

A STUDY OF THE MORMON PRACTICE OF PLURAL MARRIAGE
BEFORE THE DEATH OF JOSEPH SMITH

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ABSTRACT

Bachman, Danel W. MA, Purdue University, December 1975. A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith. Major Professor: Henry Walthmann.

Plural marriage has been one of the most popular topics in Mormon historiography, but scholars have heretofore neglected the origin and development of this tenet of Mormon doctrine. This has been due to the inaccessibility of primary source materials and perhaps because scholars have been somewhat reticent to take Mormon theology seriously. This study attempts to fill this gap by tracing the development of the idea of plural marriage from the emergence of Mormonism to the death of its founder Joseph Smith.

Recently the LDS Church Archives, which is the main repository for primary source material on Mormonism, has made available to scholars for research purposes their vast collections, which provided the basis for this study. Heavy reliance was also placed on the local press accounts, particularly in Illinois.

This study argues that the doctrine of plural marriage emerged, grew, and developed in a religious and theological context as opposed to the more mundane and secular explanations of most previous authorities. Not only Joseph Smith, but his wives and others who practiced plural marriage did so because of religious convictions. Lust or sexual appetite appear to have been at most secondary motives.

Nevertheless, conflict was the most consistent product of the infusion of this practice into Mormon life. This doctrine affected Mormon home life, it stimulated friction within the Church, and it led to strife with the non-Mormon community. Although plural marriage proved to be a source of animosity and opposition from many quarters, an examination of non-Mormon attitudes and actions suggests that plural marriage was secondary to power politics and it was, in fact, only one of the irritants in stimulating anti-Mormon opposition.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present study is intended to be a detailed examination of the origin and development of plural marriage among the Mormons prior to the death of Joseph Smith, the founder and organizer of their faith. Much has been written about "polygamy" among the Mormons, however, to date there has been no thorough investigation of the emergence and evolution of that unique doctrine. What follows is an attempt to fill this historical gap.

Most of what has been written on Mormon plural marriage falls into one or more of several categories. The earliest writings on the subject were exposés. These were characterized by vindictive, hypercritical, and moralistic judgments of the Mormons and their beliefs. Offended sensibilities burst forth in righteous indignation at the Mormon affront to American morals and the underpinnings of society. Critics felt that Americans should be warned of the dangers inherent in this cancer upon the body politic through "true" accounts of the corruption and licentiousness of Joseph Smith's followers.¹ Occasionally

¹ Representative of this type of literature are: John Bowes, *Mormonism Exposed, in its Swindling and Licentious Abominations, Refuted in its Principles, and in the Claims of its Head, the Modern Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Who is Proved to Have Been a Deceiver, and No Prophet of God* (London: E. Ward, 1849); John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857); John H. Beadle,

such works were published by disaffected or expelled Mormons.² At best, these materials distorted the facts, and, at worst, they completely departed from the truth. Indeed, as one reviewer suggests, some attacks on Mormon marital patterns may have been psychological projections of American psycho-sexual maladjustments.³

A second genre of literature dealing with Mormon plural marriage can best be described as polemical, growing out of intra-church controversies over various doctrinal disputes--particularly succession in the Mormon hierarchy. A first, and most important, split in Mormon ranks occurred shortly after Joseph and Hyrum Smith were killed on June 27, 1844. Although plural marriage was a secondary issue in the succession controversy, the contending factions were divided on the issue of multiple marriage. The members of some factions taught and practiced plural marriage, accepting it as a spiritual legacy from

Polygamy, or the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Co., 1882); Wilhelm W. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits: or the Truth About the Mormon Leaders 1830-1860* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886); and V. Waite, *The Mormon Prophet and His Harem* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1866).

² John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints: or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842); Fanny Stenhouse, *Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady's Life Among the Mormons* (New York: American News Co., 1872), and "Tell it all": *The Story of a Life Experience in Mormonism* (Hartford: A. D. Worthington & Co., 1874); Increase McGee VanDusen, *The Mormon Endowment; Secret Drama, or Conspiracy, in the Nauvoo Temple, in 1846; to Which is Added a Sketch of the Life of Joseph Smith ...* (Syracuse: N. M. D. Lathrop, 1847); Oliver Olney, *The Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed* (Hancock Co., Illinois: n.p., 1843).

³ Leonard Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review*, XXII (Summer, 1968), 243-260. See also, Leonard J. Arrington, *Kate Field and J. H. Beadle, Manipulators of the Mormon Past* (Salt Lake City: n.p., n.d.). This was an "American West Lecture" sponsored by several institutions in Utah.

Joseph Smith. Those who comprised the opposing groups totally rejected the idea and practice as heretical, apostate, and an offense to God. Some even suggested that if Smith taught and followed such a doctrine, he had fallen from his prophetic calling and was about to lead the Church astray from the truth of primitive Christianity. To prevent this, the Lord allowed his life to be taken. Divergent views on such important fundamental issues produced an immense literature of apologia as well as condemnation.

The major controversy arose between the Mormons, headquartered in Utah, and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), headquartered at Independence, Missouri, and first led by Joseph Smith III, son of the original founder. To this day, the RLDS position has been unyielding in its denial that Joseph Smith introduced the doctrine of plural marriage into the Church or that he in any way practiced such a principle. The Utah Mormons, on the other hand, practiced it until 1890 and continue to insist that the doctrine was a divinely originated revelation to Joseph Smith. Often intemperate in tone and spirit, the literature of this debate has built up theological bulwarks behind which both sides have sought to defend their interests and within which they have found self-justifying security.⁴ While

⁴ Among the many works of this type the most important representative of LDS publications is Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement, and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1950). Typical RLDS publications are: Joseph Smith III, *Plural Marriage in America: A Critical Examination* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing, n.d.), *One Wife or Many* (Lamoni: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, n.d.), and *Reply to Orson Pratt* (Plano, Illinois: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, n.d.); Jason W. Briggs, *The Basis of Brighamite Polygamy* (Lamoni: Reorganized Church of Christ, n.d.).

the exchange of views has brought to light considerable historical detail, it has not been distinguished by objectivity and analytical sophistication. Reference to writings of this type has been nearly useless in determining the significance of polygamy in the history of Mormonism or its effects in the lives of the Mormon people. Certainly such writings have little to say on the relationship between Mormon experiences and broader aspects of American history.

In recent years, a number of academicians have authored more objective studies of plural marriage. Historians and sociologists have been especially active in this field.⁵ Their most constructive inquiries have been balanced and analytical in approach, but have usually focused on the Utah period, for which the data and resources are more available. They have commonly shared several other failings. Most have passed over the origins of the marital doctrine lightly in an attempt to get quickly into the later period. If they have dealt with the early period, their documentation has often been weak. The main repository of information on early Mormon history--the Church Archives in Salt Lake City--has only recently been opened to scholarly examinations on plural marriage. So most treatises have rehashed old arguments, citing a small amount of authoritative primary and secondary material.⁶

⁵Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954); Gustive Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1971); Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942).

⁶The most recent example is Paul E. Reimann, *Plural Marriage Limited* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Co., 1974). A less polemical

A weakness common to all three types of literature is their lack of perspective on plural marriage. This theological subject has not been seriously considered in the context of American social and religious developments.

Significance of This Study

This thesis seeks to make several historical contributions. First and foremost, it draws upon untapped source materials. The author was able to spend over a month in the Mormon Church Archives in Salt Lake City, Utah. There access was gained to many of the original documents relating to early Mormon history. This vast collection encompasses unpublished diaries, journals, reminiscences, correspondence, minutes of church councils, conferences, city councils, fraternal orders, records of sermons, files of affidavits, certificates, statements, and manuscripts of revelations. The Church Historical Department also houses the largest and most complete accumulation of printed materials relating to Mormonism. Hence, it was possible to examine many rare and obscure published materials, including books, pamphlets, brochures, edited diaries and correspondence, newspapers, and broadsides. Finally, through the excellent interlibrary loan service of the

but equally provincial outlook due to its theological nature is Hyrum Andrus, *Principles of Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970). As late as 1954 Kimball Young, in reference to historical inquiry into the beginnings of plural marriage said, "the precise steps in its emergence are almost impossible to trace, as this chapter will make clear." The most eloquent commentary of the chapter was its size. In a book of over 470 pages one chapter of 21 pages was devoted to the "origin and development of Mormon polygamy: official and otherwise." (Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-102).

Purdue Library, the author has been able to make extensive searches in early newspapers published both by the Mormons and non-Mormons in Illinois. Largely overlooked with respect to the inception of Mormon plural marriage, these various materials have yielded important data in piecing together the mosaic of the development of that institution.

On the simplest level, then, an attempt is made to broaden our understanding of an early Mormon precept and its social impact. The perusal of primary materials has allowed a more positive and authoritative assertion of facts relative to the beginnings and development of plural marriage in the days of Joseph Smith. Extensive attention is hereinafter given to a description and analysis of these events. It is also now possible to deal more reasonably with areas that have traditionally been in dispute, such as the secrecy with which the unconventional marriage practice was initiated, the denials of polygamy, and the meaning of terms like spiritual wifery.

It is also hoped that this inquiry will add to the growth of Mormon social and intellectual history. The conditions under which plural marriage was introduced generated occasional weddings between men and married women, and at least one case of a woman having a "front" husband to conceal her polygynous⁷ marriage to Joseph Smith. These and other circumstances have interesting implications regarding the Prophet's views of his own prerogatives and his views on the legitimacy of civil and religious authority. Mormon theology concerning the spiritual significance of marriage, sex, and the family

⁷See text pp 190-191.

are only recently becoming important to scholars. There is much to be learned through a review of the first instances of plural marriage and their effects on the Church and outsiders. One of the doctrines that gave unity to almost every other facet of early Mormon history was the idea of the kingdom of God. The doctrine of "plurality of wives" takes on added importance in Mormon cultural history when it is seen as a vital mechanism facilitating the creation of the kingdom.

The introduction of plural marriage fits into a general pattern of expanding theological development. The later Nauvoo years were among Smith's most prolific in the development and fleshing out of the doctrines of Mormonism. With regard to plural marriage, we find evidence that early church leaders did not claim to have all the answers to the problems associated with the introduction of such a radical new concept into a religious society. While one should be careful in the use of the terms "evolution" and "experiment," there is persuasive evidence that Mormon doctrines were not all formalized and ritualized at once. For a time there was a certain theological incompleteness and freedom that was gradually eliminated.

The secret implementation of plural marriage has important consequences within the Church. Rumor and misunderstanding were rife. These conditions opened the door for unscrupulous opportunists to distort and misuse the doctrine to their own ends. Such characters often became acrimonious when expelled from the Church. Their diatribes had far reaching and important consequences. The most notorious example was Dr. John C. Bennett, whose debauchery, apostasy, and vituperative criticism of the Church has not earned him an honored

position in Mormon annals. Unfortunately, scholars have not fully recognized the effect he and his cohorts had on the outcome of the Mormon sojourn in Nauvoo, Illinois. Bennett and other critics were directly (and sometimes indirectly) responsible for a major crisis at the highest levels of Church leadership and among some of the Prophet's closest advisors. They also precipitated numerous excommunications and defections from the faith. Furthermore, Bennett's misrepresentation of the plural marriage doctrine, his viscious attacks on the Church, and his divisive agitation disrupted missionary activities, the development of Nauvoo, and other socio-religious endeavors. Certainly the pressures and problems created by dissidents encouraged Joseph Smith to become involved in political embroilments, legal entanglements, public disputes, and ecclesiastical proceedings when he might have moved in more constructive and productive directions.

The final months of Smith's life were largely dominated by difficulties growing out of the plural marriage issue. A group of disaffected Mormons printed a newspaper called the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Among other things, it was filled with criticism of the Church and its leaders for teaching and practicing plural marriage. As mayor of the city and chief magistrate of the city court system, Smith and the city council declared the paper a public nuisance and had it destroyed. Consequently, he and others were arrested and taken to Carthage, Illinois, where an angry mob stormed the jail and assassinated Joseph and Hyrum Smith. When that happened, all the resources of Mormondom were rechanneled into preserving the Church and transporting it half a continent away to the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains.

Socially, plural marriage was a two-edged sword for the Mormons. Various publications and documents reveal that it offered potential and, in some instances, real advantages to the Saints. Yet it also challenged the faith, integrity, and obedience of many church members. Some were strengthened, and some were dismayed. Nearly every personal or autobiographical account details moral misgivings about a marital arrangement that ran against the puritan traditions of the church's New England-reared constituency. The sensibilities, patience, and unselfishness of the woman were often painfully put to the test. Multiple families likewise tried the leadership, tact, and ability of male Mormons. Collectively, the Saints found that polygamy was to be another reason in the arsenal of rationales the gentiles used to abuse, persecute, and banish them. Their faith was seriously challenged by the dishonor and stigma of rumor and innuendo from within and without the Church.

In addition, a closer look at this aspect of Mormon history has some relevance to more general elements of ante bellum American history. Since publication of Barbara Welter's now famous article on "The Cult of True Womanhood," in 1966, a great deal of interest has been generated in the role of women, sex, and the family in Jacksonian America.⁸ The bulk of recent scholarship on the role of women and the

⁸ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Summer, 1966), 151-174. The author has reviewed over forty-five articles most of which have been published in the decade since the appearance of Mrs. Welter's article. The vast majority of these authors have built and expanded upon her basic premise. Some of the more typical examples are: Ben Barker-Benfield, "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality," *Feminist Studies*, I (1972), 45-74; Mari Jo Buhle, Anne G. Gordon and Nancy Schrom, "Women in American Society: An Historical Contribution,"

family have concluded that the years between the Declaration of Independence and the Civil War were the nadir for American women. In this period, according to "Welterians," sexist male chauvinists exploited women, prevailing on them to accept an ideal of "true womanhood" which entailed an inhibited and restrictive, middle class American life-style. In the transformation from a rural-agrarian to an urban and industrial society, the economic and social role of the woman deteriorated. She lost her economic importance as a producer in the family farm economy, and her social role was relegated more and more to that of wife and mother-teacher. This change in role served at least two purposes. First, it eliminated her as a threat to the male role as bread winner and provider. Secondly, the restrictive sexual norms placed upon her maintained the traditional double standard which permitted men to engage in extramarital relations. In short, Jacksonian men found a convenient method of keeping women in their place.

Radical America, IV (July-August, 1971), 3-66; Ronald W. Hogeland, "The Female Appendage: Feminine Life-Styles in America, 1820-1860," *Civil War History*, XVII (June, 1971), 101-114; Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal*, X (Spring, 1969), 5-14; Keith Melder, "Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *New York History*, XLVII (July, 1967), 231-254; Glenda G. Riley, "Subtle Subversion: Changes in the Traditionalist Images of American Women," *The Historian*, XXXII (February, 1970), 210-227; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Beauty and the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Status in Jacksonian America," *American Quarterly*, XXIII (October, 1971), 562-584 and "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America," *Social Research: An International Quarterly of the Social Sciences*, XXXIV (Winter, 1972), 652-678. Perhaps the most useful and thoughtful summary of this theory is an essay by Alice Rossi in her, *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 241-278.

It has been argued that these impositions upon women brought some unusual reactions. Conceptualized as guardians of virtue, moral superiors, spiritual advisors, and as persons unsuited to extensive physical work, women built up emotional resentment and frustration to the point of rebellion. In its milder forms, this frustration was combatted through participation in reform movements. In its more tragic and profound manifestations, Freudian analysts assert, pent-up female anxieties and sexual repressions led to psychosomatic illnesses. The most common of these disorders was female hysteria. With such profound problems plaguing the family and women, the stage seemed to be set for the introduction of alternative life-styles and marriage systems that would replace or correct the malfunctioning monogamic system of the day. It is in this context then that some are prone to evaluate the origin of Mormon plural marriage--as an experiment or an attempt of a millennialistic, communitarian group to provide a viable alternative to an existing social evil. A strong case can be made for such a view.

There is, however, another possibility. Recently the Welterian notion of early nineteenth century roles of women and family have come into question. Authors such as Frustenberg, Branca, Morantz, Smith, Potter and Lantz, have pointed to significant deficiencies in the reform argument.⁹ David Potter for example, has suggested that urbanization

⁹Patricia Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Women," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised*, ed. by Mary Hartman and Lois Banner (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1974), pp. 179-191; Frank F. Frustenberg, Jr., "Industrialization and the American Family: A Look Backward," *American Sociological Review*, XXXI (June, 1966), 326-337; Herman R. Lantz, Jane Keys, and Martin Schultz, "The American Family in the Preindustrial Period; From Base Lines in History to Change," *American Sociological Review*, XL (February, 1975), 21-36;

and industrialization, rather than being the death knells of feminine identity were really facilitators of economic opportunity. Whereas the "frontier" had been a man's world, filled with opportunities for men only, urban life afforded women a freer and more satisfying existence. Frustenberg, Lantz, and others have shown that industrialization did not progress far enough before the Civil War to revolutionize life-styles. There is also evidence that the influence of the ideal of true womanhood on middle class American women may have been more impressionistic than real, and that its assimilation by ordinary females is unsubstantiated. If, as Daniel Boorstin and John Higham have suggested, there was a sovereignty and boundlessness in the American spirit which promoted innovation, experimentation, exploration, and pluralism, the development of alternative life styles may be seen as an expression of free wheeling independence, not merely as reaction against a norm of questionable pervasiveness.¹⁰ To be sure, Mormons did reject some norms of American society. Certain elements of Mormon philosophy and doctrine were clearly utopian. However, this thesis will argue that there was a freedom of expression and behavior in Mormonism that was not wholly idealistic or reactionary. There was also a liberating

Regina Morantz, "The Lady and Her Physician," in Hartman and Banner, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-53; David M. Potter, "American Women and the American Character," in *History and American Society: Essays of David M. Potter*, ed. by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 277-303; Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," in Hartman and Banner, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-136.

¹⁰ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), *passim.*, and John Higham, "From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture 1848-1860," *The Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series in American History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., n.d.).

spirit which Smith and his followers felt they were promoting through the restoration of primitive Christianity.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this study has something to say concerning the circumstances and motives behind the Mormon-gentile conflict in Illinois. This situation seems to have been consistent with conditions and attitudes that were widespread in America at the time. Ronald Walter's description of abolitionist criticisms of sexual activities among slave holders, David Grimsted's essay on Jacksonian rioting, and Richard Dykstra's discussion of social conflicts in the cattle towns of the Great Plains, reveal some ideological sources of American bigotry and vigilante violence in the nineteenth century. Seen in the light of these and other studies, reaction to Mormon culture and particularly plural marriage can be explained in terms other than mere religious persecution.¹¹

Definition of Terms

Throughout this work there will be numerous references to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, its doctrines, customs, organization, and practices. These subjects may be unfamiliar to many readers. For clarification and preciseness, some of the more important Mormon usages are defined and/or explained at this point.

¹¹ Ronald Walters, "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," *American Quarterly*, XXV (May, 1973), 177-201; David Grimsted, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," *American Historical Review*, LXXVII (April, 1972), 361-347; Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (Forge Village, Massachusetts: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 371-378. See also James S. Coleman, *Community Conflict* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957).

Terms Relative to Church
Organization, Quorums, and Councils¹²

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Adherents of this faith are commonly referred to as Mormons, Saints or Latter-day Saints, (LDS). The Church was founded by Joseph Smith in western New York on April 6, 1830. During Smith's lifetime, the LDS headquarters was moved from New York (1830), to Ohio (1831-1837), to Missouri (1838), and later to Illinois (1839-1846). The name of the Church changed several times, but was established by divine decree by Smith on April 26, 1838.¹³ After his death, there was a major succession crisis. Brigham Young and other church officials led the largest group of Mormons to Utah in 1846-1847. Most of those who remained in the East coalesced into the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), which now has its headquarters in Independence, Missouri. Non-Mormons are often referred to as "gentiles."

Priesthood. Mormons believe that divine authority to carry on the spiritual and temporal work of the ministry was conferred upon

¹²Two of the best and most succinct explanations of Mormon Church government can be found in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966) and John A. Widtsoe, (Comp.). *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1962). The former is written in encyclopedic form and is more current than the latter which is now out of print. Because of numerous recent changes in church organization and auxiliaries the latter work is obsolete, but it is still the standard reference for explanations of basic church government and procedure which are fixed and relatively permanent.

¹³Joseph Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), Section 115, verses 3 and 4, (hereafter cited as D&C with appropriate section and verse number following). As is customary with the Bible, the Mormon scriptures will not be italicized.

Joseph Smith by the visitation of angelic messengers. In Mormon theology this authority is necessary to validate religious ordinances and to give special sanction to the teachings and actions of church leaders. It is generally called priesthood authority and is made available to non-negroid males on the basis of worthiness. The Church is therefore governed by a lay ministry. Collectively, the body of male members holding this status are referred to as the priesthood, or as priesthood holders. There are two divisions, or orders, of the priesthood. The first is the Aaronic Order, which is generally confined to the more temporal work of the Church. Members of this order are divided into three offices: Deacons, Teachers, and Priests, with separate and distinct duties assigned to each. The second and higher order, the Melchizedek Priesthood, is comprised of men with spiritual duties such as teaching, blessing, performing ordinances, and leadership. It is generally conferred upon mature adults and is considered the means by which a man and his family receive the full spiritual blessing of God. The Melchizedek Order is likewise divided into offices with specific duties. The titles of its officers are: Elder, Seventy, High Priest, Apostle, and Prophet. Upon receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, one is commonly referred to as "Elder." Melchizedek office-holders are organized into "quorums," usually of a specified number. For example, a maximum of ninety-six men make up a quorum of Elders, while seventy or less men form a quorum of Seventy.

First Presidency. The highest quorum of officers in the Church is the First Presidency. Under normal conditions, the presidency is composed of the President of the Church and two counselors. The

President is considered a "prophet, seer, and revelator" to his people, and the spokesman of the Lord to the Church. Customarily, Mormons reverently refer to their leaders as "the Prophet," or "President." Traditionally, the presidential quorum is dissolved upon the death of the prophet and must be reorganized by action of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Immediately below the First Presidency in the Mormon hierarchy is a body known as the Twelve Apostles. Latter-day Saints accept these men as holding the same authority and power as the Apostles of New Testament times. Tenure in office is terminated by death or unworthiness, but the full size of this quorum is continually maintained. Mormon scripture teaches that these men are jointly equal in authority to the First Presidency when their decisions are unanimous and that the Keys of the Kingdom (special rights of Presidency) are conferred upon each Apostle during ordination. Upon the death of the President of the Church, the senior Apostle succeeds him.

Other General Authorities. Other quorums and officers operate at the general church level. These would include the First Council of Seventy, the Presiding Patriarch, the Presiding Bishopric, and other general authorities. There will be little reference to these officers in this work.

Stake and Ward. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is administratively divided into geographical units. Each unit has presiding officers responsible for the proper function of church programs and ministries to church members. A stake is a sizeable geographic

area, presided over by a stake president and two counselors. There is also a body of twelve high counselors who act in conjunction with the stake presidency as the church judiciary in their district. Stakes generally encompass fewer than a dozen local congregations, which are called "wards" and are presided over by a bishop and two counselors. Local members are responsible to their bishop, who is in turn responsible to the stake presidency.¹⁴

Revelation and Mormon Scripture

It is a fundamental article of faith among the Saints that God communicates to his worthy servants. Each Mormon believes that he can have direct communication from God (revelation) for his own personal stewardship. However, only the Prophet (President) is believed to receive revelation for the guidance of the whole Church. Revelation is at the very foundation of Mormon origins and doctrines.

The Book of Mormon. Because of their belief in revelation, Mormons accept three volumes in addition to the Bible as inspired scripture. The first is the Book of Mormon, which is an account of ancient inhabitants of America, led here in pre-Christian times by inspired prophets. Prior to the establishment of the Church, Joseph Smith said that he came into possession of a set of gold plates,

¹⁴This explanation is according to present church organization. Wards and stakes came into being during the Nauvoo period and their function was roughly the same as today. Historical investigation of pre-Utah organization is only in its infant stages and may modify our thinking in the future. The word "stake" apparently was taken from the imagery of Isaiah's "stakes" which held the tent of Israel. (See Isaiah 33:20 and 54:2) The word "ward" likely came from its political and geographical use in New England and elsewhere.

delivered to him by an angel, named Moroni, and that he was directed to translate these plates for his people. This translation became known as the Book of Mormon.

The Doctrine and Covenants. This volume is comprised of 136 sections which are considered to be God's revelations to the Prophet on church doctrine and practice. One of these, Section 132, is the authoritative source of the doctrine of plural marriage among the Mormons. The history of this document will be considered below.

The Pearl of Great Price. This is a small collection of Joseph Smith's translations of ancient writings, plus some of his personal revelations that were not canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Due to their personal and spiritual nature, experiences that humans perceive as revelations from God are generally beyond the scope of historical proof or falsification. The particular religious predilections of commentators usually determines their attitudes toward the validity of such matters. Since the Latter-day Saints are convinced of certain revelations and rely on their canonized scriptures as inspired and authoritative sources of doctrine and practice, little can be accomplished by disputing their claims. In pursuing the topic at hand, the author will concentrate on the contents, background, authorship, and meaning of pertinent documents. He will not continually qualify Smith's doctrinal statements as revelations that the Prophet "claimed" to receive from God.

Polygamy, Polygyny, Celestial Marriage and Spiritual Wifery

Non-Mormons are often confused about Mormon beliefs regarding the practice of plural marriage. Much of this uncertainty stems from a lack of precision and common understanding in reference to these terms:

Polygamy. This is probably the word that is most commonly misapplied in discussion of Mormon doctrine. Technically, it refers to a marital relationship existing between an individual and several living spouses. One form of polygamy is polyandry--women having two or more husbands. Since the Mormon Church has never taught that a woman should have more than one living husband at a time, this inexact word should be avoided. It is incorrect to generalize about Mormon polygamy, although some males had polygamous marriages.

Polygyny. This is the male counterpart of polyandry and is the term which technically designates the true practice of the Church. It refers to the situation when a man has more than one living wife concurrently and does not connote the same privilege to women.

Celestial Marriage. The doctrine that a man may have more than one wife is part of a larger theological concept of marriage promulgated by the Mormons, providing that a man and woman could be married, or "sealed," by a properly authorized church official for time and all eternity. Participants believed that such a marital relationship would persist into the life after death and that family relationships would be eternal if entered into and maintained in accordance with LDS teachings. Although this and all other terms herein defined

were not used in the authoritative documents (revelations) establishing plural marriage, it was common in the early days to indiscriminately refer to plural marriage as "celestial marriage." Mormon leaders often taught that the highest order of marital relationships in eternity would be of the plural type. In 1933, though, the Presidency * of the Church issued an authoritative statement confining the meaning of "celestial marriage" to the belief in eternal marriage and indicating that plural wives were not needed to have a celestial marriage.¹⁵

Spiritual Wifery. The origin of this term is unknown, and its exact meaning is somewhat difficult to determine. In the early

¹⁵First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Official Statement from the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Issued June 17, 1933*, p. 19. The most available reprint of this document is in James R. Clark (comp.), *Messages of The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, V (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 315-330. (Compare also, Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage: A Discussion* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1950], p. 67.) The actual statement made in 1933 says: "Celestial marriage--that is, marriage for time and eternity--and polygamous or plural marriage are not synonymous terms. Monogamous marriages for time and eternity, solemnized in our temples in accordance with the word of the Lord and the laws of the Church, are celestial marriages." Heber J. Grant was then president of the Church and was reiterating to his people the position of the Church. Since the official abandonment of plural marriage in 1890 there were fundamentalists who had resisted the change and who were marshalling all the theological arguments possible to bolster their cause. One of the most effective techniques was to point to sermons wherein statements were made to the effect that a person could not be saved without a celestial marriage when the context implied plural marriage. A good example is in the sermon of Joseph F. Smith given July 7, 1878. (*Journal of Discourses*, XX [London, England: Albert Carrington, 1880], 24-31, [hereafter cited as *JD*].) Other examples of the interchangeability of these terms can be seen in the published statements of Benjamin F. Johnson, William Clayton, Joseph B. Noble. (See Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record a Monthly Periodical Devoted Exclusively to Historical Biographical, Chronological and Statistical Matters* [Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1887], VI [May, 1887], 221-225, [hereafter cited as *HR*].)

literature it was commonly used to deride the Mormons. It may have originated in the unique marital practices of nineteenth century perfectionist groups in New England and New York. Some nonconformists apparently taught that, if a man or woman felt a spontaneous spiritual affinity toward a member of the opposite sex, they were spiritual husbands and wives. Perfection of one's character and affections occurred after repentance and regeneration, which purged such a relationship of its sinfulness. It is unclear if this idea initially allowed conjugal relationships, but the complex marriage system of John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida Community did.¹⁶ Another advocate of "spiritual" marriage was the self-styled prophet,

¹⁶ Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York; 1800-1850*, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1965), pp. 238-251. There is some evidence of conjugal relations occurring among advocates of these principles. Cross relates the "1835 Brimfield Bundling" episode where Maria Brown wanted to "Demonstrate that her piety could overcome lowly desires" by sleeping chastely with her minister. (*Ibid.*, p. 243.) That the term "spiritual wifery" came to include numerous marital experiments can be seen in William Hepworth Dixon, *Spiritual Wifery*, 2 Vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1868), and John B. Ellis, *Free Love and Its votaries, Etc.* (New York: United States Publishing Co., 1870). One of the better studies detailing the intellectual origins of the "free love" type thinking in nineteenth-century America is Sidney Ditzion, *Marriage Morals and Sex in America: A History of Ideas* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953). For general studies on Noyes see: Maren L. Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1969); Robert A. Parker, *A Yankee Saint: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935). For some analysis of the theology of John H. Noyes on marriage see: Ernest R. Sandeen, "John Humphrey Noyes as the New Adam," *Church History*, XL (March, 1971), 82-90; Erik Achorn, "Mary Cragin, Perfectionist Saint," *New England Quarterly*, XXVIII (December, 1955), 490-518; and William M. Kephart, "Experimental Family Organization: An Historico-Cultural Report on the Oneida Community," *Marriage and Family Living*, XXV (August, 1963), 261-271.

Matthias, who in 1833 contracted an unusual marriage to a married woman with the justification that, as sinners, she and her first husband had not been properly united in wedlock. Matthias claimed the power to dissolve the first marriage, did so, and thereafter fathered a child by the woman.¹⁷

As far as the Latter-day Saints are concerned, the term came into vogue after the Church excommunicated Dr. John C. Bennett for adultery. He claimed special authorization from Joseph Smith for his extra-marital relations. When expelled, he brought charges of corruption against the Church and accused the Mormons of practicing

¹⁷ Gilbert Seldes, *The Stammering Century* (New York: John Day Co., 1928), pp. 117-131. Matthias' notoriety was widespread during the period. Interestingly, in 1835 he apparently paid a visit to Joseph Smith who was negatively impressed and threw him out of his home exclaiming Matthias' God was the devil and that "he was in . . . possession of a wicked and depraved spirit." (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed., B. H. Roberts, 11 [2nd ed. rev., Salt Lake City, Utah; Deseret Book Co., 1959-1960], 305-307, [hereafter cited *HC*]. This is a compilation of many writings of Joseph Smith from his diaries, correspondence and church publications. It is commonly referred to as the "documentary" history of the Church. It is an extremely valuable collection, but recently editorial problems have been brought to light which suggest the need for a careful examination of it as a reference source. The primary problem is with the diary entries, since many scribes assisted Smith in keeping it current and much of it was compiled and written after his death. See Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies*, XI [Summer, 1971], 439-473.) Another very early reference to spiritual wives is found in the journal of Mormon missionary Orson Hyde. In 1832 he encountered a group of "Cochranites" who "believe in a 'Plurality of wives' which they call spiritual wives, knowing them not after the flesh but after the spirit, . . ." (Orson Hyde, Journal, October 11, 1832. Typescript located in the Archives, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri. This excerpt was provided me by letter from Archivist Grant McMurray, April 23, 1974.)

spiritual wifery.¹⁸ Latter-day Saints, however, say that Bennett was the author of the doctrine and that it was nothing more than a theological justification for adultery and prostitution.¹⁹ Some outsiders accused the Mormons of having a "community of wives" or of "swapping wives" and used the term spiritual wifery to deprecate these situations. In this study, "spiritual wives" or "spiritual wifery" will designate an aberrant form of the Mormon doctrine and practice.

¹⁸In his first letter of exposé printed in the *Sangamo Journal* [Springfield, Illinois], July 8, 1842, he refers to "clandestine" and "secret" wives, but in his second letter published in the *Sangamo Journal*, July 15, 1842, he accused Smith of attempting to persuade Sarah M. Pratt to become his spiritual wife. Smith wanted Bennett to exonerate him "from all participation whatever, either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, in the spiritual wife doctrine. . . ."

¹⁹See the denial of "John C. Bennett's 'secret wife system' . . . a disclosure of his own make," by twelve men and nineteen women. (*Times and Seasons* [Nauvoo, Illinois], III [October 1, 1842], 939-940, [hereafter cited *T&S*].) One woman who signed this denial later remarked that it was aimed specifically at Bennett's system of prostitution. (Eliza R. Snow to Joseph F. Smith [undated]. Original in the Joseph F. Smith Collection, Church Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, [hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives].) Orson F. Whitney also accused Bennett of inventing the "jargon" of spiritual wives. "[T]he phrase was his, but it was never the accepted title of the principle it pretended to describe. This and his other jargons . . . were invented to cover up his own iniquity, and to wreak vengeance upon the Prophet. . . ." (Orson F. Whitney, *The Mormon Prophets Tragedy* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905], pp. 43-44.) Parley P. Pratt wrote in 1845 that "'The Spiritual Wife Doctrine,' of J. C. Bennett, and numerous other apostates, is as foreign from the real principles of the Church as the devil is from God. . . ." (*The Prophet* [New York, New York], May 24, 1845.)

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND ON MORMON HISTORY AND DOCTRINE

To adequately understand the setting in which plural marriage originated, it is necessary to briefly review the essentials of Mormon history and doctrine. For the sake of convenience and order, the study of the twenty-four years of pre-Utah events in Mormon history is customarily divided into the following periods: the New York period (1820-1830), the Ohio period (1831-1838), the Missouri period (1831-1839), and the Illinois period (1839-1846). Except for the Ohio-Missouri eras, which partly coincided, these periods follow church development chronologically and are generally centered in and around the life and activities of Joseph Smith.¹ (See map in Appendix A.)

¹The best general studies of pre-Utah LDS history are: Brigham H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Century I*, 6 Vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), which covers the first hundred years and was originally published to commemorate the Church Centennial in 1930; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950); and Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration; A History of the Church to 1846* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973). All of these are "in house" histories and are descriptive rather than interpretative. Dale Morgan died before his multi-volume work could be published. No major history has been completed by an outsider, and in fact, non-Mormon Mario DePillis has been critical that few scholars, Mormon and non-Mormon alike, have taken Mormonism as a religion seriously. ("The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 [Spring, 1966], 66, 71. [hereafter cited as *Dialogue*].) The future, however, looks bright. Under the direction of the LDS Church historian, Leonard Arrington, the Church has commissioned sixteen authors to produce a sixteen volume history for the sesquicentennial in

The members of the Smith family were probably quite typical New England Yankees. Joseph Smith, Sr., and his wife, Lucy Mack, had a large family of eleven children. Joseph Smith, Jr., was the third son and fifth child. He was born in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, on December 23, 1805. Both parents sprang from solid, transplanted English stock, reared in Yankee land.² Economic depressions and personal financial setbacks plagued the Smiths through at least eight moves in New Hampshire and Vermont between their marriage in 1796 and their departure for New York in 1816.³ The year of their departure was remembered as "1800 and froze to death" because late snows and continuous cold weather convinced many that further efforts to farm the depleted and rocky New England soil was futile. The legendary boundlessness of the West, with its magnetic attraction, drew the Smiths and thousands of other Yankees up the Mohawk River valley across the Alleghenys into the "burned-over-district" of Western New York.⁴

1980. Most of these authors are professionally trained in history and disciplines related to their topics. This could be the first major synthesis of Mormon history. A renaissance of Mormon history in recent years has brought forth a flood of interpretative articles and monographs which are laying the groundwork for better book length treatments. Many of these will be cited in the notes below. Biographies of Joseph Smith are legion, but again most are "in house" and laudatory. Despite its anti-Mormon overtones the standard interpretative work remains, Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945).

² Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971).

³ Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, England: S. W. Richards, 1853), pp. 45-72.

⁴ Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9; Ralph N. Hill, *Yankee Kingdom, Vermont and New Hampshire* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), pp.

Mormonism was conceived near Palmyra, New York in the spring of 1820. Here, Joseph Smith was caught up in some religious excitements in his neighborhood. Whitney Cross and other historians tell us the environment of this region was especially conducive to the unusual religious enthusiasm that cropped up there and affected Smith's thinking.⁵ Confused as to his religious future, young Smith felt directed to seek divine guidance. The result of his first attempt at "vocal" prayer was a grand theophany wherein Jesus Christ directed him not to join any church then in existence. Instead, he was to prepare himself to accept the assignment as the Lord's prophet to "restore" the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth again.

243-244; and Stewart H. Holbrook, *The Yankee Exodus* (New York: McMillan, 1950), pp. 16-17.

⁵Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-150. For the unique New England flavor given to Mormonism both in theology and membership see, David Brion Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism," *The New England Quarterly*, XXVII (June, 1953), 147-168; Donna Higgins, "Smiths, Youngs, and Vermont," *The Improvement Era*, LXVII (November, 1964), 930-931, and Lawrence M. Yorgason, "Some Demographic Aspects of One Hundred Early Mormon Converts, 1830-1837" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971), p. 32. Yorgason shows the following numbers of converts according to birth place: Massachusetts 22, Vermont 21, New Hampshire 6, Connecticut 5, Rhode Island 3, and Maine 1, or 58 out of 100 from New England. Not all were converted while residing in New England because many moved several times before their conversion, yet there remains a significant New England influence. After Massachusetts and Vermont, New York had the third largest number of converts born with eighteen. For an assessment of the environmental milieu in the burned-over-district which builds upon Cross and suggests the importance of his findings to the development of social reform movements, particularly women's rights see, Rossi, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-278.

There is only one adequate study of the New York era but it is mostly a collection of factual details and is not interpretative in nature. (See, Lawrence Porter, "A Study of the Origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816-1831" [unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1971].)

Marvin Hill has shown that the religious crisis following the Revolutionary War prompted a "restorationist" movement which had as its goal the return to "primitive" Christianity. The movement was denominationally and geographically diverse. The North, South, and West were dotted with clergymen and laymen who were unhappy with the inroads that secularization and worldliness were making in the churches because of the separation of church and state. These "primitivists" argued that the churches were in a state of apostasy from the true religion of Christ. Their goal was a return to original Christianity.⁶ Smith's first vision experience was consistent with this notion and demonstrated his own primitivist views. But his theology eventually went beyond this. Smith concluded that secularization and religious disestablishment had only promoted competition and had been a source of disunity. He saw pluralism as one of the chief religious evils of the day, because it seemed to encourage apostasy.

Hill maintains that Smith may have overreacted in his millennialistic, restorationist theology.⁷ The core idea was the establishment of "the" kingdom of God on earth. Others have shown that the idea of the kingdom had several definitions. But, in its most sophisticated form, it embodied a theocratic political kingdom in which the Mormon priesthood would gain political as well as ecclesiastical authority to accomplish Daniel's vision of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. This stone would increase in size as it rolled

⁶ Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1968), chap. i.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

down the mountain. Eventually the stone (kingdom) would break into pieces (destroy) all other nations and kingdoms. All of this was to be done in anticipation of the millennial appearance of Christ. Then the kingdom would be presented to him, and he would rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.⁸ Between the time of restoration and the second advent, the kingdom would be administered by the Mormon prophet and his followers. This theocratic community was to bring together the social, economic, and political aspects of American life which "could alone withstand certain secularizing tendencies of pluralism, and adequately ready the Saints for Christ's rule upon earth."⁹ Thus Hill suggests that it was the all-inclusiveness of this theocratic kingdom which later angered Mormon neighbors in four states and half a dozen communities.¹⁰

Besides giving unity and meaning to our understanding of Mormon history, the concept of the creation of the kingdom appears to illuminate doctrines and practices such as plural marriage. It was a notion that helped to generate conviction and enthusiasm in the religion's adherents, a powerful motivating force which energized the Saints.

New knowledge gained from the first vision was itself a major departure from orthodox Catholic and Protestant conceptions of God. Although traditional Christianity had a triune godhead in name, it had remained monotheistic through the pronouncements of the Nicene and other creedal statements about the Godhead. However, through stronger

⁸ Daniel 2:24-44; 7:13-14, 21-22.

⁹ Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, and 63, n. 2.

statements about the "separateness" of the persons and personality of God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, Mormonism proclaimed itself polytheistic.¹¹ This distinction laid the groundwork for Joseph Smith's later statements about the plurality of "Gods." He taught that there were more deities than the trinity; that man himself was the "offspring" of celestial parentage and was a god in embryo. Moreover, Mormonism was depicted as the divine plan of salvation, offering man a chance to fulfill his spiritual potential and become a god.¹²

In the decade after the first vision, Joseph Smith completed his inspired translation of the plates that he obtained near Palmyra, New York.¹³ The resultant Book of Mormon relates the story of several groups of people led by Providence from the old world to the Western Hemisphere. The most important group left the area around Jerusalem in about 600 B.C. A large civilization descended from these Semitic colonists. But there were divisions among them over the leadership and teachings of the prophets. Those who followed the prophets were

¹¹ Smith's account of the vision is in *HC* 1:2-8. An extensive historiography on the first vision is emerging chiefly due to a challenge of its historical context by Presbyterian minister Wesley P. Walters in his, "New Light on Mormon Origins from the Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival" *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, X (Fall, 1967), 227-244, reprinted in *Dialogue*, IV (Spring, 1969), 59-81 and by the "Utah Christian Tract Society" of La Mesa, California. A bibliography of this historiography and a general summary of these arguments can be found in Milton V. Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971)

¹² Joseph Smith, discourse at the funeral of Elder King Follett April, 1844, *T&S* 5:612-618. In Mormon circles this has been dubbed the "King Follett Discourse."

¹³ *HC* 1:9-19.

known as Nephites and the dissenters were called Lamanites. After telling of the resurrection of Christ, the book details his visit to these New World Christians. Finally, fratricidal wars among the contending factions left a small remnant of Lamanites which the book presents as the ancestors of the American Indian. Thus Mormonism was infused from its very beginnings with a compelling interest in their spiritual and temporal welfare. Some of the additional contents of this volume are not easily condensed. The Book of Mormon is perhaps the earliest Mormon statement outlining the philosophy and objectives of the kingdom of God ideology.¹⁴ Yet, it has little to say with respect to family life. Those families which Smith did write about were apparently monogamous. Only here and there are there hints of alternative marriage forms.¹⁵

The Book of Mormon came off the press in March of 1830. The next month Joseph Smith formally organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the meantime, he told of receiving numerous angelic visits which gave direction and authority for the organization of the Church. From the resurrected John the Baptist and from the apostles Peter, James, and John, he said he received the priesthood

¹⁴Hill, *op. cit.*, chap. iii.

¹⁵The history of the translation and printing of the Book of Mormon has not been adequately studied. A beginning is found in B.H. Roberts, *New Witnesses For God*, II (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1909); Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America: The Book of Mormon*, 2 Vols. (Provo, Utah: Utah Printing Co., 1960); Paul R. Cheesman, *The Keystone of Mormonism: Little Known Truths About the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973); Gayle G. Ord, "The Book of Mormon Goes to Press," *The Ensign*, II (December, 1972), 66-70; and Janet Jenson, "Variations Between Copies of the First Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* (Winter, 1973), 214-222.

authority necessary to "restore" the Church to its original status.¹⁶ Smith also asserted that God gave him many revelations for the guidance of church members. These were eventually published in a bound volume.¹⁷

Mormonism did not remain in New York very long. In the next seventeen years, its members migrated four times. In 1830 a small group of missionaries were dispatched to the Western borders of Missouri to preach to the Indians who were being relocated west of that state. These Saints faced severe hardships as they hiked hundreds of miles to their destination, and difficulties with Indian agents prevented them from accomplishing their primary objective. In route to Missouri, however, they had unusual success among the followers of Alexander Campbell in the Western Reserve in northern Ohio. News of their efforts and a visit by two prominent converts prompted Smith to establish the Church's headquarters at Kirtland, Ohio.¹⁸

Later, sanguine reports from the Missouri mission field encouraged the Prophet to journey to Missouri in the summer of 1831 with a large group of missionaries. While there, he declared that region to be the ancient site where the Garden of Eden once flourished. God, he said, directed the Saints to build the center stake of Zion or the city of New Jerusalem at Independence, in Jackson County, Missouri.¹⁹

¹⁶HC 1:39-44.

¹⁷This is the Doctrine and Covenants.

¹⁸Details of this missionary journey are documented in chapter III of this work.

¹⁹D&C 57:1-5. Evidence that Smith taught that this was the location of the Garden of Eden can be found in Alvin R. Dyer, *The Refiner's Fire: The Significance of Events Transpiring in Missouri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), pp. 110.

significant theological innovations were suggested by the revelation on the location of Zion (Missouri). The foremost was the doctrine of the gathering. The Mormon prophet taught his people they were modern descendants of Israel, with the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in their veins and the birthright of Joseph upon their heads.²⁰ The immediate necessity in preparing for the second advent of Christ and the millennial ushering in of the kingdom of God was to establish a society worthy and able of inhabiting Zion. The first step in accomplishing this goal was to gather modern Israel into a community which could provide a large enough economic base to build a temple and sustain the full spiritual programs of the kingdom.²¹

A colony was established at Independence in 1831, and for the next seven years Kirtland and Independence were the principle gathering centers of faithful Mormons. Although the Prophet and most of the church leaders lived in Kirtland, he continued to assert that the Lord was telling him to build up the land of Zion and promote its redemption. With anticipation and expectation of great spiritual blessing, the Saints listened as Joseph Smith taught them about the erection of a great and sacred temple wherein the Lord could reveal his will, endow his people with power, and make his abode. While the first temple was

²⁰ D&C 27:10; 86:8-10; 107:40-41; 132:30 and others. That Joseph Smith was a descendant and heir of the ancient prophet Joseph is taught in the Book of Mormon, 11 Nephi 3. Mormons believe that Church Patriarchs when bestowing blessings on the heads of worthy members are inspired to declare the lineage from which the member descended or to which he will be adopted. Most Caucasian members are declared to be descendants of Ephraim, the birthright son of Joseph.

²¹ Joseph Smith, discourse of June 11, 1845, HC 5:423; George A. Smith, discourse of March 18, 1855, JD 2:214; and D&C 63:22-27.

erected in Kirtland, the Saints anticipated the construction of a large temple complex in Independence, from which Christ would rule during the Millennium.²²

In addition to the gathering and the temple, another prerequisite of the perfect social order Mormons sought was the establishment of a communitarian economic system, referred to as the "law of consecration and stewardship." The Saints worthy to live in Zion were expected to acknowledge Christ as the Lord of the whole earth. This was done by consecrating (deeding) all their property to the local bishop. He, in turn, after appropriate counsel and agreement with the families involved, would give them a "stewardship." In the agrarian economy of the times, a stewardship was generally farm property, but occasionally it involved other business ventures as well. It was assumed that the rich would have more property than their needs required. The surplus of their consecration would be used in making up an adequate stewardship for the poorer consecratees. The system was apparently intended to produce more than greater economic equality. Church members were also supposed to develop Christlike characters, thereby producing and maintaining a perfect social order, while preparing themselves to become fit subjects of the kingdom.²³

²²The "plat" of the city of Zion with Smith's description of this temple complex is in *HC* 1:357-362.

²³Several revelations develop the doctrine. The most important are D&C 42, 44, 51, 70, 72, 82, and 104. An excellent explanation of the "law" and an assessment of its operation in Missouri is in Leonard J. Arrington, "Early Mormon Communitarianism: The Law of Consecration and Stewardship," *Western Humanities Review*, VII (Autumn, 1952), 341-369.

Conflict with their gentile neighbors in Independence boiled over in the summer heat of July, 1833. Violent opposition throughout the summer forced nearly 1,200 Mormons to leave Jackson County that fall. They went north across the Missouri River into the more sparsely settled counties of the state. The people of Clay County sympathized with the plight of these refugees at first, providing work and shelter for many of them.²⁴ The Mormons fully expected to be restored to their Jackson County lands. Over the next ten or fifteen years church leaders tried incessantly to regain possession of this property through petitions, litigation, congressional lobby, threat of militaristic invasion, and finally, direct appeal to the President of the United States. All the efforts failed. Mormon difficulties continued to fester in Missouri from 1833 until things finally broke out into open hostility again in 1838. The fall and winter of 1838-1839 saw nearly 12,000 Saints expelled from Missouri in the face of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs' threat of extermination.²⁵

²⁴The Missouri sojourn awaits its historian. To date the best studies are: B. H. Roberts, *The Missouri Persecutions*, most of which was incorporated into volume I of his *Comprehensive History*. The title warns in advance the emphasis of the study and suggests Roberts' bias. Over a dozen theses and dissertations have been written since 1919 concerning Mormonism in Missouri, only two of which are noteworthy as general studies. They are: Warren A. Jennings, "Zion is Fled: The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1962) and Leland Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965). A brighter outlook for the future is presaged by a plethora of periodical articles on the subject.

²⁵Boggs' order is in *HC* 3:175. Besides the works cited in note twenty-four the following assess the causes of conflict in Missouri: Richard L. Bushman, "Mormon Persecutions in Missouri in 1833," *BYU Studies*, III (Autumn, 1960), 11-20; Warren A. Jennings, "The Expulsion

Meanwhile, the kingdom prospered in Ohio.²⁶ By March of 1836, a temple was completed, and its dedication was in many ways the spiritual zenith for the Saints in the Prophet's lifetime.²⁷ During

of the Mormons from Jackson County Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXIV (October, 1969), 41-63; "Factors in the Destruction of the Mormon Press in Missouri, 1833," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXXV (Winter, 1967), 57-76; "The City in the Garden: Social Conflict in Jackson County, Missouri," in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, ed. by F. Mark McKiernan, Alan R. Blair and Paul M. Edwards (Lawrence, Kansas: Cornado Press, 1973), pp. 99-119; and R. J. Robertson, "The Mormon Experience in Missouri, 1830-1839; Parts I and II," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXVIII (April and July, 1974), 280-298, 398-415.

²⁶ Mormon historiography relating to Ohio is in much the same condition as that of New York and Missouri. Book length scholarly studies are few, but are bolstered by proliferating journal articles. The best lengthy studies are: Robert Kent Fielding, "The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1957), and Max H. Parkin, "The Nature and Cause of Internal and External Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio Between 1830-1838" (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966).

²⁷ The dedication commenced March 27, 1836. The Kirtland temple was the only one completed in Smith's lifetime and the only one in which he officiated for any length of time. The Nauvoo temple was only partially completed at his death. He was therefore forced to instruct faithful Church members about temple work in his store and other private residences in Nauvoo. Little evidence has come forth showing anywhere near the pervasiveness or regularity of spiritual experiences in Missouri and Nauvoo that prevailed among the Saints in Ohio. That the Kirtland temple was the locus of a great many spiritual manifestations can be seen in *HC* 2:410-440, in the accounts of Eliza R. Snow and Prescindia Huntington in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), pp. 100-101, 207-209 respectively; and the experiences of Wilford Woodruff, as found in Dean C. Jessee, "The Kirtland Diary of Wilford Woodruff," *BYU Studies*, XII (Summer, 1972), 365-399, especially pp. 372, 378, 380, 385-394. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery related a vision they jointly experienced of Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah in the temple April 3, 1836. In this vision Christ accepted the sacrifice made by the Saints in building his house and the three prophets conferred "keys" of authority relative to temple and missionary work upon both men. (D&C 110, and *HC* 2:435-436.)

this same time, Smith received numerous revelations which expanded upon church doctrine and government.²⁸ The notion of the kingdom grew as Smith took steps to stabilize the Church by placing it on firm organizational footings. Church government had previously been rather informal, but in Ohio Smith formalized and centralized it. He initially established the First Presidency of the Church in January of 1832. His position as Prophet was thus secured, for as President of the High Priesthood he had the right to preside over all priesthood holders in the Church. In February of 1835, he organized the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and two weeks later men were chosen to fill the office of Seventy--a special missionary calling. Steps were also taken to clarify the offices of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.²⁹ Moreover, the first international expansion of Mormonism came during the Kirtland period.³⁰

²⁸Of 136 sections in the present LDS Doctrine and Covenants 473 or 64 sections were recorded in Ohio from 1831 to 1837. (Earl E. Olson, "The Chronology of the Ohio Revelations," *BYU Studies*, XI [Summer, 1971], 329-349.)

²⁹These facts were synthesized from Michael Quinn's excellent study, "The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church," *Journal of Mormon History*, I (1974), 21-39. This is a revised form of chapter one of his Master's thesis, "Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1934: A Prosopographical Study" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1973).

³⁰The first foreign missions were to Canada and England. Of the English endeavor Joseph Smith recorded, ". . . God revealed to me that something new must be done for the salvation of His Church. And on or about the first of June, 1837, Heber C. Kimball, one of the Twelve, was set apart by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, prayer and laying on of hands, of the First Presidency, to preside over a mission to England, to be the first foreign mission of the Church of Christ in the last days." (HC 2:489.)

Ohio Mormonism did not prosper without problems similar to those in Missouri. Economic difficulties combined with internal dissension and persecution forced the Church to move its headquarters to Far West, Missouri in early 1838. Smith and other church leaders attempted to establish a banking facility to service the Church and its members. The precariousness of the economic situation, along with a lack of financial acumen, led the Saints into serious errors in the handling of the quasi-official "Kirtland Safety Society Ant banking Company." When Smith saw the financial ineptness and malpractices of the administrators of the bank, he warned the people and withdrew his support. This action and other problems related to the Panic of 1837 led to the collapse of the institution.³¹ The closing of the bank added fuel to an already-burning fire of internal dissension. Financial distress, unusual spiritual manifestations, charges of demagoguery against Smith, and squabbles among church leaders divided the people and led to what has become known among Mormon historians as the "great Kirtland apostasy." Thus internal strife and external persecution of the sect finally forced Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and others to flee to Missouri in January of 1838 to save themselves and their church.³²

³¹ No substantial study of the bank exists, but scholars have recognized its significance in the outcome of Mormonism's residence in Ohio. For example, see D. Paul Sampson and Larry T. Wimmer, "The Kirtland Safety Society: The Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure," *BYU Studies*, XII (Summer, 1972), 427-436; and Scott H. Partridge, "The Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society," *BYU Studies*, XII (Summer, 1972), 437-454.

³² This was January 12, 1838. (HC 3:1.)

A few months later, the nucleus of Mormonism was shifted to western Illinois. In the winter of 1838-1839, Brigham Young led a contingent of outcast Missouri Saints eastward across the Mississippi. Joseph Smith and several companions were then incarcerated in a small Missouri jail with the ironic name of Liberty.³³ Thus Young directed the removal from Zion and tried desperately to keep the Saints gathered. After losing their homes two or three times, some Mormons were more inclined to scatter than to resettle elsewhere. Debate in the highest councils of the Church was lively, but Smith and Young decided it was best to regather.³⁴

For a time, some church members settled in Quincy, Illinois, where their arrival was welcomed. Politically, the state was almost evenly divided between Whigs and Democrats. The party which could enlist Mormon favor would surely dominate the state. So the local Democratic Party in Quincy was among the first to actively court and assist the exiles. That spring controversy brewed as some Mormons were not prone to coquetry with the party which they blamed for their expulsion from Missouri. But the Prophet, by now out of prison,

³³Smith was taken prisoner October 31, 1838 at Far West and imprisoned at Liberty, Missouri November 30, 1838 after lengthy litigation and abuse by public officials. He and his companions were allowed to escape the evening of April 15, 1839. (HC 3:188-215,320.)

³⁴HC 3:283, 4. Though the Prophet apparently did not as yet have a specific location in mind he wrote from Liberty jail March 25, 1839, "No, brethren, I would suggest for the consideration of the conferences that our brethren scattered abroad, who understand the spirit of the gathering, that they fall into the places and refuge of safety that God shall open unto them, between Kirtland and Far West. Those from the east and from the west, and from the far countries, let them fall in some where between those two boundaries, in the most safe and quiet places they can find; and let this be the present understanding, until God shall open a more effectual door for us for further considerations." (HC 3:301.)

quickly squelched the criticism and accepted the offer of help.³⁵ Another factor favorable to a warm reception of the Saints was Illinois' debt, caused by years of depression, speculation, and disastrous overextension in internal improvements. Robert Flanders tells us "the chief hope for extricating Illinois from public bankruptcy and private ruin was the continuation of large-scale immigration into the state"--a panacea it was hoped the Mormons would provide.³⁶ At any rate, the Saints lived with the local citizens and around the countryside in any available quarters.

When released from jail, Smith was ready to begin anew. Several land speculators with holdings north of Quincy approached him with offers to sell unsettled areas. It was finally decided that the Mormons would relocate on a marshy protrusion of land which formed a "big bend" in the Mississippi River, thirty-five or forty miles upstream from Quincy and a few miles northeast of the Missouri-Iowa border. The center of their settlement was a village called Commerce. Joseph Smith renamed it Nauvoo, using a Hebrew word which

³⁵Robert B. Thompson complained to the First Presidency that Apostle Lyman Wight in several letters to the *Quincy Whig* denigrated the Democratic party and that his remarks were calculated to hinder the resettlement of the Saints in Illinois. In a kind letter Smith expressed confidence in Wight's "good intentions" but reminded him "to steer clear of making the Church appear as either supporting or opposing you in your politics lest such a course may have a tendency to bring about persecution on the Church. . . ." (HC 3:366-367. For Thompson's letter and the First Presidency's reply see HC 3:351-352, 363-364.)

³⁶Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 19.

he said meant "beautiful place."³⁷ Thus the thirty-five year old Prophet commenced to gather his people at Nauvoo--the city beautiful. The bright outlook of the spring of 1840 concealed the dark and gloomy clouds that were to rest over the city in the years to come. With enthusiasm and energy the Mormons cleared the swamp and erected what was to become one of the largest cities in Illinois. Soon it was a popular river port, benefitted by its propitious location at the head of the Des Moines rapids, which often forced river traffic to move overland.³⁸

The relative peace and seclusion of Nauvoo allowed Smith security and an opportunity to push his programs. He could resume his opposition to religious pluralism and his efforts to establish the kingdom of God. Perhaps Smith's own sense of impending doom helped to propel him forward in doctrinal innovation and organizational stabilization. Some Mormons soon thought that their faith was undergoing such significant doctrinal changes that it was no longer

³⁷HC 4:121.

³⁸This is perhaps the best researched period of pre-Utah Mormonism and yet only the surface has been scratched. Flander's work is the only published book length interpretation. But he was hindered because he did not have access to the wealth of primary source material in the Mormon Church archives in Salt Lake City. B. H. Roberts did have access to Church records when he wrote his *Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* which later became volume II of his *Comprehensive History*, but he was not trained in modern interpretative historical methodology. Two other books suffer from these same two deficiencies and are authored by less able historians. They are: E. Cecil McGavin, *Nauvoo the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1946); and David E. and Della S. Miller, *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1974). Like the New York, Missouri, and Ohio periods, however, Nauvoo has also received extensive treatment in periodical articles.

recognizable. For Smith, though, Nauvoo became the "kingdom on the Mississippi."

The idea of the kingdom, foreshadowed by the Book of Mormon and begun in Kirtland, received both theological and procedural enlargement in Nauvoo. These amplifications were achieved through a tightening of church government, increased organizational efficiency, and the spelling out of doctrinal themes.

Joseph Smith's new teachings at Nauvoo concerning the plurality of Gods and the destiny of man challenged the thinking of the Saints. The kingdom was to be patriarchal in nature. Smith taught his people that God was an exalted man, that mortal experience was the testing ground and apprenticeship for men to begin their own progress toward exalted Godhood. Sometime in the future each father would preside over his own kingdom, populated by his own immediate family. The family thus came to be looked upon as the most important unit of the Church. Salvation was identified with the husband whose wife and children were sealed to him for eternity. The highest realms of celestial glory were unattainable for the unmarried.³⁹ Children were the crowning glory of a man and his wife; they were the foundation upon which his own kingdom would be built.

The importance of the family in the process of salvation was underscored by Smith's expansion of the temple doctrine. Another temple was started, and the Prophet issued new statements regarding

³⁹See the King Follett Sermon cited in note twelve above and D&C 132. Much of the systematic development of these ideas came in Utah but the core concepts are obviously present in these statements.

its purpose and use.⁴⁰ Proxy ordinance work for dead ancestors was initiated with the practice of baptism for the dead in the Mississippi River in 1840.⁴¹ Smith taught his people that they not only had spiritual obligations towards their own immediate family and their future posterity, but that they also must show concern for their dead ancestors who lived in the dark ages of apostasy. The "restoration" of the gospel was made available to them through proxy baptism. Soon this idea was broadened beyond baptism to include all ordinances Mormons considered necessary for salvation.⁴² Finally, Smith taught that men should have their wives and children sealed to them by the priesthood for all eternity. Through these doctrines, Mormons saw themselves forging, one by one, through proxy work for the dead, links in an almost endless chain of family ties back to Adam.⁴³

It was in Nauvoo that plural marriage was first practiced in earnestness. The doctrine is not unrelated to the principles of family exaltation and the building of the kingdom of God. In fact, the idea

⁴⁰D&C 124, 128, 131, and 132.

⁴¹The doctrine was apparently first taught at the funeral of Seymour Brunson, August 15, 1840, and the first baptism was performed on this date. The details are recorded in Andrus, *op. cit.*, pp. 483-484.

⁴²This means all the ordinances presently performed in the temples. They include ordinations to the priesthood, marriages, sealings and a special ceremony of instruction and covenant known as the "endowment." Of it Brigham Young said, "Your *endowment* is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your exaltation in spite of earth and hell." (Discourse of April 6, 1853, *JD* 2:31. Italics in the original.)

⁴³D&C 128:17-18.

of the kingdom in Mormon thought gave a significance and meaning to plural marriage which is unrecognizable without it. Plural marriage expedited the establishing of a growing interrelationship, through intermarriage, among church leaders. As Michael Quinn has pointed out, Smith's emphasis on "lineage" as a requisite of church leadership led him to establish a sort of hierarchical/dynasty in the church's presiding quorums. Plural marriage played a vital role in binding Mormon leaders together with Smith's family.⁴⁴ Plural marriage was also viewed as a method of allowing a man to increase the size of his own dominion in eternity. Ideally, his wives would become the mothers of myriad spirit children, conceived and reared in celestial realms in the hereafter. These children would one day be given a chance to prove themselves in mortal experience and to progress to the status of Godhood. In the heirarchy of Gods, however, these sons and their families would be responsible to and subject to their father.⁴⁵

One of the final acts of Smith's life in preparation for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth was the creation of a special governing council of approximately fifty men. These leaders came to be called "the council of fifty" or the "political kingdom of God." The factual detail about the organization of this body and its purpose has only recently come to light through the investigations of

⁴⁴Quinn, "Organizational Development...." pp. 125-176.

⁴⁵D&C 132:19-20.

James Clark, Keith Melville, Hyrum Andrus, and Klaus Hansen.⁴⁶ From their research it appears that the "council of fifty" was the Prophet's idea of the beginnings of a world governing body. Smith and others taught that the priesthood was the only legitimate authority on earth,⁴⁷ politically as well as ecclesiastically. Therefore, the Prophet, as God's agent, was the only rightful ruler of political governments in the absence of Jesus Christ. He was to be the theocratic head of the new kingdom, and the council was to be the governing body.

This temporal organization was begun on March 11, 1844,⁴⁸ three months before Joseph Smith and his brother were killed. Slightly less than two years later the Saints were again on the road to a new home. Again internal dissension had coalesced with external pressure to force open confrontation between the Mormons and their neighbors as it had done in Missouri and to some extent in Ohio. Mormon political involvement stirred up outsiders. But the gentiles were bothered by other things too. The totality of the Mormon conception of the kingdom--its doctrines and practices, its exclusiveness and

⁴⁶James R. Clark, "The Kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty and the State of Deseret," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXVI (April, 1958), 130-148; J. Keith Melville, "Brigham Young's Ideal Society: The Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies*, V (1963), 3-18; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith and World Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1958); and Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967).

⁴⁷Smith's idea on the legitimacy of authority helps explain some of his actions in the practice of plural marriage. See chaps. iii-v.

⁴⁸HC 6:260-261. See also Hansen, *op. cit.*, chap. ii.

anti-pluralism--appeared to the outsider to be un-American and unacceptable.⁴⁹

Internally there was schism in the Church in the spring of 1844. There was an open break by a few vociferous opponents of Smith's new measures. They purchased a press and printed one issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, designed as the name indicates, to expose the problems, evils, and corruption of the Church in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith, the community's mayor, convened a city council meeting which after arduous debate declared the *Expositor* a public nuisance. The press was ordered destroyed, and the order was carried out on June 10, 1844. The owners of the press, who included three sets of brothers, immediately joined forces with anti-Mormon parties in Warsaw and Carthage, Illinois. After debate and delay, Smith finally submitted to arrest and was taken to Carthage for trial. There he was imprisoned by Governor Thomas Ford for his own protection. On the sweltering afternoon of June 27, 1844, while the governor was absent from the city, an irate mob, with painted faces, stormed the jail and assassinated Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Another companion, John Taylor was severely wounded, but a fourth man, Willard Richards, remained unharmed.⁵⁰

For the next eighteen months or so the Saints remained in Nauvoo. However, external persecution became so great that Brigham Young presently led the Mormons on their final journey beyond the

⁴⁹See n. 10 above.

⁵⁰Detail and documentation of these events will be given in a subsequent chapter.

existing boundaries of the United States. He crossed the river heading west in February of 1846. In the following years, approximately fifteen to twenty thousand Mormons from Illinois and the eastern states took to the trail across the Plains to settle in the shadow of the Wasatch Range of the Rockies, where they could continue Smith's efforts to build the kingdom of God on earth.

CHAPTER III

NEW YORK AND OHIO ORIGINS OF MORMON PLURAL MARRIAGE

Boston brahmin Josiah Quincy considered Joseph Smith a "phenomenon" who required an explanation. But after a brief attempt he concluded, "If the reader does not know just what to make of Joseph Smith, I cannot help him out of the difficulty. I myself stand helpless before the puzzle."¹ Another non-Mormon historian, Jan Shipps, recently entitled an essay about Smith "The Prophet Puzzle."² Even Mormon biographers have found this innovative religious leader a man of enigmatic intellectual and spiritual qualities and a paradoxical subject. He was untutored, yet learned individuals such as Sidney Rigdon, Orson Pratt, and Brigham Young were overawed by him. He was semi-literate, yet millions eventually accepted as scripture a book

¹ Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1884), p. 400. Quincy visited Nauvoo in April of 1844 with Charles Francis Adams. The complete account of the visit is found in pages 376-400. For the Adams view see, Henry Adams, Jr., "Charles Francis Adams Visits the Mormons in 1844," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LXVIII (October, 1844-May, 1947), 267-300.

² Jan Shipps, "The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," *Journal of Mormon History*, I. (1974), 3-20. For an example of the enigma less favorable authors have found themselves in see, Samuel Smucker, *History of the Mormons* (Philadelphia: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1856), pp. 181-183.

he wrote before he was twenty-five. The favorite non-Mormon explanations of Smith's religious thought have stressed his unscrupulousness, clairvoyancy, mental illness, self-deception, and misused genius.³ The Saints, however, have consistently attributed his ideas to divine revelation.

The investigator of the beginnings of plural marriage and the ideology surrounding it must cope with similar difficulties. How can one determine why a New England farm boy, reared in "puritan" or "victorian" surroundings, became the architect of an alternative marriage form that eventually set the nation's teeth on edge? Endless hours could be spent seeking the causes of Smith's psycho-sexual development or the reasons for his mind-set, mysticism, eclecticism, and revelations. But such endeavors would result in little more than speculation.

Fawn Brodie and Kimball Young have illustrated the deficiency of the psychological approach to the Prophet's teachings. They have, as Mario DePillis has perceptively noted of many others, failed to take Smith seriously as a theologian.⁴ Brodie and Young came to the same conclusion--that Joseph Smith was a "parapath," or one who cannot

³Brodie's opus has become the standard interpretation and is a mixture of several of these. Smith is described as a blundering fraud that came to believe his own lies. His natural near-genius allowed him to eclectically assimilate the religious issues of his region. Another evaluation similar to this latter view was propounded by Alexander Campbell in one of the first anti-Mormon pamphlets. (*Delusion: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* [New York: E. H. Green & Co., 1832].)

⁴N. 1, chap. ii.

distinguish fact from fancy.⁵ From this premise it was easy for Young to conclude that polygamy may have been "announced as a rationalization for Smith's own infidelities."⁶ Brodie agreed that the Prophet "erected a stupendous theological edifice to support his new theories on marriage," having "too much of the Puritan in him" to permit indiscriminate, promiscuous relationships without some religious justification.⁷ Assuredly, rumors of sexual misconduct blemished Smith's reputation and stalked him throughout life. He also experienced some dissatisfaction in married life. But substantiation of such rumors is difficult, and his marital problems apparently resulted from the practice of plural marriage rather than vice versa.

To characterize Smith as a parapath and dismiss the "stupendous theological edifice" of Mormonism as merely countermeasures for the expression of sexual passion, is to underestimate the genuine religious motivation of both the Prophet and his followers. Smith's earliest statements on marriage were consistent with the general developmental pattern of Mormon theology, and they were clearly made in a "prophetic context."⁸ His ideas on marriage had a relevance and

⁵Kimball Young, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

⁸Marvin Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*," *Church History*, XLIII (March, 1974), 94. He noted that none of the earliest anti-Mormon writers such as Obediah Dogberry and E. D. Howe charged Smith with immorality, moreover, "rather than being an evidence of cynicism and religious insincerity, polygamy may provide further proof of Smith's early and complete absorption in his prophetic role."

unity within Mormonism that indicated a mind operating above passionate capriciousness.

This chapter seeks to take Joseph Smith's religious thinking seriously and will stress three main themes. First, an effort will be made to show that much of the ideological framework of Mormon polygyny had emerged in Joseph Smith's thinking before the end of 1831. Nearly all the evidence on the origins of his revelations on the subject point to this early date. Moreover, an assessment of post-1831 events seems to substantiate this hypothesis. Second, attention will be given to the growth and development of Mormon doctrines in Kirtland which reveal the religious motivations behind Smith's views on marital forms, family importance, and sex roles. Finally, it will be suggested that theological and practical occurrences in Ohio foreshadowed events in Nauvoo.

Events in New York

Even before he left New York, Joseph Smith's reputation was sullied by rumors of untoward conduct with his female companions. Circumstances of the young Prophet's "moneydigging" and his first marriage by elopement have not gone unnoticed among critics who have looked for the antecedents of his later attitudes toward polygyny. In the fall of 1825, according to his own narrative, the nineteen-year-old Prophet left Palmyra, New York in the employment of Josiah Stowell.⁹ He was to assist Stowell in digging for a silver mine in Susquehanna

⁹HC 1:16-17. The Prophet spelled the name Stowel, but the correct spelling is probably Stowell. (See Porter, *op. cit.*, p. 122 note 32; and pp. 121-128 for the account of his labors with Stowell.)

County, Pennsylvania. He first met the attractive and eligible Emma Hale while boarding with her family in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Before digging ceased for the winter a romance had developed between them.

The next fall Smith again visited the area. Prior to leaving Palmyra he informed his mother of his decision to propose marriage to Emma. The family was so "pleased with his choice" that they encouraged him to bring her to their home to live.¹⁰ At the conclusion of the mining operations that year, Smith asked Isaac Hale for Emma's hand in marriage. Hale turned him away, stating that young Smith was an outsider who "followed a business I could not approve of."¹¹ Whether the "business" Hale objected to was Smith's mining or his religious thinking is not clear, but the Prophet thought the latter was Hale's greatest concern.¹²

Accounts of the elopement differ. Hale said it was in his absence that the young man returned and "carried off" his daughter.¹³ However, Emma told her son that it was during her visit to Chenango County, New York that Joseph importuned her to marry him. She had not

¹⁰Lucy Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 93. The family was very favorable to their son's marital plans and we have no reason to think otherwise. But it must be remembered that these are reminiscences and were likely written with the memory of the vocal opposition to the marriage by Emma's parents. For an evaluation of the accuracy and worth of Mrs. Smith's account see, Richard L. Anderson, "The Reliability of the Early History of Lucy and Joseph Smith," *Dialogue*, IV (Summer, 1969), 13-28.

¹¹Isaac Hale Statement from *The Susquehanna Register* (Montrose, Pennsylvania), May 1, 1834 as quoted in Porter, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-187.

¹²HC 1:17

¹³Porter, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

made her trip with matrimonial intentions, but preferring him "to any other man" despite her father's bitter opposition, she consented to the elopement.¹⁴ Hale may have been somewhat over-protective, for his daughter was twenty-two, a year older than Smith. Nevertheless, the Hale family never completely reconciled themselves to the young Prophet as a son-in-law.

Other difficulties carried over from the operations in the eastern borderlands of Pennsylvania and New York. In 1830, shortly after the organization of the Church, the Prophet visited friends in Colesville, in Broome County, New York. Townspeople soon opposed his successful proselytizing efforts there. On a Saturday, late in June, Smith and two companions built a small dam in a stream, intending to baptize several converts the next day. Opponents destroyed the dam that night, postponing the services until Monday. After Oliver Cowdery had baptized several people near the reconstructed dam, confirmation services were scheduled for that evening. But the proceedings were again interrupted when Smith was arrested, charged with being a "disorderly person," and whisked off to South Bainbridge in Chenango County.

Smith stood trial on Thursday, July 1, 1830.¹⁵ He recalled of this episode that "a great excitement prevailed on account of the

¹⁴*The Saints Herald* (Plano, Illinois), October 1, 1879 as quoted in Porter, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹⁵This episode is detailed in *HC* 1:81-96. The trial is confirmed by an account found in an article entitled "Mormonites" in the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, April 9, 1831, p. 120. An original of this is housed in the Meadville Theological Seminary, University of Chicago. A photocopy was provided to me by the Reverend

scandalous falsehoods which had been circulated."¹⁶ The nature of the charges was apparent in the fact that two of Stowell's daughters were subpoenaed to testify about the Prophet's conduct towards them "both in public and private." Smith subsequently declared that the women "bore such testimony in my favor as left my enemies without a pretext on their account."¹⁷ According to his attorney, John Reid, who spoke in 1844, "Not one blemish nor spot was found against his character; . . . notwithstanding the mighty efforts that were made to convict him of a crime by his vigilant persecutors." Thus, in Reid's opinion, Smith's character remained "unstained even by the appearance of guilt."¹⁸

These difficulties and charges were to haunt Joseph Smith in later years. His opponents were disposed to see them as evidence of

Wesley P. Walters. Walters has discovered the bills submitted by the constable Ebenezer Hatch who arrested Joseph Smith and Justice Joseph Chamberlin who tried the case. (Wesley P. Walters, "Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N. Y. Court Trials," *The Westminster Theological Journal*, XXXVI Winter, 1974, 123-155.) The charge of being a "disorderly person" is confirmed in HC 1:88, and the bill submitted by Justice Chamberlin. The same bill confirms the date of the trial. Smith's account condenses events following his arrest on Monday evening and makes it appear that the trial commenced on Tuesday or possibly Wednesday. However, the constable's bill itemizes a \$2.00 charge for "keeping him twenty-four hours." This probably refers to lodging after the arrival in Bainbridge. Some time would also be required to subpoena ten witnesses. Therefore, the Thursday trial date is not unrealistic and is probably correct.

¹⁶ HC 1:89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91. The account in the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* does not mention these women as witnesses, but Justice Chamberlin's bill charged 72¢ for swearing twelve witnesses, ten of which required subpoenas. (Walters, "Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials," p. 125.)

¹⁸ T&S, 5:550. Reid gave this information in a public speech at Nauvoo, Illinois May 17, 1844.

unbridled passion and an unprincipled character, as explanations of his ensuing behavior and teachings. Yet Smith's elopement may tell us only that he experienced difficulties with his in-laws similar to those encountered by countless others. Moreover, there is no solid evidence that Smith was guilty of sexual misconduct. Therefore the Mormon Church regards these early accusations as harrassment and slander. At any rate, such involvements probably made the Prophet aware of the sensitivity of marital matters, influencing him to act with caution and secrecy in this area in Ohio.

Theories of the Origin of the Revelations On Plural Marriage

Smith and his followers arrived in Ohio in 1831 under propitious circumstances and with sanguine expectations. Previously twenty-three-year-old Parley P. Pratt, Mormon neophyte and ex-Reformed Baptist minister, had led the "first Lamanite mission" to outstanding success among Campbellite "restorationists" in Northeastern Ohio. Pratt had gone from the Western Reserve into upstate New York and had there encountered Mormonism and its prophet. Favorably impressed with Smith, he had been baptized in Seneca Lake on September 1, 1830. Soon thereafter, Smith sent him on the missionary tour to the Indians. It was Pratt who encouraged the missionaries to visit Kirtland, Ohio, his previous home. He was eager to share the message of Mormonism with Sidney Rigdon, his former friend and mentor, and one of the early leaders in the Campbellite movement. Here among the followers of Alexander Campbell, these missionaries enjoyed the greatest success of their entire journey. A few weeks of vigorous

preaching netted over a hundred souls--including Rigdon.¹⁹

Ohio now challenged New York for its leadership in providing Mormon converts. Soon Joseph Smith received a divine directive designating Kirtland as the new Church headquarters.²⁰ Smith moved to Ohio in February of 1831; the rest of the New York Saints followed in the spring. In Kirtland the Smiths lived with the Newell K. Whitney family. Whitney was a prominent merchant, and a recent Mormon convert.²¹ Following a summer journey to Independence, Missouri, the Prophet moved his family thirty miles south of Kirtland to Hiram, Ohio. There they were welcomed into the home of John Johnson.²²

Part of Smith's optimism about the future in these early days is reflected in the fact that of the sixty-four revelations he

¹⁹Pratt's personal account of this missionary journey is found in Parley P. Pratt ed., *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938), pp. 47-62. The best studies of the success of this early preaching in Ohio are assessed in Milton V. Backman, Jr., "The Quest for a Restoration: The Birth of Mormonism in Ohio," *BYU Studies*, XII (Summer, 1972), 346-364 and Richard L. Anderson, "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *BYU Studies*, XI (Summer, 1971), 474-496. An excellent study of the episode focusing on the Mormon-Indian Relations is, Warren A. Jennings, "The First Mormon Mission to the Indians," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXXVII (Autumn, 1971), 288-299. *

²⁰D&C 37; 38:32-33.

²¹Newel K. Whitney was appointed by revelation as Bishop of Kirtland and the eastern branches on December 4, 1831. (See D&C 72:8.) He remained faithful to the Church until his death in Utah, September 23, 1850. Whitney was a close confidant of the Prophet during these early years and the family was among the first to become associated with Joseph Smith in the teaching and practice of plural marriage in Nauvoo. (See below page 121, and Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, I [Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901], 222-227, [hereafter cited *Biographical Encyclopedia*].)

²²HC 1:215. Smith said the move was made September 12, 1831.

received in seven years in Ohio, twenty-eight, or forty percent, came in 1831 and more than half (36) by the time his stay in Hiram ended in April of 1832. The year 1831 led all others in the number of revelations received in Smith's lifetime. And, if sheer numbers are any indication, that year saw some of the most profound doctrinal developments in the Church's history.²³

Noting this rapid doctrinal development, most authorities indicate that Smith also had revelations on plural marriage at this time. Lyman Johnson told his missionary companion, Orson Pratt, that "Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831 that plural marriage was a correct principle," but had said it was not yet time to teach and practice it.²⁴ George Q. Cannon said Smith learned "in an early day" that "it was to obey God's will" that the ancients had plural wives "and he probably learned, also, that His servants in those [Kirtland]

²³This material is condensed from a chart containing pertinent data on the Ohio revelations found in Earl Olsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 332-333 and his own comments on page 329. These figures do not include at least six revelations given in Missouri during the summer journey. They are Sections 57-62 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

²⁴*Latter-day Saint Millennial Star* [Liverpool, England] XL, (December, 16, 1874), 788. This periodical appeared under various titles but is commonly referred to as the *Millennial Star* and will hereafter be cited *MS*. On another occasion Pratt said "I will tell you what the Prophet Joseph Smith said in relation to this matter in 1831, also in 1832, the year in which the law commanding the members of this Church to cleave to one wife only was given. Joseph was then living in Portage county, in the town of Hiram, at the house of Father John Johnson. Joseph was very intimate with that family, and they were good people at that time, and enjoyed much of the Spirit of the Lord. In the fore part of the year 1832, Joseph told individuals, then in the Church, that he had inquired of the Lord concerning the principle of plurality of wives, and he received for answer that the principle of taking more wives than one is a true principle, but the time had not yet come for it to be practiced. That was before the Church was two years old." (Orson Pratt, discourse of October 7, 1869, *JD*, 13:193.)

days would be commanded to carry out this principle."²⁵

President Joseph F. Smith,²⁶ nephew of the Prophet, made an interesting claim relative to his uncle's understanding at that time. In 1882 he spoke at the funeral services of Elizabeth Ann Whitney, the daughter of Newel Whitney and plural wife of Joseph Smith. His remarks were misquoted by a local reporter. So the next day in a letter addressed to the editor of the *Deseret News* he made the following clarification:

What I did say was to the effect that when the Prophet Joseph Smith received the revelation in relation to the eternity of the marriage covenant, which includes plural marriage, in 1831; the Lord showed him those women who were to engage with him in the establishment of that principle in the Church, and at that time some of these women were named and given to him, to become his wives when the time should come that this principle would be established.²⁷

²⁵George Q. Cannon, "History of the Church," *Juvenile Instructor*, XVI (September 15, 1881), 206. This was an ongoing series by Cannon. Sarah M. Kimball said she was taught by Smith in 1842. "He said in teaching this he realized that he jeopardized his life; but God had revealed it to him many years before as a privilege with a blessing, now God had revealed it again and instructed him to teach it with commandment as the Church could travel (progress) no farther without the introduction of this principle." (Augusta J. Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret, A Book of Biographical Sketches, To Accompany the Pictures of the Same Title* [Salt Lake City: J. C. Graham & Co., 1884], p. 26.)

²⁶Joseph F. Smith was born November 13, 1838 at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri to Hyrum Smith and Mary Fielding Smith. He was ordained an apostle July 1, 1866 by Brigham Young and became the sixth president of the Church October 17, 1901 where he served until his death on November 19, 1918. (Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:66-76.) The only full length biography is by a son. (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938].)

²⁷*Deseret Evening News* [Salt Lake City, Utah], February 18, 1882. See the February 17, 1882 issue for the reporter's remarks. Some credence to the idea that Smith had some women in mind who could

president Smith was only six years old when his father and uncle were killed. Therefore, given his age and the secrecy with which the doctrine was originally taught, it is unlikely that he knew of this vision firsthand. Nevertheless, his claim about the early origin of plural marriage is supported by two manuscripts, revelatory in nature, which have historical connections to the year 1831 or before. The first is the revelation known as Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. The second is a report by William W. Phelps to Brigham Young of a revelation Joseph Smith received in the summer of 1831.

The vision Joseph F. Smith spoke of and these two texts did not not emanate from the same historical situation or experience. Indeed, they were never part of the same manuscript. Internal evidence shows that the occasion of their writing was different. They also differ in content, purpose, and autography.²⁸ This conclusion is bolstered by those who said that Smith had more than one revelation on the subject.²⁹ Moreover, evidence in Section 132 indicates it was

initiate the practice with him is found in the statement of Mary Lightner, a self-proclaimed wife of Smith. In 1905 she said, "I am the first being that the revelation was given to him for [,] and I was one thousand miles away in Missouri for we went up to Jackson County in '41." The date should be 1831. Jackson County had been vacated of Mormons in 1833. (Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, "Remarks," April 14, 1905. Original manuscript in the Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.) In an affidavit sworn in 1902 she said Smith was told to marry her in 1834. She was then 1000 miles away. (Lightner, affidavit, quoted in Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 444.)

²⁸The extant documents are in different handwriting--Kingsbury and Phelps--although both are attributed to Smith's inspiration. He commonly employed scribes. His own handwriting and spelling were quite poor.

²⁹For example Benjamin F. Johnson said: "I will Say That the Revilation [sic.] to the Church at Nauvoo July 12th 1843 on the Eternity

probably a compilation of at least two separate directives.

The Origin of the 1843 Document

Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants was originally recorded on July 12, 1843 by William Clayton. Shortly thereafter Joseph C. Kingsbury made a second copy. Clayton's copy was destroyed under circumstances which will be detailed later in this study. Thus the Kingsbury manuscript became the source for the published version of the revelation.³⁰ It appears that part of it may have originated as early as 1831.

of the Marriage Covenant and Law of plural marriage was not the first Revelation [sic.] of that Law." (Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, 1903. Original in the LDS Church Archives.) I have retained the spelling and punctuation of Johnson throughout the quotes used in this chapter. The author is indebted to Dean Zimmerman, an employee of the LDS Department of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion for his help with this important sixty-four page letter. It has a long history and has been poorly reproduced several times from like quality copies. Mr. Zimmerman has identified the original letter and painstakingly made a verbatim typed copy to which he has appended a short history of the letter. He anticipates publication of his work but in the meantime has graciously provided me with a working copy. George F. Gibbs was secretary to the First Presidency of the Church and Johnson was an acquaintance of Joseph Smith in Nauvoo and Kirtland. The letter is obviously an answer to Gibbs' inquiry for information about Smith from a personal acquaintance. In May of 1886 Joseph F. Smith published several affidavits and statements of those who testified that Joseph Smith taught and practiced plural marriage. In his introduction he said, "the law remained unwritten and was practiced only by the faithful. When it was recorded in 1843 only a portion of the revelation was written. . . ." (*Deseret News* [Salt Lake City, Utah], May 20, 1886.)

³⁰ The details of the writing and subsequent history of these manuscripts will be considered in chap. v. A complete copy of Section 132 is in appendix B.

The text consists of a little over six pages in the present Doctrine and Covenants and is divided into sixty-six verses. It appears to be separated into two nearly equal divisions, each of which is introduced by a question. The first section is thirty-nine verses long. It answers the Prophet's question as to why the Lord justified "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David, and Solomon, my servants," in having "many wives and concubines."³¹ Verse forty-one implies that a second question was asked concerning adultery, and the remaining verses deal with matters related to it.

What impelled Smith to make such inquiries? And when did they occur? The answer to these questions can be found in the case of many of his revelations by examining the background and situation in which they occur in his *History*.³² This is only partially true for the 1843 document. The *History* merely records that the revelation was "received" in the presence of Hyrum Smith and William Clayton. After it was written, "Hyrum took the revelation and read it to Emma."³³ The reading of the revelation to Emma provides a key which may explain at least part of what is contained in the text. The latter portion answering the question about adultery also contains seven verses spoken directly to Emma Smith. In them she is commanded "to receive all those [wives] that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and

³¹D&C 132:1

³²See for example, HC 1:18-31 which details the events surrounding the reception of Sections 3, 10, 4, and 5.

³³HC 5:500, 501, 5-7.

who are virtuous and pure before me."³⁴ Smith is known to have had only one plural wife in Ohio, but he was married several times before July 12, 1843. Therefore, the past tense plural form of "those who have been given," places this portion of the record in the 1843 setting.³⁵

Smith's associates, however, asserted that the initial question about the patriarchs was asked sometime between 1829 and 1831. This was compatible with the historical situation. In the 1843 setting there were few directly observable reasons for Smith to inquire about the patriarchs. However, from 1829 to 1831 conditions existed which may have stimulated Smith to make the inquiry.

According to Joseph B. Noble, the doctrine was "revealed to him while he was engaged in the work of translation of the Scriptures."³⁶ During the course of his life, Smith "translated" three sets of records. The first was the Book of Mormon, completed between 1827 and 1829. In 1830 he was also commanded to make a revision, or translation, as he called it, of the Bible.³⁷ The third set of records were

³⁴D&C 132:52. Verses 51-56 are directed specifically to Emma Smith.

³⁵Details of his plural wives will be given in chap. iv and v. The conditions prevalent in 1843 will be treated in more detail on pages 157 ff.

³⁶This is from the minutes of the Davis Stake Conference published under the title "Plural Marriage," in MS 16:454.

³⁷The word "translated" must be used somewhat advisedly in all three cases because of the unique claim of inspiration which was involved in the process. The work on the Bible is even less of a translation because Smith had no original manuscripts, but worked from an English text of the King James Version. Therefore, LDS scholars are prone to consider this a revision rather than a translation process although his revelations use the word translation.

some papyri found with Egyptian mummies in the catacombs near Thebes on the Nile. They came into the possession of the Church in 1835. Subsequently, he translated and published these as the records of Abraham.³⁸ Smith's contemporaries posit three possible theories which link his question about the activities of the patriarchs with each of these endeavors.

The least likely of the three comes from T. B. H. Stenhouse, prominent Salt Lake City resident and one-time Mormon. He recalled that William W. Phelps said in 1862 that the "Prophet became impressed with the idea that polygamy would yet become an institution of the Mormon Church," while translating the Book of Abraham.³⁹

The Stenhouse-Phelps thesis is unacceptable for several reasons. First, as is being shown, most reliable witnesses--including Phelps--point to the 1831 date as correct. Since the papyrus did not come into Smith's hands until 1835, they could not have initiated his question.

Secondly, Stenhouse was obviously unaware of the absence of any relevance between the Book of Abraham and the first paragraph of Section 132. He claimed that the "introduction of polygamy" was "such more correctly traceable to those Egyptian mummies than to a revelation" because "the first paragraph of the Revelation has all the musty odour of the catacombs about it."⁴⁰ The only possible

³⁸ The second book in the Pearl of Great Price known as the Book of Abraham.

³⁹ T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), p. 182.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

"musty odour of the catacombs" in paragraph one of Section 132 is the name of Abraham and other ancient prophets. And there is no mention of Abraham's plural wives in the Book of Abraham, therefore, it would provide little prospect of provoking a question on the matter.

Finally, Stenhouse said that Brigham Young was present at Phelps' speech and was "much annoyed" by his statements. "But," stated Stenhouse, "it is highly probable that it was the real secret" which Phelps then divulged.⁴¹ The inference is that Young and others were telling another story to conceal the truth. If Stenhouse is accurate, a more likely reason for Young's anger may have been the fact that a year before the speech he received a letter from Phelps reporting a revelation on plural marriage given to Joseph Smith in the year of 1831.⁴² Either Phelps was confused, forgetful, deliberately creating contention, or else the story is a fabrication.⁴³

Brigham Young is the only person reported to have said that the revelation on plural marriage came while Smith was translating the Book of Mormon. Charles Walker, in a diary account, gave a synopsis of Young's sermon delivered on July 26, 1872. Young reportedly said "that while Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon they had a revelation that the order of Patriarchal

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See pp. 68 ff.

⁴³ Stenhouse's own bitter experience with Mormonism and his wife's opposition to plural marriage may have caused him to project his frustrations and difficulties back on the Church. (See, Ronald W. Walker, "The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image," *Journal of Mormon History*, 1 [1974], 51-72.)

marriage and the Sealing was right."⁴⁴ We are not told whether this "revelation" was Section 132 or not. However, it is possible that the translation of the Book of Mormon may have been the catalyst for it.

The most explicit passage therein relating to plural marriage is a sanction against the ancient peoples who were justifying their "whoredoms because of the things which were written concerning David and Solomon his son."⁴⁵ The ambiguity of the passages following this condemnation may have created a question in Smith's mind. They explain that the Lord considered it "abominable" that David and Solomon had "many wives and concubines," and exhorted the people to chastity and monogamy. Then verse thirty contains the following qualifications: "For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people: otherwise they shall harken unto these things."⁴⁶ Thus the Book of Mormon here appears to teach that, with God's approval, other than monogamous marriages might be performed. Certainly, if Smith and Cowdery contemplated these passages (as we know they were prone to do),⁴⁷ there is a possibility they would have sought

⁴⁴ Charles L. Walker, Diary, 1855-1902, excerpts typed by Brigham Young University Library 1969, July 26, [1872], pp. 25-26. Original located in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁴⁵ Jacob 2:23.

⁴⁶ Jacob 2:30

⁴⁷ HC 1:35, 36, 39, 40, 52, where questions were raised about the fate of John the Apostle, baptism, and witnesses to the Book of Mormon, respectively.

clarification of this proviso in verse thirty in light of the previous condemnations.⁴⁸

Young's report also harmonizes with Church doctrine which holds that witnesses are required to validate special events. He said that Oliver Cowdery was with Smith when plural marriage was revealed and that both men received "keys," or authorization from God, to practice the principle. This is consistent with Smith's reports of other occasions when keys were bestowed. Cowdery was with Smith when angelic messengers revealed the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829 as well as when Moses, Elias, and Elijah brought their keys to the Kirtland temple in 1836. Furthermore, Cowdery was elevated to the office of "Assistant President" of the Church in 1834, a calling which came in part because he had been the "second elder" and a witness to these significant events.⁴⁹

The Walker-Young theory, however, fails to explain the references to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Section 132. The passages of the Book of Mormon considered do not refer to the marital status of these patriarchs. Therefore, in order to validate the hypothesis, we must assume that Smith and Cowdery relied on their own general

⁴⁸ This may be particularly true if they searched the things "written" concerning David and Solomon in the Bible. Several passages appear to sanction plural marriage. For example in II Samuel 12:8, Nathan tells David, "And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives unto thy bosom. . . ."

⁴⁹ For an assessment of this office and its theological importance see, Robert Glen Mouritsen, "The Office of Associate President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

biblical knowledge to include the patriarchs in the question as stated in verse one.⁵⁰

The hypothesis most widely accepted in the Church was suggested by Brigham H. Roberts in his introductory essay to volume five of Smith's *History of the Church*. He argued that the Prophet's revision of the Old Testament in 1831 was the springboard for Smith's question. "He was doubtless struck with the favor in which the Lord held the several Bible Patriarchs of the period, notwithstanding they had a plurality of wives. What more natural than that he should inquire of the Lord at that time."⁵¹

Robert Matthews buttressed Roberts' argument in his definitive study of the revision.⁵² Although it was started in New York, the

⁵⁰There is an additional difficulty. Mary Lightner claimed that Smith resisted the doctrine because "in the Book of Mormon it was an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, and they were to adhere to these things except the Lord speak." (Lightner, "Remarks.")

⁵¹*HC* 5:xxix, Hubert Howe Bancroft in 1889 wrote, "It is said that as early as 1831 the will of the Lord in this respect has been revealed to Joseph. In translating the Bible he had come upon the passages relating to plural wives and concubines, and had inquired of the Lord what he should do. He was told to wait, and not make the matter public, then, the people not yet having faith to receive it. It was one of the severest trials the Church had yet been called upon to undergo, and the wisest circumspection was necessary lest Joseph should be repudiated by his followers as a false prophet." (*History of Utah* [San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft Co., [1889], p. 161.)

⁵²Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation:" *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975). This is a result of his voluminous "A Study of the Text of the Inspired Revision on the Bible" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968).

major portion of Smith's work on the Bible was completed after his move to Ohio. Data derived from the three extant manuscripts of the Old Testament revision indicates that the Genesis chapters concerning Abraham's plural wives were translated in February and early March of 1831.⁵³ Besides, Matthews has concluded that the translation of the Bible was a tutorial experience for Smith.⁵⁴ That is, the imperative to correct it placed him in a situation requiring him to ask questions. Indeed, revelations concerning the work of translation contain explicit directives to "ask" about the scriptures.⁵⁵ And several sections of the Doctrine and Covenants are directly attributable to inquiries made by Smith during the process.⁵⁶

⁵³The second manuscript contains a revision of Genesis 8-24. Matthews says the five dates written on it are the "earliest known dates for the revision of Genesis." Nearly twenty-four chapters were revised by April 5, 1831. Sidney Rigdon served as Smith's amanuensis beginning at Genesis 7:3. He continued through Genesis 24:42 where the date April 5, 1831 was followed by the explanation "transcribed thus far." After the revision of Genesis 7:78 of the published version, Smith was directed to discontinue translating until he moved to Ohio. He arrived there on February 1, 1831. Matthews speculates that the revision of Genesis 7 recommenced in Ohio at that time. At Genesis 19:35 a change in instrument and style of writing occurs. This may be explained by the fact that Smith was directed to turn his attention to the New Testament on March 7, 1831. He did so the next day. Thus it is likely that he was actively studying the life of Abraham in chaps. 7-19 in February and perhaps early March of 1831. (Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation,"* pp. 64-67).

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

⁵⁵D&C 42:56-58. (See also D&C 21:6; 35:18, 20; and 45:60-61.)

⁵⁶According to Matthews all or part of Sections 74, 76, 77, 84, 86, 93, 102, 104, 107, 113, and 132. (Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation,"* p. 256.)

Thus the conditions were optimal in February of 1831--more so than in 1843--for Joseph Smith to inquire about the plural wives of the ancients. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that the first portion of Section 132 may have originated while Smith was translating the Book of Mormon or during the early Kirtland period. It is more certain that portions of the second section arose from the situation prevailing in Nauvoo about the time the document was written.

The W. W. Phelps Letter to Brigham Young

The second text to be considered is a letter from William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, dated August 12, 1861. Phelps shared the "substance" or "part"⁵⁷ of a revelation "given over the boundary, west of Jackson County, Missouri, on Sunday morning, July 17, 1831."⁵⁸ Phelps came to Kirtland in June of 1831, just before the journey to Missouri. After his baptism he accompanied Smith to Independence and there witnessed the events he described.⁵⁹

⁵⁷William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861. Original in the LDS Church Archives. The word "substance" is crossed out and replaced with "part" on the manuscript.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹William Wines Phelps was born February 17, 1792. He accepted Mormonism in 1831 after reading the Book of Mormon and discussing it with Sidney Rigdon for ten hours. In July of 1831 he was appointed by revelation as the printer for the Church in Missouri. There he established the *Evening and Morning Star*. In the summer of 1833 his press was destroyed by a mob. He fell into difficulty with others in the early months of 1838 at Far West, Missouri. He was excommunicated March 17, 1839 but returned to the Church in 1841. He was less prominent in Nauvoo affairs. He went to Utah during the exodus and died there March 7, 1872. (Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia* 3:692-697. See also Walter Dean Bowen, "The Versatile W. W. Phelps--Mormon Writer, Educator and Pioneer" [unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958].)

The "substance" Phelps reported fills two hand-written foolscap pages of excellent detail. Two short paragraphs introduce the revelation; it is similar in form to the Doctrine and Covenants and is divided into seven verses. The seven elders present on the occasion united in prayer asking the Lord who should preach to the Lamanites. The answer was not written at the time it was given because there was "neither pen, ink nor paper" available. But the Prophet assured them that "the Lord could preserve his words. . . till the time appointed."⁶⁰ Thus the source of Phelps' document remains a mystery. Whether this is his reminiscence, or whether Smith recorded the revelation later and Phelps copied it, cannot be said with certainty at present.

In the first three verses the elders are told that they were brought to the wilderness for a trial of their faith and to "bear testimony of this land, upon which the Zion of God shall be built up."⁶¹ Cowdery was appointed to pray, Phelps to preach, and two others to testify. Paragraph four is of special interest to the topic at hand. It reads:

Verily, I say unto you, that the wisdom of man, in his fallen state, knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my holy priesthood, but ye shall know when ye receive a fulness by reason of the anointing. For it is my will, that in time ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites,⁶² that their

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² The Book of Mormon explains that the two groups intermarried and that there were dissenting Nephites who sided with the Lamanites previous to the final battles which virtually eliminated them. It was taught that the rebellious Lamanites were "cursed" with a dark skin.

posterity may become white, delightful and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.⁶³

Three years later Phelps asked Smith how those mentioned in the revelation could "take wives of the natives," since all were married men. Smith promptly replied, "In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah; by revelation."⁶⁴

The historical accuracy of this "substance" is corroborated by Ezra Booth, an independent source. Booth, a former Methodist minister from Mantua, Geauga County, Ohio was converted to Mormonism by a miraculous healing. B. A. Hinsdale, president of Hiram College, related the story. Booth and his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, were visiting Smith. Mrs. Johnson had a lame arm, and was not "able to lift her hand to her head." During the interview the Prophet discoursed on supernatural gifts. A few moments later, he walked across the room, took Mrs. Johnson by the hand and said "in the most solemn and impressive manner: '*Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command thee to be made whole,*' and immediately left the room." She "at once lifted it up with ease; and on her return home the next day she was able to do her washing without difficulty or pain."⁶⁵

⁶³Phelps, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵As quoted in A.S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1876), pp. 250-251. This is the same John Johnson Smith lived with in Hiram.

On June 7, 1831, the day after the fourth general conference of the Church, Joseph Smith recorded a revelation directing the next conference to be held in Missouri. Fourteen pairs of missionaries were commanded to travel from Ohio to Missouri to attend the conference. Ezra Booth and his companion Isaac Morley were the fourth pair named.⁶⁶ The trek from Kirtland to Independence in the heat of the summer and the preaching of Mormon tenets to resistant gentiles cooled Booth's ardor for Mormonism. When he returned to Kirtland, he deserted the Church and angrily wrote nine letters to Ira Eddy, editor of the *Ohio Star* in Ravenna, justifying his defection. He was particularly incensed at the care Smith's group took on the journey to "make suitable provision for themselves both in money and other articles. . . [that] they might carry the appearance of gentlemen feeling some important station in life." He also chafed at the fact that he and the rest traveled on foot with packs on their backs and "were justly entitled to the character of beggars."⁶⁷

Booth likewise criticized Mormon tactics "invented, in order to remove obstacles which hitherto had proved insurmountable" in converting the Indians being relocated in eastern Kansas. Among other things, "it has been made known by revelation," he said, that it would be pleasing to the Lord if the elders formed "a matrimonial alliance with the natives." The Lord promised to bless "abundantly" those who complied

⁶⁶ D&C 52:22.

⁶⁷ *Ohio Star* [Ravenna, Ohio], November 10, 1831. These are also in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic.]; or, *A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, From its Rise to the Present Time*. (Painesville, Ohio: Published by the Author, 1834), pp. 175-221.

with the commandment. Through obedience they would "gain a residence" in Indian territory, despite the opposition of the Indian agent. "It has been made known to one who has left his wife in the State of New York," wrote Booth, "that he is entirely free from his wife, and is at pleasure to take him a wife from among the Lamanites."⁶⁸

Evidence that Mormon leaders later taught a philosophy of miscegenation resembling the one depicted by Phelps and Booth gives added strength to their statements. As early as 1852 William Hall credited Brigham Young with teaching that through intermarriage "the curse of their [the Indians] color shall be removed."⁶⁹ In 1853 missionaries sent to the Shoshoni Indians in the Green River country of Utah and Wyoming were counseled to counter the animosity that the mountain men had created between the Indians and Mormons. "We were to identify our interests with theirs, even to marrying among them, if we would be permitted to take young daughters of the chief and leading men," recalled James Brown. "It was thought that by forming that kind of an alliance we could have more power to do them good and keep the peace among the adjacent tribes."⁷⁰ In their first encounter with a

⁶⁸ *Ohio Star*, December 8, 1831.

⁶⁹ William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed, Containing Many Facts and Doctrines Concerning That Singular People During Seven Years Membership with Them; from 1840 to 1847* (Cincinnati: I. Hart, 1852), 59. I first came across this connection of ideas in a newspaper printed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, ardent anti-Mormons in Salt Lake City. (*The Salt Lake City Messenger*, May 1974, pp. 2-3.)

⁷⁰ James S. Brown, *Giant of the Lord: Life of a Pioneer* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1960), p. 320. See also Lawrence Coates, "Mormons and Social Change Among the Shoshoni, 1853-1900," *Idaho Yearnings*, XV (Winter, 1972), 3-11.

chief in April of 1854 the missionaries explained, "Some of us might want to come out into this country and marry some of their good daughters and rear families by them."⁷¹ Similar advice was given to missionaries called to the Salmon River country in central Idaho in 1856-1857.⁷²

Subsequent Events in Ohio

Testimony of contemporaries and subsequent events in Ohio and Illinois provide circumstantial evidence consistent with the supposition that Smith's thinking on polygyny was developing in the early Kirtland period. Some associates explained that he did not feel at liberty to advocate or institutionalize plural marriage at that time. George Q. Cannon asserted that the Prophet "took no license" from his knowledge. He was content to await the pleasure and command of the Lord.⁷³ While in Kirtland, wrote Lyman Littlefield, "he was instructed of the Lord respecting the sacred ordinance of plural marriage; but he was not required to reveal it to the Church until sometime during the residence of the Saints in Nauvoo."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 323. This was the only objection the chief raised to their proposal. (*Ibid.* p. 334.)

⁷² Juanita Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XII (1944), 28-30. See also, Stenhouse, *Early Mountain Saints*, pp. 657-659.

⁷³ Cannon, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁷⁴ Lyman O. Littlefield, "An Open Letter," MS 45:387. This was addressed to Joseph Smith, III President of the RLDS Church. It generated several follow-up letters and became known as the Littlefield-Smith correspondence.

It is unclear when Smith felt impelled to enter into polygynous relationships. Seemingly, he anticipated adverse reactions, sensing that this step might cost him his life and even destroy the Church. Smith dramatized his reticence with stories of a sword-brandishing angel who threatened to take his life if he did not proceed. Joseph B. Noble, a close associate of the Prophet in Nauvoo, said it was in 1840, three years before the writing of Section 132, that Smith informed him of the revelation and the angel's command to "move forward in the said order."⁷⁵ Hyrum Smith told B. F. Johnson that his brother "waited until an Angel with a drawn Sword Stood before him and declared that if he delayed fulfilling the Command he would Slay him."⁷⁶ Lorenzo Snow said Smith "foresaw the

⁷⁵ Joseph B. Noble, affidavit, June 26, 1869 in Joseph F. Smith, "40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage." Original in the LDS Church Archives. While examining two separate collections the writer found four small record books kept by Joseph F. Smith. Three were housed in his collection and the fourth was in a collection of affidavits and statements in the archives vault. Apparently Smith began the collection of these affidavits and statements in 1869 when Alexander Hale Smith and David Hyrum Smith, sons of Joseph Smith came to Salt Lake City on a proselytizing mission for the RLDS Church. They were denying that their father taught or practiced plural marriage. Joseph F. Smith collected these statements from personal witnesses to combat these missionaries. Two of the three books in the Smith collection have identifying marks. The third one and the one in the vault have none. For convenience in this study I have designated them as follows. The book titled "40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage" is designated book 1, the book designated as book "2" will retain this number, and the unmarked one will be referred to as book 3. The book in the vault collection will be designated book 4. There are duplications in these volumes and it appears that two were intended as duplicates, but there are also unique items in each one. For further detail see appendix H. For the mission of the Smiths to Utah see Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 5:272-275.

⁷⁶ Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.* This story has proved very popular and been told many times. Although most faithful Mormons probably accept it as true "the church has not pronounced it authentic nor has it contradicted it." (Melvin J. Ballard to Elsie Jensen,

trouble that would follow and sought to turn away from the commandment," but an angel prevented him.⁷⁷ And Mary Lightner reported that the prophet told her the angel came to him three times between 1834 and 1842. The last time he had a drawn sword in his hand and "told Joseph if he did not go into that principle he would slay him."⁷⁸

Still others reported occasions when Smith complained that there were doctrines he knew, which if taught to the Church would bring dire results. "If I should make known what God has made known to me," he told Levi Hancock in Kirtland, "they would seek my life."⁷⁹ Similarly, Brigham Young recalled hearing Smith say there was not a man or women who would stay with him if he revealed all he knew.⁸⁰ It was in Far West, Missouri that he again told the church leadership "the people cannot bear the revelations that the Lord has for them."⁸¹

Few Kirtland Mormons actually knew of these early communications, yet some gossip flourished about Smith's conduct. It was not all

August 14, 1934 in *Marriage* [Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing Co., n.d.], p. 15. See Mrs. Jenson's inquiry p. 13.) Ballard was an Apostle at this writing. The Truth Publishing Company is active in publishing pro-polygamy fundamentalist literature and characteristically does not have a named author.

⁷⁷ Lorenzo Snow, affidavit, August 28, 1869. Original in Vault Folder of affidavits and statements on plural marriage in the LDS Church Archives, (hereafter referred to as Vault Folder). This was copied in Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:19 and 3:19-20. It was published in Jenson, *HR* 6:222.

⁷⁸ Lightner, "Remarks," *op.cit.*

⁷⁹ *Deseret Evening News*, February 21, 1884.

⁸⁰ Brigham Young, discourse of May 25, 1852, *JD* 9:294.

⁸¹ Brigham Young, discourse of June 23, 1874, *JD* 18:242.

unfounded. Before the close of the Kirtland period, Smith and Cowdery both began polygamous households. Oliver Olney, an excommunicated Mormon, spoke of happenings in Kirtland. His allusion to the "ancient order of God" is interesting in light of the fact that it was written three months before Section 132 was penned.

An unlawful intercourse amongst the two sexes existed, of which testimony plainly spoke. Also an introduction of principles that would lead to bad morals; such as Polygamy, or the time would soon be, that the ancient order of God that was in the days of old Solomon and David. They had wives and concubines in abundance, as many as they could support. The secret whispering was, that the same will eventually be again.⁸²

Such "whispering" may have led to violence. In March of 1832, at Hiram, Ohio, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were brutally attacked by an enraged mob. That night Smith was up late with children recovering from measles. He was dozing on the trundle bed when he awoke to the shrieks of his wife. Half a dozen men, some of whom were apostate Mormons,⁸³ dragged him from the house and choked him into unconsciousness. There was some talk of murder, but fear overcame the ruffians, and they decided on tar and feathers instead. According to a member of the Johnson family with whom Smith was then residing, the mob brought a physician along to castrate the Prophet "but his heart failed him, and he refused to operate."⁸⁴ Luke Johnson's remark may have had some

⁸² Olney, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸³ HC 1:262. Simonds Ryder and probably Eli Johnson. This whole episode is narrated by Smith in HC 1:261-265.

⁸⁴ Luke Johnson, "History of Luke Johnson," MS 26:834. The "History of Brigham Young" was being published in a series in the *Star* at this time and numerous other valuable biographical sketches were subsumed under that heading as is this one of Johnson's. This report is echoed by George A. Smith in a discourse on November 15, 1864. (JD 11: 5-6.)

significance in light of an unconfirmed report that his brother Eli instigated the assault because Smith was too intimate with their sister.⁸⁵ Nancy Johnson, does not mention the attempted emasculation in her account, but there may be some slight intimation in her testimony: "During the whole year that Joseph was an inmate of my Father's house I never saw aught in his daily life or conversation to make me doubt his divine mission."⁸⁶

The First Hierarchal Split Over Plural Marriage

Difficulties between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery also developed over plural marriage. Cowdery had associated himself with Mormonism even before it became an organized church. While boarding with the Smith family as a local school master he learned about the gold plates and Smith's work of translation in Pennsylvania. He was intrigued with the story and visited the Prophet in Harmony, where he was soon acting as scribe in the translating endeavor. Cowdery remained prominent in pre-Nauvoo church affairs. He was declared to be its "second elder" when the Church was founded, was a special witness to the Book of Mormon and other angelic visitations, and was one of the leaders of the first mission to Missouri. In 1834 Cowdery

⁸⁵*Public Discussion of the Issues Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Church of Christ (Disciples)*. (Lamoni, Iowa: The Herald Publishing House, 1913), p. 202, (hereafter cited as *Public Discussion*). This is commonly referred to as the Braden-Kelly debate.

⁸⁶Tullidge, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

was ordained "Assistant President" of the Church, a position superseding that of the counselors in the First Presidency.⁸⁷

Brigham Young outlined the details of the conflict that arose between the two leaders. The pair were supposedly together when the revelation on plural marriage first came. Cowdery expressed a desire to begin practicing it immediately, but the Prophet demurred. Cowdery was determined, though "ignorant of the order and pattern" and the outcome of the institution at the time. "Oliver, if you go into this thing it is not with my faith or consent," Smith warned.⁸⁸ Apparently the Prophet extracted a "solemn pledge" from the second elder not to reveal or act upon the principles he knew. But he "acted upon it in a secret manner," declared Young and "that was the cause of his overthrow."⁸⁹ He married Miss Annie Lyman, and "from that time he went into darkness and lost the spirit."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Mouritsen, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

⁸⁹ Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, August 26, 1857, located in LDS Church Archives, (hereafter cited as Journal History). This is a massive scrapbook type collection of materials from letters, diaries, sermons, newspapers and other sources on a day by day basis from 1830 to the present.

Brigham Young said both men received "keys" of authority to the practice of plural marriage. It appears that there may have been a misunderstanding between the two on the proper use of these keys, Cowdery thinking he had as much authority as Smith. To modern Mormons it is clear that only one man holds the keys of authority for one job in the Church, but this may not have been so clear to early nineteenth-century Mormons. Compare D&C 132:7.

⁹⁰ Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

Others besides Brigham Young held this view of Cowdery's difficulties in the Church. One prominent Mormon said he "abused" the Prophet's confidence in him. He was guilty of "running before he was sent" and of "taking liberties without license."⁹¹ Seemingly, Cowdery assumed that, because he was a witness to the Book of Mormon and had received angelic visitations, he was immune from apostasy. "[But], alas!" wrote George Q. Cannon, "he transgressed the law of God; he committed adultery; the Spirit of God withdrew from him, and he, the second elder in the Church was excommunicated from the Church."⁹²

The exact date of Cowdery's second marriage is unknown, however. Available evidence suggests that it occurred between 1832 and 1835. He married his first wife, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer, on January 22, 1832 in Missouri.⁹³ This sets the earliest date at which he could have been involved. The outside date, if the testimony of Brigham Young and Joseph F. Smith can be relied upon, is August of 1835. At that time, Cowdery was credited with the insertion of an article on "Marriage" in

⁹¹ Discourse of July 7, 1878, *JD* 20:29.

⁹² George Q. Cannon, "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor*, XX (December 1, 1885), 360. (Compare also his statement in the *Juvenile Instructor*, XVI [September 15, 1881], 206.) In 1890 Thomas Gregg who was well acquainted with Mormonism for years said he had it on "good authority that this question is what, with others, caused Oliver Cowdery to separate from him [Joseph]." (Thomas Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra* [New York: John B. Alden, 1890], pp. 397-398.)

⁹³ Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:248. Stanley Gunn in his *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1962), pp. 211-216 lists the date as December 18, 1832. He quotes a letter from Cowdery to his brother Lyman Cowdery dated January 13, 1834 which says: "I was married one year the 18th of December last. . . ." That Cowdery actually married the second wife is verified by George Q. Cannon, (*Juvenile Instructor*, XVI [September 15, 1881], 206.)

the second edition of the published revelations. In part it said:

"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 the case of death. . . ."⁹⁴ Although Joseph Smith authorized the second printing and had proofread the texts of the revelations, Young and Smith claim this "article" was Cowdery's and not his. They said Cowdery had it inserted to silence the clamour and surmising that arose over his "second wife!"⁹⁵

If Cowdery was under condemnation for violating his "sacred pledge" and the commandments of God, there is no record of official church action against him in this period. And, as we shall show, when he was excommunicated in 1838 there were no charges relating to his polygamous marriage. It has been argued that, since he was elevated in the church hierarchy in 1834, any existing personal difficulties would have been corrected by that time.⁹⁶ This argument seems to dismiss the weight of the statements of Young, Smith, and Cannon to the effect that Cowdery's unauthorized marriage was adulterous and caused his downfall. Moreover, if the problem was corrected in 1834, why would Cowdery have inserted the article on marriage in

⁹⁴ Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of the Latter Day Saints (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835), 251. This is Section 101 entitled "Marriage." (See especially v. 4.)

⁹⁵ Stenhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 193; and *JD* 20:29.

⁹⁶ Mouritsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁹⁷

At Far West, Missouri, in April of 1838, nine charges were brought against Oliver Cowdery by Seymour Brunson in a formal church trial. In the course of the trial, five of the charges were sustained, including one "For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith Jun., by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery."⁹⁸ Cowdery and Smith had now come full circle in their opposition to each other over the issue. An alleged plural marriage between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger lay at the root of the charge.

Benjamin F. Johnson is the source for most of the details about Fanny Alger. According to him she was a "nice & comly" [sic.] young lady about seventeen years old.⁹⁹ In 1835 she was living at the

⁹⁷Max Parkin has suggested the possibility that Cowdery took a plural wife after Smith took his first wife in the later Kirtland period probably after 1835. The difficulty with this supposition is the same as that of Mouritsen's; lack of formal action concerning adultery in Cowdery's trial and his involvement with the article on marriage in August of 1835. (See, Max H. Parkin, *A Study of the Nature and Causes of External and Internal Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio Between 1830 and 1838* [Provo, Utah: Department of Seminary and Institutes of Religion, August 1967], p. 132. This is a privately printed copy of Parkin's Master's thesis.)

⁹⁸The original trial minutes are recorded in "The Conference Minutes, and Record Book, of Christ's Church of Latter Day Saints," pp. 118-124. Original manuscript located in the LDS Church Archives. This is generally referred to as the "Far West Record" in LDS citations and will be cited as such hereafter. A more convenient source for part of these proceedings is in *HC* 3:16-18.

⁹⁹Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.* Genealogical data shows her to be the daughter of Samuel Alger and Clarissa Hancock born on September 30, 1816 at Rehoboth, Massachusetts. (Thomas M. Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.* [Salt Lake City: The Tinney-Green(e) Family Organization Publishing Co., 1973], p. 55.)

Prophet's home. Her amiable character had nearly everyone "partial" toward her, and "it was whispered eaven [sic.] then that Joseph Loved her." Warren Parrish told Johnson he and Cowdery knew "that Joseph had Fanny Alger as a wife for They were Spied upon & found together."¹⁰⁰

Little detail exists about Fanny Alger beyond this, and even less about her relationship with Smith. Her uncle was Levi Hancock, a Kirtlander who claimed that he took part with Smith in "trying to assist him to start the principle with a few chosen friends in those days."¹⁰¹ He may have been the one through whom the Prophet made

¹⁰⁰ Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.* A similar report was made by ex-Mormon Apostle William E. McLellin in 1875. The editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune* said McLellin told him the first sealing took place between Smith and "the hired girl. . . in a barn on the hay mow [sic.]" Emma told McLellin she watched through a crack in the door. He said she reaffirmed the story to him again in Nauvoo. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1875.) McLellin was one of the first Apostles ordained (February 15, 1835) but was excommunicated during the Kirtland-Missouri difficulties on May 11, 1838. (See *HC* 3:31 n.) Fanny Brewer also an apostate Mormon swore an affidavit in the Nauvoo period in which she said she arrived in Kirtland in the spring of 1837 and "there was much excitement against the Prophet, on another account, likewise, --AN UNLAWFUL INTERCOURSE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND A YOUNG ORPHAN GIRL RESIDING IN HIS FAMILY, AND UNDER HIS PROTECTION!!!" (Fanny Brewer, affidavit, September 13, 1842, in Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Emphasis in the original.) Finally, A. Metcalf reported he interviewed Martin Harris in Utah in 1875-1876 and reported Harris as saying: "in or about the year 1833, the servant girl of Joe Smith stated that the prophet had made improper proposals to her, which created quite a talk amongst the people. Joe Smith went to Martin Harris to counsel with him concerning the girl's talk. Harris, supposing that Joe was innocent told him to take no notice of the girl, that she was full of the devil, and wanted to destroy the prophet of God; but Joe Smith acknowledged that there was more truth than poetry in what the girl said. Harris then said he would have nothing to do in the matter, Smith could get out of the trouble the best way he knew how." (A. Metcalf, *Ten Years Before the Mast: Shipwrecks and Adventures at Sea!* [Malad, Idaho: By the Author, 1870], quoted in Kirkham, *op. cit.*, 11, 348.)

¹⁰¹ *Deseret Evening News*, February 21, 1884. This report comes from Mosiah Hancock, son of Levi, who said his father, "required. . . me to bear testimony of these things at a proper time." The Alger-Hancock relationship is confirmed in Levi Hancock, Diary. Original in

overtures to Fanny. Legend has come down from Smith's grammar teacher, C. G. Webb, that Emma Smith drove her from the house when their secrecy was exposed by her pregnant condition.¹⁰² After Smith left Kirtland the Alger family went to Indiana. "Fanny Soon Married to one of the Citizens there & altho she never left the State She did not turn from the Church nor from her friendship or the Prophet while She lived."¹⁰³

The story of the Smith-Cowdery rift is sketchy, but, when it was over, Mormonism had sustained its first major casualty in the struggle to introduce a new marriage alternative into the basically puritan society. While still in Ohio, Cowdery insinuated in the presence of Smith and others that the Prophet was an adulterer. David Patten and Thomas B. Marsh, senior members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, visited Cowdery for verifications of the rumors floating

the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰²Wyl, *op. cit.*, p. 57. A similar report comes from Ann Eliza Young. She at one time was a plural wife of Brigham Young but divorced him and toured the country lecturing on the evils of Mormonism. She reports that Fanny Alger was an "adopted daughter" of Emma. When Emma learned of the affair she insisted the girl leave. Smith sent for Cowdery to mediate the problem, but he failed. Finally, Ann Eliza reports that her mother offered to take Fanny in until she could be sent to her relatives. "Although her parents were living, they considered it the highest honor to have their daughter adopted into the Prophet's family, and her mother has always claimed that she was sealed to Joseph at the time." (Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19, or, The Story of a Life in Bondage, being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy* [Hartford, Connecticut: Dustin, Gilman and Co., 1876], pp. 66-67.)

¹⁰³Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.* Tinney has apparently followed Miss Alger to Dublin City, Wayne County, Indiana where she may have been married to Solomon Custer. (Tinney, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.)

around Kirtland. When questioned of their veracity, Cowdery "cocked up his eye very knowingly," but hesitated to answer. Yet he privately told Patten the details of the "scrape," saying "no doubt it [was] true."¹⁰⁴

After the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, Cowdery went to Missouri. Smith visited Far West in the fall of 1837. While there, a second encounter ensued in the home of George W. Harris.¹⁰⁵ Smith remembered that a council was convened and handled several problems, but he was unable to reconcile his differences with Cowdery. It was agreed, though, that the two should work out the problems privately.¹⁰⁶ In the home of Harris, Smith openly confronted his accuser. "After considerable winking," Cowdery said he had not heard Smith confess adultery.¹⁰⁷

On January 21, 1838, Cowdery wrote a letter to his brother, Warren, giving this version of the story:

When he was here we had some conversation, in which in every instance, I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself. At any rate, just before leaving, he wanted to drop every past thing, in which had been a difficulty or difference--he

¹⁰⁴Testimony of David W. Patten and Thomas B. Marsh at the trial of Oliver Cowdery, "Far West Record," pp. 123-124

¹⁰⁵Testimony of George W. Harris, *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁶HC 2:521. Smith said he arrived at Far West "some time in the latter part of October or first of November." This meeting was held on November 6, 1837.

¹⁰⁷Testimony of Thomas B. Marsh, "Far West Record," p. 124.

called witnesses to the fact, gave me his hand in their presence.¹⁰⁸

The same day he wrote to Smith openly challenging his position.

I learn from Kirtland by the last letters, that you have publicly said, that when you were here, I confessed to you that I had lied about you, this compells me to ask you to correct that statement, and give me an explanation --until then you and myself are two.¹⁰⁹

The unity in the Church leadership was splitting asunder.

Lines were drawn, and sides taken. In February, Thomas B. Marsh sent Smith his and two other testimonies confirming Smith's version of the confrontation in Harris' home.¹¹⁰ But by now the Prophet was on his way to Missouri--fleeing from one cauldron to another. He arrived at Far West, on March 14, 1838. Apparently nothing could be done to reconcile the matter and win Cowdery back, for on April 12, 1838 he was expelled from the Church.¹¹¹ The divisiveness of plural marriage

¹⁰⁸ Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery, January 21, 1838. Original located in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. A microfilm copy is in the Utah State Historical Society at Salt Lake City. This portion has been published at least twice. (See Parkin, *op. cit.*, p. 130, and a photocopy is in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Mormon Kingdom*, 1 [Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company, 1968], 26.)

¹⁰⁹ Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, January 21, 1838. Original in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. This has also been published in Gunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-158.

¹¹⁰ Thomas B. Marsh to Joseph Smith, February 15, 1838, reproduced in *Elder's Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* [Far West, Missouri], July, 1838, pp. 45-46. (hereafter cited *Elder's Journal*). Marsh's letter contained additional statements from George W. Harris and George W. Hinckle. Although Marsh lamented "that such foul and false reports" were being circulated in Kirtland, he assured Smith that "none but those who wish your overthrow, will believe them, and we presume that the above testimonies will be sufficient to stay the tongue of the slanderer."

¹¹¹ HC 3:17-18.

had reared its ugly head and claimed the first of its victims. But Oliver Cowdery was not the last to succumb; this was only the first round in what turned out to be a very long and weary fight.

Other Difficulties

The later Kirtland years saw a continually growing number of tales about unusual marital conduct among the Saints. About 1835 "there was a good deal of scandal prevalent" about Smith's "licentious conduct," particularly "with two or three families." In self-defense against such charges the Prophet asserted that "he was God's prophet . . . and that he could do whatever he should choose to do, therefore the Church had no right to call into question anything he did."¹¹² Benjamin F. Johnson said "suspicion or Knowledge of the Prophet's Plural Relation was one of the Causes of Apostasy & disruption at Kirtland although at the time there was little said publicly upon the Subject."¹¹³ There were others, he said, such as Oliver

¹¹² Benjamin Winchester, "Primitive Mormonism," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 22, 1889. It should be remembered that one of the main reasons Winchester left the Church was over its authoritarian nature, and Smith's in particular. His comment here may reflect his own feelings as much as the teachings of Smith, however, later testimony corroborates his representation of Smith's views.

¹¹³ Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.* John Whitmer said in the fall of 1836 the church leaders were "lifted up in pride, and lusted after forbidden things," particularly the spiritual wife doctrine. (John Whitmer, "John Whitmer's History of the Church," Chapter 20. Original in the RLDS Church Archives, Independence, Missouri. Several printed editions are extant.) Whitmer was the second official historian or record keeper of the Church. He received his appointment on March 8, 1831. (See D&C 47:3.) He was excommunicated March 10, 1834, (HC 3: 61-68) and wrote this chapter sometime after that. (See Tanner's edition *John Whitmer's History* [Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n.d.], "Introduction.")

Cowdery, Jared Carter, and Warren Parrish who abused their knowledge and became a "law unto themselves" concerning the matter.¹¹⁴ Carter had gone so far as to ask Joseph for a plural wife simply because he had recently acquired a second house.¹¹⁵ The *Elder's Journal* for August of 1838 said that some years before that Parrish, cashier in the Kirtland Safety Society, had been brought to account before Church authorities for "taking unlawful freedom" with the wife of one Mr. Coles.¹¹⁶ In April of 1837 the Seventy's Quorum in Kirtland issued a warning to its members: "we will have no fellowship whatever with any Elder belonging to the quorums of the Seventies who is guilty of polygamy or any offense of the kind."¹¹⁷ Perhaps this was because Parrish was a Seventy.¹¹⁸ Later that year the *Journal* ran an article

¹¹⁴Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶*Elder's Journal*, August 1838, p. 57. (See also George A. Smith, discourse of January 10, 1838, *JD* 7:115.)

¹¹⁷*Latter Day Saint's Messenger and Advocate* [Kirtland, Ohio], May 1837, p. 511, (hereafter cited *Messenger and Advocate*).

¹¹⁸*HC* 2:244. There exists another unusual connection between Parrish and the Mormon marital difficulties. During 1843 a mason named Osse Welch wrote from Galena to Joseph Smith inquiring of Parrish's character. Welch suspected Parrish of trying to deceive him and cover up his "wickedness with the Sacredotal robe which he has assumed (he is now a Baptist minister). He has written and said many things prejudicial to your order as you well know, see his letter to Bennett and others." (Osse Welch to Joseph Smith, October 25, 1843. Original in the LDS Church Archives.) This is likely a reference to Parrish's letter produced in J. C. Bennett's *History of the Saints* in which he describes his difficulties in Kirtland and his desire to see Mormonism broken up. In possible reference to his past and the rumors about Smith he said "I made Kirtland, the stake of Zion, so exceedingly unpleasant to him, that he got a revelation to leave between two days, and has not been there since." (Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 47.)

with a series of questions that were "daily and hourly" asked of the Mormons. The seventh question read, "Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?" The question was answered eight months later: "No, not at the same time."¹¹⁹

The Kirtland troubles spilled over into Missouri. Besides the pressure from the outside, the Saints experienced a violent disruption at top and intermediate levels within the church organizations. In addition to Cowdery, David Whitmer, Thomas B. Marsh, Orson Hyde, and others were there expelled for apostasy and aiding their persecutors.¹²⁰ Joseph Smith was in Missouri barely long enough for the gossip mills to catch up with him. There appear to be no accusations of immoral conduct or polygamy in the public statements of anti-Mormon sentiment during these last days of difficulty. But an adverse undercurrent may have been beginning. On December 16, 1838 Smith wrote a lengthy letter to the Church from his prison in Liberty, Missouri. In it he defended the Church and himself against the slander and libel he said was being heaped upon them. The old adultery charge was among them, and he laid the blame for it at the feet of "renegade 'Mormon' dissenters" who were "running through the world. . . spreading various foul and libelous reports against us."¹²¹ This was obviously a barb aimed at Cowdery.

The Saints' practice of the law of consecration and stewardship was also misrepresented. Some were charging that the Mormons were not

¹¹⁹*Elder's Journal*, November, 1837, p. 28, and July, 1838, p. 43.

¹²⁰HC 3:18-20, 167-168, 379.

¹²¹HC 3:230.

only dedicating their property, but their families to the Lord. Satan, said Smith, put it into the hearts of men to pervert the idea "into licentiousness, such as a community of wives, which is an abomination in the sight of God."¹²² But, he explained, "when a man consecrates or dedicates his wife and children, he does not give them to his brother, or his neighbor, for there is no such law: for the law of God is, Thou shalt not commit adultery."¹²³

Here we see one of the earliest inferences to what would be called in Nauvoo the "spiritual wife" doctrine.¹²⁴ In the minds of

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³*HC* 3:231.

¹²⁴Relative to another report of the use of this term about this same time we have the following letter from Franklin D. Richards to Joseph F. Smith:
Dear Brother:

In 1840 while on my first mission, my labors were mostly in the vicinity of Laporte, Plymouth, and Michigan City in Northern Indiana where by the help of the Lord I raised up a Branch and added to Branches already formed.

In this region were quite a number of Saints who were on their way to Far West in Missouri at the time of the persecutions in 1838, who, when they learned of the expulsion to Illinois, located wherever [sic.] they were at the time until another place of gathering should be designated--of this number was one a sister Akers who represented herself to me as having lived in Kirtland and as being well acquainted with the Prophet Joseph and with many of the leading men and their families in that place. She stated to me that the doctrine of "Spiritual wives" as she then termed it, was a true doctrine, that it had been revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith and would sometime be put in practice in in [sic.] the Church--that it was not then permitted, but that I would live to see it taught accepted, lived in and practically adopted as a doctrine and ordinance of the Church. Although in her statements she appeared honest and earnest, and for aught I knew was blameless in her life & conduct otherwise still I found that such whisperings were prejudicing unbelievers against the truth and souring the minds of some of the Saints, still I was obliged to put a stop to her unwise conversation by threatening to dis-fellowship her if she did not desist. Sister Akers afterwards gathered to Nauvoo where some of her sayings came true. (Franklin D. Richards to Joseph F. Smith, July 5, 1881. Original located in LDS

gentiles and anti-Mormons, it was an easy leap from a community of property to a community of wives. In Nauvoo it would be equally easy to leap from marriage for eternity, or plural marriage, to spiritual wifery. In more than one instance Mormon difficulties in Nauvoo had antecedents in New York, Ohio, and Missouri. This was particularly true of plural marriage.

Mormon Theology of Sex, Family, and Marriage

As we have seen, Mormonism in Kirtland underwent a theoretical development toward polygyny. The laying of the foundation of Mormonism clarified--perhaps crystalized--aspects of Smith's thinking on sex roles, family life, and legitimate marriage forms. An elaborate doctrinal superstructure was begun. But it was not to approach completion until late in the Nauvoo period.

In this same era--between the American Revolution and the Civil War--society and culture were greatly modified in the United States. Indeed, many Americans became politically, religiously, and philosophically ambivalent. Scholars have expounded upon the positive and negative world views that were evolving. Daniel Boorstin, one of the more recent and eloquent proponents of rosecolor interpretations, views the Revolution as, not just political secession from Europe, but as an event signaling the dissolution of "Old World absolutes."¹²⁵ In

Church Archives. I am indebted to Ron Esplin, research assistant in the Church Historical Department, for calling this letter to my attention.

¹²⁵Boorstin, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

neo-Turnerian terms, Boorstin depicts American westward expansion as a formative experience, shaping everything from industry and technology to religion, law, and language. Unlimited resourcefulness, ingenuity, energy, and optimism flowered in the conquest of the nation's vast territories.

Other optimistic observers have celebrated the "self-made" men who loved nature, and had a patriotic dream that America's natural abundance would make her the promised land. America was growing, moving, producing, and progressing. John Higham has characterized this as the "spirit of boundlessness." There was a freedom from the traditional "limits on man's aspiration"---limits which the War of 1812 seemed to erase. The spirit of boundlessness fed on technological changes, which widened horizons and broadened the range of reason; on the democratization of politics, which struck against a caste society; on the energy of evangelical Christianity, which denied Calvinistic depravation and yielded perfectionism; and on "aspects of European romanticism," which overcame the essentially "static world-picture" of the eighteenth century through its awe of nature and the infinite.¹²⁶

On the other hand, as various analysts have shown, there were also those who had great fears and much anxiety about the direction of American life in the early national years.¹²⁷ Indeed, as C. S.

¹²⁶ Higham, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-10.

¹²⁷ Indeed this ambivalence is the point of David Grimsted's, "Rioting in Jacksonian America." Other examples evaluating this conflict are: Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) and Douglas T. Miller, *The Birth of Modern America 1820-1850* (New York: Western Publishing Co., 1970).

Griffin has argued, the essence of the "ferment of reform" in this period may have been its conservatism.¹²⁸ If man's reason was supreme, his materialism and progress were rushing him towards oblivion. If America was more egalitarian, it was also heretical and impotent. If man loved nature, he was also losing his culture and refinement. Thus, this period was also an "age of anxiety."

Mormonism was the one truly American religion to emerge and survive this schizophrenic time. Yet it mirrored some of the counter-currents of the day. It was at once utopian and traditionalist.¹²⁹ Mormonism appealed both to optimists and naysayers. The primary message of the restored gospel faith proved attractive to restorationist-oriented Campbellites in Ohio and to other primitivists in New England and New York. Emphasis on anti-pluralism and its counterpart--the creation of a monolithic theocratic kingdom--met many needs.

For those possessing the spirit of boundlessness, Mormonism was an active agent in dissolving the limits placed on man. Its perfectionism, its emphasis on reason and works as well as faith, and its broad cosmic perspective all merged to compliment the dominant trend in Jacksonian America. Likewise, its hearkening back to "primitive" Christianity; its futuristic promise of a Zionistic society, led by men under God's tutelage; and its authoritarianism gave solace to the

¹²⁸ C.S. Griffin, *The Ferment of Reform, 1830-1860* (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1967), p. 31. The thrust of the Welterian hypothesis of the origin of the women's rights movement is basically that it was reactionary. See chap. i, pp. 9-13.

¹²⁹ For an interesting study of how conservative ideologies and reactionary utopian thought can develop within the same society see, Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans., by Louis Wirth and Edward Chils (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., n.d.). See especially p. 40.

anxious. But the dual nature of Mormonism was also calculated to offend traditionalists and liberals alike. The former found Mormon liberality and theological innovation troubling, if not demonic. The latter--especially ultra-liberal and materialistic Jacksonians--found the conservatism and literalism of the faith confining and inhibitory.

Smith's thinking on sex roles, marriage, and the family are microcosms of Mormonism and, to a lesser extent, of American society as well. His mixture of liberal and conservative thinking had a dualistic nature that was typical of Mormon theology. The same forces which helped mold Mormonism also sculpted the doctrine of plural marriage.

Smith may have reached back two millennia to the original Christian era for his inspiration, but his theology placed a strangely heavy reliance on the Old Testament and its teachings. To begin with, the Book of Mormon itself was a mixture of pre- and post-Christian dispensations. Indeed, it explained that much of Christianity was taught and practiced by the pre-Christian ancients and that Christ was the God who had spoken to those patriarchs and prophets. It said that portions of the Christian gospel had been disclosed in several dispensations since Adam. But apostasy and unworthiness had necessitated lesser laws such as the Law of Moses to prepare people for the higher gospel. This Old Testament flavor permeated Smith's thinking about the kingdom of God too, for it was to the Old Testament theocracies that he turned for examples of his true Zion society. Then, too, the conception of the temple, with its washings, anointings, and covenants had its inception in the Old Testament milieu.

Similarly, Smith's ideas on marriage, sex, and the family reflect a strong Old Testament bias. The Mormon male role as priesthood bearer and father drew much of its inspiration from traditional Biblical theology, and hearkened back to the patriarchs and prophets for many of its examples. As was the ancient custom, the new Mormon man was to be the patriarch in his family and, through the priesthood, he was to rule in righteousness. In patriarchal-fashion, men were to receive divine guidance for their families and their stewardships. In 1831 Joseph Smith made it clear that women were not the proper receptacles of revelation for the Church. Thus women were not priesthood holders nor could they ever ascend to leadership in the church hierarchy.¹³⁰

The role of women, and the basic purpose of marriage were captured in an early revelation received in Kirtland in March of 1831. This message made reference to a nearby Shaker colony. In opposition to Shaker celibacy, and reminiscent of Biblical language, it stated:

. . . whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God for marriage is ordained of God unto man. 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 before the world was made. And that the world might be filled with the measure of man according to his creation before the world was made.¹³¹

¹³⁰HC 1:154. "A woman came making great pretensions of revealing commandments, laws and other curious matters; and as almost every person has advocates for both theory and practice, in these various notions and projects of the age, it became necessary to inquire of the Lord." Section 43 of the Doctrine and Covenants was then recorded, which interdicted all others from receiving revelation for the Church except Smith. (D&C 43:3.) This philosophy about women as religious leaders was reaffirmed in a *Times and Seasons* editorial "Try the Spirits" in April 1842. Here he asserts "A Woman has no right to found or organize a church; God never sent them to do it." (T&S 3:743-748.)

¹³¹D&C 49:15-18.

Here Mormon doctrine emphasized the traditional role of the woman as wife and mother. Procreation was the primary purpose of matrimony. Marriage was to be consummated that the earth might fulfill its purpose in creation. It was the divinely created abode for the embodied spiritual children of God. Here men could gain the experience necessary to prove themselves worthy to regain the presence of deity in the next life. Women in this scheme were to provide the bodies for divinely-sired Spirits. Their role was basically a traditional one, couched in new theological trappings. But some radical practicalities were extended to them too. Before the Church was organized, a divine directive declared that church officers were to be sustained by the "common consent" of the people.¹³² All available evidence indicates that early Mormon women exercised this prerogative of religious franchise.

¹³²HC 1:60-61; D&C 20:63-65, and HC 1:76-77. The following found in an early Mormon newspaper unexpectedly without comment or rebuttal, is indicative of the freedom and liberal attitudes held by some in the Church relative to social innovations.

"Preventive Check. It is the custom in Germany and Moravia, to make two distinct ceremonies necessary to constitute marriage; the betrothal and final rite. The latter precedes the former from one to four years, according to circumstances, [sic.] and is the best Malthusian plan that could be devised as Miss Martineau would acknowledge, being founded on prudence.

"It interposes a seasonable pause before young parties enter into the expenses of a family and house. It gives an opportunity of discovering any cause, such as drunken or idle habits or poverty which might make the marriage unsuitable; and perhaps, as a probationary period, is not without its good effect on the character and temper of both sexes. If we reckon the prolific age of a female at twenty-two years, or from eighteen to forty; the interval of a year, (& in less opulent classes it is often several) alone reduces to the amount of between four & five percent the increase of population." (*Messenger and Advocate*, III [March, 1837], 480.)

In the passage quoted above, the fundamental philosophy of sex and marriage was outlined, and everything which followed built upon this foundation. Again one sees a mixture of religious tradition and novelty. The Old Testament fiat to multiply and replenish the earth was mirrored along with a cosmic perspective that gave a new purpose to the injunction.

Of Smith's teachings on this point Benjamin F. Johnson remembered:

The First Command was to "Multiply" and the Prophet taught us that Dominion & power in the great Future would be Comensurate with the no [number] of "Wives Children & Friends" that we inherit here and that our great mission to earth was to organize a Neculi of Heaven to take with us. To the increase of which there would be no end--¹³³

Here we may find a suggested meaning to the Jacob passage proviso that under certain circumstances God may command his people to form polygynous marriages. Spirit children of God were to gain a necessary physical tabernacle through mortal parents. But what if God was interested in raising up a certain lineage or a group of children through a special core of spiritual elite, who had been initiated into the mysteries of God and were thereby qualified to instruct others? How better might this be expeditiously accomplished than through multiple wives? These women might perpetually bear children of the men of modern Israel--"holy men" whom God had "reserved" and chosen.¹³⁴

¹³³Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.*

¹³⁴D&C 49:8

The Mormon Prophet's conceptualization of an authoritarian priesthood also demonstrated the dual nature of his teachings. The notion that the Church of Jesus Christ had returned to earth, vesting its officers with God's authority, held a special attraction for those who yearned for primitive Christianity or regretted the secular changes of the day. This concept also had roots in the Old Testament. Although the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods were described as restorations by resurrected New Testament figures, the fullness of their authority, powers, and doctrines was revealed by Old Testament prophets.

The keys and uses of the priesthood with regard to the temple were revealed in Kirtland in March of 1836 by Moses, Elias, and Elijah. Moses brought the keys to gather the Israelites from their scattered condition in the world into stakes of Zion. Elias restored the authority to confer the blessings and promises held in the Abrahamic dispensation. And Elijah brought the all-important sealing powers.¹³⁵ This power to "seal" meant that whatever the Prophet bound on earth would be bound in heaven, while whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven.¹³⁶ In other words, as God's agent the Prophet's actions would be recognized in heaven. What was not done by his authority was not of lasting significance. The power of God's agents thus transcended civil authority.¹³⁷ This doctrine eventually

¹³⁵D&C 110.

¹³⁶D&C 110.

¹³⁷Joseph Smith taught this throughout his life but the most dramatic of his early statements is in an epistle, "The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, To Their Brethren Abroad," *The Evening and Morning Star* [Kirtland, Ohio], February 1834, pp. 135-136; March 1834, pp. 142-144; and April, 1834, p. 152.

came to be exercised on behalf of the dead and for living families. In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith would teach that, through the sealing powers, saving religious ordinances could be performed for the dead. And, in its ultimate extension, he taught that this providential confirmation was necessary to bind husbands, wives, and children together for eternity.

As early as April of 1830 Smith refused to accept the baptisms performed in other churches. A revelation from the Lord declared "all old covenants have I caused to be done away. . ."¹³⁸ But it was in Kirtland that the Prophet's more extreme conceptions of his authority were emerging. Not only was he beginning to theorize about a theocratical kingdom, but he was trying to give it substance in the Church. By 1836, as has been noted, Smith defended himself against accusations of "licentious" conduct by saying that he was "God's prophet and God's agent." Not even the Church could censure him because "he was responsible to God only."¹³⁹ It was reported that this doctrine "created a great sensation," causing a large portion of the original church membership to withdraw.¹⁴⁰

As early as 1835, Mormon authoritarian tendencies were evident in another respect. At that time Sidney Ridgon was indicted for "solemnizing marriages without a license." He was acquitted of this charge, however, when it was learned that his license as a Campbellite

¹³⁸ D&C 22:1.

¹³⁹ Winchester, *op. cit.* See n. 111.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

minister had never been revoked.¹⁴¹ But during the height of the Kirtland apostasy the right to marry was again the issue. The day after Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland, Joseph Smith, Sr., the Prophet's father, was arrested and charged with marrying a couple illegally.¹⁴² Apparently the elder Smith and other Mormons were deliberately violating a restrictive Ohio statute because they considered it unconstitutional and, more importantly, an imposition on their divine authority.

J. C. Dowmen, a Kirtland justice of the peace said that he married couples who were later remarried by the Prophet in church rites.¹⁴³ It is known that Joseph Smith asserted his prophetic authority over the civil law on at least two occasions in Ohio. These marriages foreshadowed similar uses of authority in Nauvoo on a more extensive, but never widespread, scale, and they illustrated his adherence to "ancient" patterns or orders.

The first marriage that the Prophet performed was that of Lydia Goldthwait Baily and Newell Knight. At the age of seventeen Lydia had married Calvin Baily and had later borne him two children who soon died. "Baily," said Knight, "turned out to be a drunkard

¹⁴¹ *Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette*, October 30, 1835 as quoted in Parkin, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁴² Lucy Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁴³ Dale Morgan to Fawn Brodie, December 24, 1947. Original in the Special Collections Department, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. Morgan was explaining to Mrs. Brodie the contents of an interview he discovered between a Mr. Deming and J. C. Dowmen. A search is presently under way to locate this document for verification. Morgan was a thorough researcher and his report is probably reliable.

unworthy of a wife; letting her suffer and pine in sorrow, while he was carousing and spending even the avails [sic.] of the last cow."¹⁴⁴ Lydia left Baily and joined some friends in Canada, where she accepted Mormonism in the fall of 1833. From Canada she moved to Kirtland in May of 1835. There she met and fell in love with Knight, who proposed marriage. She recalled that Hyrum Smith prepared to get Seymour Brunson to officiate at the wedding, because his authority to marry had been recognized in southern Ohio.¹⁴⁵ Joseph Smith, however, interfered, desiring to perform the wedding himself. Hyrum expressed concern over the danger this might create for the Prophet. Nevertheless, the marriage was solemnized on Tuesday, November 23, 1835. Of the Prophet's teachings on the occasion Knight wrote: "During the evening President Smith said many things relative to marriages anciently, which were yet to be revealed."¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Smith asserted his right to perform marriages despite the Ohio law. Knight recorded his remarks at a Sabbath service on November 28, 1835 relative to this action:

I have done it by the authority of the holy Priesthood, and the Gentile law has no power to call me to an account for it. It is my religious privilege, and even the Congress of the United States has no power to make a law that would abridge the rights of my religion. I have done as I was commanded, and I know the Kingdom of God

¹⁴⁴Newel Knight, "Sketch," p. 5. Original manuscript in the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴⁵Homespun (Pseud.), "Lydia Knight's History," *The First Book of Noble Women's Lives Series* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), p. 31.

¹⁴⁶Newel Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

will prevail, and that the Saints will triumph over all their adversaries.¹⁴⁷

Joseph Smith's own version confirms Knight's memory.

I then remarked that marriage was an institution of heaven, instituted in the garden of Eden; that it was necessary it should be solemnized by the authority of the everlasting Priesthood. The ceremony was original with me, and in substance as follows--You covenant to be each other's companions through life, and discharge the duties of husband and wife in every respect; to which they assented. I then pronounced them husband and wife in the name of God, and also pronounced upon them the blessings that the Lord conferred upon Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, that is, to multiply and replenish the earth, with the addition of long life and prosperity.¹⁴⁸

Smith's action takes on even more importance when it is known that Lydia Goldthwait Baily was never granted a legal divorce from her first husband.¹⁴⁹

On January 20, 1836 Joseph Smith also married Apostle John F. Boynton and Susan Lowell. After a hymn and prayer, the Prophet "then arose and read aloud a license, (according to the law of the land) granting any minister of the Gospel the privilege of solemnizing the rights of matrimony."¹⁵⁰ Again he alluded to the "ancient" order

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.* Lydia's version is: "Our Elders have been wronged and prosecuted for marrying without a license. The Lord God of Israel has given me authority to unite the people in the holy bonds of matrimony. And from this time forth I shall use that privilege and marry whomsoever I see fit." (Homespun, *op. cit.* p. 31.)

¹⁴⁸HC 2:320.

¹⁴⁹Newel Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 6. "But," said Knight, "I prayed to the Lord and then took President Smith's Council [sic.], [and] was married to her."

¹⁵⁰HC 2:377. The next day Smith signed a certificate of marriage for William F. Calhoun and Nancy M. Gibbs which read in part that the ceremony had been performed "agreeable to the rules and regulations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Matrimony." (HC 2:377.) This same terminology was used in the

of marriage. In Smith's words, "I pronounced upon them the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and such other blessings as the Lord put into my heart."¹⁵¹ Reminiscing about the pleasantries of the celebration that followed, he commented, "I doubt whether the pages of history can boast of a more splendid and innocent wedding and feast than this, for it was conducted after the order of heaven, which has a time for all things."¹⁵²

Summary

The collective weight of these episodes and the historical context of the first revelations on plural marriage do not confirm the Brodie-Young thesis that Smith was developing his doctrines as rationalizations for his own moral indiscretions or the satisfaction of his passions. There were abundant rumors of misconduct by Smith, and his enemies capitalized on them, but there is little proof that he was as evil and manipulative as some have alleged. The overwhelming impression coming from a study of the pre-Nauvoo years is that, like the rest of Mormon theology, the tenet of plural marriage emerged from a primarily religious context. Smith's perception of his prophetic prerogatives left him untrammelled in innovative thinking, although he may have felt inhibited in implementing his ideas by societal norms and peer group resistance. The ethics of plural

Boynton wedding and is part of the article on marriage in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

¹⁵¹ HC 2:378.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

marriage for Joseph Smith were summed up in his statement: "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is."¹⁵³ It seems quite clear that Smith believed he was acting and speaking under God's direction in bringing forth this unique doctrine.

¹⁵³HC 5:135. This was given in the context of plural marriages as will be discussed in the text below. See chapt. vii.

CHAPTER IV

A REEXAMINATION OF THE PLURAL MARRIAGES
OF JOSEPH SMITH

One of the most emotional subjects in Mormon history is Joseph Smith's personal involvement in plural marriage. Controversy and uncertainty have surrounded questions about the number of women he married, the marital status of those he married, the unusual techniques he used in obtaining wives, the nature of these unions, and the number of offspring he fathered. While examining these issues in this chapter, the author will also attempt to analyze the motivation behind Smith's matrimonial behavior.

Reexamination of the Evidence for Smith's Wives

Smith's wives are named in two much-publicized, but different, lists. (See Figure 1.) The first of these appeared in an article, entitled "Plural Marriage," published in 1887 in Assistant LDS Church Historian Andrew Jenson's *Historical Record*. Jenson defended the Prophet's views and actions on religious grounds, lamenting the fact that the "apostates and other opponents of the truth" were "continually attempting to deny certain facts connected with the introduction of plural marriage." He tabulated twenty-seven supposed

wives of the Prophet.¹ A second roster was presented in 1945 in Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History*. She also included vignettes of each wife in an appendix.² Brodie added twenty-one names to Jenson's list, bringing the total to forty-eight supposed wives. She did not explain the discrepancy between the two listings, but her attitude on the subject was evident in the title of her chapter on the beginnings of Mormon plural marriage: "If a Man Entice a Maid." Thus she revealed her inclination to depict Smith as a libertine with unbridled passions. More recent, less well-known, lists have further proliferated the number of Smith's wives or "possible" wives, and they, too, have generally had the effect of heaping ridicule on Smith and his followers.³

¹Jenson, *HR* 5:219. His stated purpose is confirmed in a letter from Zina D. Young, a plural wife of the Prophet, to Mary Lightner another of the Prophet's wives. She was explaining that Jenson was gathering material for biographical sketches of Smith's wives and that he wanted "their testimonies &c that will have a good influence and substantiate [sic.] the truth he wants to have to place in his history." (Zina D. Young to Mary E. Lightner, June 8, 1887. Original in the LDS Church Archives.) Jenson produced several sketches in his first article, and it is evident that he intended to continue the project in later issues. But his work came to a halt when Church leaders expressed displeasure with what they felt to be an unwise publication of the list. (See Keith Perkins, *Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist*, [unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974], p. 40.)

²Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 335, 336; 434-465.

³The author has in his possession several graduate papers written for Religion and LDS History courses at Brigham Young University on Joseph Smith and plural marriage. This topic seems to hold special attraction for these students. Moreover, Jerald Tanner has published with the aid of an unnamed donor a list of eighty-four women "who may have been married to Joseph Smith." (Joseph Smith and Polygamy [Salt Lake City; Modern Microfilm Co., 1966], pp. 41-47.) Mrs. Brodie claimed that Stanley Ivins, a noted Mormon scholar who worked long years on Mormon polygamy, told her that he had a list of 66 or 67

Available sources indicate that none of these treatments of the number and nature of Smith's marriages are exact. The statements of the most reliable witnesses make a convincing case for his matrimonial ties to about twenty women. Additional testimony strongly suggests that he was wedded to another ten. William Clayton, Smith's personal secretary through most of the important part of the Nauvoo period, told Madison Scott in 1871 that he personally sealed one woman to Smith and "could name ten or a dozen of his wives who are now living in the Territory."⁴ This statement may not allow for any wives who died after 1844, but the tenor of Clayton's remarks was supported by Benjamin F. Johnson, another close associate of Smith in Nauvoo. In his memoir, Johnson said that the Prophet was married to eleven or twelve women by April of 1843,⁵ and in a 1903 letter to George F. Gibbs he asserted: "as to the no. [number] that Came into the Plural order before the prophets death I can think of but few names I will not now attempt to Recall."⁶

women that were sealed to Smith while he was living and 149 who were sealed to him in temple ceremonies after his death. (Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 465.) Tinney has likewise collected a list of hundreds of women who were supposedly sealed to Smith during his life and after his death. (Tinney, *op. cit.*) The common failing of Brodie and Tanner seems to be the assumption that any woman sealed to Smith in an 1846 temple ceremony had some relationship to him while he was alive.

⁴William Clayton to Madison Scott, November 11, 1871. Original in the LDS Church Archives, also reprinted in Smith, *Blood Atonement*, pp. 77-78.

⁵Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), p. 96.

⁶Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.*

Detailed examination of the Jenson and Brodie lists suggests that both authors probably overstated their case, including some women whose marital connection with Joseph Smith rested on flimsy historical evidence. However, Jenson was apparently less inclined to jump to conclusions than Mrs. Brodie. From affidavits and statements which he published, plus "other sources," Jenson concluded, "We find that the following named ladies, besides a few others, about whom we have been unable to get all the necessary information, were sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith during the last three years of life."⁷ One can only speculate about what he meant by "a few others." The principle sources for Jenson's list were the affidavits collected by Joseph F. Smith in 1869 as part of an effort to combat RLDS missionaries then in Utah preaching against Joseph Smith's conformity to the belief.⁸ In this collection two women are also mentioned who were excluded from Jenson's list.⁹

Although somewhat conservative in his approach, Jenson apparently accepted hearsay statements on some of Smith's marriages. He included eight women for whom only second-hand testimony can be found. Five of them were identified by knowledgeable Mormons, but

⁷Jenson, *HR* 5:233.

⁸The Joseph F. Smith collection of affidavits contain many of the original copies of the affidavits Jenson produced. So he must have used this as his main source in publishing his article.

⁹Nancy Marinda Johnson and Martha McBride. Jenson may have skipped Johnson because of embarrassment over the fact that she had previously been the wife of Apostle Orson Hyde. It is less obvious why he may have overlooked McBride, who was a widow at the time of her marriage to Smith.

no such credentials can be found for the other three.¹⁰ On one hand, there is little supporting evidence for the inclusion of Sarah Cleveland, while John Benbow's affidavit is the only known source for Hanna Ellis. On the other hand, the connection between Smith and Lucinda Pendleton Morgan, former wife of anti-Mason William Morgan, is backed up by various non-Mormon sources. Thus, there is unevenness in Jenson's survey, but enough historicity for agreement with most of his findings.

Mrs. Brodie, however, loosely observes that her register "is probably not complete and includes several whose relationship to Joseph is admittedly little more than presumptive."¹¹ While admitting the tenuousness of her assumptions, the tone of her text and appendix suggests that she readily accepts the authenticity of even the most

¹⁰The five with reasonable support are Fanny Alger, Sarah and Maria Lawrence, Flora Woodworth, and Sylvia Sessions. The evidence for Fanny Alger has been considered above. The author has a photocopy of a document appointing Joseph Smith as guardian of Maria and Sarah Lawrence along with several others. It is dated June 4, 1844, and is notarized by Quincy, Illinois, Justice of the Peace, A. Miller. This document was called to my attention by Dennis F. Walle, Librarian in the Illinois Survey, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. Maria was born on December 18, 1832 and Sarah on May 13, 1826, which would have made them twenty and eighteen respectively at the time. These two sisters are among the most persistent to show up in reminiscences by Mormon observers as Smith's wives. The following people have mentioned them: Benjamin F. Johnson, Lucy Walker, Lovina Walker, Emily Partridge, and William Law.

There is an unfinished affidavit for Sylvia Sessions in the Smith affidavit collection. It is not signed or notarized, but the substance of the written text is that Sylvia [Sessions] Lyon was sealed to Smith on February 8, 1842. Why this affidavit was unfinished is not known. (See Book 1:60.) There is additional evidence from her daughter, Josephine F. Fisher, who swore that her mother told her she was Smith's wife. (See n. 76 below.)

¹¹Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 434-435.

doubtful names.¹² Needless to say, the Utah Church has not been pleased with the conclusions Brodie draws from her research as to Smith's impetus for establishing the plural marriage article of faith. But Mormon scholars have not adequately contested sixteen ill-supported names.¹³

Seven of the "wives" cited by Brodie seem to have no confirmation beyond the fact that they were sealed to the deceased Joseph Smith by proxy in the Nauvoo temple prior to the exodus west in 1846. She claims that the Nauvoo Temple records show that thirty women were sealed to him in that year. Noting that twenty-two were acknowledged to have been married to him while he was alive, she declares that "it can be assumed that the remaining eight had also been" married to him.¹⁴ Brodie thereby made an unwarranted deduction primarily because she dismissed or failed to appreciate theological reasons for the Mormon practice of sealing some women to Church leaders posthumously.

As Mormon marital hierology developed, it taught that in order to be exalted men and women must be married for eternity by the proper

¹²See, for example, her comments about Lucinda Morgan on p. 301, Clarissa Hancock on p. 302 and 345, and Sarah M. Cleveland, on p. 306.

¹³They are: Clarissa Hancock, Mrs. Durfee, Sally A. Fuller, Mrs. A. O., Miss B., Mary Ann Frost, Olive Andrews, Mrs. Edward Blossom, Elizabeth Davis, Cordilia Calista Morley, Sarah Scott, Nancy Maria Smith, Jane Tibbets, Phebe Watrous, Nancy Mariah Winchester, and Sophia Woodman.

¹⁴Brodie, *op. cit.*, 434. On this point Marvin Hill said that he had personally examined the Nauvoo Temple record and that "there were only seventeen marriages listed . . . and it made no indication which wives were Smith's previously nor whether or not he lived with them. . . ." (Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?", p. 95.)

priesthood authority. In private instructions to Benjamin F. Johnson and his wife in Macedonia, on May 16, 1843, Joseph Smith explained that in the highest degree of eternal glory--which Mormons refer to as the Celestial Kingdom¹⁵--there were also "three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood, (meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage); and if he does not, he cannot obtain it." The revelation continued, "He may enter into the other[s] but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase."¹⁶ Section 132 also taught that those who were not married for eternity by the power of the Priesthood would be "angels" or "ministering servants" and would "remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever."¹⁷ Some spinsters and widows had little prospect of marriage, and since others were married to men who were either non-members or were unfaithful to the Church, the possibility of their exaltation was thus in jeopardy.¹⁸ Under these circumstances, some women were sealed

¹⁵Mormonism teaches that there are three "degrees" of eternal rewards which are, from the least to the greatest: Telestial, Terrestrial, and Celestial. They believe that through the atonement of Jesus Christ all people except the most wicked--Sons of Perdition--will be resurrected and given a "degree" of salvation in one of these kingdoms based on their faith and works.

¹⁶HC 5:392. These instructions have since been cannonized as Section 131 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants.

¹⁷D&C 132:16-17

¹⁸This idea was closely allied with the Mormon concept of "adoption" in which prominent men in the Church had other church members sealed into their families. (See Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of

to Smith after his death to secure a better eternal reward. It was Benjamin F. Johnson who said that few women were sealed to Smith in life "but the No. [number] soon after his death began to increase."¹⁹ These marriages were obviously celestial and spiritual, not terrestrial.

An example of how Brodie has allowed her "assumptions" to take her beyond the facts can be seen in the case of Mary Ann Pratt. This woman was married to Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt on May 9, 1837. But because she was sealed to Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo temple in 1846, Mrs. Brodie concludes that "it may be assumed that Mrs. Pratt had also been" married to him in his life time.²⁰ There is no evidence that Smith ever approached either of the Pratts concerning this matter. In fact, he even allowed Pratt to have plural wives in Nauvoo. The reason for the 1846 sealing can be explained, according to Parley P. Pratt, by the fact that he consented to it in the hope that it would alleviate some marital difficulties he was then having with Mary Ann.²¹

Mrs. Brodie has included other women on the basis of inadequate second-hand evidence. Two of them, simply identified as "Mrs. A. S." and "Miss B." are traceable to the notorious anti-Mormon John C. Bennett's *History of the Saints*. Brodie goes along with Bennett's opinion because he correctly cited other wives such as Louisa Beaman.²²

Salvation, 1830-1900," *BYU Studies*, XIV [Spring, 1974], 291-314. See also B. F. Johnson on p. 96 above, and n. 13, chapt. v.)

¹⁹ Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

²¹ "Family Record of Parley Parker Pratt," March 11, 1850 as cited in Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?," p. 95.

²² Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

She also alleges that Smith had a week-long orgy with Mrs. Edward Blossom, citing Wilhelm Wyl, who claimed to have obtained that information from Smith's house steward.²³ Still other wives are mentioned on the basis of tradition. Vienna Jacques is on the list because "descendants of her neighbors" said she was Smith's wife, while Clarissa Hancock is included because of a family claim which is presently undocumented.²⁴ Sarah Scott and Nancy Maria Smith are names taken from a passing reference by Apostle Orson F. Whitney.²⁵ So Brodie is quite right in stating that she has been "little more than presumptive" at some points.

Close scrutiny of the sources illustrates the nature of the problem under discussion. Figure 1 shows that only fifteen women left affidavits professing to be Smith's wives. Three others left personal statements to the same effect, and two more were attested to by persons claiming to have witnessed their marriages to Smith. Indirect statements of well-informed and reliable persons seem to substantiate the inclusion of another eleven spouses,²⁶ whereas all additional names appear dubious. Thus, it seems safe to regard only the thirty-one women whose underlined names appear in Figure 1, below, as Joseph Smith's marriage partners.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 462.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 463, 441.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 463-464.

²⁶They are: Fanny Alger, Delcena Johnson, Sarah Cleveland, Maria and Sarah Lawrence, Flora Woodworth, Hanna Ellis, Sylvia Sessions, Lucinda Morgan, Nancy M. Winchester, and perhaps Vienna Jacques. The last is included because there is an incomplete affidavit in Smith, Affidavit Book, 4:56, which was intended for her signature. Why she did not sign it is unknown at present.

Wives of Joseph Smith According to Fawn Brodie	Personal Affidavit	Personal Statement	Witnesses Present	Other Mormon Statements	Those on Andrew Jenson's List	Non-Mormon Statements	Temple Sealings According to Fawn Brodie
1. <u>Fannie Alger</u>				x	x		
2. <u>Lucinda Pendleton (Morgan)</u>				x	x	x	
3. <u>Prescinda Huntington (Buell)</u>		x	x	x	x	x	
4. <u>Nancy Marinda Johnson (Hyde)</u>	x			x		x	x
5. <u>Clarissa Reed (Hancock)</u>							
6. <u>Louisa Beaman</u>			x	x	x	x	
7. <u>Zina D. Huntington (Jacobs)</u>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8. <u>Mary E. Rollins (Lightner)</u>	x	x		x	x		x
9. <u>Patty Bartlett (Sessions)</u>		x				x	
10. <u>Delcena Johnson (Sherman)</u>				x			
11. <u>Mrs. (Durfee)</u>						x	
12. <u>Sally Ann Fuller</u>						x	x
13. <u>Mrs. A. (S.)</u>						x	
14. <u>Miss B.</u>						x	
15. <u>Eliza R. Snow</u>	x	x		x	x	x	
16. <u>Sarah Ann Whitney</u>	x	x	x	x	x	x	
17. <u>Sarah M. Kinsley (Cleveland)</u>					x		x
18. <u>Elvira Cowles</u>	x				x		x
19. <u>Martha McBride (Knight)</u>	x			x			x
20. <u>Ruth D. Voss (Sayers)</u>	x			x	x		

Figure 1. Sources of Evidence for the Wives of Joseph Smith.²⁷

Wives of Joseph Smith According to Fawn Brodie	Personal Affi- davit	Personal State- ment	Witnesses Present	Other Mormon Statements	Those on Andrew Jenson's List	Non-Mormon Statements	Temple Sealings According to Fawn Brodie
21. <u>Desdomena W. Fuller</u>	x			x	x		
22. <u>Emily D. Partridge</u>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
23. <u>Eliza M. Partridge</u>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
24. <u>Almera W. Johnson</u>	x		x	x	x		
25. <u>Lucy Walker</u>	x	x	x	x	x		x
26. <u>Helen M. Kimball</u>		x		x	x		x
27. <u>Maria Lawrence</u>				x	x	x	x
28. <u>Sarah Lawrence</u>				x	x	x	x
29. <u>Flora Ann Woodworth</u>				x	x		
30. <u>Rhoda Richards</u>	x	x			x		x
31. <u>Hanna Ellis</u>				x	x		
32. <u>Melissa Lott</u>	x	x			x	x	x
33. <u>Fanny Young (Murray)</u>			x	x	x		
34. <u>Olive G. Frost</u>					x	x	
35. <u>Mary Ann Frost (Pratt)</u>							x
36. <u>Olive Andrews</u>							x
37. <u>Mrs. Edward (Blossom)</u>						x	
38. <u>Elizabeth Davis</u>							x
39. <u>Mary Huston</u>							x
40. <u>Vienna Jacques</u>	?					x	x

Figure 1, cont.

Wives of Joseph Smith According to Fawn Brodie	Personal Affidavit	Personal Statement	Witnesses Present	Other Mormon Statements	Those on Andrew Jenson's List	Non-Mormon Statements	Temple Sealings According to Fawn Brodie
41. Cordelia Calista Morley	?						x
42. Sarah Scott				x			
43. <u>Sylvia Sessions</u>				x	x		x
44. Nancy Maria Smith				x			x
45. Jane Tibbets							x
46. Phebe Watrous							
47. <u>Nancy Mariah Winchester</u>				x	x		x
48. Sophia Woodman							x
TOTALS	15	12	9	27	27	20	26

Figure 1, cont.

²⁷The sources for the compilation of this chart are Brodie's Appendix C, Jenson's list, the Smith Affidavit Books, other affidavits, and many other statements from various sources. A listing of sources is unnecessary here, for many of their texts have been published in defenses of polygamy mentioned in this work. Newly discovered sources will be cited in other appropriate places in the narrative. In most cases I have retained the spelling of the Brodie list. Minor variations appear in the text when cited from the sources. Parentheses indicate the assumed names of those who were married previous to any supposed connection to Smith.

Biographical data has been obtained on the age, previous marital status, and wedding dates of Smith's actual and alleged wives. This enables one to get something of a composite picture of these women. Figures Two, Three, and Four contain noteworthy elements of a more detailed summary in Appendix C.

The Ages of Smith's Wives at Their Marriage

Forty females, who have been correctly or incorrectly named as Smith's wives, have known birthdays. They averaged twenty-nine years at the time of their reported marriages, ranging in age from fifteen to fifty-nine. The eighteen with verified wedding dates averaged just under thirty-one years. The probable range for the other twenty-two was from fourteen to fifty-four; the average about twenty-eight. A more refined breakdown of the age groupings of these wives is found in Figure 2.²⁸

	Age at Marriage for Those With Known Marriage Dates	Unknown but Probable Marriage Dates
Age: 15-20	6	6
21-30	4	9
31-40	5	4
41-50	0	2
51-60	3	1
61 and over	0	0
Totals	18	22

Figure 2. Age at Marriage for 40 Wives with Known Birthdays.

²⁸For unknown marriage dates, the author has taken the year

If we confine ourselves to the twenty most likely wives we find the average age at date of wedding to be 30.58, and if we take the thirty-one most likely wives their average age at date of wedding is 29.4 years. The breakdown of these two groupings is as shown in Figure 3.

	20 Most Positive Wives	31 Probable Wives
Age 15-20	6	10
21-30	5	8
31-40	5	7
41-50	0	0
51-60	3	4
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals	20	31

Figure 3. Age At Marriage for the Most Probable Wives.

Consideration of the twelve youngest wives may deserve special comment (see Figure 4). The average age of this group at marriage was 18.25 years. Two of the twelve, Cordelia Morley and Nancy Mariah Winchester, are in the doubtful category as Smith's wives. Of the two, Winchester is the most likely wife. Seven of the remaining ten women were married to Smith between March and September of 1843. Four of these persons (Emily Partridge, Lucy Walker, Maria Lawrence, and Sarah Lawrence) were wards of the Prophet and were residing in

1842 as the possible year of marriage for the purpose of averaging. For those marriages that must have occurred before or after a certain date, an average was taken between that year and 1840 or 1844, as the case may be.

	Age When Married	Marriage Date
1. Fanny Alger	17	1833?
2. Sarah Whitney	17	July 27, 1842
3. Emily Partridge	19	March 4, 1843
4. Lucy Walker	17	May 1, 1843
5. Helen M. Kimball	15	? , 1843
6. Maria Lawrence	19	Spring 1843
7. Sarah Lawrence	17	Spring 1843
8. Flora A. Woodworth	16	Spring 1843
9. Cordelia C. Morely	19	?
10. Nancy M. Winchester	14	?
11. Melissa Lott	19	September 20, 1843
12. Zina D. Huntington	20	October 27, 1841

Figure 4. Age and Marriage Date of the Twelve Younger Wives.

his home when their weddings occurred.²⁹ Fanny Alger, too, had been living at the Prophet's home in Kirtland at the time of her marriage.

Zina D. Huntington was the only one of this group who was already married when she became Smith's wife. In Fawn Brodie's words, she "has perhaps the most complicated record of all."³⁰ She married Henry Bailey Jacobs seven and a half months before her marriage to Smith in 1841. At the latter date, she was apparently seven months pregnant with Jacob's child. The issue is complicated

²⁹The Partridges were fatherless, and the Lawrence sisters were orphans.

³⁰Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 442.

by the exact nature of Zina's relationship with Jacobs. In an interview many years later, she reported that her marriage to him "was unhappy, and we parted."³¹ But in 1846, when she was sealed to Brigham Young (as were others of Smith's wives), Jacobs apparently stood as witness--a fact that seems to indicate a fairly solid church standing. Jacobs, like Parley Pratt, may have agreed to the second marriage because of difficulties in his own marriage.

Thus, in at least six cases Smith may have felt that there were good social reasons for his plural marriages.³² Moreover, three of the women involved--Emily Partridge, Sarah Whitney, and Helen Kimball--were daughters of Church leaders.³³ If Michael Quinn is correct in his recent observations on the creation of a loose type of Mormon dynasticism through the appointment of family members to hierarchical positions and intermarriage, then there may have been other reasons for these unions with great age disparities.³⁴ It was Helen Kimball who noted that her father offered her to Smith because of a "great desire to be connected with the Prophet."³⁵

³¹John W. Wight, interview with Zina D. H. Young, October 1, 1898, in "Evidence From Zina D. Huntington-Young," *Saints Herald*, LII (July 11, 1905), 28-30.

³²Brodie hints at a possible economic motivation behind Smith's proposal to the Lawrence and Partridge sisters. She says Smith had "considerably reduced" the Partridge's legacy by borrowing \$10,000 and that the Lawrences were left with \$8,000 in English gold. Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 339.)

³³Fanny Alger was also the niece of Levi W. Hancock, who was a member of the First Council of Seventy.

³⁴Quinn, "Organizational Development. . .," chapt. iv.

³⁵Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney to her children, March 30, 1881. Original in the LDS Church Archives. This appears to be a

Joseph Smith was sealed to Sarah Ann Whitney on July 27, 1842, by her father, and in the presence of her mother, Elizabeth. Smith felt close ties to this family from his earliest days in Kirtland.³⁶ Newel K. Whitney had been ordained the second Bishop of the Church--an office which had a unique significance derived from Aaron, the brother of Moses.³⁷ A special revelation was given to Whitney through the Prophet, explaining the procedure he was to follow in the ceremony. The charge as to what he should say at the conclusion of the rites is

statement directed to her posterity similar in nature to statements made by some Mormon women to be opened by their posterity at the centennial of the Church.

³⁶For the beginnings of this association on the day Smith arrived in Kirtland, see *HC* 1:145-146. The Smiths resided with the Whitneys for several weeks after their arrival.

³⁷The office of Bishop is to preside over the Aaronic Priesthood. Mormons believe that, when Moses found the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf, he was prevented from giving them the higher law of the gospel which was to be administered through his own Melchizedek Priesthood. Instead, he went back into the mountain and there received the Law of Moses which was a lesser law to prepare them for the gospel. This lesser law was to be administered through the Priesthood which Aaron possessed and which is now called the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood. (See D&C 84:14-30, and Exodus 34 in Joseph Smith, Jun., *Inspired Version: The Holy Scriptures* [Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1961].) This is the explanation Mormons give to Hebrews 7:11-12. Bishops in modern Mormonism then are to preside over the more temporal work of the Church by virtue of their ordination as a Bishop. But they are also ordained High Priests, and, as such they preside over all the Melchizedek Priesthood in their ward. Revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants explain that, if a man is a direct, literal descendant of Aaron, he has the right to be a Bishop in the Church without counselors. If a man is not a descendant of Aaron, then he must be ordained a High Priest and serve with counselors. In either case, worthiness is required of a man. Literal descendants of Aaron or not, one must be called by revelation in the proper fashion of other Priesthood ordinations. (See D&C 68:14-22, and 107:13-17.) There are few if any known Bishops who are descendants of Aaron in the Church today.

suggestive of this dynasticism and the importance the Priesthood played in the plural marriages that were performed. Perhaps because both parents had given their consent to the marriage of their daughter --probably the first such case in the Church--and because of the important nature of his own and Whitney's blood lineage, Smith promised that special blessings would come to the whole family through this union.³⁸ Moreover, this action was apparently taken in anticipation of future benefits. Whitney said at the time.

I do it in my own name and in the name of my wife, your mother, and in the name of my holy progenitors, by the right of birth which is of priesthood, vested in me by revelation and commandment and promise of the living God, obtained by the Holy Melchizedek Gethrow³⁹

³⁸The importance of Smith's lineage is stressed by many early church leaders who apparently taught that he may have been a direct descendant of Jesus and/or the Apostles as well as the ancient patriarchs. (D&C 27:10; 132:30; 11 Nephi 3; and Brigham Young, discourse of October 9, 1859, *JD* 7:290.) Such men as Heber C. Kimball attached this meaning to Smith's statement that "You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history." (*HC* 6:317. See for example Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball: An Apostle, The Father and Founder of the British Mission* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967], p. 33, and compare his discourse of September 6, 1856, *JD* 5:215-216, in which he speaks of church leaders as descendants from the "true aristocracy.") D&C 86:8-11 explains that the priesthood of the Apostles came to them through the lineage of their fathers and through them it would be preserved and remain "until the restoration of all things. . . ." For the possible importance this type of lineage was to have empowered Smith with, see D&C 113:1-6. Whitney's own lineage and its importance is suggested in the quote in the text.

³⁹As written this particular sentence is unclear in its meaning. It is doubtful that the intent was to suggest that Gethrow (Jethro) the father of Moses was Melchizedek since other Mormon revelations say that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Abraham preceded Jethro by generations according to Mormon scripture and therefore would be out of the proper time sequence. A more likely rendering would be: "obtained by the Holy Melchizedek [,] Gethrow [,] and others of the Holy Fathers, . . ." The insertion of these commas would then give the meaning that Whitney received the same Priesthood held by these ancients.

and others of the Holy Fathers, commanding the name of the Lord all those powers to concentrate in you and through you to your posterity forever. All these things I do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that through this order he may be glorified and that through the power of anointing David may reign King over Israel, which shall hereafter be revealed.⁴⁰

Smith also had Whitney and his wife rebaptized on Saturday August 26, 1842, and the next morning, while hiding from legal officials attempting to extradite him to Missouri, the Prophet gave the family additional blessings. Whitney said that all were reconfirmed as members of the Church and granted "all good things & eternal life in the first resurrection." The Bishop was specifically promised rewards above those given to his fellow mortals. He was to have a long life, keys of the Priesthood, and a "double portion" of the spirit of the Lord which had been conferred upon others. Finally, he said he was assured "all gifts possessed by my progenitors who held the Priest Hood before me anciently."⁴¹ Obviously, the faithfulness

⁴⁰Revelation to Newel K. Whitney through Joseph Smith, July 27, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives. This document is undated and unsigned. The existence of this item has been known for some time. (See Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:226 and Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Causes of Mormon non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, 1839-1846," [unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1967], p. 99, n. 27.) More recently it has been published by the Tanners in Salt Lake City. (See H. Michael Marquardt, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1973], p. 23, and also *The Salt Lake City Messenger*, May, 1973, p. 5.) Marquardt, however, had a "typed copy" and did not include the final non-revelatory portion of the document in the published version. Godfrey's statement that Sarah Ann Whitney wrote a postscript on the revelation--which was not on the copy investigated by the author--suggests that there may be two copies extant.

⁴¹The data in this paragraph comes from the same document, especially from the later portion on the second page.

of this family in accepting the new institution of marriage had deeply moved Smith.

Joseph Smith also married some widows. There is evidence that he may have associated plural marriage with the ancient Jewish custom of levirate marriage. This tradition, based on Deuteronomy 25: 5-10, provided that if a man died without posterity his brother should marry his wife and produce it for him. Hyrum Smith is quoted as having said this law "must be again established."⁴² It appears that this concept was incorporated and embellished into church practice in Nauvoo. Seemingly, if a man did not have a brother or one that was a faithful member, a worthy church brother could act in his behalf. The idea of producing children for the deceased husband in the levirate law also took on an eternal aspect in its Mormon setting. Hyrum Smith, married the widow of Robert B. Thompson, but according to Mercy Thompson it was "with a covenant to deliver me up in the morning of the resurrection to Robert Blashel Thompson with whatever offspring should be of that union."⁴³ Similar promises were made by those who married Smith's widows after the martyrdom. Thus, even possible social motivations were tinged with theological overtones.

⁴²"Words of the Prophets, Sprictural [sic.] Items." Original in the Wilford Woodruff Collection in the LDS Church Archives. The author is indebted to Van Hale, a researcher and student of the teachings of Joseph Smith, for pointing this item out. When it was shown to Dean Jessee he attempted to verify the handwriting and was able to state that it was not Wilford Woodruff's. But he was unable to determine the authorship of the notebook before the author left Utah.

⁴³Mercy Thompson to Joseph Smith III, September 5, 1883. Copy in the LDS Church Archives.

Joseph Smith and Previously Married Women

Thirteen women who were reportedly wedded to Smith were already married to other men. Three of these women, Hancock, Frost, and Blossom, fall into our category of doubtful wives. Three more, Morgan, Cleveland, and Young, were attested to by others, although Cleveland's credentials are weak. Seven of these women gave personal proof of polyandrous ties to Smith. Since we have said that the Mormon Church never taught polyandry this unusual marital relationship requires some explanation. Mormon theology provided an ethical rationale for weddings of a utilitarian nature, but there were also some obvious social purposes served by some of these unions.

Mormon Apostle, John A. Widtsoe has explained that several types of eternal marriages were taught in the early days. The most conventional was the condition of two living persons sealed to each other for time and eternity. A second form involved the sealing of a living person to a deceased one, and a third was the sealing of two deceased people. The fourth and most unusual type was the sealing of two living persons for eternity only. This latter form meant that there was no connubial association between the two on earth. Widtsoe thus rationalizes most of Smith's nuptial ties in the context of this fourth arrangements.

Zealous women, some of them married as well as unmarried, loving the cause of the restored gospel, considered their condition in the hereafter and asked that they might be sealed to the Prophet for eternity. They were not to be his wives on earth, in mortality, but only after death, in the eternities. Such marriages led to

much misunderstanding by those not of the Church and unfamiliar with its doctrines and practices.⁴⁴

Marvin Hill has apparently adopted a similar position in his evaluation of Smith's wives in general, arguing that the number of women with whom Smith may have had conjugal relations is probably less than fifteen.⁴⁵ Evidence to substantiate this assertion is unclear because few of the women left statements relative to their intimacies with Smith. Also, the exact number of his children or reported children remains obscure, but was apparently small enough to strengthen the Widtsoe-Hill argument.

Nevertheless, Mormon theology did provide an ethical basis for men marrying undivorced women. We have shown that in the Kirtland period Smith joined the married Lydia Baily to Newel Knight, justifying his action on the basis of his prophetic right to do as God directed him. In addition, some early church leaders regarded marriages by civil officials and non-Mormon clergymen as illegitimate. This view went hand in glove with the notion that the theocratic kingdom of God should be established to supersede all temporal governments which were seen as corrupt usurpations of God's authority. A little handwritten volume in the LDS Church Archives entitled "Words of the Prophets, Sprictural [sic.] Items" quotes Smith as saying in 1841, "He that is called of God is not only a minister of the Law given by God but is also anointed to make Law according to their

⁴⁴ John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1957), p. 240.

⁴⁵ Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?," p. 95.

Authority."⁴⁶ While this statement is probably to be understood in a religious context, it is obvious that Smith and other leaders thought of marriage as a religious ordinance. So they may well have felt justified in making their own law relative to it. This notion is given weight by Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which says of civil marriages:

All covenants, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.⁴⁷

In April of 1844 the Prophet's brother, Hyrum, explained his understanding of this stipulation.

I read, that what God joins together let no man put asunder [.] I see magistrates and priests in the world, but not one who is empowered to join together by the authority of God. Nor yet have I seen any priest that dare say that he has the authority of God, there is not a sectarian Priest in Christendom that dare say he has the authority by direct revelation from God. When I look at the seal of the new Covenant, & reflect that all the old covenants made by the authority of man are only made to be in force during the natural life and end there I rejoice that what is done by the Lord has an endless duration. No marriage is valid in the morn of the resurrection unless the marriage covenant be sealed on earth by one having the keys and power from the Almighty God to seal on earth as it shall be bound in heaven.⁴⁸

⁴⁶"Words of the Prophets," *op. cit.*

⁴⁷D&C 132:7.

⁴⁸Hyrum Smith, discourse of April 8, 1844. Original manuscripts in the Minutes Collection in the LDS Church Archives. Two manuscript copies are extant. The one followed here is in the handwriting of Jonathan Grimshaw, which is probably the earliest of the two as evidenced by its obvious rough draft nature. In a letter to Joseph Smith III, John Taylor (not the third LDS president), a resident of Harrisville, Utah, recalled some teachings he heard

These passages imply some readiness to recognize civil authority during mortality. But the Prophet felt that only those who had his approval could properly exercise the religious ordinance, and that he could void marriages that were not valid in eternity. Indeed, there is evidence that Smith and others willfully "annulled" civil marriages at Nauvoo. They likened this activity to their practice of rebaptizing converts. That is, on some occasions they honored marriages by non-priesthood authority no more than the baptisms by non-Mormon ministers.

Orson Pratt, one of the foremost theologians of the early Church, was perhaps the leading proponent of this concept. In 1847, Wilford Woodruff recorded some remarks by Pratt on the subject.

He said that as all the ordinances of the gospel administered by the world since the apostasy [sic.] of the church was illegal, in like manner was the marriage ceremony [sic.] illegal and all the world who had been

from Hyrum Smith in late May or early June of 1844. He said: "Some three weeks before the murder in Carthage Jail I was present by the invitation and kindness of a brother at a meeting of the high priests and seventy, held in the seventy's hall, called by President Hyrum Smith, at which meeting Hyrum addressed those present. During his teaching, which was exceedingly moral and instructive, he referred to spiritual wifery, and in strong and emphatic language denounced it and declared that there was no such doctrine believed in or taught by Joseph, himself, or any of the heads of the church; and authorized those present to so state; and to report to him if they heard any one so teaching such doctrine.

I never heard the doctrine of spiritual wifery, celestial marriage, plurality, or polygamy taught by any one during the lifetime of Joseph and Hyrum and during my connection with the church before their death. Had any such thing been taught I was in good position to have known it as any other officer in the church outside of the leading men themselves. . . .

Pres. Hyrum Smith particularly impressed it as the duty of all, especially the teachers, to put down any such doctrine, and to report to him any one who should be found so teaching." ("Evidence of John Taylor," *The Saints Herald*, LII [July 11, 1905], 28.) This report was confirmed by Thomas A. Lyne (*Ibid.*).

begotten through the illegal marriage were bastards & not sons & hence they had to enter into the law of adoption & be adopted into the Priesthood in order to become sons & legal heir [sic.] of salvation.⁴⁹

Again, in an August, 1873 sermon in Salt Lake City, Pratt reiterated this idea. "I said their [non-Mormon] baptisms are illegal. Now let me go a little further, and say that the ordinance of marriage is illegal among all people, nations and tongues, unless administered by a man appointed by new revelation from God to join the male and female as husband and wife."⁵⁰

Pratt's brother, Parley must have held similar views, for he married the undivorced Eleanor McLean in Utah. She had not been happy with her first husband and had been abused by him for many years. After her conversion to Mormonism she left McLean and later married Pratt without her first husband's knowledge or a divorce from him. The tragic consequences of this episode drag out over several years, but finally McLean tracked Pratt down and murdered him.⁵¹ In later years a reporter for the *New York World* questioned Eleanor about her justification for remarrying without a divorce. The *World* quoted her as saying, "the sectarian priests have no power from God to marry; and as a so-called marriage ceremony performed by them is no marriage at all, no divorce was needed."⁵²

⁴⁹Wilford Woodruff, Journal, August 15, 1847. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

⁵⁰Orson Pratt, discourse of August 11, 1871, *JD* 16:175.

⁵¹This story is detailed in Steven Pratt, "Eleanor McLean and the Murder of Parley P. Pratt," *BYU Studies*, XV (Winter, 1975), 225-256.

⁵²*New York World*, November 23, 1869, as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 233.

The minutes of the Nauvoo High Council for the years 1842 to 1844 are also instructive in regard to this early church attitude toward civil marriage and divorce.⁵³ Apparently it was common at this time for separated, but undivorced, persons to remarry without benefit of church sanction or civil divorce. As the Church's chief judicatory body, the High Council tried eight different cases in early 1842 involving married men or women who acquired additional spouses. Several of the most notable cases illustrated how such matters were handled by the ecclesiastical leaders.

In April of 1842, the case of Jesse Turpin was appealed from the Seventy's quorum. He had been excommunicated by that assembly for marrying another man's wife. Turpin was acquitted by the appellate

⁵³ Recently a non-Mormon scholar, Larry Foster, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, has been doing some interesting research into another area of evidence of a unique conception of divorce in Nauvoo. He has examined a small pamphlet published there by Udney Hay Jacob which contains an elaborate justification of plural marriage for married men on the basis of estrangement in the first marriage. The argument is that if the wife is estranged her recourse is divorce, but if the husband is alienated he cannot leave his first wife, he can only marry additional wives. (Udney Hay Jacob, *An Extract, From a Manuscript Entitled The Peace Maker, or the Doctrines of the Millennium: Being a Treatise on Religion and Jurisprudence, Or a New System of Religion and Politics* [Nauvoo: Joseph Smith, 1842].) Foster has prepared a short article which is presently ready for publication.

Mormon scholars have generally dismissed this pamphlet as the work of a crackpot but Foster suggests, as was originally done by John D. Lee, that it may have been a trial balloon encouraged by Joseph Smith. (See, Kenneth W. Godfrey, "A New Look at the Alleged Little Known Discourse by Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies*, IX Autumn, 1968, 49-53; Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 146.) Certainly Foster has found many things in Mormon theology which are consistent with attitudes expressed therein. Early in 1845, Parley P. Pratt published more orthodox "hard line" views on divorce. (*The Prophet*, April 5, 1845.)

court on the technicality that only the circumstantial evidence of one witness could be produced to substantiate the charge.⁵⁴

A more lengthy and somewhat humorous trial involved John Wells Taylor and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Cook. Cook's first wife passed away, leaving him with three children. The family was in "destitute circumstances," so friends advised Cook to remarry. After a short acquaintance, he married a woman identified in the Council's minutes as Mary, or "the catfish woman." She turned out to be something of a foul-mouthed shrew, who was "in the habit of traveling about nights" and "shamfully" [sic.] mistreating Cook's children. She "entirely refused to be subject" to Cook and even threatened him and his children with violence. Finally, he "whipped her pretty severely thinking that might bring her to her duty." Apparently John W. Taylor offered to buy her for her weight in catfish. Cook took the offer as a joke. However, his wife and Taylor "had it as a bargain" and apparently began to live together. Hyrum Smith, in rendering a decision on charges against Cook for unchristian conduct and selling his wife, severely reprimanded him for whipping her. But Smith said that he "thought that Cook had acted as well as could be expected under his circumstances and decided that he should be acquitted." John C. Annis, who had performed the Taylor-Cook marriage was tried

⁵⁴"Minutes of the Nauvoo High Council," April 22, 1842, p. 41. Original manuscript in the Nauvoo Collection in the LDS Church Archives. At the time the author searched through this collection it had not been catalogued and indexed. He is indebted to Ron Watt, Supervisor of the Archives Search Room, and Jeff Johnson, head cataloguer, both of whom are employees in the LDS Church Historical Department, for securing access to this collection.

the same day for his part in the affair. He "frankly confessed," said he had acted in ignorance, and was therefore acquitted. Later that week Taylor and Mrs. Cook were summarily expelled from the church.⁵⁵

In December of 1842, John Thorp left his wife, Charity, and beguiled Sarah Miller into becoming his wife. At the ensuing trial, Sarah Miller pleaded "ignorance," saying she "did not know but she had a right to marry him [,] that Thorp, used many arguments to induce her to have him and finely convinced her that it was right." Meanwhile, the abandoned Charity Thorp also remarried. She had been doing some house work for Thomas Prouse, a widower. When he learned that she was having marital difficulties and was not being provided for, he "became more & more attached to her." As the acquaintance progressed, Prouse's children also became fond of her and did not want her to leave their home. They "often solicited their father to marry her which at last he did" on December 22, 1842. Prouse defended himself on the grounds that Thorp had abused and neglected his wife. Hyrum Smith also rendered the decision in this case. Thomas Thorp and Sarah Miller were excommunicated, while Charity Thorp and Thomas Prouse were "disfellowshipped."⁵⁶

In other cases the Council could be more lenient and understanding. On January 21, 1843, Henry Wilson petitioned the Council

⁵⁵*Ibid.*. January 21, 1843, and January 25, 1843.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, January 21, 1843. The minutes say Thorp enlisted the help of "Dr. Forster." This may have been Dr. Robert D. Foster, who figures in the difficulties during the latter part of Smith's life.

to know "whether, in his present condition, it would be wisdom, and also if it would be justifiable by the laws of God and man, for him to unite himself in matrimony, or not, as he had a living wife." He noted that she was a "very contentious, disobedient and ungovernable [sic.] woman" who "would not submit to good order, or abide his council and altogether refused to live with [him]." The couple had been separated five years, and Wilson had fallen in love with another woman. Hyrum Smith and William Marks ruled that Wilson could remarry if he "felt justified and could sustain himself against the laws of the land."⁵⁷

Likewise, James Reed and Mary Powell were sustained in marriage even though she had not been divorced from her first husband. The Powells had been separated for over three years, and Mr. Powell was viewed as a man "of bad character." Moreover, he, too, was endeavoring to get remarried. The Council's judgment did not explain the future of the Reed-Powell relationship, but was brief and to the point: "Parties acquitted and held in fellowship, the council agreed to it."⁵⁸

Perhaps the most interesting case of those who were treated leniently was that of John Blazzard and Mrs. Pool. The Pools were English converts. For some unknown reason Mr. Pool remained in England while his wife moved to Nauvoo, where she married Blazzard. Testimony at the trial indicated that Mrs. Pool's conduct had been "unfair to her husband, who "wished to continue to live with her." In

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, January 25, 1843.

fact, it was observed that they had "parted with each other affectionately when she left England." In addition, when Blazzard got Brigham Young's advance opinion, he was advised that the second marriage would be inappropriate. Through Gustavius Hills, Blazzard had also asked Joseph Smith for his opinion. But Smith "advised that Blazzard and Mrs. Pool be married," and Hills performed the rite on an island in the Mississippi. Mrs. Pool reasoned that this was right because her husband had abused her when she was pregnant and had been "cross" toward her since they had joined the Church. Hyrum Smith testified that he had also advised against the marriage unless she was divorced. He further gave his opinion that the resultant situation was adulterous. Accordingly, Blazzard and Pool were excommunicated on January 25, 1843. Strangely enough, on February 4, 1843, the case was reheard because additional testimony showed Mrs. Pool's first husband had committed adultery. Apparently, Blazzard and Mrs. Pool were then readmitted into the Church by baptism. We do not know what followed, but this marriage seems to have finally received Church sanction.⁵⁹

Thus it appears that men or women were permitted to remarry without a divorce if it could be proven that their former spouses' conduct was adulterous or seriously marred by unfaithfulness. On the other hand, Saints who were considered guilty of gross marital misconduct were judged harshly. While in one or two instances trial minutes reveal some concern for the existing state laws, the High Council generally paid little heed to such regulations.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, January 25, and February 4, 1843.

The spread of plural marriage among Mormons was also attributable to the fact that Joseph Smith and other leaders engaged in that practice for pragmatic and social, as well as theological reasons. Three of Smith's wives experienced marital difficulties in their first marriage, and it appears that he wed them out of concern for both their earthly and eternal welfare. For example, Prescinda Huntington Buell's relationship with her first husband, Norman, was apparently shaky. In a letter to her descendants, written in 1880, Prescinda explained that Mr. Buell left the Church in Missouri in 1839, but that "The Lord gave me strength to Stand alone & keep the faith amid heavy persecution."⁶⁰ In 1841 she was married to Joseph Smith. It is not known if she first obtained a legal divorce. Under the circumstances, however, it seems doubtful.

Similar conditions attended the marriage of Prescinda's sister Zina Huntington. In 1898 John W. Wight questioned Zina about the rather odd circumstances of her two quick marriages and her pregnancy at the time of her union with Smith. She stated that her first marriage was unsatisfactory, but was indignant and somewhat confused by this inquiry. When Wight stated, "Mrs. Young, you claim, I believe, that you were not married to him [Smith] for time," she agreed, saying that the marriage was "For eternity." This implied a spiritual marriage only. But later on in the interview, Wight returned to the nature of her relationship with Smith and she declared that she had been married to him for "time and eternity." When Wight

⁶⁰ Prescinda L. Kimball Smith, to her eldest grand daughter living in 1830, April 1, 1881. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

tried to reconcile the two divergent answers, Zina replied, I meant eternity."⁶¹ These remarks seem to imply that Zina may have been married to Smith because of an unsuitable first marriage or at least that he wedded her mainly with an eye to her future celestial glory.

The case of Mary Rollins Lightner is somewhat unique. On August 11, 1835 this Mormon woman married Adam Lightner, a man who never embraced her faith. Later, in February of 1842, she accepted Joseph Smith's proposal of marriage. In a letter to John A. Young in 1892, she wrote, "I could explain some things in regard to my living with Mr. L. after becoming the *Wife of another*, which would throw light, on what now seems mysterious--and you would be perfectly satisfied with me. I write this; because I have heard that it had been commented on to my injury."⁶² Mormon doctrine held that if she remained with Lightner in his faithless condition she probably would never be exalted in heaven. Therefore it appears that she acted mainly to insure her salvation, although she may well have had conjugal relations with Smith.

Little is known of the first marriage of some of Smith's other wives, but two or three of them do not appear to have been unsatisfactory unions. In three separate cases the original husband stood proxy for Joseph Smith or were witnesses in the temple while

⁶¹ John W. Wight, *op. cit.*

⁶² Mary E. Lightner to John A. Smith, January 25, 1892. Original in the Papers of George A. Smith Family, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Salt Lake City, Utah. Italics in the original.

their wives were sealed to the deceased Prophet.⁶³ This would seem to indicate a degree of faithfulness to the Church, and it may also imply that these men knew of previous ties between Smith and their wives. It would be quite speculative, however, to agree to Widtsoe's conclusion that these were wholly celestial or spiritual arrangements.

Smith's Offspring by his Plural Wives

A further issue concerning Smith's plural marriages is the extent of his paternity in these ties. There is increasing evidence that Smith did have sexual relations with a number of his wives and that some bore him children. Benjamin F. Johnson was especially vocal in attesting to these matters. For example, he stated that he knew that the Prophet occupied the same bedroom with his sister, Almira, and other plural wives at the Johnson home in Macedonia.⁶⁴ One or

⁶³ According to Mrs. Brodie, Orson Hyde stood proxy while Nancy Marinda Johnson Hyde was sealed in 1857. Jonathan Holmes stood proxy while Elvira Cowles was sealed in January of 1846, and Henry B. Jacobs stood witness while Zina D. Huntington Jacobs was sealed in January of 1846. (Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 440, 540, 443.)

⁶⁴ Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.*; B. F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, Jenson, HR 6:221-222; and Benjamin F. Johnson to Frank Feely, December 10, 1897. Original in the John M. Whitaker Collection, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. Mr. Feely lived in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and was apparently a member of the RLDS Church studying with LDS missionaries. This letter was Johnson's reply to Feely's request for information about Smith's practice of plural marriage. At that time Whitaker was in the Presidency of the Eastern States Mission and was challenged to a debate with the RLDS in Boston. He secured the letter from Feely and sent it back to Johnson for notarization which was done. (See Whitaker's attached "Memo," which explains this circumstance.)

two wives also hinted that they had sexual relationships with Smith, but none of them left firsthand testimony that he fathered any of their offspring.⁶⁵

Mrs. Brodie maintains, though, that seven women may have borne Smith children, two as a result of adulterous relations

⁶⁵ Malissa Willes, in a sworn affidavit recounted an interview with Joseph Smith III of the RLDS Church. In her statement she said, "I lived with [Joseph Smith] as his wife until his death." She reports the following dialogue between Smith and herself.

Q. "Was [sic.] you a wife in very deed?

A. Yes

Q. Why was there no increase, say in your case?

A. Through no fault of either of us, lack of proper conditions on my part probably, or it might be in the wisdom of the Almighty that we should have none. The Prophet was martyred nine months after our marriage.

Q. Did you know of any Brother or Sister of mine by my father's plural wives?

A. I did not know of any."

✓ (Malissa Lott Willes, affidavit, August 4, 1893, as quoted in Raymond T. Bailey, "Emma Hale, Wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith" [unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952], pp. 98-100.)

Bailey obtained the affidavit from Myrtle Willes Bailey, who was a granddaughter of Malissa Willes. In another affidavit, Lucy Walker said, ". . . I know that she [Emma Smith] gave her consent to the marriage of at least four women to her husband as plural wives, and that she was well aware that he associated and cohabited with them as wives." (Lucy Walker Smith Kimball, affidavit, December 17, 1902. Original in Vault Folder in the LDS Church Archives. It has been copied into the *Journal History* under the date of May 2, 1843 and was also published in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement*, pp. 68-69.) In another statement Mrs. Walker said in reference to Smith's offspring, "They [the RLDS] seem surprised that there was no issue from asserted plural marriages with their father. Could they but realize the hazardous life he lived, after that revelation was given, they would comprehend the reason. He was harassed and hounded and lived in constant fear of being betrayed by those who ought to have been true to him." (Lucy Walker, statement, quoted in Rodney W. Walker and Noel W. Stevenson, *Ancestry and Descendants of John Walker [1794-1869] of Vermont and Utah, Descendants of Robert Walker, an Emigrant of 1632 from England to Boston, Mass.* [Kaysville, Utah: Inland Printing Co., 1953], p. 35.)

preceding their marriage to him. Brodie's findings in this hard-to-prove area are speculative, at best. For example, she argues that Prescinda Huntington Buell's husband left the Church in the spring of 1839, perhaps because he suspected that Smith had impregnated his wife.⁶⁶ According to Prescinda, she bore her sixth child, a boy, on January 31, 1840.⁶⁷ Brodie asserts that Smith escaped from Liberty jail on April 15, 1839, mingled with the Saints in Far West prior to their departure for Illinois, and probably had intercourse with Buell's wife at that time (before her marriage to Smith).⁶⁸ Acceptance of this theory, however, is difficult. Why would Smith who had condemned sexual relations out of wedlock, do such a thing rather than first entering the plural marriage to which he ascribed? He did not marry Prescinda until 1841. Moreover, Smith started for Illinois on April 17, 1839, so the child would have had to have been conceived between April 15 and 17.⁶⁹ This would make the child two or three weeks overdue at birth. It seems, therefore, that Mrs. Buell should be given the benefit of the doubt, partly because she remained with her first husband despite his estrangement from the Church. Buell, rather than Smith, probably fathered the child.

⁶⁶Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 437-439.

⁶⁷Prescendia L. Kimball Smith, to her oldest granddaughter living in 1930, April 16, 1881. Original in the LDS Church Archives. - This is an enlarged version of the document she wrote on April 1, 1881. Both are housed together and both were statements to be opened at the Church centennial.

⁶⁸Brodie, *Idem*.

⁶⁹HC 3:319-327.

It is more likely that Smith sired Prescinda's seventh child. She does not give his birth date in her chronicle, but she does say that he lived two years, then died of the "summer Complaint." Her eighth child was conceived in about April of 1846, so one can guess that her seventh child was born before that year.⁷⁰ Since Prescinda did not marry Heber C. Kimball until January of 1846, the logical father would have been Joseph Smith, who wed her on December 11, 1841, and was killed on June 27, 1844, or Buell, who Brodie has in the picture until the Kimball wedding.⁷¹ In any event, this example certainly illustrates the difficulty of determining the paternity of children born of polyandrous marriages.

The investigation of four other possibilities does little to clarify Smith's relationships to the children of previously married wives. Clarissa Hancock and Mary Ann Frost Pratt have already been classified as doubtful wives. The remaining two, Marinda Johnson Hyde and Mary Rollins Lightner, both had children after Smith was sealed to them. But there remains the possibility that Smith's marriage to Mrs. Hyde was little more than celestial, since she was married to Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde. John D. Lee said there was a "report" that she had been "sealed to Joseph for an eternal state . . ." with her husband's consent.⁷² Although Brodie suspects the

⁷⁰Prescendia L. Kimball Smith, letter of April 16, 1881.

⁷¹Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

⁷²John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled: Or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee* (St. Louis: Bryan Brand, & Co., 1877), p. 147.

paternity of the Mary Lightner's fourth child born in 1843, again it is impossible to say with certainty that Smith was the father.

According to Brodie, Fanny Alger and Eliza R. Snow were single women who may have borne Smith's children. Again her suppositions are less than convincing. The Alger pregnancy was first mentioned by C. G. Webb in Wyl's *Mormon Portraits* and has been given little credence except by ardent anti-Mormons. The Snow tradition is less doubtful, but lacks first person confirmation. The essence of the story is that Eliza was pregnant with Smith's child when Emma caught her and the Prophet in an embrace in a hallway. She purportedly went into a rage and pushed Eliza down the stairs, causing a miscarriage.⁷³

There is some documentary evidence, though, that Smith did not intend all his marriages to be strictly spiritual and celestial. The ceremony uniting him with Sarah Ann Whitney included the promise that the powers of the priesthood would be passed along through the couple to their "posterity forever."⁷⁴ Additional secondhand testimony strengthens the notion that Smith fathered some children.

⁷³Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 447-448. The traditions, interestingly enough, come from fairly substantial LDS sources. One is from Eliza's nephew, LeRoi C. Snow. The other is a report from John R. Young, who told Vesta Crawford that he heard Solon Foster, the Prophet's coachman, relate the story in a Sunday service in St. George, Utah. In a conversation with Maureen Ursenback-Beecher, who is presently writing a biography of Eliza Snow, the author learned that she was unable to come up with verification of these rumors and was quite suspicious of them. She pointed out that there is no indication of such an experience in Snow's diary, kept at the time. However, there is one entry that may indicate Emma's displeasure with her.

⁷⁴Revelation to Newel K. Whitney, *op. cit.*

Lucy M. Smith, the wife of Smith's cousin-Apostle, George A. Smith, has left two interesting accounts of an episode related to her by her husband. He told her that one evening he found the Prophet washing his bloody hands in a basin. When George A. Smith inquired as to what his cousin was doing, the Prophet explained that he had been helping Emma deliver a child of one of his plural wives.⁷⁵ Josephine F. Fisher, daughter of Sylvia Sessions, has also passed down some interesting testimony. She gave Andrew Jenson a signed statement in 1915, stating:

Just prior to my mothers death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days on earth were about numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something which she had kept as an entire secret from me and from all others but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith, she having been sealed to the Prophet at the time that her husband Mr. Lyon was out of fellowship with the Church. . . . In conclusion mother told me not to make her statement to me too public, as it might cause trouble and rouse unpleasant curiosity.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Lucy M. Smith, written statement of May 18, 1892. Original in the Papers of the George A. Smith Family, in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. A second undated but signed statement, telling essentially the same story is found in the Wilford C. Wood collection, housed in the Wilford C. Wood Museum in Bountiful, Utah. (See, LaMar C. Berrett, *The Wilford C. Wood Collection*, Vol. I [Provo, Utah: Wilford C. Wood Foundation, 1972], 95, entry 4-N-b-19.)

⁷⁶Josephine F. Fisher, certificate, February 24, 1915. Original in Vault Folder in the LDS Church Archives. This document was signed by Josephine Fisher in the presence of Andrew Jenson, Joseph H. Grant, and I. F. Fisher. Mary Lightner, also said, "I know he had six wives and I have known some of them from childhood up. I know he had three children. They told me. I think two are living today, but they are not known as his children as they go by other names." (Mary E. Lightner, "Remarks.") A mystifying statement comes from the diary of Samuel W. Richards, who said: "Brother Noble gave me an account of the first polygamous marriage of Joseph Smith

The desire for secrecy as well as the delicacy of the situation assure us that Mrs. Sessions was not merely explaining to her daughter that she was Smith's child by virtue of a temple sealing. The plain inference arising from Jenson's curiosity in the matter and Mrs. Fisher's remarks is that she was, in fact, the offspring of Joseph Smith.

Summary

This survey of Smith's personal practice of plural marriage still leaves many questions for further research. However, it suggests several things relative to our main thesis. Certainly, we are wise to demand adequate documentation before assuming a given woman was Smith's spouse, and, in light of Mormon doctrines on marriage, caution should be exercised in evaluating the nature of that relationship.

Clearly Smith's marriages cannot be simply written off as sexual adventures. His words and actions commonly reflected less biological motivations. As we shall note in the next chapter, like most of the women who became his wives, Smith was basically driven by a sense of duty to carry out what was perceived as the will of God. Social concerns such as caring for the fatherless, the indigent, mismatched wives, and perhaps the wayward, also entered into Smith's

with his wife's sister in Nauvoo. A son in polygamy 40 years old today." (Samuel W. Richards, Diary, typed copy in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, as quoted in Godfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 110.)

marital conduct. Generally, though, these factors complement theological inducements. One should not forget that Smith envisioned the creation of a "true Zion society" which ought to eliminate poverty, suffering, and evil. His practice of marrying women in difficult social circumstances was consistent with this larger objective. In the mid-Nauvoo period Smith received a revelation explaining that "the same sociality which exists among us here will exist" in heaven.⁷⁷ At the same time, he believed that many of his revelations divulged the patterns of heavenly orders which were to be adopted in temporal affairs. There is little doubt that the overwhelming message of Section 132 is that plural marriage was a heavenly institution which must be implemented on earth. Moreover, the newly discovered tendency toward dynasticism was likely facilitated by plural marriage; and levirate marriage was reinstituted in a Mormon theological framework.

The prophetic impetus in Smith's thinking further helps to explain Mormonism's unusual attitude toward the non-recognition of civil marriages in Nauvoo. The rather liberal Mormon attitude toward separation and divorce had similar roots. Likewise, an emphasis upon the supremacy of revealed truths and divine prerogatives had a bearing on Smith's personal marital behavior.

⁷⁷D&C 130:2.

CHAPTER V

THE REACTION OF JOSEPH SMITH'S WIVES

In later Utah years the wives of Joseph Smith were among the most ardent supporters of the plural wife doctrine in the face of the government onslaught against that institution. Over and over again they defended the tenet at pro-polygamy rallies, in church meetings, and in petitions, calling it one of the most sacred and holy principles that God had ever revealed. At a mass meeting in January of 1879, for instance, Eliza M. Partridge recalled that it had been thirty-six years since she had been taught the principles of Celestial Marriage by Joseph Smith. She said that she had raised sons and daughters under that "order." And, she said, "I am not afraid to say that it is one of the most pure and holy Principles that has ever been revealed to the Latter-day Saints and one that is necessary to our exaltation."¹

If women in Utah were proud to proclaim themselves the wives of Joseph Smith, that may not have been quite the case in Nauvoo. There is little evidence on how they reacted when first approached

¹Eliza M. Partridge Lyman, "Life and Journal of Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman," p. 78. Photocopy of original in Marriott Library, University of Utah. See also Tullidge, *op. cit.*, chapt. xliii.

on the subject. But what there is shows that they were deeply and profoundly troubled by the call that came to them. What then motivated them to accept plural marriage so readily? Can their subsequent rosy view of the institution be attributed to more than "cognitive dissonance?" What impact did plural marriage have on Smith's first marriage? Such questions as these are the focus of the present chapter.

Kimball Young has noted that unusually powerful motivating forces must have been operating for members of a puritan society to so quickly accept and assimilate such a divergent marital system.² In his fifth chapter, Young outlines the "reasons and excuses" for Mormon acceptance of plural marriage which he derived from a study of the Utah period. He notes that the main sources of stimulation were official promotion and instruction on both a general and specific level. In other words, both public preaching and private counsel were factors. He also gives attention to the advice of friends, relatives, and perhaps even spouses; the sterility of the first wife; widowhood and/or spinsterhood; economic considerations; social status; romantic love; and the availability of marriage partners as sources of unofficial encouragement. However, he hints that the most important motive seemed to have been "linked with the Mormons' deep conviction that Joseph Smith was a 'true prophet of the Most High' who had restored to mankind the only true doctrines of salvation and

²Kimball Young, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

the only priesthood which could bring this salvation about."³

Our study of the motivations of the women who married Joseph Smith confirm Young's general conceptions. In the Nauvoo period, though, plural marriage was perhaps too new to entail many of the unofficial determinants such as sterility and the need for marriage partners on a large scale. Even in the case of Smith's wives--where non-doctrinal considerations like romantic love, widowhood or spinsterhood, and the prospect of a higher economic and/or social status were sometimes operative--spiritual concerns were basic for most of those who departed from the monogamous patterns of the day. Several plural wives had serious afterthoughts about the correctness of Smith's matrimonial teachings until they had their own mystical experience, or what Mormons call a "testimony."

The younger wives seemed to experience the most difficulty or at least were freer in the expression of their dismay. Twenty-four-year-old Mary Rollins Lightner said when the Prophet first came to her and told her an angel had commanded him to marry her she asked him if he didn't "think it was an angel of the Devil. . .?" He assured her it was from God. The conversation continued:

Well, I talked with him for a long time and finally I told him I would never be sealed to him until I had a witness. Said he: 'You shall have a witness.' He asked me if I was going to be a traitor. . . . I shall never tell a mortal I had such a talk from a married man!' said I. 'Well,' said he, 'pray earnestly for the angel said to me you should have a witness.' . . .

³*Ibid.*, p. 103. He also said, "When we examine the wide range of motives which appear in our records of polygamous families, we note that there is nearly always the basic faith in the principle of plurality of wives." (*Ibid.*, p. 118.)

I made it a subject of prayer and I worried about it because I did not dare speak to a living being except Brigham Young. I went out and got between three haystacks where no one could see me. . . . I knelt down, and if ever a poor mortal prayed I did. A few Nights after that, an angel of the Lord came to me and if ever a thrill went through a mortal it went through me.⁴

She was so afraid, however, that she hid herself under her bed covers. In a later conversation Smith explained this sign to her and predicted events which would take place in her own family. "Every word came true. I went forward and was sealed to him," said Mrs. Lightner.⁵

One of the most famous accounts comes from Lucy Walker, who was seventeen when she married Joseph Smith. Her parents had been in the Church since 1832, and had been active in Kirtland, Far West, and Nauvoo. Lucy was one of ten children when her mother died in January of 1842. As in other such situations, Joseph and Emma Smith helped relieve the family by taking the four oldest children into their own home. Lucy said she did not comprehend the Prophet's meaning when he hinted, "My home shall be your home, eternally yours." During that year Smith came to her with a special message. "I have been commanded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman." Lucy's reaction was predictable: "My astonishment knew no bounds." She said the proposal came as a "thunderbolt." Smith quizzed her about her

⁴Mary E. Lightner, "Remarks."

⁵*Ibid.* Zina Huntington wrote to Mrs. Lightner on June 22, 1881, again speaking of Andrew Jenson's work in gathering biographical sketches of Smith's wives. She said, "as you are among the first honored of God to help lay the foundation of this great work of regeneration he br. Jenson wants yours amongst the first published" (Zina Huntington to Mary Lightner, June 22, 1881. Original in the LDS Church Archives.) It was never printed.

faith in him and after some reassurance he explained the principle to her in more detail, then asked, "What have you to say?"⁶

'Nothing. How could I speak, or what could I say?' He said, 'If you will pray sincerely for light and understanding in relation thereto, you shall receive a testimony of the correctness of this principle. I thought I prayed sincerely, but was so unwilling to consider the matter favorably that I fear I did not ask in faith for light. Gross darkness instead of light took possession of my mind. I was tempted and tortured beyond endurance until life was not desirable.'⁷

But she did pray "in the agony of her soul" over the matter for some time. The Prophet discerned how deeply troubled she was and again approached her. He explained that "under existing circumstances" he could not acknowledge her as his wife but that she must decide whether to follow God's command in one more day. "If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you."

This aroused every drop of Scotch in my veins. For a few moments I stood fearless before him, and looked him in the eye. I felt at this moment that I was called to place myself upon the altar a living sacrifice --perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt to my youthful companions; all my dreams of happiness blown to the four winds. This was too much, for as yet no shadow had crossed my path, aside from the death of my dear mother. The future to me had been one bright, cloudless day. I had been speechless, but at last found utterance and said: 'Although you are a prophet of God you could not induce me to take a step of so great importance, unless I knew that God approved of my course. I would rather die. I have tried to pray but received no comfort, no light.' and emphatically forbid him speaking again to me on this subject. Every feeling of my soul revolted against it. Said I, 'The same God who has sent this message is the Being I have worshipped from my early childhood and He must manifest His will to me.'⁸

⁶Walker and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁷*Ibid.*

The Prophet promised her she should have it and left. Lucy reports that she prayed earnestly for the fulfillment of that promise. One night her room filled with light and her soul was calmed with a "sweet peace." "Supreme happiness took possession of me," she recalled, "and I received a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truth of plural marriage, which has been like an anchor to the soul through all the trials of life." As she went outside to "give vent to the joy and gratitude" that filled her heart, she found Smith standing at the bottom of the stairs. "Thank God, you have the testimony," he said. "I too, have prayed." Then, Lucy later wrote, "He led me to a chair, placed his hands upon my head, and blessed me with every blessing my heart could possibly desire."⁹

Less well known, but equally expressive of the trauma these women experienced, is an unpublished account left by Helen Mar Kimball, the third child and second daughter of Heber C. Kimball and Vilate Kimball.¹⁰ Her father was one of the few original members of the Quorum of Twelve who had not at one time or another opposed Smith. Kimball's loyalty to Joseph Smith was equalled only by Brigham Young and one or two others. He was one of the first to receive Smith's instruction about the marriage doctrine in Nauvoo and sired one of the first children born to a polygamous marriage in the Church.¹¹

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Kate Carter, ed., *Heber C. Kimball, His Wives and Family* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1967), pp. 8-12.

¹¹Sarah Noon was Kimball's first plural wife. In a post-script to a letter written to him from his first wife, Vilate, Sarah

Helen Mar was in her "fifteenth summer" when her experience began. It came about, she said, because her father had a "great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph. . . ." ¹² Kimball's desire may have grown out of the emerging concept in Mormonism that blood lineages were important in church governmental hierarchy. But his was probably a spiritual one also, for he believed that the Prophet could inaugurate the "Dispensation of the Fullness of Times," the last of all Gospel dispensations. Smith would thus have a very high and important station in heaven and Kimball desired the honor of permanent association with him. ¹³ In any case, Helen said that her father

wrote that she was anxious to move into a house that was being prepared for her because she perceived her "infirmities increasing daily." Vilate Kimball bore a son January 2, 1843. Her daughter, Helen, said that, although she could not remember the date, "the birth of another son by my father's wife Sarah. . . happened not far from the time that my mother's was born." At the time, Miss Kimball was too young to be aware that Sarah Noon was her father's wife, but she did take notice of the great interest her parents took in the event. (Helen Mar Whitney, *Scenes in Nauvoo*, *Woman's Exponent*, XI [June 1, 1882], 1-2.)

¹² Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, statement of March 30, 1881. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹³ John M. Whitaker wrote relative to the understanding of church leaders about the law of adoption the following: President Lorenzo Snow and Assistant Church historian, John Jacques, who wrote the Catechism for the Sunday Schools of the Church, came in with some other brethren, and for some time discussed many matters being talked about all over the church. Among them, one so much discussed as Brother Jacques brought up,--that of the LAW OF ADOPTION,--he continued and said he had understood that among many leading brethren, some 70% of them had been adopted to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that with the consent of Emma Smith herself; and that also he heard that Emma Smith herself had no objections to Sister Eliza R. Snow being SEALED to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Brother Jacques also said he had asked President John Taylor about the matter, and he said President Taylor said he knew nothing about such an affair, neither did Brigham Young. But much is being discussed that no one seems to know practically anything about. . . . I especially make note of this idea here to

offered her to Smith to forge the link between the families.

The Kimball girl subsequently learned some of the details of this episode from the Prophet, having been told little by her parents. "My father had but oneEue [sic.] lamb," she said, "but willingly laid her upon the altar." This was almost more than her mother could endure. Vilate had already gone through the trying experience of permitting her husband to take a plural wife and thought that that would be sacrifice enough. Now the Prophet was asking for more from the family. "How crule [sic.] this seemed to mother," Helen recollected.¹⁴

For twenty-four hours after the proposition of union with Smith was made, Helen agonized over the decision that faced her. The next morning the Prophet explained the marriage principle to her and her parents in more detail. Turning to Helen he then said, "If you will take this step, it will insure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household & all of your kindred." "This promise was so great," recalled Helen, "that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward. None but God & his angels could see my mother's bleeding heart." When Smith asked for Mrs. Kimball's

show the spirit of the times (1887) that many people infused with new ideas and rush into things sometimes without knowing much about the seriousness of the matter involved. Even among the members of the Twelve Apostles there seems to be little known about the Lws [sic.] of Adoption at this particular time, that I can find out about. President George Q. Cannon said he did not understand the matter. (John M. Whitaker, "Daily Journal," November 16, 1887, 11, 122-123. Original in the Marriott Library, University of Utah.)

¹⁴ Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, *op. cit.*

consent to the wedding, she could only reply, "If Helen is willing I have nothing more to say."¹⁵

Helen's youthful feelings were captured in a newly found poem she wrote in later years. She remembered how her thoughts of youthful freedom and serenity were shattered by this call. She saw her teenage companionships grow cool in the face of twittering gossip. As the "fettered bird" that she had become, the only things that sustained her were her faith that her father would not deceive her and the promised blessings associated with her marital status.¹⁶

Smith's youthful wives, Lucy Walker and Helen Kimball, had real difficulties with peer groups. The latter's plight was acknowledged in a letter that her father wrote to her on June 9, 1844. Among other things Heber Kimball counseled his daughter to say nothing about her marriage to Smith to her young acquaintances because they might betray her. She was urged to have confidential discussions only with her mother, who had the girl's best interests at heart. Regarding her conduct toward others of her own age he advised, "Do not slit [slight] your friends, be kind, be merciful be Gentle, be mild be sober, and shoe [sic.] your self approved of God and to your friends."¹⁷

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.* The depth of her pathos is captured best in her own language. The poem was introduced as "Helen Mar Kimball's Retrospection About Her Introduction to the Doctrine and Practice of Plural Marriage in Nauvoo At Age 15." See Appendix D.

¹⁷Heber C. Kimball to Helen Mar Kimball, June 9, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

Finally, we have the experience of Eliza Partridge, who married Smith at the age of twenty-three. She was the daughter of the first Mormon Bishop Edward Partridge. Smith considered the Bishop "one of the Lord's great men," having had a revelation comparing him to Nathaniel of old, "in whom there is no guile."¹⁸ After her father died in Nauvoo on May 27, 1840, she and a sister went to live with the Smiths. In 1877, Eliza reminisced about the events of those days.

Times were not then as they are now in 1877, but a woman living in polygamy dare not let it be known, and nothing but a firm desire to keep the commandments of the Lord could have induced a girl to marry in that way. I thought my trials were very severe in this line, and I am often led to wonder how it was that a person of my temperment could get along with it and not rebel. But I know it was the Lord who kept me from opposing his plans, although in my heart I felt I could not submit to them. But I did, and I am thankful to my Heavenly Father for the care he had over me in those troublous times.¹⁹

It is not known how many women may have rejected Smith's proposals, but at least one did. Early in 1842, he proposed to Sidney Rigdon's daughter, Nancy. Since she was then keeping company with some of the rougher elements in the community, he may have thought that she would be better off as his spouse. But Nancy Rigdon did not see it that way. She flatly refused his advances and immediately told her father. As we shall see in a later chapter, this event led to discord between Smith and his counselor, also generating considerable controversy in the community. In addition, Nancy's

¹⁸HC 1:128 and D&C 41:11.

¹⁹Eliza Partridge, Journal, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

refusal prompted the Prophet to pen an elaborate defense of plural marriage.²⁰

For some of the older, unmarried women, a marriage proposal from Smith may have held some special appeals. This was probably particularly true for those who came to adore him as their spiritual leader. But even some of these women had moments of doubt and hesitation. Eliza R. Snow, for instance was thirty-eight years old when she married Joseph Smith on June 29, 1842. That same day she began keeping a personal diary. In it she referred to her wedding and the circumstances which opened new vistas for her both temporally and eternally. It had been two weeks and two days, she said, "since an intimation was presented of my duty and privilege of remaining in the City of the saints in case of the removal of my fathers family." Who this "intimation" came from, we are not told, but the context suggests that it may have been from Smith in the form of a proposal. Marriage came just nine days after her parents left Nauvoo. As Eliza reflected upon their departure and looked ahead she observed:

. . . though I rejoice in the blessings of the society of the saints, and the approbation of God; a lonely feeling will steal over me before I am aware, while I am contemplating the present state of society--the powers of darkness, the prejudices of the human mind which stand array'd like an impregnable barrier against the work of God. . . .²¹

²⁰This episode and the letter will be considered in greater detail in chapt. vii.

²¹Eliza R. Snow, Diary, June 29, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives. I am indebted to Maureen Ursenback-Beecher for calling this valuable item to my attention and providing me with her typed manuscript to assist in my study of the original. She has since edited this diary for publication. (See her "Eliza R. Snow's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies*, XV [Summer, 1975], 391-416.) Mrs. Beecher tells me that her study shows that Eliza was a deep and

She concluded "the period might not be far distant" which would require the Saints to depend on the grace of God to withstand such hatred and prejudice. For herself, she resolved to "live by every word that proceedeth out of his [God's] mouth," including polygyny.²²

Eliza Snow was a cultured and refined woman, intensely loyal to Mormonism and its Prophet. Latter-day Saints know her through her poetry as one of the most tender and sensitive of the early Saints. She was also very articulate with respect to Mormon doctrines. Certainly she was receptive to the religious justifications for plural marriage to go along with her deep and abiding, almost worshipful, love for Joseph Smith.

The fervor of Eliza's affection for Joseph Smith was demonstrated during the critical summer of 1842. On August 8, Smith was arrested on a warrant issued by Illinois Governor, Thomas Carlin, and was held for extradition to Missouri. This was the second time Missouri had initiated extradition proceedings on charges of alleged Mormon crimes against that state. It was triggered by the false charges of the notorious recently-expelled ex-Mormon, John C. Bennett, who told Missouri officials that Smith had plotted to kill former governor Lilburn W. Boggs. Through the unusual powers of the Nauvoo

often profound thinker with a clear and precise manner of expression. These vague and abstract diary entries appear to be the exception rather than the rule. When she wanted it known what she was saying, Eliza Snow's statements were quite explicit. Therefore, the apparent veiled meanings in these entries appear to be significant in light of the aura of secrecy about plural marriage prevalent in Nauvoo.

²²*Ibid.*

city court system, however, Smith was able to fend off extradition by obtaining a writ of *habeas corpus*. Immediately after his release, he went into hiding, dodging several additional attempts to take him by force. By August 20, 1842, things had cooled off, and he returned to Nauvoo.²³ While he was in hiding, Eliza Snow wrote and dedicated a brief poem to Smith, entitled "To Who Needs Consolation." It appeared in the September 10, 1842, issue of the Mormon newspaper, *The Wasp*. The author was identified only by the letter "E." In the midst of all this turmoil, the following stanzas must have had particular meaning.

O can a gen'rous spirit brook,
 With feelings of content;
 To see an age, distrustful look
 On *thee*, with *dark intent*!
 I feel thy woes--my bosom shares,
 Thy spirit's agony:
 How can I love a heart that dares
 Suspect *thy* purity?
 I'll smile on all, that smile on *thee*
 As angels do above--
 All who in pure sincerity
 Will love *thee*. I will love.
 Believe me, thou hast noble friends
 Who feel and share thy grief;
 And many a fervent prayer ascends
 To heaven, for thy relief.²⁴

²³HC 5:86, 119.

²⁴*The Wasp* [Nauvoo, Illinois] September 10, 1842. Several months later a copy of this poem was clipped from the paper and given to Eliza Snow. Her diary entry for June 23, 1843, is interesting. "Yesterday I was presented with the following lines, which had been sent to press without my knowledge, & of which I had retained no copy." Seemingly, Eliza had privately given Smith the poem but in a moment of daring or out of gratitude for her thoughtfulness he had it published.

Emma Smith and Plural Marriage

Still other aspects of Joseph Smith's plural marriages that require exploration are the concerns, feelings, and reactions of his first wife, Emma. Although she did not keep a record of her opinions on the subject, the statements of observers and witnesses in Nauvoo reveal that she was not enthusiastic about her husband's matrimonial teachings and behavior. Her position seems to have fluctuated between resignation to the Prophet's will and prideful rebelliousness at his actions. As Orson Pratt recalled, Emma "at times fought against him with all her heart; and then again she would break down in her feelings . . . and would then lead forth ladies and place their hands in the hands of Joseph. . . ." ²⁵

The true story of Mrs. Smith's reactions is clouded by controversy between the RLDS Church and the Utah Mormons. Emma could not conscientiously follow Brigham Young to the Great Basin. She had come to dislike him, perhaps because of the plural marriage issue, and decided to remain with her children in Nauvoo. ²⁶ Later she married Major Lewis Bidamon and spent the rest of her life in the East. Her oldest living son, Joseph Smith III, eventually became President of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In 1879 he

²⁵Orson Pratt, discourse of October 7, 1869, *JD* 13:194.

²⁶It is interesting to speculate about the nature of her dislike for Young. It is known that he and Kimball married most of the Prophet's wives in January of 1846, previous to the trek west. One wonders if in an attempt to live the levirate law Young may have approached Emma on the issue and further irritated her. As far as the author knows, there is no evidence to support this speculation, but Emma's opposition to the doctrine clearly figured in her refusal to go west.

claimed that he visited his mother on her death bed and asked her if his father had been a polygamist. He reported that Emma denied that Joseph ever taught or practiced such a thing.²⁷ This report infuriated the Utah Mormons, who said she had either been misrepresented (that is, Joseph Smith III had lied) or had perjured herself. Thereafter numerous testimonies came from various sources to the effect that Emma not only knew about Smith's wives but even stood as a witness for several of them. The sheer bulk of the evidence seems convincing on this point.

Eliza Snow asserted that it was a "*fact*" that Sister Emma, of her own free will and choice, gave her husband four wives. . . [and] she not only gave them to her husband, but she taught them the doctrine."²⁸ Eliza was probably referring to the Partridge and Lawrence sisters, for most observers say that they were the ones Emma gave her consent to. Lucy Walker, Lovina Walker, Emily Partridge, and Helen M. Whitney all testified that Emma consented to and was present at the above weddings.²⁹

²⁷ Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *The Saints' Herald*, XXVI (October 1, 1879), 289-290. See also, Joseph Smith III, and Heman C. Smith, *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, III (Independence, Missouri: The Herald Publishing House, 1967), 353-358. Utah Mormons have been quick to point out that this interview was published posthumously. Emma Smith died on April 30, 1879.

²⁸ *Deseret Evening News*, October 18, 1879. Italics in original. This was part of a compilation by Joseph F. Smith in a response to the RLDS publication of Emma's last testimony. In this article he published for the first time some of the affidavits he had collected in 1869.

²⁹ "Testimony of Lucy W. Smith," in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement*, p. 61; Lovina Walker, certificate, in Smith,

The story of the Partridge sisters is interesting in respect to Emma's reaction. They claimed that they went through two separate marriage ceremonies with Smith, the second of which was for Emma's benefit. Their first inkling of the Prophet's stance toward polygyny came in the spring of 1842, about a year before they were married.³⁰ Emily was sealed to Smith on March 4, 1843, and her sister Eliza affirmed that her marriage occurred four days later. Both women attested to a second double wedding in which they were sealed to Smith on the following May 11th.³¹ Emily Partridge explained that the first rites were performed without Emma's knowledge. Then:

Two months afterwards she consented to give her husband two wives, provided he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma's presence, she giving her free and full consent thereto.³²

This story is corroborated in the journal of William Clayton, Smith's private secretary. Clayton wrote of a conversation on August

Affidavit Books 4:30; also in Jenson, *HR* 6:223; and Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural Marriage, as Taught by the Prophet Joseph; a Reply to Joseph Smith, Editor of the Lamoni (Iowa) "Herald"* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), pp. 14-15.

³⁰Journal History, August 1, 1885.

³¹See the two affidavits of Emily dated May 1, 1869 in Smith, Affidavit Books 1:11, 13; 4:11, 13, and four affidavits signed by Eliza Partridge, July 1, 1869, in the Vault Folder and copied into Smith, Affidavit Book 2:30, 32-34. All are in the LDS Church Archives. The location of the originals of Emily's affidavits is uncertain. They are not in the Vault Folder with her sister's, and those copied into the Smith books are not notarized. Several of these were reproduced in Jenson, *HR* 6:223.

³²Jenson, *HR* 6:240.

16, 1843 in which the Prophet told him that Emma "had resisted the Principle in toto" [sic.] upon returning from a trip to St. Louis in early May. To calm her, Smith initially offered to "relinquish all for her sake." Then Emma acquiesced and "said she would give him Eliza and Emily Partridge." But her husband remained unconvinced of her sincerity. Clayton reported Smith as saying that "he knew if he took them she would pitch on him, and obtain a divorce and leave him. He however, told me he should not relinquish anything."³³

By mid-August Emma was at the point of leaving Smith, and Emily Partridge said that "from the very hour" of their marriage,

³³William Clayton, Journal, Wednesday, August 16, 1843, as quoted in a certificate signed by Joseph F. Smith, John Henry Smith, and Robert L. Campbell in Smith, Affidavit Book 1:68. True to his purpose of combating the RLDS opponents of plural marriage, Joseph F. Smith had this extract copied from Clayton's journal and had it verified by witnesses. This is perhaps one of the most important finds of my research, not only for its content, but as solid, contemporary evidence from one who was close to Joseph Smith. The Clayton journal for the years of 1842 to 1844 is not in the LDS Church Archives, yet the various quotes from it, such as this one and others by George A. Smith (see n. 60) and B. H. Roberts, are proof of its existence. My inquiries as to the whereabouts of the original turned up only rumors. The most persistent was that it is kept by the First Presidency of the Church in a private vault. Conversation with one who had inquired there and among the Clayton family ran into dead ends. Nevertheless, the general opinion seemed to be that this may be one of the most important diaries extant from early Mormon history. This is true because, as Smith's secretary, Clayton was privy to so much that went on. Moreover, he was prone to record in detail that which he knew and experienced. This is evidenced by the few extracts published. For examples of Clayton's journal work see, William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal: A Daily Record of the Journey of the Original Company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1921), and more recently published, James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, eds., *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton 1840 to 1842* (Santa Barbara, California: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1974.).

"Emma was our bitter enemy." The girls remained with the Smiths for several months "but things went from bad to worse until we were obliged to leave the house and find another home." Emma wanted the sisters to leave Nauvoo, Emily remembered, but after some consideration they decided to remain with friends in the city.³⁴

That Smith felt compelled to appease his wife by denying his personal convictions and intentions illustrates the intense emotion that Emma exhibited. Her reaction is understandable, given the circumstance she faced. The spring of 1843 had been a busy one for her husband in adding plural wives to his household. Six of his acquisitions were quite young.³⁵ It perhaps made matters worse that most of these women were living in the Smith home at the time. Furthermore, the revelation to Smith which was recorded on July 12, 1843, commanded Emma to receive all these women as Smith's wives asserting that neither they nor her husband were guilty of adultery. Emma was directed "to cleave unto. . . Joseph and none else," and to forgive him his transgressions against her. Finally, the revelation said that she must cease resistance or suffer dire spiritual and eternal consequences.³⁶

But Emma's opposition to plural marriage antedated the eventful spring of 1843. It was evident as much as a year earlier in the wake of Smith's July 27, 1842 wedding to Sarah A. Whitney. Several

³⁴Jenson, *HR* 6:240.

³⁵See Figure 4 in chapt iv. In all he married at least eleven women between February and July of 1843. Others, such as Elvira Cowles and some of the women for whom we do not have marriage dates, may also have been wed to Smith at this time of great activity.

³⁶D&C 132:52-56.

weeks after the ceremony, while in hiding from lawmen trying to extradite him to Missouri, Smith wrote to the Whitneys requesting them to meet him privately so that he could seal additional blessings on their heads. Smith was particular to caution them about Emma. "The only thing to be careful of, is to find out when Emma comes, then you can not be safe, but when she is not here there is the most perfect safety. . . . I think Emma wont come tonight. If she don't dont [sic.] fail to come tonight."³⁷

There was also tension between the Smith's because of Eliza Snow. Shortly after Eliza's marriage to Smith, on June 29, 1842, Emma invited her to move into the Smith home.³⁸ She had been living with Sarah Cleveland, but was happy to accept the invitation and made the move on August 14, 1842.³⁹ Eliza's diary does not refer to the

³⁷ Joseph Smith to Dear, and Beloved, Brother and Sister Whitney, and &c., August 18, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives. Despite Smith's direction that the Whitneys "burn this letter as soon as you read it, keep all locked up in your breasts, my life depends upon it . . . ," copies have been around for a long time and published on occasion. My research in the Smith affidavit collection turned up a fascinating item which details more of its history. On August 13, 1869, Elizabeth and Sarah Ann Whitney brought the letter to Joseph F. Smith. He copied it into books 2:25-27 and 3:25-27. The Whitney's then swore "that the foregoing is a true copy of a letter written at Carlos Graingers by President Joseph Smith, dated Nauvoo August 18th, 1842 to Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney and their daughter Sarah Ann Smith who was married or sealed to President Smith, July 27, 1842. And further they have this day deposited said letter in the Historian's Office in the county and City of Salt Lake." (Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:27-28 and 3:27-28.) Neither of these copies is sealed, and the location of the original affidavit is unknown at present.

³⁸ Eliza R. Snow, Diary, entries of August 14 and 15, 1842.

³⁹ *Ibid.* Emma sent the invitation via A. Coles. This may have been Elvira Cowles.

hallway incident, mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, for unstated reasons, she left the Smith residence on February 11, 1843, seven months after her arrival.⁴⁰ Eliza's departure may have stemmed from disagreements with Emma Smith, for on July 20, 1843 she recorded in her characteristically stoic and somewhat self-justifying manner this incident:

Sister [left blank in original] called to see me. Her appearance very plainly manifested the perturbation of her mind. How strangely is the human countenance changed when the powers of darkness reign over the empire of the heart! Scarcely, if ever, in my life had I come in contact with such forbidding and angry looks; yet I felt as calm as the summer eve, and received her as smilingly as the playful infant; and my heart as sweetly reposed upon the bosom of conscious innocence, as infancy reposes in the arms of paternal tenderness & love. It is better to suffer than to do wrong, and it is sometimes better to submit to injustice rather than contend; it is certainly better to wait the retribution of Jehovah than to contend where effort will be unavailable.⁴¹

The next evening Eliza rode to the Morley Settlement with a friend. The trip "was a season for contemplation," she wrote and in apparent reference to the experience of the day before her journal adds:

The likeness and unlikeness of disposition & character with which we come in contact, is a fruitful theme of thought; and the very few, who have strength of mind, reason & stability; to act from *principles*; is truly astonishing, and yet *only such*, are persons *worthy of trust*.⁴²

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, February 11, 1843.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, July 20, 1843.

⁴²*Ibid.*, July 21, 1843. Italics in original. It was common to refer to the doctrine of plural marriage as the "principle." There may have been some double-entendre intended here, as in the following

Some critics and even some Mormons have denigrated Smith because he secretly married wives without Emma's knowledge or consent. They have usually done so on the ground that a man must have the consent of his first wife before he could have additional ones. Their view takes account of some of Smith's own writings; particularly verse 61 of Section 132. Known as the "law of Sarah," this passage reads:

If any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he

poem copied from her diary September 23, 1842.

O, how shall I compose a thought
When nothing is compos'd?
How from ideas as I ought
On subjects not disclos'd?

If we are wise enough to know
To whom we should give heed---
Thro' whom intelligence must flow
The church of God to lead,

We have one grand position gain'd--
One point, if well possess'd--
If well established--well maintain'd,
On which the mind may rest.

This principle will bear us up--
It should our faith sustain,
E'en when from "trouble's reckless cup"
The dregs, we have to drain.

What boots it then, tho' tempests howl
In thunders, round our feet---
Tho' human rage, and nature's scowl
By turns, we have to meet.

What though tradition's haughty mood
Deals out corroding wrongs:
And superstition's jealous brood
Stirs up the strife of tongues.

espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him. . . ."43

However, the Prophet knew his own doctrine better than his detractors. Subsequent passages treat the wife's responsibility in the matter.

And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law.

Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not believe and administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.⁴⁴

Under these provisions, the wife had little choice but to acquiesce. Here we also see the totality of Smith's insistence upon the inspired nature of his doctrines. From his perspective a man who was righteous and received God's command to engage in polygynous marriages should not be deterred by his first wife's objections.⁴⁵ But there was a reason for the consent stipulation. Subsequently, some Mormons explained that bigamy was essentially a situation in

⁴³D&C 132:61.

⁴⁴D&C 132:64-65.

⁴⁵This was the understanding of Orson Pratt. "See his Celestial Marriage," in *The Seer* [Washington, D. C.], March, 1853, p. 41. Pratt edited this paper for the Church from January of 1853 to August of 1854.

which one or both of the wives was ignorant of the other through the husband's deception.⁴⁶ This proviso was designed, they said, to obligate the man to be honest with his wife about his actions. Therefore, Smith may have thought that, having explained the doctrine to Emma and having received her initial consent, he had fulfilled his duty in this regard. Moreover the revelation he issued in 1843 may have been meant to placate his first spouse. Be that as it may, Emma had definite qualms about the marriage dogma and some of her co-wives, and she was probably infuriated by the directive as well.

There was perhaps another reason for Emma's bitterness. The 1843 revelation specifically commanded her to cleave to her husband and none else. This may have been more than an attempt to stave off impending divorce, for she was also instructed to "Stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, said the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice."⁴⁷

There are indications that Smith may have offered Emma the opportunity to have a second husband. Persistent rumors from anti-Mormon sources suggest that Emma and William Law were in love in 1844. At that time Law was a counselor to Smith in the Presidency of the Church. Joseph Jackson, an ex-Mormon not known for his veracity and good character, reported that Joseph Smith "got up a revelation that Law was to be sealed to Emma, and that Law's wife was to be his, in

⁴⁶ George Q. Cannon, discourse of June 25, 1882, *JD* 24:45; and John Taylor, discourse of February 12, 1882, *JD* 26:94.

⁴⁷ D&C 132:51.

other words, there was to be a spiritual swop."⁴⁸ According to Jackson, when Emma could not get Law for a "spiritual husband" she was highly irritated at Joseph. This story received its most important repetition in Wilhelm Wyl's *Mormon Portraits*. In a footnote comment about verse 51 of Section 132 Wyl explained the foregoing story, saying he had it "from one who personally knew of the proposed swop."⁴⁹ During or after the publication of his book, Wyl began a correspondence with William Law. On January 7, 1887, Law wrote to him denying that any overtures had been made to him or his wife. However, he confirmed the idea that Smith proposed another companion for Emma, remarking:

The story may have grown out of the fact that Joseph offered to furnish his wife Emma with a *substitute* for him, by way of compensation for his neglect of her, on condition that she would forever stop her opposition to polygamy and permit him to *enjoy his young wives in peace* and keep some of them in his house and be well treated, etc.⁵⁰

The hypothesis that Smith offered Emma a "substitute" or "spiritual" husband as a test is consistent with his previous actions and teachings. Joseph Smith firmly believed that God would test the integrity and loyalty of his people in a manner similar to the test administered to Abraham when he was commanded to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. In addition, he believed himself to be God's agent in administering such tests. This concept was in his mind from the

⁴⁸ Joseph Jackson, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Experience of Joseph H. Jackson, in Nauvoo, Disclosing the Depths of Mormon Villainy* (Warsaw, Illinois, n.p., August, 1844), p. 22.

⁴⁹ Wyl, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁵⁰ *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 3, 1887. Italics in the original.

earliest days in Kirtland. For example, we have already seen that the elders who made the journey to Missouri for the first Church conference in the summer of 1831 were told that they had been sent in the wilderness for a trial of their faith.⁵¹

Two "testing" experiences were also associated with Zion's Camp in 1834. The Camp was a Mormon army traveling from Ohio to Missouri. The ostensible purpose of the maneuver was to show force to the Missourians in an attempt to frighten them into returning the Saint's lands and homes in Jackson County. When this failed a revelation disbanding the company explained that the army had been "brought thus far for a trial of their faith."⁵² Later many of the first Quorum of Twelve Apostles and the first Seventies were selected from among this group, presumably because they were willing to die for the faith.⁵³

The second incident occurred one evening while the group was pitching camp. Some of the men encountered three rattlesnakes and were about to kill them when Smith intervened. He explained that the animal kingdom would never lose its enmity toward men until man had eliminated his own vicious disposition. He then instructed them to kill only what they needed for survival. Shortly thereafter, while the same brethren were watching a squirrel on a tree, he shot it and walked off. He did it he said "to prove them and to know if they

⁵¹W. W. Phelps to Brigham Young, *op. cit.*

⁵²D&C 105:19.

⁵³HC 2:181-182.

would heed my counsel." When they fetched it for food, he commended them for practicing his precept more than his example.⁵⁴

Such tests were varied in nature, but a revelation speaking of the suffering Saints in Missouri said "they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham. . . for all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me cannot be sanctified."⁵⁵ If this was true of those in Zion, Joseph Smith felt justified in testing the people of Nauvoo too. On one occasion he went to Edwin Wolley, a new merchant in town, and requested all his store goods for the kingdom. Wolley passed the test when he expressed his willingness to comply with the request.⁵⁶

On another occasion, when some new emigrants were arriving at Nauvoo, the Prophet disguised himself as a ruffian and met them at the wharf. Edwin Rushton's father told him that the Prophet questioned them about their conviction that Joseph Smith was a prophet. When the elder Rushton affirmed his faith, Smith asked, "What would you think if I told you I was Joseph Smith?" Rushton again said that would make no difference to his belief. Smith then explained that he dressed and spoke in the manner he did to "see if their faith is strong enough to stand the things they must meet. If not they should turn back right now."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

⁵⁵ D&C 101:4-5.

⁵⁶ Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1, 631-632.

⁵⁷ Edwin Rushton, Journal, p. 2. Copy in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Joseph Smith applied these same techniques to plural marriage. Before he explained its religious principles to some men, he tried to learn whether they were trustworthy and loyal. This shall be considered in greater detail in the next chapter.

Having such an interest in tests of faith, Joseph Smith could have interpreted an invitation to Emma to take a plural husband as a trial for all concerned. First if he suspected that she really cared for Law or someone else her proper response might illustrate her wifely devotion to him. By resisting such a temptation, she could also show that she was true to him as a prophet and spiritual leader. No doubt a "substitute" husband would have been tried under the proposed arrangement too. Most importantly, though, even Smith may have been tested. It was one thing to demand submission from Emma while he was continually taking new wives, but what would he do if God told him to let her have more than one husband? Could he allow her the same privileges? In any case, it appears that Emma may have failed her test.

During the last year of Joseph Smith's life, he and Emma became cooler toward one another. No record can be found showing that Emma was ever sealed to her husband for eternity. Nauvoo commentators did not even hint that this happened. Then, too, the 1843 revelation calling for her submission to the Prophet's marriages apparently weakened rather than strengthened the Smiths relationship. Clayton tells us that Hyrum Smith took the newly-recorded revelation to Emma with the idea of convincing her that it was from heaven.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ In fact, Hyrum's own wife may also have given him some

However, when he returned, Hyrum said that "he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger."⁵⁹ According to George A. Smith, Clayton also stated in his journal that "She said she did not believe a word of it, and appeared very rebellious."⁶⁰ Other Mormons said Emma badgered her husband until he finally let her have the revelation, which she burned.⁶¹

Joseph Smith's determination to continue as he felt directed by God made it impossible for him to yield to Emma's demands. At the

resistance. (See Joseph Fielding, Journal, V, 54-56. Original in the LDS Church Archives.)

⁵⁹William Clayton, affidavit, February 16, 1874. Original in the Vault Folder in the LDS Archives. It has been reproduced in several places. The most convenient is in Jenson, *HR* 6:224-225.

⁶⁰George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869 as quoted in Raymond T. Bailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

⁶¹The sermons of Brigham Young and Orson Pratt illustrate the feelings this incident caused among Utah Mormons. Brigham Young said: "Emma took the revelation, supposing she had all there was; but Joseph had wisdom enough to take care of it, and he handed the revelation to Bishop Whitney, and he wrote it all off. After Joseph had been to Bishop Whitney's he went home, and Emma began teasing for the revelation. She said--'Joseph, you promised me that revelation, and if you are a man of your word you will give it to me.' Joseph took it from his pocket and said--'Take it.' She went to the fire-place and put it in, and put a candle under it and burnt it, and she thought that was the end of it, . . . and she will be damned as sure as she is a living woman." (Discourse of August 9, 1874, *JD* 17:159). *see P174*

Orson Pratt said of Emma: "But what became of the original? An apostate destroyed it; you have heard her name. That same woman, in destroying the original, thought she had destroyed the revelation from the face of the earth. . . . That same woman has brought up her children to believe that no such thing as plurality of wives existed in the days of Joseph, and has instilled the bitterest principles of apostasy into their minds, to fight against the Church that has come to these mountains according to the predictions of Joseph." (Discourse of October 7, 1869, *JD* 13:194).

same time, Mrs. Smith's ardent opposition to her spouse's polygynous notions compounded the problem of reconciliation between the two of them. It was rumored in the Hancock County newspapers in April of 1844 that the Prophet had finally turned Emma out-of-doors. The *Warsaw Signal* said that it was because Smith was jealous of her association with Ebenezer Robinson. A week later the same publication noted that Emma was heading down the Mississippi aboard the steamer *Hibernia*, but added she and her husband had been reunited before her departure.⁶²

Still other sources, including comments by some of Joseph Smith's closest associates, refer to continuing problems in the Smith household. Jane Blood recorded some pertinent remarks by John Taylor at Kaysville, Utah on November 12, 1876. Taylor was one of Smith's key aides and was in Carthage when the Smith brothers were murdered, so he probably spoke with authority in remarking:

⁶²*Warsaw Signal* [Warsaw, Illinois], April 17, and 24, 1844. These rumors were confirmed in a letter from D. S. Hollister to Joseph Smith in early May of 1844. He reported an encounter he had while on board the steamer *Valley Forge* heading for St. Louis. "While I was speaking," he said, "I referred to the many false statements which found their way to the public through the papers, a case in print [sic.; point (?)] was that of Joseph Smith having just discarded his wife. After I had finished speaking and was standing on the guard of the boat a Missourian stepped up to me asking me if I wished to be understood that all who said Jo. Smith had discarded his wife were liars. On my answering him in the affirmative he drew his howie [sic.] knife on me but some passengers who had heard him threaten my life and were watching, caught him as he was in the act of striking and in the act of pitching him overboard, but they saved him, and I am glad of it. The whole affair turned much to my advantage, . . ." (D. S. Hollister to Joseph Smith, May 9, 1844, in *Journal History*, under the same date.)

Emma Smith at first professed faith in the revelation but afterwards forsook it, and used her influence against it to my wife and others. She even said I denied the revelation. When I spoke to Joseph about it he said, 'Brother Taylor, Sister Emma would dethrone Jehovah himself if she could accomplish her purposes.'⁶³

Endocia B. Marsh, a non-Mormon visitor to Nauvoo, reported hearing some women ask Emma about the origin of the doctrine of spiritual wives. "Her face flushed scarlet, and her eyes blazed as she replied, 'Straight from hell, Madam!'"⁶⁴ Christopher Merkley swore that he had talked with Zenos Gurley many times "about Sister Emma's raising the devil with Joseph about his wives." And Almira Hanscom, who left Mormonism because of plural marriage, said she heard Joseph and his wife quarrel about the principle.⁶⁵

⁶³Ivy H. B. Hill, *Jane Wilkie Hooper Blood Autobiography and Abridged Diary* (Logan, Utah: J. P. Smith Printing, Inc., 1966), pp. 20-21. See also Taylor's remarks as reported in "Minutes of a General Meeting Held in the Fourteenth Ward Assembly Hall, July 18, 1880" as published in the *Woman's Exponent*, IX (September 1, 1880), 54-54.

⁶⁴Eudocia Balwin Marsh, "When the Mormons Dwelt Among Us," *The Bellman* (April 1, 1916), p. 375 as quoted in Godfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁶⁵Christopher Merkley, affidavit, August 3, 1869. Original in Vault Folder in the LDS Church Archives. It was also copied into Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:21-23, and 3:21-23. Almira Hanscom was the aunt of Mormon missionary Hyrum Belnap. His mother had told him that Hyrum Smith had asked Almira to become his wife in Nauvoo. Since she was born in 1827, she would have been sixteen-years-old in 1842. On July 28, 1908, Belnap visited his eighty-one-year-old aunt in Akron, Ohio, and asked her to verify the story. In a luncheon interview she told Belnap "I heard Emma his [Joseph Smith] wife complain about it in an opposing way." Belnap requested Mrs. Hanscom to verify the interview by a signed statement in his diary which she did on that day. Her memory failed her on some names but her statement is interesting. She wrote: ". . . I know that spiritual marriage, as it is called, was taught by Joseph and Hyrum Smith. When in Nauvoo, before they were killed, and that this spiritual marriage, allowed men to have more than one spiritual wife at the same time.

This is one of the reasons that I declined to remain with the Mormon Church.

There is a legendary and oft-quoted statement attributed to Joseph Smith which summarizes the attitude of many early Mormons toward the "apostate" Emma Smith. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were most fond of repeating it. In a characteristically blunt August, 1874 sermon, Brigham Young told how Emma had burned the revelation, observing:

. . . she thought that was the end of it, and she will be damned as sure as she is a living woman. Joseph used to say that he would have her hereafter, if he had to go to hell for her, and he will have to go to hell for her as sure as he ever gets her.⁶⁶

Summary

The substantive testimony of his contemporaries suggest that Smith did not discard his prophetic mantle in establishing his own plural families. Repeatedly he told his prospective wives that God had commanded him to marry them. Moreover, many of the women he called upon to enter the nuptial relationship with him did so only

I also know that Emaline and Harriet Partridge came to me, and said this was taught them and tried to convince me, although this was a hard trial.

I also heard at the time that Joseph Smith the prophet so called, and his wife quarrelled about this principle." (Hyrum Belnap, Journal, July 24, 1908. Original in the LDS Church Archives.)

⁶⁶ Brigham Young, discourse of August 9, 1874, *JD* 17:159. *see p. 171*
Benjamin F. Johnson, quoted Smith similarly. (Johnson to Gibbs, *op. cit.*) Heber C. Kimball left a similar statement to that of Young. "That was the trouble with Emma Smith. Joseph stood for the truth and maintained it, she struck against it, and where is she? She is where she is, and she will not escape until Joseph Smith opens the door and lets her out. She declared that she would leave him, if he would not sustain her instead of sustaining Brother Brigham and Heber and the rest of the Twelve Apostles of God. That is as true as that the sun shines. She had her choice, but Joseph could not follow her." (Heber C. Kimball, discourse of July 12, 1857, *JD* 5:29.) This is also the probable meaning of D&C 132:55a.

after receiving spiritual assurance that his summons was in harmony with God's will. Uninhibited sexual appetite or liberal socialistic reasons apparently had very little to do with his wives' actions.

The introduction of plural marriage, which had an adverse effect on Mormonism in Kirtland, tended to fracture the unity of Smith's own household. Although his addition of plural wives in defiance of the opposition of his first wife was consistent with principles outlined in his revelations, Emma eventually became more and more rebellious. Smith's secret unions, his propensity to wed young wards, and his enunciation of a revelation rebuking Emma for standing in the way of his polygyny were the most ostensible factors behind her disenchantment. Her opposition to Smith's doctrine and to its continuance by his successor, Brigham Young, was one of the major reasons why she did not accompany the Saints when they migrated west. The split in the Smith household was but a microcosm of the larger Nauvoo reaction which remains to be detailed.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPREAD OF PLURAL MARRIAGE IN NAUVOO

In the security of Nauvoo, and with the imperative of a divine command, Joseph Smith attempted to introduce the new doctrine of plural marriage among his associates and followers. He did so primarily through private and personal interviews, although he also delivered one or two public sermons on the subject. As of 1842 there were approximately 7,000 residents in Nauvoo, while the summer census for 1845 showed a population of 11,152.¹ Yet, according to George A. Smith's estimate, which appears to be fairly accurate, no more than one or two hundred people knew of the revelation when it was written in 1843.² This means that only a small fraction of the Prophet's adherents were aware of his attitudes on plural marriage at that point. But the number involved turned out to be significant both in a positive and negative sense.

In this chapter we will focus on Smith's advocacy of plural marriage, the secrecy which shrouded the introduction of the principle,

¹T. Edgar Lyon, "The Current Restoration in Nauvoo, Illinois," *Dialogue*, V (Spring, 1970), 15.

²George A. Smith, discourse of August 13, 1871, *JD* 14:213.

the Church's public denials of the practice, and the accompanying reactions of local Mormons. Three groups of Saints played important roles in the outcome of events. There were those who had early knowledge of plural marriage and endorsed it; those who learned of the doctrine and opposed it; and the mass of people who were uninformed about the matter but got caught in a cross fire of rumor and debate.

The inception of plural marriage did not come as a surprise to all Nauvooans. Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young claimed that they had premonitions that such a doctrinal position would be enunciated.³ More often than not, though, the first indications were not given to church officials like Kimball and Young, but to relative unknowns in the history of Mormonism. Joseph B. Noble claimed that it was in the fall of 1840 that he was first instructed on the subject. He swore that the following spring he sealed his sister-in-law, Louisa Beman, to Smith.⁴ Noble and Miss Beman were probably the first

³In April of 1839, H. C. Kimball was in Far West, Missouri aiding those Mormons in the process of leaving that state. In a letter to Vilate who was with some exiles in Quincy, Illinois, Kimball dictated "a word from the Spirit of the Lord" in which he predicted that his posterity should "be as numerous as the sands upon the sea shore." Vilate rather doubted the prophecy due to her advancing age. "The thought had never entered our minds," Kimball related, "that the Lord would establish in this Church the doctrine of plurality of wives in my day, still I believed it would be restored to the earth in some future time." (Orson F. Whitney, *op. cit.*, pp. 241, 245 and also H. C. Kimball, "President Heber C. Kimball's Journal," *MS* 45:115-116. Compare the remarks of his daughter in the *Woman's Exponent*, X [October 1, 1881], 66.) Young's experience is partially mentioned on p. 180 below. See his discourse of June 23, 1874, *JD* 18:241, for full details. Moreover, Mary Lightner said she had been dreaming for a number of years before Smith approached her that she was his wife. (Mary Lightner, "Remarks.")

⁴Jenson, *HR* 6:221 and J. F. Smith, *Blood Atonement*, p. 75. Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow, a brother-in-law to Miss Beman, confirm

Nauvooans to whom Smith confided the principle. The Bemans were among the earliest supporters of Smith's religious endeavors. As early as 1827, Louisa's father, Alva Beman, helped Smith conceal the plates of the Book of Mormon from a mob.⁵ Still, the full reasoning behind Smith's choice of this particular family for the unveiling of his precept of plural associations is not known.

In 1840 the William Huntington family also learned of the doctrine. In October and December Joseph was married to Prescinda and Zina Huntington by their brother Dimick in the presence of Fanny M. Huntington.⁶ William and his family were converted to Mormonism in 1832. Although they were never prominent in Church affairs, William remained faithful through the trying days of Kirtland and Far West, aiding the Smiths and supporting the Church generally. In 1840 he married the relict of Bishop Edward Partridge and served on the High Council in Nauvoo. Again, however, the basis for the Prophet's selection are obscure.⁷

this date. (MS 40:788, and HR 6:232.)

⁵ Joseph Bates Noble, Journal, p. 10 and 16. Typescript in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Mary A. Noble's journal begins on page fifteen of the typescript, and the latter page is from her writing. Noble's wife Mary was the daughter of Beman whom he married September 11, 1834. Beman is Noble's spelling; Brodie uses Beaman.

⁶ Zina D. H. Young, Prescinda H. Kimball, D. B. Huntington, and Fanny M. Huntington, affidavits, all sworn to on May 1, 1869. (Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:5, 7, 19, 21 and 2:5, 7, 19, and 21 respectively.) The Zina Huntington envelope in the Vault Folder was empty.

⁷ Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:368-370. There is perhaps one possibility which may partially explain the connection with this family. We have already noted that Smith may have had a vision of the women who were to enter into plural marriages with him. His

In 1841 Smith apparently began to instruct authorities of the Church regarding plural marriage. That summer many of the Twelve Apostles returned from missionary tours in Great Britain. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor arrived in Nauvoo on July 1, 1841.⁸ Kimball's daughter, Helen, related the events that ensued. Joseph Smith was waiting at the landing with a company of horsemen. As soon as the missionaries disembarked from the boat, he rushed them to dinner at his home, not even giving them time to visit with their own families. Vilate Kimball thought that this discourtesy continued after dinner when Smith brought the entire party to the Kimball home. The Prophet, wrote Helen Kimball, "seemed unwilling to part with my father and from that time kept the Twelve in Council early and late." Helen said her mother "never dreamed that he was during those times revealing to them the principles of Celestial Marriage" or that her trials were about to begin.⁹ George A. Smith confirms Miss Kimball's

contemporaries also said he had a vision or visions relating to his ancestry and how he was related by blood to many of the prominent families of the early church. (See Heber C. Kimball, discourse of September 6, 1856, *JD* 5:215-216; and Orson Pratt to Parley P. Pratt, October 11, 1853 as quoted in Archibald F. Bennett, *Saviors on Mount Zion* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1955], p. 86. The author also has a photo copy of this letter in his possession.) Genealogical research by Archibald F. Bennett and others has demonstrated this to be a fact and that most of Smith's relations descend from Reverend John Lathrop, who came to America from England in the 1630's. (Archibald Bennett, *op. cit.*, chapt. xxi, entitled "A Race of Religious Leaders," pp. 85-90.) Edward Tullidge quotes Zina D. Huntington as saying that Lathrop was one of her progenitors also. (Tullidge, *op. cit.*, p. 203.) It appears very likely that these three facts are not unrelated to the emerging, but not fully developed concept of dynasticism in the Church hierarchy.

⁸ *HC* 4:381.

⁹ Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes in Nauvoo," *Women's Exponent*, X (August 15, 1881), 42. If this sequence is true Juanita Brooks'

reminisces. He noted that it was "at one of the first interviews" after his return from England on July 13, 1841, that Smith astonished him with the new doctrine of "Patriarchal Marriage."¹⁰

However, the testimony of Brigham Young seems to indicate that Smith did not teach these men all he knew about plural marriage at this time. While still in England, Young recollected he had visions in which the Lord manifested "things that [he] did not understand" concerning marriage. He kept these matters to himself, planning to speak to Smith about them upon his return to Nauvoo. In conversing with Smith, Young felt that the Prophet was probing for something. So Young explained what he felt was in store for the future. At this point, Smith

turned round and looked me in the eyes, and says he--
'Brother Brigham, are you speaking what you understand,
--are you in earnest?' Says I--'I Speak just as the Spirit
manifest to me.' Says he--God bless you, the Lord has
opened your mind,' and he turned and went off.¹¹

At least one member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Parley P. Pratt, was not instructed until 1843. The private introduction of Pratt and his wife by Smith was somehow interrupted, and Smith did not finish his tutoring. The Pratts then went to Vilate Kimball for additional

conclusion that Smith introduced them to plural marriage on May 4-5, 1842 cannot be correct. This was the meeting when the Prophet began to instruct church leaders more fully in the temple doctrines. Mrs. Brooks has apparently assumed that this was the time when he introduced plural marriage. She gives no documentation for her assertion. (See Juanita Brooks, *John D. Lee, Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat* [Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1972], pp. 56-57.)

¹⁰George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869 as quoted in Bailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83. See also HC 4:382.

¹¹Brigham Young, discourse of June 23, 1874, JD 18:241.

information. Vilate explained that she thought they had better "go to those that had authority to teach," warning them that "they were sacred things, and he [Pratt] had better not make a move until he got more instruction."¹²

The story of Heber C. Kimball, also told by Helen Kimball, is perhaps the most interesting and instructive of all those extant on Smith's method of private introduction concerning plural marriage. It seems that Smith astounded Kimball with perhaps the most unusual request ever made of one of his followers. It was nothing less than the demand that Kimball should give his wife Vilate to the Prophet to be his wife. Kimball reeled at the thought. Suspicion and doubt seized him, but he knew his leader too well to take the request lightly. He fasted and prayed for three days to bring himself into submission. Finally, with "soul self-mastered" he took Vilate to the Prophet's home. Reportedly, Smith wept at this demonstration of devotion. In the emotion-filled moment, he embraced Kimball and told him the Lord was only testing him as he had tested Abraham. Vilate

¹²Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 27, 1843. Original in the LDS Church Archives. On the 29th she was still writing the letter and on that date told her husband that since beginning the letter she had received the visit referred to in the text. Thus when Smith was teaching Pratt about "the eternal union of the sexes" in Philadelphia in 1840 he must not have been teaching the polygynous doctrine as Mrs. Brodie asserts. (P. P. Pratt, *Autobiography*, pp. 297-298 and Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 297.)

Later church leaders recounted a similar test of John Taylor. Given the fact that the story was related by Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon, it is doubtful that they were confusing Kimball and Taylor. (See John M. Whitaker, *Daily Journal*, November 1, 1890, p. 242. Original in the Marriott Library, University of Utah.) Jedediah Grant said, "Did the Prophet Joseph want every man's wife he asked for? He did not, but in that thing was the grand thread of the Priesthood developed. The grand object in view was to try the people of God, to see what was in them." (Discourse of February 19, 1854, *JD* 2:14.)

was to remain his own. In fact, now that he had passed the test, nothing would be withheld from him. So then and there Smith joined the Kimball's hands together and sealed them as husband and wife for eternity.¹³

Next, the Prophet required Kimball to take a plural wife without the knowledge of Vilate, fearing that she would not accept the principle. Kimball delayed until he received a third command to action. He had been told to marry Sarah Peak Noon, an immigrant and mother of two daughters who left a drunken and dissolute husband in England.¹⁴ Heber was told that, if he did not comply with this directive, he would lose his Apostleship and suffer damnation. Under this pressure he acquiesced.

For days after the wedding, the knowledge that he was deceiving his wife seared Kimball's conscience. He ate little and slept less. Finally, he went to Smith and confessed he was too weak to deceive his wife any longer. But Joseph Smith informed him that the Lord had promised that his life would be taken to protect him from apostasy. Kimball's "anxious and haggard looks betrayed him daily and hourly, and finally his misery became so unbearable that it was impossible to control his feelings." Helen said, "he became sick in body, but

¹³This story comes from two separate sources; the first in Helen M. Whitney and the second is from James Lawson, a son-in-law. Mrs. Whitney's story is told originally in the *Women's Exponent*, XI (July 15, 1882); 26, Orson F. Whitney, "Heber C. Kimball," *Contributor*, VIII (June, 1887), 311. Lawson's was first printed in Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball*, in 1888. (See the present edition, pp. 439-440.)

¹⁴H. Whitney, *Woman's Exponent*, X (October 15, 1881).

his mental wretchedness was too great to allow his retiring, and he would walk the floor till nearly morning. . . ." When he refused to explain to Vilate the cause of his anguish, she turned to prayer.

According to Helen, a vision was opened to her mother's mind and

Before her was illustrated the order of Celestial Marriage, in all its beauty and glory, together with the great exaltation and honor it would confer upon her in that immortal and celestial sphere, if she would accept it and stand in her place by her husband's side. She also saw the woman he had taken to wife, and contemplated with joy the vast and boundless love and union which this order would bring about, as well as the increase of her husband's kingdoms, and the power and glory extending throughout the eternities, worlds without end.¹⁵

Comforted, Vilate went to her husband and explained what had happened and told him she could covenant to stand by him. But the story does not end on this mystical, "happy ever after" note. In the fall of 1842, Kimball was called to missionary service in central and southern Illinois. Surviving correspondence between Heber and Vilate during this time shows that even the reported vision had not eradicated all the feelings of a devoted wife's heart. The intrusion of plural marriage into the Kimball home proved to be a persistent problem. On October 16, 1842 Vilate wrote to her husband, expressing her feelings as follows:

Our good Friend S. (Sarah, father's other wife) is as ever, and we are one. You said I must tell you all my feelings; but if I were to tell you that I sometimes felt tempted and tried and feel as though my burden was greater than I could bear, it would only be a source of sorrow to you, and the Lord knows that I do not wish to add one sorrow to your heart, for be assured, my dear Heber, that I do not love you any less for what has transpired, neither do I believe that you do me; therefore, I will keep my bad feelings to myself, as much as

¹⁵*Ibid.* p. 327.

possible and tell you the good. I can say with propriety that the most of my time I feel comfortable in my mind, and feel that I have much to be thankful for. I realize that the scenes we are called to pass through are calculated to wean us from the world, and prepare us for a better one. My desire is to live while I can be a comfort to you and to bring up our children. For I don't know of a person on earth that I should be willing to leave them with.¹⁶

Heber likewise let his feelings be known in two letters, the first of which is dated October 23, 1842. At the time he had not received the foregoing communication from his wife. Among other things, he prayed that God would take him before he had a chance to sin or "betray my dear brethren who have been true to me and to God the Eternal Father." He exhorted his wife to stand by him even to death. Life was quickly losing its "charms" for him, he said, and his head was often "a fountain of tears."¹⁷

By October 25 he had received Vilate's letter. His reply at that date illustrates the agony of the trial he was experiencing. He was deeply moved by her attempt to conceal her feelings. Although her letter was a "sweet morsel" to him he had been able to read between the lines and sympathetically responded:

I could weep like a child if I could get by myself to think fore one moment that I have been the means of causine you anny sorrow [.] I know you must have manny

¹⁶Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, October 16, 1842 as quoted in the *Women's Exponent*, XI (June 1, 1882), 1-2. The author was unable to locate the original of this in the LDS Church Archives.

* Apparently Kimball's biographer has not either, since he quotes the same source used here in his recent article. (See, Stanley Kimball, "Heber C. Kimball and Family, the Nauvoo Years," *BYU Studies*, XV [Summer, 1975], 459-465.) The author suspects that Mrs. Whitney edited the letter somewhat because other letters she printed have been found, showing significant editing.

¹⁷Helen M. Whitney, *Women's Exponent*, XI (July 15, 1882), 26.

bad feelings but I feel to pray fore you most of the time for I think you have not been out of my mind one score of minutes at a time since I left you. Thare has been but a few nits but what I have drempt about you but most allways I find you distant. My feelings are of that kind that it makes me sick at heart so that I have no apetite to eat, my temptations are so severe, it seams as though I should heaf to lay down and die fore it seems as though I should sink beneat it & I go to the wods Evry chance I have and pore out my soul before God that he would deliver me and bless you my dear love for I love you most dear I assure you for my heart ake so it seams as though it would burst [.] I have been trouble[d] about my self some of the time [and the] first I would know I would bee in tears weeping like a child, about you and the situation that I am in but what can I do but go ahead [?] my dear Vilate do not let it cast you down for I know how to pity you, my dear. I can say I never suffered more in all the day of my life than since these things come to pass.¹⁸

At the conclusion Kimball again felt the need to reassure Vilate that his love for her remained strong and that taking a plural wif had not changed the nature of his love. He told her he would be the "most miserable" of all men if her love for him had changed. His own love for her "eclips[ed] all other[s] on Earth. . . ." "I essteam you most pressious of all things below the sun for you and my children are my Earthly object and it is all that holds me to it. . . ." Although these expressions were "the verry cream" of his soul, he again assured her: "no one in the world can make me as happy as you can."¹⁹

This episode, filled with pathos as it is, suggests several things relative to the discussion at hand. First, we learn of the

¹⁸Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, October 25, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives. This was published by Helen M. Whitney in *Ibid.* Comparison of the two show some editing. The original has been followed here.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

loosed and I was filled with the Holy Ghost." He preached such a sermon that both he and his sister were converted to the principle. Later in Nauvoo, at the home of his sister, Delcena Sherman, Johnson was to hear Hyrum Smith's explanation that the Prophet would not have taught the doctrine if it was not from the Lord and, in fact, would not have accepted it if an angel had not threatened him.²⁰

Apparently, Hyrum Smith himself had a difficult spiritual struggle with the new doctrine. Indeed, he warned his brother that it would cause the breakup of the Church and cost him his life. As was his pattern, Joseph promised his older brother, that if he prayed about it, he would discover the correctness of the principle. Reportedly, Hyrum Smith "well-nigh sweat blood over it, so repugnant was it to his feelings," but upon inquiring of God he received the promised revelation.²¹

²⁰ Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, pp. 94-95.

²¹ Gideon Carter, affidavit, February 27, 1874. Original in the Vault Folder in the LDS Church Archives. It has been published in B. H. Roberts, *Succession in the Presidency of the Church* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Publishing Co., 1900), pp. 122-125. James Allred, a member of the High Council to which Hyrum Smith later read the revelation said Smith told the council "he did not believe it at first, it was so contrary to his feelings, but he said he knew Joseph was a profit [sic.] of God so he made a covenant that he would not eat, drink or sleep untill [sic.] he knew for himself, that he had got a testimony that it was true, that he had even herd [sic.] the voice of God concerning it." (James Allred, statement of October 15, 1854. Original in the LDS Church Archives.) Compare also the statements of Ebenezer and Angeline Robinson. (Affidavits of December 29, 1873 and October 24, 1885, as found in D. H. Bays, *The Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism Examined and Refuted* [St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1897], pp. 368-371.)

Hyrum's first plural wife, Mercy R. Thompson tells the story that Hyrum was induced to marry her after the Prophet told him to. Her dead husband (Robert B. Thompson) repeatedly appeared to Smith telling him to have Hyrum marry her because he did not want her to live "such a lonely life." (Mercy R. Thompson to Joseph Smith III,

John Taylor's feelings were similar to those of Kimball, Johnson, and Hyrum Smith. Taylor remembered that, when the Prophet taught the doctrine to the Twelve, he told them that their refusal to practice it would inhibit the progress of the kingdom of God. But Taylor thought it was an "appalling thing to do," and, in fact, delayed so long in establishing a plural household that he aggravated Smith. Eventually Taylor encountered the Prophet on horseback in front of the Nauvoo temple. Smith was adamant in his instructions.

'Look here,' said he, 'those things that have been spoke of must be fulfilled, and if they are not entered into right away the keys will be turned.' Well, what did I do? Did I feel to stand in the way of this great, eternal principle, and treat lightly the things of God?
No.²²

Brigham Young said the only time he desired the grave was when he learned of his duty in the matter.²³ Lorenzo Snow's reaction was typical. He, like Benjamin Johnson, was taken for a walk and told of plural marriage while sitting on a log near a river bank. In her biography of her brother, Eliza R. Snow quoted these comments from Lorenzo's journal:

I felt very humble, and in my simplicity besought him earnestly to correct me and set me right if, at any time, he should see me indulging any principle or practice that might tend to lead astray, into forbidden paths; to which he replied, 'Brother Lorenzo, the

September 5, 1883. Copy in the LDS Church Archives. It has also been reproduced in *Deseret Evening News*, February 6, 1886, p. 6; and Bays, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-384.

²² John Taylor, selections from discourses delivered in various settlements, *JD* 24:230. See also *MS* 45:454.

²³ Brigham Young, discourse of July 14, 1855, *JD* 3:266.

principles of honesty and integrity are found within you, and you will never be guilty of any serious error or wrong, to lead you from the path of duty. The Lord will open your way to receive and obey the law of Celestial Marriage.²⁴

The following are known or thought to have established plural households prior to the martyrdom: Ezra T. Benson, Gladden Bishop, William Clayton, Howard Egan, Thomas Grover, Orson Hyde, Benjamin F. Johnson, Heber C. Kimball, Joseph Bates Noble, Parley P. Pratt, Willard Richards, Hyrum Smith, John Smith, William Smith, Eratus Snow, James J. Strang, John Taylor, Lyman Wight, and Brigham Young.²⁵

Secrecy and Church Denials

The aura of secrecy which enclosed the new institution has been repeatedly noticed in this study. Not only were new initiates privately taught, but there were times when Smith even concealed his actions

²⁴ Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow One of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1884), p. 70.

²⁵ John A. Widtsoe is the authority for Gladden Bishop, John Smith, James J. Strang, and Lyman Wight. (Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith, Seeker*. . . , pp. 238-239.) George A. Smith in a letter to Joseph Smith III, adds E. T. Benson, Howard Egan and Thomas Grover. (George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, *op. cit.*) In addition to references cited elsewhere, sources for the others listed include: John Henry Evans and Minnie Egan Anderson, *Ezra T. Benson, Pioneer Statesman-Saint* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947), pp. 63-64; Mary Ann Price Hyde, "Autobiography," (microfilm copy in the LDS Church Archives); *Deseret Evening News*, April 12, 1904; Mercy Fielding Thompson, "Autobiographical Sketch," (Original in the LDS Church Archives); Calvin P. Rudd, "William Smith: Brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith," (unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973); B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), pp. 464-466; Kate Carter (ed.). *Brigham Young, His Wives and Family* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, n.d.), pp. 14-16; James H. Crockwell, *Pictures and Biographies of Brigham Young and His Wives* Salt Lake City: James H. Crockwell, n.d.), pp. 17-20. For yet others consult Appendix H.

from Emma and went to unusual lengths to keep the matter from the public. As previously noted, on July 27, 1842 Smith married Sarah, the 17 year-old daughter of Bishop Newel Whitney.²⁶ She "was the first woman given in plural marriage with the consent of both parents."²⁷ Shortly after the marriage, Smith sent the mother and father a written invitation to meet him at a hiding place in order to receive additional blessings. This remarkable letter, penned August 18, 1842, specifically cautioned the addressees about secrecy. "Let Brother Whitney come a little ahead, and knock at the south east corner of the house at the window; it is next to the cornfield," he wrote. We have also noted Smith's concern that Whitney not come when Emma was present. He then said,

. . . be careful to escape observation, as much as possible. I know it is a heroick [sic.] undertaking, but so much the greater friendship, and the more joy when I see you. . . . Burn this letter as soon as you read it, keep all locked up in your hearts my life depends on it. . . .²⁸

Nine months later Joseph Smith "married" Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph C. Kingsbury, brother-in-law to her father. In a striking diary entry, recently brought to light, Joseph Kingsbury explained his reason for marrying the girl. He said:

on the 29th of April 1843 I according to President Joseph Smith[s] Council [sic.] & other agreed [sic.] to Stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as to be her husband & had a pretended marriage for the purpose of Bringing

²⁶See n. 40, chapt. iv.

²⁷Tullidge, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

²⁸Joseph Smith to Beloved Brother and Sister Whitney, *op. cit.*

about the purposes of God in these last days Spoken by
the mouths of the prophets. . . .²⁹

This is the only known instance a "front" husband marrying one of
Smith's wives in order to conceal his activities.

Secrecy was also practiced by others. Erastus Snow recorded
in code in his diary his first plural marriage, which occurred on
February 15, 1844. This was apparently to conceal knowledge of the
proceedings from anyone who might gain access to the personal account³⁰
(see Figure 5). Likewise, shortly after her marriage to Joseph Smith,
Helen Mar Kimball received instructions from her father. He cautioned
her to keep her feelings to herself and tell them to no one because
"if you do you will be betrade [sic.]; and Exposed, to your hurt."

²⁹ Joseph C. Kingsbury, "The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury,"
pp. 12-13. Original in the Marriott Library, University of Utah.
Kingsbury's first wife died October 10, 1842. This wedding occurred
on April 29, 1843. (Civil Marriages Performed in Nauvoo, Hancock
County, Illinois. Original in the Nauvoo Collection, in the LDS
Church Archives.) The above account was first published by Michael
Marquardt. Compare Figure 7 p. 210 above.

³⁰ Erastus Snow, Journal, June 1841 to February 1847, opposite
p. 50. Original in the LDS Church Archives. First a copy of these
pages were found in the Vault Folder with an attached explanation of
the code. Subsequently the journal itself was secured. The author
is grateful to the executive committee at the Historical Department of
the LDS Church for granting permission to reproduce this.

The coded message is in brown ink similar to that of the
rest of the journal. The deciphered message is in a different hand-
writing (unknown) and ink color (blue). Several blank pages follow
the message. The observant reader will notice that the dates on page
50 do not correspond with the date of Snow's marriage. Apparently
he skipped back a few pages in his journal, recorded the message
then continued keeping his journal account until he reached the
coded entry. Then he skipped back a few more pages and proceeded.
The one (1) at the top left of the coded message and the pages left
blank after it suggest that Snow may have contemplated adding
additional coded messages.

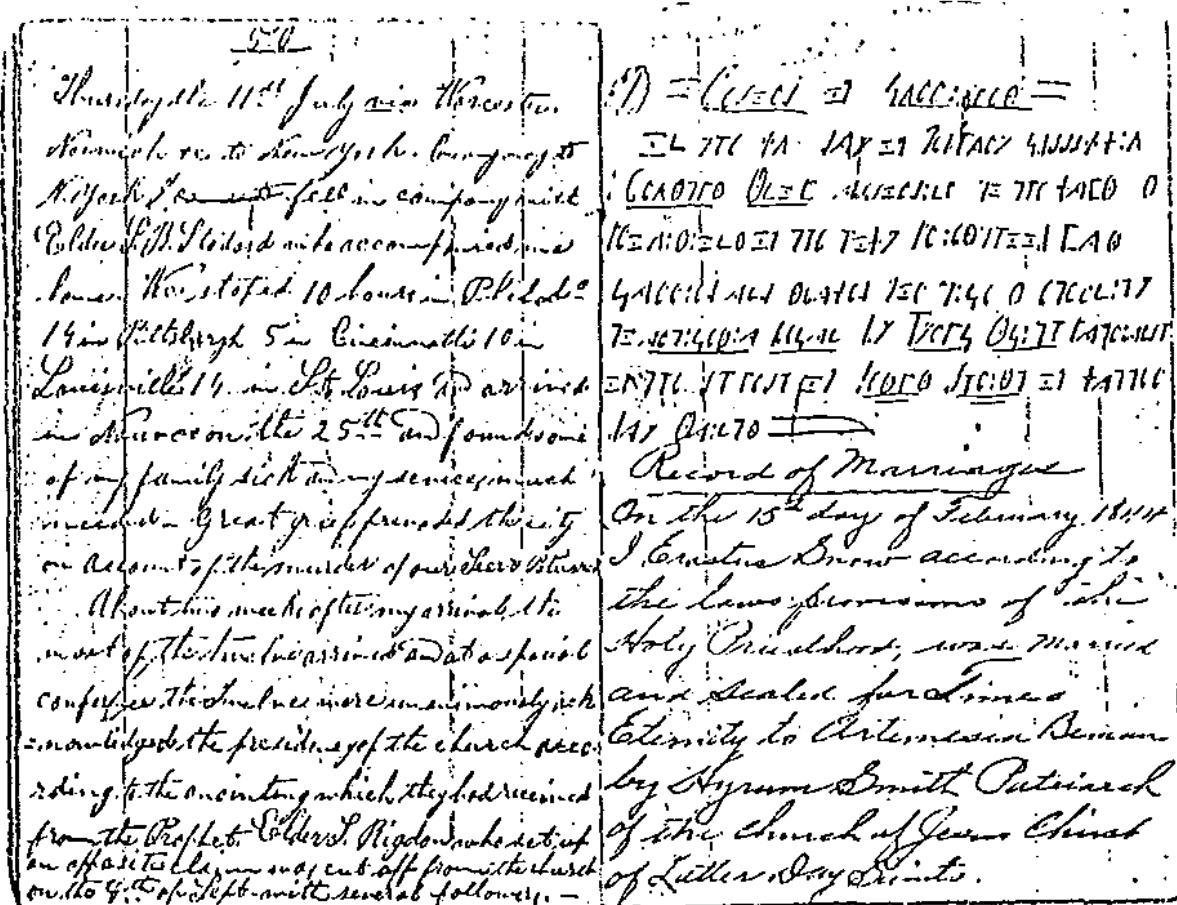


Figure 5. The Erastus Snow Journal.

you must not show this letter to any but our family [.] be wise and you shall prosper. . . . keep the company of those that are wise and keep close mouths, Solomon says a wise head keeps a close mouth. so don't tell all you feel. if you should [.] tell it to your mother, she feels for your interest.³¹

As Michael Quinn has pointed out, Joseph Smith "institutionalized both exclusiveness and secrecy as permanent characteristics of Mormonism. . . ."³² Early Mormonism was steeped in secrecy. The

³¹ Heber C. Kimball to Helen Mar Kimball, June 9, 1844.

³² Michael Quinn, "Socio-Religious Radicalism of the Mormon Church: A Parallel to the Anabaptists" (paper presented to the Mormon History Association in conjunction with the Chicago meeting of the

presiding councils of the Church from the First Presidency down to the Stake High Council meetings were all held behind closed doors. The sacred temple ordinances and rituals were only available to worthy and prepared church members. Perhaps, in some instances, even worship services were confined to selected believers.³³ The apex of secrecy surrounded the formation and organizational councils of the Council of Fifty.³⁴ In April of 1844, Sidney Rigdon revealed the nature of secrecy in the Church and some of the criticism it must have been receiving when he said: "Would you not be astonished if even now we should tell the glories and privileges of the Saints of God to you and to the World? We should be ridiculed; and no wonder we shut it up in secret. . . . Do not be astonished, then, if we even yet have secret meetings, asking God for things for your benefit." He assured the people, "There was no evil concocted when we first held secret meetings, and it is the same even now."³⁵

Several factors explain this policy of secrecy about polygyny. Smith had encountered opposition from the time at an early age, when he began to have spiritual experiences with Christ. Disagreement with

Organization of American Historians, December, 1974). Mimeographed copy in possession of the author.

³³D&C 46:31.

³⁴Klaus J. Hansen, "The Making of King Strang: A Re-Examination," *Michigan History*, XLIV (September, 1962), 206-207.

³⁵HC 6:290-291.

his views only seemed to intensify as Mormonism grew and progressed. Most assessments of the persecutions that the Prophet ultimately experienced have pointed to cultural and social differences between his followers and their gentile neighbors.³⁶ Strange Mormon doctrines and practices supposedly compounded tensions related to economic, political, and other issues. As a consequence, Smith was imprisoned, arrested numerous times, tarred and feathered, and faced one or two early threats on his life. By the time when the Saints gathered in Nauvoo--the third or fourth home for many of the exiles--the Prophet must have realized that an indiscriminate advocacy of plural marriage would only intensify criticism and stiffen anti-Mormon opposition.

For that matter, Smith did not have to speculate on what might happen if critics heard that he believed in plural marriage. He had already been tried in court for illicit relationships with women. And there is some evidence that he may have already been attacked by an irate crowd because of a supposed intimacy with a fellow Mormon's sister. In addition, Smith had seen one of his closest advisors, Oliver Cowdery, leave the Church over this issue. So he had no illusions as to what moral conduct either outsiders or believers expected of one who claimed to be a Prophet of God.

From Smith's own point of view, one of his greatest difficulties in life was to break down the "traditions of men" which stood in the way of his teachings on marriage. He thought that the norm of

³⁶ See ns. 23-25 in chapt. ii.

monogamy chained men's minds, making them totally unreceptive to alternative lifestyles. On several occasions, Smith complained about the difficulty he had in teaching his own flock. Reverently and with obvious awe, Apostle Wilford Woodruff recalled that "the Lord taught him [Smith] many things by vision and revelation that were never taught publicly in his days; for the people could not bear the flood of intelligence which God poured into his mind."³⁷ In an April, 1842 sermon to the Relief Society Smith chided those "Great Big Elders" whom he privately taught the "things of the Kingdom" that they were then proclaiming as their own revelations.³⁸ Again, in a June, 1843 discourse, he angrily lashed out at those who professed loyalty, but "the moment you teach them some of the mysteries of the kingdom of God . . . they will be the first to stone you and put you to death."³⁹ Six months before his murder, the Prophet depicted his dilemma in humorous words. To get things into the heads of the people, he said, "has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a bettle."⁴⁰ More serious tones reveal the frustrations of long years of inhibited teachings.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions; they cannot stand the fire at all.⁴¹

³⁷Wilford Woodruff, discourse of April 9, 1857, *JD* 5:83-84.

³⁸*HC* 4:604.

³⁹*HC* 5:424.

⁴⁰*HC* 6:184.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 185. Klaus Hansen applied some of these statements to the kingdom of God concept rather than plural marriage. (See, Hansen, "The Making of King Strang," p. 207.)

What is more, his critics could not accept the institution of plural marriage as having any moral or religious basis whatever. To many gentiles, Smith and his doctrine were the worst threats to the underpinnings of society. As David Brion Davis has said, this very aura of secrecy contributed to the solidification of anti-Mormon sentiment.⁴² The unconditional loyalty and obedience demanded and received by Mormonism merely magnified these concerns.

Efforts to maintain silence, to restrict knowledge of the nuptial doctrine to trusted and worthy associates, and to avoid outside pressure only seemed to enliven charges of moral corruption against the Church. The bitterly anti-Mormon *Nauvoo Expositor*, edited by repudiated ex-Mormons, was quick to point to "many items of doctrine" which it said were "taught secretly, and denied openly."⁴³ Likewise, after the death of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon turned against Mormonism. In his religious newspaper, Rigdon charged that New Testament scriptures predicted the apostasy of the latter day Church because it would privately introduce wicked practices and seek to maintain them by secrecy and lying if necessary.⁴⁴

Under such circumstances, church leaders did deny the accusations of those who said that they countenanced immorality and

⁴²David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic and Anti-Mormon Literature," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (September, 1960), 211-214.

⁴³*Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844.

⁴⁴Sidney Rigdon to James Gregg, in *The Latter Day Saint's Messenger and Advocate* [Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania], October 15, 1844.

corruption with respect to marriage. Most of these denials stressed semantical and theological technicalities. That is, the language of the defense was carefully chosen to disavow practices that did not accurately represent Church doctrines.⁴⁵ Some Mormons insisted that the Church was not advocating plural marriage as an official practice for its general membership.⁴⁶ Still others bordered on outright prevarication in order to protect the Church.

As early as the 1830's, at Kirtland and Far West, references were made to the marital provisions in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and in the articles in the *Elder's Journal* that involved some protective circumlocution. The earliest denials of marriage abuses in Nauvoo grew out of a scandal related to the activities of John C. Bennett, an individual who had been prominent in the Church's heirarchy and in Nauvoo society. Bennett was excommunicated in the spring of 1842 for committing adultery with various women.⁴⁷ Immediately, in the public press he charged that the Mormon leadership was teaching spiritual wifery and seduction. He stated that Joseph Smith and others had tried to use him as a go-between in alluring

⁴⁵In his letter of October 9, 1869 to Joseph Smith III, George A. Smith said, "Anyone who will read carefully the denials, as they are termed, . . . in connection with the circumstances will see clearly that they denounce adultery, fornication, brutal lust and the teaching of plurality of wives by those who were not commanded to do so; showing clearly that it was understood that such commandment would be given to others." (Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 86.)

⁴⁶John Taylor, discourse of April 9, 1882, *JD* 23:64, and Jesse Haven, *Celestial Marriage and the Plurality of Wives!* (Cape Town: W. Foelscher, n.d.), p. 2.

⁴⁷This story will be detailed in chapt. vii.

women into their seraglios. Joseph Smith contradicted these statements and, in fact, said that Bennett was using his name without authorization in making sexual conquests. Bennett finally signed an affidavit absolving Smith of any culpability for his behavior, but later claimed that this document was obtained under duress.⁴⁸

The October, 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, a local Mormon publication, reaffirmed the Church's monogamous marital stance by reprinting the 1835 statement to this effect. This was done "to show that Dr. J. C. Bennett's 'secret wife system' is a matter of his own manufacture."⁴⁹ Subsequently, two additional disclaimers were signed by thirty-one prominent Nauvooans.⁵⁰ The first was approved by twelve men who stated that they knew of no other marriage system than the one outlined in the 1835 statement. The second was endorsed by nineteen women of the Relief Society, all of whom were married. It echoed the statement made by the men, following the argument presented in the October editorial. The interesting thing in these statements is the fact that several of the signatories did in fact know of polygyny. Among the men, Newel K. Whitney and perhaps John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff were privy to the new teaching. Eliza R. Snow and Elizabeth Ann Whitney were enlightened among the ladies.

The Prophet's own comments on the subject were evasive. By February of 1842 he was boiling over and was particularly incensed

⁴⁸ *T&C* 3:870-871.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 939.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 939-940.

about the rumors among the women. To the temple workmen he exploded,

There is a great noise in the city, and many are saying there cannot be so much smoke without some fire. Well, be it so. If the stories about Joseph Smith are true, then the stories of John C. Bennett are true about the ladies of Nauvoo; and he says that the Ladies' Relief Society are all organized of those who are to be the wives of Joe Smith, Ladies, you know whether this is true or not.⁵¹

Years later, Eliza Snow explained the apparent discrepancies between these refutations and the behavior of the people. She said that they pertained only to Bennett's doctrines, not the true doctrines of the Church.⁵² While this may have been the intention of some of the knowledgeable Mormons, there were also those who thought that they were actually representing the Church's true position. The latter were simply ignorant of the principles of plural marriage that were being secretly taught and practiced. Ebenezer and Angeline Robinson were among those who signed these documents, believing they were interdicting all non-monogamous doctrines. It was not until December of 1843 that Hyrum Smith taught them the truth about the plural marriage precept. Speaking of his previous knowledge, Robinson said, "we knew it was talked of in secret, and had been for more than a year."⁵³ In fact, Don Carlos Smith, the Prophet's younger brother, was ignorant of this teaching at the time. In June of 1841, he told

⁵¹HC 5:286.

⁵²Eliza R. Snow to Joseph F. Smith, undated. Original is in the Joseph F. Smith Collection in the LDS Church Archives.

⁵³Ebenezer Robinson, "Items of Personal History," *The Return* (February, 1891), pp. 29-30.

Robinson that "Any man who will teach and practice 'spiritual wifery' will go to hell, no matter if it is my brother Joseph."⁵⁴

Some denials were straightforward, although they were probably based on zealous ignorance. This was apparently the case with a Mormon who wrote to the *Boston Bee*, categorically denying charges that his leaders were "advocating a plurality of wives."⁵⁵ But other public comments are quite obtuse and subject to different interpretations. For instance, on February 1, 1844, the *Times and Seasons* printed a "notice" from Joseph and Hyrum Smith to Hiram Brown in Lapeer County, Michigan. Brown was excommunicated for "preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines."⁵⁶ It is likely that the Smiths were aware of the technical difference between polygamy and polygyny and could therefore classify the former as a false doctrine.

Again, in March of the same year, Hyrum Smith wrote a letter of chastisement to the China Creek Branch of the Church in Hancock County, Illinois. Some of the elders had been teaching the people that "a man *having a certain priesthood*, may have as many wives as he pleases." "That man teaches *false doctrines*," Smith declared,

⁵⁴Ebenezer Robinson, *Items of Personal History of the Editor. Including Some Items of Church History not Generally Known, Taken from "The Return," Volumes 1-3, 1886-1890*, pp. 126-127. Typescript in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. The author used this source in lieu of the above source because the copy in the LDS Church Archives was incomplete and the interlibrary loan service at Purdue was unable to procure it.

⁵⁵*T&S* 4:143.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 423.

"for there is no such doctrine taught here; neither is there any such thing practiced here."⁵⁷ Therefore, those guilty of teaching such doctrine stood in jeopardy of losing their church membership.

The unauthorized practices of Bennett, Brown, and others at China Creek put Hyrum Smith in a bellicose mood. In an April, 1844 sermon, he responded to "the 10,000 reports" daily coming in about the existence of the spiritual wife doctrine. "Almost every foolish man runs to me to inquire if such things are true, & how many spiritual wives a man may have," he said. "I know nothing about it; what he might call a spiritual wife, I should not know anything about. In about half an hour after he has gone another begins to say: the Elders tell such & such things all over the country. I am authorized

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 474. (Italics in the Original.) The origin of the idea is uncertain, however, Section 132 taught that the Prophet Nathan held the "keys of this power" and gave David his wives. From this idea Orson Pratt taught that the "keys" which then resided in Joseph Smith allowed the two necessary conditions for a man to have a plural wife. The possessor of the keys was the only one who could get the authorizing revelation from God, and he was also the only one with power to seal the couple together. (Orson Pratt, discourse of August 29, 1852, *JD* 1:63-64, and compare the statement by the First Presidency in 1933, *op. cit.*) An interesting note appears in Smith's *History* under the date of October 5, 1843 relative to these two issues. It says, ". . . walked up and down the street with my scribe. Gave instructions to try those persons who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives; for, according to the law I hold the keys of this power in the last days; for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom the power and its keys are conferred; and I have *constantly said no man shall save but one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise.*" (*HC* 6:46.) But Smith's journal for the same date had a variant reading which is less specific but may convey the same notion although it appears to be more final than the published version. The diary reads, ". . . walked up and down st. [street] with scribe, and gave instructions to try those who were preaching, teaching on the doctrine of plurality of wives on this law. Joseph forbids it, and the practice thereof. No man shall have but one wife." (Joseph Smith, Diary, Thursday, October 5, 1843. Original in the LDS Church Archives. Dean Jesse says the diary is in the handwriting of Willard Richards, one of Smith's secretaries.)

to tell you from henceforth," he asserted, "that any man who comes in and tells you such damn fool doctrine to tell him to give up his license. None but a fool teaches such stuff; the devil himself is not such a fool, and every Elder who teaches such stuff ought to have his nose wrung." The doctrine of eternal marriage had suffered a fate similar to other Mormon dogmas: "it was made to have an evil effect through the foolishness of some."⁵⁸

In a unique admission, Hyrum Smith then explained the Church doctrine which was apparently being confused with "spiritual wifery." It may be noteworthy, though, that the following comment says nothing of multiple living wives:

I married me a wife, and I am the only man who has any right to her. We had five children, the covenant was made four [sic.] our lives. She fell into the grave before God shewed us *his* order. God has shewn me that the covenant is dead, and had no more force, neither could I have her in the resurrection, but we should be as the angels--it troubled me. Prd. Joseph said you can have her sealed to you upon the same principles as you can be baptized for the dead. I enquired what can I do for any second wife? You can also make a covenant with her for eternity and have her sealed to you by the authority of the priesthood. I named the subject to my present wife, and she said I will act as proxy for your wife that is dead, and I will be sealed to you for eternity myself for I never had any other husband.⁵⁹

But Smith said even this doctrine should not be preached to the world. It should be taught only in Nauvoo where it could be kept under

⁵⁸ Hyrum Smith, *op. cit.* See n. 46 in chap. iv.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* These doctrines had been taught as early as January of 1844. See the letter of Jacob Scott to Mary Warnock, January 5, 1844. Photocopy in the LDS Archives. Original in the Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri.

control and be reserved for the Saints who have obeyed the Gospel and gathered.

If one takes the position that these denials and teachings were couched in careful language to deny all false and unauthorized doctrines while concealing true ones, it must nevertheless be said that they also conveyed the impression to the public that the leaders were condemning all non-monogamous marital systems. It was Sidney Rigdon who said:

How often have these men and their accomplices stood up before the congregation, and called God and all the holy Angels to witness, that there was no such doctrine taught in the church; and it has now come to light . . . [that] they were living in the practice of these enormities and there were multitudes of their followers in the congregation at the time who knew it.⁶⁰

Attempts At a Public Announcement

Apparently Smith also made several attempts to broach the subject publically in Nauvoo, but, with circumstances as they were it is not surprising that here, too, he encountered resistance. Helen Kimball said that the Prophet stated in 1841 that the ancient order concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be among the things restored with the fullness of the Gospel. However, in a speech made on the afternoon of the same day, he withdrew the statement, saying "possibly the Spirit had made things seem nearer than it really was."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Sidney Rigdon to James Gregg, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁶¹ Helen M. Whitney, *Plural Marriage*, pp. 11-12, and *Women's Exponent*, X, 93. Bathsheba W. Smith placed this or a similar experience in the year 1840. (Affidavit, November 19, 1903. Original in the Vault Folder, LDS Church Archives. A shorter affidavit written the previous day does not mention this event.) Still another

On another occasion it is reported that Smith challenged his fellow Mormons with a rhetorical question, proposing a situation wherein the Elders baptized a Turkish polygamist. He asked if the man could bring his wives to Zion and live in peace. "Yes," he said, answering his own query, "the laws in Zion are such that you can bring your wives and enjoy them here as well as there." Again, he apparently struck a sensitive nerve. A delegation of women interrupted his dinner, demanding a retraction. He reportedly granted it, saying that he "was aware it was a very large pill for them or the people to swallow."⁶²

The Recording and Public Reading of Section 132

However, these were not official public declarations of the new doctrine. The closest thing to that was the recording and semi-public reading of the revelation on marriage now known as Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. Because it was not published in

experience took place about the time the revelation was written. (James W. Phippen, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Women's Journal*, XVII [December, 1906], 540.)

⁶² Joseph L. Robinson, *Journal*, pp. 12-13. Typed copy located in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. (Compare George A. Smith, discourse of March 18, 1855, *JD* 2:217.) Other testimony in support of the notion that Smith introduced the topic publicly in Nauvoo comes from Utah Mormons at the turn of the century. It came as a part of the continuing debate with the RLDS. N. T. Silcock started the debate and the deluge by claiming he heard Smith preach a sermon in July of 1843. "This was the only systematical polygamous sermon I have ever heard," he said. (See the statements of N. T. Silcock, Thomas Chastleworth, B. H. Watts, Harry Dalton, S. T. Kenner, B. F. Johnson, Mrs. Alice E. Stephens and James Leithhead in the *Deseret Evening News*, March 15, April 2, 8, 12, 1904, and the *Journal History*, November 27, 1910.)

the Prophet's lifetime and because of the circumstances of its writing and later publication, some have questioned the authenticity of this document.⁶³ However, evidence available today verifies the essential elements in the story of the origin of the document and its use in Nauvoo.

In 1871 William Clayton publicly claimed that he wrote the revelation as received by Joseph Smith on the morning of July 12, 1843.⁶⁴ We have already noted that 1843 was a year of intense crisis in the marriage of Joseph and Emma Smith. Clayton said that Hyrum Smith was present when the section was drafted and that it was at his insistence that it was recorded. The brothers came into the office in the upper story of Smith's brick store on Water Street, near the bank of the Mississippi River. They were conversing about plural marriage, and Hyrum was importuning his brother to write the revelation so he could take it to Emma and try to convince her of its truth, thereby bringing "peace" to the Prophet's household. Smith was not sure that Emma would be so easily convinced. But Hyrum insisted that the doctrine was so plain that he could "convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity or heavenly origin." For some unexplained reason, perhaps to give it more authority,

⁶³The first publication came in 1852. Orson Pratt was called upon by Brigham Young to make the first public announcement of the doctrine on August 29, 1852. It was published in a *Deseret News* "Extra" on September 14, 1852, however, the revelation was not canonized until it was included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. These circumstances left the Utah church open to the criticism that the traditional story of its recording was a myth and that Young was the real author of the dogma.

⁶⁴William Clayton to Madison Scott, *op. cit.*

Clayton said Hyrum wanted the Prophet to use the same spectacles with which he had translated the Book of Mormon to write the revelation.⁶⁵ Smith said "he knew the revelation perfectly from beginning to end," and thus dictated it from memory. Scribe Clayton read the revelation back to Smith, who then pronounced it correct, adding that there was "much more that he could write, [sic.] on the subject, but what was written was sufficient for the present."⁶⁶

Hyrum then took the revelation to Emma Smith. Shortly thereafter he returned, saying that she was "very bitter and full of resentment and anger." The Prophet had expected as much. Later during the day, the revelation was reportedly read to several unnamed Church authorities. That evening Bishop Newel K. Whitney requested permission to copy the revelation. Smith consented, and on the following day Joseph Kingsbury--the ostensible husband of Whitney's daughter--copied the revelation. Several days later Smith told Clayton and others that "Emma had so teased and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it" that it wearied him and he gave it to her. He knew full well he could rewrite it anytime and that a second copy had been made. Clayton said the Kingsbury copy was "carefully preserved by Bishop Whitney" and few knew of its existence until the

⁶⁵This was the Urim and Thummim, an instrument through which he received Section 3, 6, 7, 11, 14, 15, and 16 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

⁶⁶William Clayton, affidavit, February 16, 1874. See also HR 6:225.

Saints arrived at Winter Quarters on the Missouri River in 1846.⁶⁷

Both Clayton's and Smith's journals of the time verify the date of the recording of the revelation. In a diary kept for Smith by Willard Richards, we find under the date of July 12, 1843 the following entry: "Received a Revelation in the office in presence of Hyrum & Wm Clayton."⁶⁸ Clayton stated in his own journal on that date that he had written a revelation consisting of "ten pages on the order of the Priesthood, showing the design of Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives, etc."⁶⁹ Several people, including Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and others, testified that Emma destroyed the original Clayton draft. Smith's own journal is suggestive of difficulties with Emma. For his entry on July 13, 1843, says that he "was in conversation with Emma most of the day." He was also at home most of the fourteenth.⁷⁰

However, the most important element of the story--the Kingsbury manuscript--finds substantial support from Kingsbury himself. In 1870 he swore to the accuracy of a deposition stating that he "wrote the Revelation on Celestial or plural marriage from the mouth of Bishop Newel K. Whitney as he read from the original, which was in his possession just before its reported destruction by Emma Smith."⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Joseph Smith, Diary, July 12, 1842.

⁶⁹ Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁷⁰ HC 5:509-510.

⁷¹ Joseph Kingsbury, affidavit, March 7, 1870. Original in Smith, Affidavit Books 2:18 and 3:18. Again, on May 22, 1886, Kingsbury swore an affidavit reaffirming Clayton's story. (Original in the

But the most striking and conclusive evidence of the Kingsbury story is found in the document itself. Two manuscript copies of Section 132 are housed in the LDS Church archives in Salt Lake City. One is in the handwriting of Willard Richrds and the second has the chirography of Joseph Kingsbury. An examination of Kingsbury's 1846-1850 journal, located in the University of Utah Library and of two letters signed by Kingsbury have facilitated identification of his writing. Excerpts from the manuscript revelation, the journal, and the letters are reproduced in Figures 6, 7, and 8 below.⁷² The fact that the lettering in the revelation is somewhat stronger and

Vault Folder in the LOS Church Archives.) Further evidence of his authorship can be found in his testimony before the Circuit Court of the United States at Kansas City in the early 1890's (*In The Circuit Court of the United States, Western District of Missouri, Western Division, At Kansas City. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complainant vs. The Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri; . . . Complainant's Abstract of Pleading and Evidence.* [Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House and Bindery, 1893], p. 342, [hereafter cited as *The Temple Lot Case*].)

⁷² Joseph Smith, Revelation, July 12, 1843, original manuscript in the LDS Church Archives; Kingsbury, *op. cit.*; and Joseph C. Kingsbury to Joseph Merservey, March 26, 1878, original in the LDS Church Archives. The author expresses grateful appreciation to the Executive Committee of the LDS Historical Department and its Managing Director Elder Joseph Anderson for permission to reproduce these portions of the manuscript of the revelation and the letter, and to Dr. Joseph L. Cooley in charge of the Special Collections in Western Americana in the Marriott Library, University of Utah for permission to reproduce the Kingsbury journal.

One interesting approach to verify the 1843 authorship of the revelation was developed by William LaRue. He compared the revelation with several statements made about it at the time. LaRue concluded: "These statements indicate clearly to all, except those who 'prefer' to believe otherwise that this revelation . . . was known to all these persons in the days of Joseph Smith. . . . There is no disagreement between it and the common understanding which was had concerning it by those who knew about it." (William Earl LaRue, *The Foundations of Mormonism: A Study of the Fundamental Facts in the History and Doctrines of the Mormons from Original Sources* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.], pp. 209-212.)

Kauai, July 12th 1843.

Verily thus saith the Lord, unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have enquired of my hand, to know and understand wherein I the Lord justified my servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines: Which, and so, I am the Lord, thy God, will answer thee as touching this matter; therefore shall have 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; for he that 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

Figure 6. The Kingsbury Manuscript of Doctrine and Covenants Section 132.

12.

the river to Warren (which was called Crimino)
 & was employed in Joseph Smith's store under
 the direction of Bishop Samuel Whitney until
 the fall of 1842 and on the 16th day
 Oct. Caroline My wife died after a
 severe sickness of three months & being
 delivered of a son the same day of her death
 which Lord I think I have (his name is
 Newell) I remain alone & felt as though
 I had lost some part of myself, for truly
 she was a great help, sweet temper and how
 thankful I feel thinking I shall see
 sweet her again to enjoy each other's society
 for even to part more & also my two little
 sons Joseph & William for my desire is
 to live long upon this earth to see that all
 things is prospered to meet them all in.

13

the Celestial Kingdom of ^{in the presence of God} Glory standing at
 with head according to the crown of glory of
 God and on the 29th of April 1843 I
 according to President Joseph Smith's Council
 & others agreed to stand by Sarah Whitney
 as supposed to be her husband & had a pre-
 -ceded meeting for the purpose of bringing
 about the purposes of God in these last
 days as spoken by the mouth of the
 prophets I wish Samuel Lockie and John
 Joseph Smith, & Sarah Ann should be
 a great glory Honour & eternal lives, and
 I also should feel a great glory through
 & eternal lives to the full of my
 heart in having my Companion Caroline
 in the first resolution to remain & no one
 to have power to take her from me & give

Figure 7. The Kingsbury 1846-1850 Journal.

General Tilling Office,

Salt Lake City, Utah.

March 26, 1878

Joseph Messervey
Hesper-ville

Dear Sam in Law

I received yours of the 20th in
response. I glad to hear you
are all well. We are well
excepted some of the
small children. They are dangerous
also some of Bishop's children
have been of the same of some
it seems a general complaint
among all children of the
very serious fever and
very dangerous. They are the
same. We have not met the
first communion week after
fever. It has brought 20 acres
of land on the bench and banana
plant. It is placed for some
plantation.

I am very busy at the
present time at present
business & goes at least long delay.
Many hands are engaged with the
arranging to have the
bullet and report many hands
this summer. Now is the time
to raise grain to prepare for the
future. It is expected a large
harvest. The report many hands
are expected to be held. We have
planned to see you and Mary here
at the present. Also Joseph Messervey
and wife. I will try to be here
and see you all some time.
Sincerely yours
Very Respectfully in haste
J. B. Kingsbury

Figure 8. The Kingsbury Letter.

bolder than that of the 1878 correspondence, and is more deliberate and careful than that what appears in the journal extract. strengthens the notion that the revelation is the earliest of the three documents.

According to handwriting specialist Dean Jessee, there is a remarkable lack of deterioration in Kingsbury autography between 1843 and 1878.

Additional verification of the existence of the plural marriage document can be seen in evidence that the revelation was read before the Nauvoo High Council in Hyrum Smith's office on August 12, 1843. David Fullmer, a member of the High Council at the time, said that Dunbar Wilson, another Council member, prompted the reading with an inquiry relative to the rumors concerning polygamy in Nauvoo.

Hyrum Smith went across the street to his home and soon returned with the revelation, which he then read to the men assembled.⁷³ Thomas Grover, another participant that evening, said Hyrum Smith read the revelation, then said, "Now you that believe this revelation and go forth and obey the same shall be saved, and you that reject it shall be damned."⁷⁴ This episode finds important corroboration in the minutes of the Nauvoo High Council. Under the date of August 12, 1843, the minutes read: "Council met according to adjt. [adjournment] at H. Smith's office [.] No business before the Council. Teaching by Prests. [Presidents] Hiram [sic.] Smith & William Marks."⁷⁵ A search of the Council minutes from 1842 through 1844 reveals this as the only occasion on which Hyrum Smith addressed the Council when no business was before it.⁷⁶ In 1869 four council members asserted that

⁷³David Fullmer, affidavit, June 15, 1869. Original in Smith, Affidavit Books 1:37-38 and 4:27-28. In connection with fellow council members Thomas Grover, Aaron Johnson and James Allred, Fullmer swore a second affidavit on October 10, 1969, affirming the reading before the High Council. (Original in Smith, Affidavit Books 2:47-48, and 3:47-48.) Allred also told of the reading in 1854. (See James Allred, *op. cit.*)

⁷⁴Thomas Grover to A. M. Musser, January 10, 1885 as quoted in Jenson, *HR* 6:226-227, compare also *MS*, XLV (July 16, 1883), 454. Hyrum Smith's wife, Mercy, Ebenezer Robinson, and James Leithhead, also confirm the reading before the High Council. (See *Deseret News*, February 6, 1886. Ebenezer Robinson, *Items of Personal History*, p. 167, and *Deseret News*, April 8, 1904, respectively.)

⁷⁵Minutes of the Nauvoo High Council, August 12, 1843.

⁷⁶The council met at Hyrum Smith's office at least ten times between March and October of 1843. On February 11, March 11, July 15, August 5, 26, September 29, 1843; and January 21, 27, February 3, and March 23, 1844 the council had no pressing business and in each case adjourned. The August 12, 1843 meeting is unique in that "teaching" occurred when no business lay before the group.

"the teaching . . . referred to in the minutes . . . was on the subject of said revelation endorsing the same and enjoining it on the council."⁷⁷

Furthermore, it is known that three of the men present on this occasion rejected the revelation. They were: William Marks, stake president; Austin Cowles, counselor in the stake presidency; and Leonard Soby, high councilman. All three eventually left the Church, but Soby and Cowles affirmed the fact that the revelation was read to the High Council.

The story of Leonard Soby's testimony is particularly interesting. In 1883 there was a debate between Lyman O. Littlefield and Joseph Smith III, President of the Reorganized Church. In the course of the exchange, Smith requested the names of those who were supposed to have been on the High Council and heard the reading. Soby's name was on the list, and Smith dispatched Zenos Gurley to visit him at his home in New Jersey. Apparently Gurley arrived with an affidavit already prepared for Soby's signature. It denied the whole story of the reading. Soby refused to sign the document, but offered to sign a corrected statement if Gurley would write it up.⁷⁸ This affidavit was signed by Soby on November 14, 1883.⁷⁹

⁷⁷David Fullmer, *et al.*, Affidavit, *op. cit.* Interestingly, Hyrum and Joseph Smith discussed this revelation on August 25. (HC 5:54.) And on October 23, H.C. Kimball, George A. Smith and Brigham Young visited Smith. Young said: "He taught us many principles illustrating the doctrines of celestial marriage, concerning which God had given him a revelation, July 12." (Journal History, October 23, 1843.)

⁷⁸Bays, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-381.

⁷⁹Leonard Soby, affidavit, November 14, 1883 as cited in Bays, *op. cit.*, pp. 378-379.

On January 5, 1886, the *Ogden Herald* reviewed the Littlefield-Smith letters, and a James Brooks took it upon himself to write to Soby for confirmation of the Gurley visit. The affirmative reply was dated February 26, 1886.⁸⁰ In the meantime, James Hart and Samuel Harrison also visited Soby's home. Again he provided them with an affidavit which he signed March 23, 1886.⁸¹ In it he declared that, after reading the published version of Section 132, he was satisfied that it was the same one he had heard Hyrum Smith read in Nauvoo.⁸²

But the most conclusive, although mystifying, evidence for the whole affair comes from early Nauvoo newspapers, printed before the death of the Smiths. The first and only issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor* carried an affidavit from the disgruntled Austin Cowles, former member of the Nauvoo Stake Presidency. He testified:

In the latter part of the summer, 1843, the Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, did in the High Council, of which I was a member, introduce what he said was a revelation given through the Prophet; that the said Hyrum Smith did essay to read the said revelation in the said Council, that according to his reading there was contained the following doctrines; . . . 2nd, the doctrine of a plurality of wives, or marrying virgins; that "David and Solomon had many wives, yet in this they sinned not save in the matter of Uriah."⁸³

To this we add a synopsis of remarks of Hyrum Smith made at the Nauvoo Municipal Council meeting the night that body decided to

⁸⁰Jenson, *HC* 6:228

⁸¹*MS* 48:252.

⁸²Leonard Soby, affidavit, March 23, 1886, cited by Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Attonement*, p. 80.

⁸³Austin Cowles, affidavit, May 4, 1844, cited in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844.

destroy the *Expositor*. The minutes read:

Councilor, H. Smith . . . referred to the revelation read to the High Council of the Church, which has caused so much talk about a multiplicity of wives; that said Revelation was in answer to a question concerning things which transpired in former days, and had no reference to the present time.⁸⁴

The revelation was also read privately to a number of individuals, usually with Hyrum Smith sharing the news. In a June 16, 1844 letter to her mother in New England, Sarah Scott confirmed the rumor of Smith's support of plural marriage in these words:

Joseph had a revelation last summer purporting to be from the Lord, allowing the saints the privilege of having ten living wives at one time. . . . Mr. Haven knows these statements are correct, for they have been taught in the quorum to which he belongs by the highest authority in the Church.⁸⁵

In another letter to her parents written in July of 1844, Sarah Scott added this comment.

Mr. Haven told me last spring before I was married that those doctrines tried his faith very much till he heard Hyrum Smith explain them and now or then he thought it was right. But a few weeks before the murder Hyrum denied that he and Joseph had the revelation concerning it but said it referred to ancient times; and it was published in the *Neighbor*. After I saw it I said to Mr. Haven: 'What do you think of that? Is it not a plain contradiction to what you told me? What do you think of it?' He said that he supposed Hyrum saw what a disturbance it was making and thought he would say it on account of there being such an excitement.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Nauvoo Neighbor* [Nauvoo, Illinois], June 19, 1844.

⁸⁵ Sarah Scott to Abigale and Calvin Hall, June 16, 1844 cited in George F. Partridge, "The Death of a Mormon Dictator, Letters of Massachusetts Mormons, 1843-1848," *The New England Quarterly*. IX (December, 1936), 594.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 598.

William and Jane Law also produced affidavits that were printed in the apostate-controlled *Expositor*, testifying that Hyrum Smith had allowed them to take a copy home to read. William Law described the document as containing a "revelation [which] authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world . . .," and that it was the law of God. His wife was equally specific in saying it "sustained in strong terms the doctrine of more wives than one at a time."⁸⁷ According to Howard Coray, Hyrum Smith had committed the revelation to memory and ten days after it was written he rehearsed it to Coray and his wife while riding in a carriage.⁸⁸ Bishop S. A. Wolley likewise claimed that he heard the revelation read in his home the following October.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ William and Jane Law, affidavits, May 4, 1844 cited in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844.

⁸⁸ Howard Coray, affidavit, June 12, 1882. Original in the Vault Folder in the LDS Church Archives, also published in Jenson, *HR* 6:228-229.

⁸⁹ Jenson, *HR* 6:231. Charles Lambert said William Clayton read the revelation to him and Stephen Hales in the basement of the temple. This would have been after mid-March of 1844 when he arrived in Nauvoo. He also said: "The Prophet used to hold meetings in a log house of his sometimes . . . at one of these he said he wished he had a people that he could reveal to them what the Lord had shown to him but one thing I will say there are thousands of Spirits that have been waiting to come forth in this day and generation their proper channel is through the Priesthood a way has to be provided but the time has come and they have got to come away and thus left me in a fix [sic]." (Charles Lambert, "Autobiography," typescript in the LDS Church Archives.)

Summary

Joseph Smith longed for the time when he could freely unburden himself of the religious ideas that filled his mind. Although secretiveness was not new to the Church, his past experience and present circumstances led the Prophet to be extremely discrete in diffusing the new doctrine among his followers. His mode of operation at Nauvoo was to privately explain these new tenets to his closest and most trusted friends. At first, the reactions of the male leadership was universally negative to this revelation. Like their sisters, many Mormon men only participated in plural marriage after much soul-searching or out of a sense of loyalty to their prophetic leader.

Such denials as came from church leaders in this period can be understood as attempts to evade potential criticism and persecution rather than as repudiations of the beliefs of Smith and his inner circle of initiates. Paradoxically, Smith harbored two conflicting motivations. His impulse toward self-preservation and safety from public attack was at times contradicted by his desire to prepare his people to tolerate more liberal attitudes and practices. Whereas he went to extreme lengths to conceal his own marriages, he was almost careless about the circulation of the revelation once it was recorded. These vacillations created conditions which were readily utilized by zealous, ill-informed, and opportunistic gentiles to promulgate distorted and false notions about Mormonism. They also tended to cause confusion, doubts, and suspicions among the Latter-day Saints.

CHAPTER VII

JOHN C. BENNETT AND THE APOSTASY OF 1842

As was noted in the discussion of the Ohio period, the introduction of plural marriage into the Mormon Church was destined to create serious problems. Indeed, the rift between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery foreshadowed events in Nauvoo. The present chapter focuses on the nature of the difficulties which the new doctrine created when it was more widely promulgated.

Background on John C. Bennett

"Mormonism certainly picked up some damned odd moss as it rolled around America!"¹ This was Dale Morgan's comment to Fawn Brodie after reviewing for her some material he had just discovered about John Cook Bennett, an early convert to Nauvoo Mormonism. Bennett was among the Saints for less than two years, but the results of that experience brought about one of the most severe crises in the Church's history. He was the principal character responsible for: (1) instigating three major splits in the highest levels of Mormon hierarchy (including his own and Sidney Rigdon's from the First Presidency, and Orson Pratt from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles,); (2) causing numerous lesser

¹ Dale Morgan to Fawn Brodie, August 2, 1947. Original in the Marriott Library, University of Utah.

excommunications and defections; (3) stimulating a vast amount of public pressure and persecution against the Mormons; (4) diverting the Church from missionary, administrative, and commercial concerns to internal problems; and, finally, (5) initiating a series of events and circumstances which created the volatile atmosphere in which the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith occurred. Many factors contributed to these developments, but the leading issues were associated with the doctrine of plural marriage.

Bennett was no ordinary fellow. Arriving in Nauvoo in the summer of 1840, at the age of thirty-six, he had an interesting and varied background as a promoter of medical schools, state militias, and Masonic lodges.² He was also said to have been particularly successful in promoting himself among the women.

As a young man, Bennett was encouraged to practice medicine by relatives.³ Extant records do not show how much medical education he may have received or indicate whether he earned a degree from a reputable institution.⁴ Between 1825 and 1830 he pursued his profession

²John C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Bennett was born in Bristol County, Massachusetts, in August of 1804, he was Smith's senior by a year and a half. Shortly thereafter his parents moved to Washington County, Ohio.

³Frederick C. Waite, "An Attempt to Establish a Medical College in Wheeling in 1831," *The West Virginia Medical Journal*, XLII (December, 1846), 316.

⁴Frederick C. Waite, *Western Reserve University Centennial History of the School of Medicine* (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1946), p. 47. Waite says, "A careful search of the lists of graduates of all medical colleges in the United States before 1833 does not reveal his name, and his career before 1833 certainly did not entitle him to the degree of Doctor of Laws from any reputable institution." (See also, F. C. Waite to Ralph Chamberlain, January 24, 1951. Copy in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.)

in several southeastern Ohio towns, and according to one researcher, occasionally preached as a Methodist minister.⁵ He took the lead in petitioning the Virginia legislature for a medical college at Wheeling in 1831, but left the area in late 1832 without success.⁶ In January of 1833 he was named as one of the incorporators of The Christian College in New Albany, Indiana. The school's name reflected the fact that Bennett, and perhaps other incorporators, were disciples of Alexander Campbell.⁷ Subsequently the institution was redesignated as the University of New Albany, and for a time, as the University of Indiana. It was a marginal school, used by Bennett to circumvent some of the higher standards of medical education then emerging in America. Thus he issued medical diplomas, apparently on the basis of examinations administered without course and enrollment prerequisites.⁸

In 1834 Bennett promoted the establishment of Willoughby University, a medical school in the Western Reserve in northeastern Ohio.⁹ Since many of his fellow Campbellites of that area were then

⁵Waite, "An Attempt . . . ," p. 316.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 316-319.

⁷Frederick C. Waite, "The First Medical Diploma Mill in the United States," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, XX (November, 1946), 495-496. See also, Burton D. Myers, "A Summary of the History of Medical Education in Indiana," *Indiana History Bulletin*, XIX (March, 1942), 108-113. Bennett became affiliated with the Disciples sect in 1830.

⁸Waite, "The First Medical Diploma Mill . . . ," pp. 495-503. For more on this subject and an example of one of the diplomas, see A. E. Waller, "A Fictitious Medical Degree of the 1830's," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, XX (November, 1946), 505-512.

⁹J. C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 12. See also, F. C. Waite, *Western Reserve University Centennial History*, pp. 42-49.

turning to Mormonism, it is quite possible that he may have had contact with church leaders at Kirtland, just four miles from Willoughby, at that time.¹⁰ Later that year, he gave a series of lectures as president of the medical faculty and "Professor of the Principles and Practice of Midwifery, and the Diseases of Women and Children."¹¹

Early in 1838 Bennett was active in the vicinity of Marietta, Ohio, the home of his in-laws, but in June of that year he moved to Illinois, where he was quickly accepted into military and medical circles. Governor Thomas Carlin commissioned him Brigadier General of the dragoons in the state militia in February of 1839 and as his state's Quarter-Master General on July 20, 1840.¹² Bennett also attended a meeting of Illinois physicians in Springfield in June of 1840, signing a report which called for better organization of the medical profession in the state.¹³ He not only ingratiated himself with the politicians and civic leaders in Illinois, but in 1840 he stuck up a correspondence with Mormon Church leaders, even counseling them on the relocation of the Missouri refugees and promising to move to Nauvoo and join the Church.¹⁴ True to form, upon his arrival in Nauvoo that

¹⁰ Frederick C. Waite to Ralph V. Chamberlain, May 15, 1948. Copy in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Waite said, "It is clear to me that Bennett first met Smith and Rigdon at Kirtland when Bennett was head of the medical college at Willoughby only four miles distant. However, Bennett had met Rigdon prior to that time when both were preachers of that church." Waite gives no documentation for this statement, and as of the present the author has been unable to substantiate it.

¹¹ Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹³ *Western World* [Warsaw, Illinois], July 1, 1840.

¹⁴ *T&S* 3:651; *HC* 4:168-170.

summer, Bennett soon rose to positions of prominence and leadership among the Saints.¹⁵

Joseph Smith's acceptance of Bennett's proffered services benefitted Mormonism in several respects.¹⁶ During his eighteen-month sojourn among the Mormons, Bennett carried out some important tasks. He acted as the chief Mormon lobbyist in Springfield, securing the Nauvoo charter, and was elected the city's first mayor. As Major General of the Nauvoo Legion, he organized and trained that body--one of the largest militia organizations in the state. Likewise, he was Chancellor of the University of Nauvoo, helped to select textbooks for use in the common schools, and was one of the founders of the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Society. In May of 1841, Stephen Douglas appointed Bennett Master in Chancery for Hancock County.¹⁷ A

¹⁵This happened despite the fact that upon his arrival the *Times and Seasons* defended him against an article written in the *Warsaw Signal*, May 19, 1841, saying, "He came here followed by evil report. . . ." (T&S 2:431-432.)

¹⁶In retrospect, virtually all commentators have found little in Bennett to praise. Thomas Ford, Governor of Illinois said he was "probably the greatest scamp in the Western Country . . . he was everywhere accounted the same debauched, unprincipled, and profligate character." (Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois from its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847*, 11 [Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1946], Thomas Gregg, a Warsaw, Illinois newspaper proprietor said, "He was a man of liberal education, excessively vain and pompous, and of good address; and yet he brought with him, if not a tainted, at least a questionable reputation, which his career at Nauvoo did not improve." (Thomas Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra*, p. 173.) Other assessments of his character and influence on Mormonism can be found in B. H. Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), pp. 128, 136, 140; Kenneth Godfrey, "The Road to Carthage Led West," *BYU Studies*, VII (Winter, 1968), 209; F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer 1793-1876* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1971), pp. 112-114, which is very similar to the view expressed by Flanders. (Flanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-261.)

¹⁷Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-25. Master in Chancery was

month earlier he was elevated to the First Presidency of the Church, replacing the ailing Sidney Rigdon.¹⁸ While he did not accomplish much in this office spiritually or administratively, contributions to the material betterment of the Mormon people were demonstrated, one scholar has argued, by the later re-establishment of many of his economic policies in Salt Lake City.¹⁹

John C. Bennett, Spiritual Wifery, and Conflict

In the spring and summer of 1841 the brilliance of the light of John C. Bennett began to flicker. Missionaries in Ohio and Pennsylvania sent Joseph Smith letters to the effect that Bennett was a shiftless drifter with grandiose ambitions. They said he had resided in at least twenty different towns in four states, repeatedly insinuating himself into positions of power and influence. His wife had followed him through most of this, the report said, although he had been unfaithful to her on numerous occasions. In desperation, though, she finally left her charlatan husband and took her children to her home in Marietta, Ohio.²⁰ Joseph Smith said that he did not confront Bennett

apparently a judicial office held by appointment.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 26; *T&S* 2:387.

¹⁹Leonard J. Arrington, "Centrifugal Tendencies in Mormon History," in *To the Glory of God*, ed. by Truman G. Madsen and Charles D. Tate (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972), p. 168. To date this is the most favorable appraisal of Bennett, but it focuses on his significant post-Mormon contributions.

²⁰George Miller to Joseph Smith, March 2, 1841, as found in *The Wasp*, June 25, 1842. Miller was writing from McConnelville, Morgan County, Ohio and had been sent by Smith for the purpose of investigation for he said, "By your request I have made inquiries into the history of John Cook Bennett and am enabled to give you the following facts which

with this evidence until after his affections to a young woman in Nauvoo came to light. The subject was not brought up sooner, he explained, because he was used to good men being defamed.²¹

The Prophet later reported to his people that Bennett admitted that the allegations were true. The doctor seemed so remorseful that he apparently attempted to poison himself, but failed. Because of this display of penance, Smith gave him a second chance, admonishing him to break off his amorous acquaintance. Bennett, however, clandestinely maintained the relationship, and it was not long before he was again confronted with his misconduct. For some unexplained reason, he was once more let off the hook, only to become more deeply involved. To give added effect to his advances, he taught one Mormon sister that promiscuous intercourse was a doctrine of the Church and that there was no harm in it so long as it was kept secret. His ploy was successful only when he told her that Smith and other leaders sanctioned such conduct and even had illicit relationships of their own. Once this method proved successful, Bennett apparently employed it numerous times and involved other men in the scheme as well. When the news reached Smith, he was irate.

may be relied on as correct." In June of 1841 Hyrum Smith and William Law confirmed Bennett's marital difficulties. (*Ibid.*) Frederick Waite told Ralph Chamberlain he found that Bennett sued for divorce in 1842 and his charge was that his wife had deserted him. From this Waite infers that Bennett has been ill-accused by Mormon historians. (Frederick Waite to Ralph Chamberlain, September 5, 1950. Copy in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.) However, this may have been another of Bennett's "do unto others before they do unto you" maneuvers. The author has written to the state of Illinois to obtain a copy of the divorce decree, but received no reply.

²¹*The Wasp*, June 25, 1842. The young woman was very likely Mrs. Sarah Pratt, see the discussion below.

A third time he confronted Bennett, and a third time the Doctor confessed. At this point Smith decided to put a stop to the debauchery. Through a church court he started a series of investigations in mid-May, going so far as to gather testimony from the women involved.²²

The details of the investigation proved shocking and revealed extensive corruption in the city. Things had gone far beyond Bennett's licentious behavior. As a doctor, with special interests in gynecology, he took advantage of intimate contacts among his female patients. In some cases he promised and perhaps performed abortions.²³ A married patient testified that he tried to poison her husband in order to get him out of the way.²⁴ He also frequented and perhaps operated a local brothel.²⁵ Francis M. Higbee, one of those who adopted Bennett's

²²*Ibid.* The following quote from Robert D. Foster suggests who he may have been referring to. "Alas, none but the seduced join the seducer; those only who have been arraigned before a just tribunal for the same unhallowed conduct and they, too, detest him for his seduction, those are the ladies to whom he refers his hearers to substantiate his assertions. Mrs. White, Mrs. Pratt, Nieman, Miller, Brotherton, and others. Those that belong to the church have had to bear the shame of close investigation as to their adulteries, and have been dealt with according to church order, in such case made and provided in the Book of Covenants . . . Mrs. White never was a member of the Mormon church. . . ." (*Ibid.*, October 15, 1842.)

²³Zeruiah N. Goddard, affidavit, August 28, 1842, in *Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters* (Nauvoo; n. p., August 31, 1842, hereafter cited, *Affidavits and Certificates*). See also, Hyrum Smith, affidavit July 23, 1842, in *The Wasp*, July 27, 1842. Gynecology was in its infant stages at this time, and if Ann Douglass Wood is correct, Bennett was not alone in his abuse of his clinical contacts with women. ("The Fashionable Diseases," *Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America*, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, IV [Summer, 1973], 25-52; and Regina Morantz, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-52.)

²⁴*The Wasp*, "Extra," July 27 1842.

²⁵L. D. Wasson to Joseph Smith, July 29, 1842, found in T&S 5:891-892. Robert Foster reported that while mayor, Bennett pleaded the

methods, had to be treated by Bennett for venereal disease he contacted from the "French woman from Warsaw."²⁶

John Bennett was not alone in his intrigue. Several witnesses affirmed that others were seducing females in Nauvoo under the guise of church doctrine and authority. At least four men seem to have been involved. Chauncy and Francis Higbee were sons of the prominent Nauvoo citizen and friend of Joseph Smith, Judge Elias Higbee. Robert Foster and Gustavius Hills were also involved. Four women swore that young Chauncy Higbee seduced them under the same pretext Bennett had used. Margaret and Matilda Nyman also testified that he said he had been so instructed by the Prophet and that they should keep it a secret because "there was no sin where there is no accuser [sic]."²⁷ Catherine Warren reported that he "gained his object about five or six times" with her because he told her that President Bennett was teaching the doctrine.²⁸ Higbee also told the widow Sarah Miller that she could never be guilty of the sin of adultery because she was single.²⁹ Higbee and Bennett

cause for retaining the local brothel in a city council meeting. (*The Wasp*, October 15, 1842.) He also called Bennett a whoremonger. (*Ibid.*, September 24, 1842.) See also *T&S* 5:536-542; the testimony of John Taylor in *Temple Lot Case*, pp. 190-192; and stanza six of "Buckey's [sic.] First Epistle to Jo," *Warsaw Signal*, April 23, 1844. See appendix F.

²⁶*T&S* 5:536-542.

²⁷Margaret and Matilda Nyman, affidavits, May 24, 1842, found in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 29, 1844. This was testimony taken before the Nauvoo High Council May 21, 1842. Reportedly Smith taught some such doctrine in 1841 taking his idea from John 8:3-11 ("Words of the Prophets," *op. cit.*)

²⁸*Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 29, 1844.

²⁹Sarah Miller, affidavit, May 24, 1842 in *Ibid.*

were excommunicated in May of 1842.

In the latter part of August of 1842, Mary Clift swore that she was then pregnant with a child sired by Gustavus Hills sometime in mid-January. She testified that Hills told her that "he was intimate with another woman in town besides his wife & that the authorities of the church countenanced and practiced illicit connexion [sic.] with women & said there was no harm in such things provided they kept it secret."³⁰ He tried to get her to take medicine to abort the fetus, but, when she refused, he urged her to leave town for the remainder of her pregnancy.³¹ Hills was brought to a church trial on September 3, 1842 for "illicit intercourse" and for teaching "that the time would come when men would have more wives than one."³² The next day, after obtaining affidavits from Miss Clift and hearing details of the seduction, the council disfellowshipped Hills.³³

Ferretting out these facts was an arduous and distasteful task that angered Smith and embittered Bennett. On May 7, 1842, Smith suspected Bennett of leading a plot to kill him in a sham battle of

³⁰ Mary Clift, affidavit, September 4, 1842. Original in the Statements Collection in the LDS Church Archives.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Minutes of the Nauvoo High Council, September 3, 1842; and Mary Clift, affidavit, August 29, 1842. Original in the Statements Collection in the LDS Church Archives.

³³ *Ibid.*, September 4, 1842. (See also, Mary Clift, affidavit, September 4, 1842. Original in the Statements Collection in the LDS Church Archives.) An account of this trial taken from the minutes is also in the Journal History under the dates of September 3 and 4, 1842.

the Nauvoo Legion.³⁴ Ten days later Bennett wrote out an affidavit denying that the Prophet taught illicit doctrines. Later, however, he claimed that he made this statement involuntarily.³⁵ Upon hearing of this, Smith instructed his recorder to allow Bennett to withdraw his name from the church records. As it turned out, this procedure enabled Bennett to represent his withdrawal as a move to dissociate himself from the immoral Saints.³⁶ He also resigned as Mayor at this time.³⁷

In a city council meeting, held on May 19, Smith said that Bennett had falsely accused him of indecorous actions and had been guilty of countenancing vice. Once again Bennett denied the charge. So female testimony against him was secured, and on May 25 he was informed that he was no longer a member of the Church. Bennett was also privately threatened with public exposure, but begged that the Council

³⁴HC 5:4-5.

³⁵John C. Bennett, affidavit, May 17, 1842, as found in *The Wasp*, June 25, 1842. (See also HC 5:11.) For his statement that he was under duress see his affidavit of July 2, 1842. (*Sangamo Journal*, July 15, 1842.) This was countered by an affidavit of Daniel H. Wells who notarized Bennett's initial deposition. (Affidavit, July 22, 1842, found in *The Wasp*, July 22, 1842.)

Chauncy L. Higbee also swore an affidavit on May 17, 1842 to the effect that "he never knew said Smith to countenance any improper [sic.] conduct whatever, either in public or private and that he never did teach to me in private, that an illicit intercourse [sic.] with females was under any circumstances justifiable and that I never knew him so to teach others." (Original in the Statements Collection in the LDS Church Archives.)

³⁶James Sloan, statement of May 17, 1842. Copy of the original - located in the LDS Church Archives. This statement itself says that Bennett retained the original. He made this a bone of contention when on May 25 the Church withdrew its fellowship from him. He said the notice of excommunication contained three forged signatures of Apostles who were not even in town at the time. (J. C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 41.)

³⁷*The Wasp*, June 25, 1842.

"would spare him from the paper, for his mother's sake."³⁸ Thereupon the proposed notice was withdrawn. The next day, as Smith reports, Bennett "cried like a child" before nearly 100 men, confessing his "wicked and licentious conduct," and pleading for mercy. He was again forgiven.³⁹

John C. Bennett also experienced difficulties with the local Masonic lodge. It was predominantly Mormon, and Bennett had been acting as its secretary. Hyrum Smith said that Bennett was charged with sexual misconduct before the Masonic lodge and that he confessed to sixty Masons. Furthermore, he promised that he would "never be guilty of the like crimes again."⁴⁰ According to Hyrum Smith, the allegations were deferred "until he could be heard on other charges which had been preferred against him by members of the Pickaway Lodge of Ohio, through the communications of the Illinois Grand Master A. Jonas."⁴¹ According to George Miller, Master of the Nauvoo lodge, Bennett was an expelled Mason and had pawned himself on the fraternity in Nauvoo.⁴²

The minutes of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, however, vary somewhat from this official position. On May 7, 1842 a communication was read from Jonas which indicated Bennett was an expelled Mason. He reportedly

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*HC* 5:18-19.

⁴⁰Hyrum Smith, affidavit, July 23, 1842, cited in *The Wasp*, July 27, 1842.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*, June 25, 1842.

denied the charge. But there is no evidence in the minutes that he confessed his sins.⁴³

On May 19, Thomas Grover formally accused Bennett of deceitfully gaining entrance into the Nauvoo fraternity. The most damaging evidence on this point seemed to come from a Brother Patterson who said he had initiated action against Bennett in the Pickaway Lodge in Ohio. Joseph King conversed with Patterson on the matter and confirmed the report.⁴⁴ Bennett was instructed to appear before the lodge on June 2. However, there was not sufficient evidence to substantiate Jonas' complaint at that meeting, so the investigation was postponed until June 16.⁴⁵

Additional communications from Jonas were read at the June 16 meeting. They contained evidence that satisfied those present that Bennett was feigning his membership. But he produced character references from his medical colleagues at Willoughby and the lodge there. Therefore, the matter was again postponed to allow time to obtain the minutes from the Pickaway Lodge.⁴⁶ By July 27, Nauvoo still had not heard from the Ohio fraternity. Nevertheless they

did not judge it necessary to postpone the action of the Lodge in his case any longer. It was therefore Resolved that the lodge is fully satisfied that John C. Bennett, is an expelled mason, and that this lodge

⁴³Minutes of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, Saturday, May 7, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives. See the minutes of June 16, to confirm the nature of Jonas' letter.

⁴⁴Joseph King to Dr. M. Helm, May 17, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

⁴⁵Minutes of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, June 2, 1842.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, June 16, 1842.

regards him as totally unworthy the fellowship, or regard, of all good and honorable men or masons.⁴⁷

With the feelings as they were in Nauvoo in June and July, it is unusual that the Nauvoo Lodge delayed so long in taking action against Bennett. But on August 4, 1842 another letter was received from the non-Mormon Grand Master directing the lodge to expel Bennett "for his conduct"--regardless of what happened in Ohio. Since the bylaws required two-thirds of the membership to be present in order to expel a member, a meeting was scheduled for August 8, 1842.⁴⁸

At this meeting six indictments were brought against Bennett. He was accused of seducing "certain previously respectable females of our city by using Joseph Smith's name as one who sanctioned such conduct."⁴⁹ He was also charged with adultery, lying, perjury, embezzlement of lodge funds, and for "illicit intercourse with a Master Mason's wife." One hundred and thirty Nauvooans attended the meeting. Separate votes were taken on each charge. Bennett was unanimously found guilty and excommunicated. The resolution of expulsion considered Bennett, among other things, "one of the most base and infamous adulterers, liars, and a general plunderer of female chastity."⁵⁰

When Bennett left Nauvoo, things quieted down somewhat in the fore part of June. Yet, keeping such a widespread cancer contained proved impossible. By mid-month Smith had decided to make the affair

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, July 27, 1842.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, August 4, 1842.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, August 8, 1842.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

public. On June 18 he spoke to "thousands" in "great plainness" about Bennett's wickedness.⁵¹ A week later he had the entire episode published in *The Wasp* and reprinted it again on July 1, in the *Times and Seasons*.

Had Smith let well enough alone, perhaps Bennett would have dropped out of the scene quietly. But the Prophet's efforts to protect himself, the Church, and those directly involved led to some of the most serious miscalculations of his life. Bennett had been humiliated before the High Council, the Nauvoo city council, the Masonic lodge, members of the Mormon Church, and the general public. He did not take it silently, but struck back bitterly. His own writings reveal that he spent early July in Carthage and Warsaw, Illinois--towns known for their extreme anti-Mormon attitudes.⁵² From there he traveled to Springfield, where he contacted the politically partisan *Sangamo Journal*. As will be noted in the next chapter, the Whigs received him with open arms.

The first salvo in his counterattack appeared via letter in the July 8 issue of the *Sangamo Journal*. Three more lengthy letters were printed in quick succession during the next two weeks. The onslaught continued with two more statements in August and September.⁵³ These six letters, bitter and vindictive in spirit, were filled with accusations against the Mormons. Among other things, the charges

⁵¹Woodruff, *op. cit.*, June 18, 1842.

⁵²Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-282.

⁵³Letters appeared in the *Sangamo Journal* on July 8, 15, and 22; August 19; and September 2, 1842.

claimed that they: (1) were maneuvering to gain political control of Hancock County and the state; (2) had a group of militant henchmen, bound by a mysterious, secret oath; (2) were responsible for the recent attempt on the life of Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs; (4) had perpetrated numerous misdeeds and crimes; (5) and were led by a hierarchy degenerated by gross sexual corruption.

Bennett's allegations concerning Mormon licentiousness revealed more detail on the events of the spring of 1842. The most serious criminations were leveled against Joseph Smith for seduction of many women in Nauvoo and for preaching what Bennett called "spiritual wifery." The indictments were grave because Bennett specifically alleged that the Prophet sought Mrs. Sarah Pratt, Miss Nancy Rigdon, daughter of Sidney Rigdon, and other women as plural wives. They created another crisis at the highest level of church leadership, threatening to cause a second major breach or perhaps the dissolution of the Church. Bennett hoped that it would.

The Pratt Incident

Orson Pratt, member of the distinguished Quorum of Twelve Apostles since 1835, and among non-Mormons a highly respected intellectual, had been serving as a missionary in England during 1840-1841. Bennett told a provocative story about events occurring in Pratt's absence, claiming that Joseph Smith wanted Sarah Pratt as a spiritual wife and had tried to seduce her. The ex-Mormon said that he refused the Prophet's request to help secure her favors, and that he later warned her of the intrigue. Mrs. Pratt would not believe such a thing, but was told that Smith's true character would soon be known.

Thereafter, Smith supposedly took Bennett to the Pratt home and immediately broached the subject. Sarah was outraged at his advances, and when he persisted she finally threatened to tell her husband. According to Bennett, Smith begged not to be exposed.⁵⁴

This is an interesting tale, but additional information suggests that Bennett did not tell the whole story. In the Mormon version, Bennett is the villain. The young woman with whom he was said to have engaged in improper conduct in 1841 was probably Sarah Pratt. He apparently built the Pratts a small house and lived with them for a time. After Orson Pratt left for England Mrs. Pratt was at home with an infant son and the two were in quite destitute circumstances without the economic support of their husband and father. Sarah took up sewing to provide an income and periodically lived with other families.⁵⁵ Bennett provided her with some work and frequently visited her residence, often staying late into the night. Zeruiah Goddard claimed that she

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, July 15, 1842. Interestingly, there are two accounts attributed to Sarah Pratt which confirm Bennett's charges, but both are somewhat suspicious in nature and therefore must be used with care. The first comes from Wilhelm Wyl, editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, who claimed that he interviewed Sarah Pratt in 1885-1886. (Wyl, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-63.) The second is a manuscript which purports to have been related by her to an unnamed author in 1884. But there are some difficulties with this document. Besides being unsigned, the author has confused Mrs. Pratt with Mrs. Orson Hyde throughout the Mss. by referring to her as Mrs. Hyde. ("Workings of Mormonism Related by Mrs. Orson Pratt, Salt Lake City, 1884." Original in the LOS Church Archives.) The details of both accounts are remarkably similar.

⁵⁵She apparently lived with several families while Pratt was absent. Records show that she lived with the Smiths, ("Workings of Mormonism," *op. cit.*), with the Robert Fosters, (Stephen H. Goddard, affidavit, August 31, 1842, found in *Affidavits and Certificates.*), in the home of Stephen and Zeruiah Goddard, (Stephen and Zeruiah Goddard, *Ibid.*).

once caught the Doctor "taking his hands out of her [Mrs. Pratt's] bosom," as they lay on the bed.⁵⁶ The implication of the testimony of the Goddards, Robert D. Foster, and J. B. Backenstos is that Bennett and Mrs. Pratt were having an affair.⁵⁷

When and how Orson Pratt finally learned of the episode is not presently known, but apparently he was told Bennett's version of the story. It seems clear that he did not discuss the matter with the Prophet directly, and when fellowship was later withdrawn from Bennett, Pratt refused to sign the petition.⁵⁸ Smith did not relieve tensions any. The *Sangamo Journal* reported him saying in a speech on July 14,

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *The Wasp*, October 15, 1842. Foster spoke of Mrs. Pratt as one of the "seduced." Backenstos, affidavit, July 28, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

Mary Ettie V. Smith who claimed that she lived across the street from Sarah Pratt in Nauvoo said she saw Smith call "upon her one day, and alleged he found John C. Bennett in bed with her . . . we saw and heard the whole uproar. Sarah ordered the Prophet out of the house, and the Prophet used obscene language to her." (N. W. Green, *Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition Embracing the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith of Her Residence and Experience of Fifteen Years with the Mormons* [Hartford: Belknap & Bliss, 1870], p. 31.)

It should be noted, however, that it was reported that Mrs. Pratt challenged the Goddard affidavits and they supposedly admitted that they were pressured into signing them by Hyrum Smith. (Wyl, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.)

T. Edgar Lyon tries to harmonize these two accounts by suggesting that Bennett told Sarah the Prophet wanted her as his wife with the intention of stepping in if she agreed, but Sarah rejected the idea and told her husband. This theory discounts the affidavits to the effect that an affair had developed between the two. (T. Edgar Lyon, "Nauvoo and the Council of the Twelve," in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, ed. by F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards [Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1973], p. 177.)

⁵⁸ *Sangamo Journal*, July 8, 1842.

that Mrs. Pratt "had been a _____ from her mothers breast."⁵⁹ The next day Smith recorded in his journal that Pratt was missing from the city.⁶⁰ Rumor had it that he was despondent over the conflicting reports from both sides and was going to take his own life. Ebenezer Robinson remembered that Pratt's "mind temporarily gave way, and he wandered away, no one knew where." The Prophet dispatched the temple workmen to search for him, and Robinson said "he was found some 5 miles below Nauvoo sitting on a rock, on the bank of the Missississippi River, without a hat."⁶¹ Rumor of the incident arrived in Warsaw via the stagecoach driver who reported that about 500 men had been searching for the Apostle.⁶²

The conflict remained unresolved, and, on July 22, Pratt refused to support a public resolution sustaining the virtuous character of Smith. "Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me toward the female sex, or in any other way?" Smith demanded. Pratt admitted he did not, but he "responded at some length" concerning his negative vote.⁶³ Early in August, Joseph Smith assigned Young, Kimball, and George A. Smith to assuage Pratt's opposition. Brigham Young reported that Pratt's mind was "so darkened by the influence and statements of his wife, that he came out in rebellion against Joseph,

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, July 39, 1842.

⁶⁰HC 5:60, 138.

⁶¹Robinson, *Items of Personal History*, pp. 154-155.

⁶²*Warsaw Signal*, July 16, 1842.

⁶³*The Wasp*, July 27, 1842.

refusing to believe his testimony or obey his counsel. He said he would believe his wife in preference to the Prophet." If he did, said Smith, "he would go to hell."⁶⁴ Wilford Woodruff recorded that for four days a council of the Apostles labored with Pratt, but "he persisted in his wicked course & would not recall any of the sayings which were made in public against Joseph. . . ."⁶⁵ Consequently, on August 20, 1842, Pratt and his wife were excommunicated from the Church.

Through the next few troubled months the Pratts remained in Nauvoo. Countering rumors that he was about to leave the city and make an exposé of his own, Pratt denied being away for more than twenty-four hours at any one time since his return from England. He said he had not "renounced the church," but believed in its doctrines. Late in September he wrote a second letter to *The Wasp*, refuting similar charges. Nauvoo was his residence and Mormonism his motto, he declared. He also denied corresponding with Bennett since he left the city.⁶⁶ In fact, Pratt paved the way for his re-entry into the Church by passing along to Smith a letter Sidney Rigdon had received from Bennett seeking support from both of them.⁶⁷ The Pratts were reinstated

⁶⁴Brigham Young, "History of Brigham Young," MS 26:151. Years later Pratt admitted that "he got his information from a wicked source, from those disaffected. . . ." (*Ibid.*, 40:788.)

⁶⁵Woodruff, *op. cit.*, August 20, 1842. John Taylor also said he talked with Pratt for two hours to prevent his apostasy. "But he was very sorely tried, and was very self-willed and stubborn in his feelings, and would not yield." (John Taylor, *Succession in the Priesthood*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1882], p. 18.)

⁶⁶*The Wasp*, September 3; October 1, 1842.

⁶⁷This was the view of B. H. Robers. (See his, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo*, p. 162.)

five months after their excommunication, but Pratt lost his seniority in the Quorum of Twelve and therefore the opportunity to preside over the Church as its President.⁶⁸

The Nancy Rigdon Episode

Sidney Rigdon had been a member of the Mormon Church since its earliest days. Counselor to Joseph Smith and among the best early church orators, Rigdon was well respected in and out of the Church. He was one of its chief assets in countering the notion that Mormonism appealed only to the ignorant and gullible. By 1842, however, his influence was waning. His health had plagued him periodically since the 1832 mobbing,⁶⁹ and his age made it difficult for him to keep pace with younger church leaders. Perhaps, too, he felt he was being shoved into the background in relation to the ambitious John C. Bennett. Things came to a head during the spring and summer of 1842.

Bennett's second letter to the *Journal* told a long story about how Joseph Smith tried to entice Rigdon's daughter Nancy into his seraglio. As Bennett told it, Smith offered him five hundred dollars

⁶⁸For the reinstatement see, Brigham Young, "History," *MS* 26:167; and Woodruff, *op. cit.*, January 19, 1843. Young records the event on January 20, and Woodruff on January 19. The conflict is unexplainable at present.

The Mormon Presidency as we have noted is achieved by seniority in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Brigham Young died in 1877 and was replaced by John Taylor instead of Pratt. Pratt was first ordained to the apostleship on April 26, 1835. Taylor was ordained on December 19, 1838. (For an explanation of the arrangement of Quorum members for succession see, John Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.)

⁶⁹Rigdon had been dragged by his heels over the cold March ground the night Smith was tarred and feathered. Periodically he suffered seizures and mental lapses.

or the best lot on Main Street if he would help "procure" Miss Rigdon because a special revelation had authorized the marriage. Bennett said that he refused the request and immediately warned Miss Rigdon's boyfriend, Francis Higbee. The trio decided to trap the Prophet, so Nancy met him privately at the printing office. When Smith made advances, she threatened to arouse the neighbors. Failing in his proposal and hoping to convince her, Smith promised to write a letter in a few days explaining the principle in more detail. Bennett published this document in his sixth letter to the *Journal*,⁷⁰ stating that he had obtained it from Chauncy Higbee, to whom Miss Rigdon had given it to use as he wished.⁷¹

The story caused immediate reaction in Nauvoo and in the press. The Mormon position was quickly established by William Smith, the Prophet's brother and editor of *The Wasp*. His effort to create doubt about the letter's authenticity came close to admitting it was genuine. It was without date or proof, the editor said, but even if it had these it was "upon the whole, more moral than Bennett ever was or will be. . . . Joseph Smith is not the author," he concluded.⁷² In his attempt to discredit the letter, Rigdon said Bennett was not authorized by his daughter to use her name or the letter and that she had never said Smith wrote it. Furthermore, he argued that the letter was in the handwriting of another person. "Mr. Smith denied to me the

⁷⁰This story is told in the letter printed in the *Sangamo Journal*, July 15, 1842. The Smith-Rigdon letter was published in *Ibid.*, August 19, 1842.

⁷¹John C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 45, 245.

⁷²*The Wasp*, August 27, 1842.

authorship of that letter," he concluded.⁷³ The opposition press could read between the lines and remained unimpressed with the arguments. The *Sangamo Journal* editorialized: "We never supposed Joe Smith the writer of the communication. . . . It was unquestionably written by some of his numerous assistants."⁷⁴ According to Bennett, Willard Richards wrote the letter for the Prophet.⁷⁵

By the end of August the relationship between Smith and Rigdon deteriorated even further. To counter the charges of Bennett, Smith sent out a number of missionaries with anti-Bennett certificates and affidavits. Unfortunately for both parties, Stephen Markham certified that he saw Miss Rigdon in a compromising situation with Dr. Bennett. "Many vulgar, unbecoming and indecent sayings and motions" passed between them he said. He was convinced they were "guilty of unlawful and illicit intercourse with each other."⁷⁶ Smith immediately recognized the blunder and quickly let it be known he had not authorized the use of the affidavit, but the damage had been done.⁷⁷ The September 23 issue of the *Sangamo Journal* published four affidavits refuting Markham. Miss Rigdon's defenders said Markham invented the episode and perjured himself. Ex-Mormon George W. Robinson, who was in the Rigdon house on the day Markham was there, said Bennett was merely

⁷³*Ibid.*, September 3, 1842.

⁷⁴*Sangamo Journal*, September 16, 1842.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, July 15, 1842, and September 23, 1842, for similar views by T. F. Olney.

⁷⁶Stephen Markham, affidavit, August 29, 1842, cited in *Affidavits and Certificates*.

⁷⁷*The Wasp*, September 3, 1842.

treating Nancy in a professional capacity. Rigdon impotently defended his daughter, saying Markham's "word for truth and veracity was not good."⁷⁸

The circumstances of the story may be questionable, certainly the conflicting testimony is difficult to unravel, but two things seem certain. Smith did propose marriage to Miss Rigdon and was refused. Also, the letter from Smith to Nancy Rigdon, published by Bennett, is authentic. The proposal was confirmed by Miss Rigdon's brother John in an interview in Salt Lake City in 1900.⁷⁹

Orson Hyde, however tried to defend Smith's action, denying the Prophet really proposed to Nancy. Hyde said that her conduct was "notorious in this city," that "she was regarded generally, little, if any better, than a public prostitute." Therefore, Smith, in an attempt to "reprove and reclaim her if possible," had Hyde's wife invite her to their home. Whereupon, according to Hyde:

He wished to speak with her, and show her the impropriety of being gallanted about by so many different men, many of whom were comparatively strangers to her. Her own parents could not look upon it, and think that all was right; being blind to the faults of their daughter. There being so many of this kind of men visiting Mr. Rigdon's house at the steam boat landing (for he kept a sort of tavern or boarding-house,) that Mr. Smith did not care to go there to see her. Miss Nancy, I presume, considered her dignity highly insulted at the plain and sharp reproofs she received from this servant of God. She ran home and told her father that Mr. Smith wanted her for a spiritual wife, and that he employed my wife to assist him in obtaining her.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Carlos Grove, Sidney Rigdon, George W. Robinson, and Henry Marks, affidavits and certificates, in the *Sangamo Journal*, September 23, 1842.

⁷⁹*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 20, 1900.

⁸⁰Orson Hyde, *Speech of Elder Orson Hyde, Delivered Before the*

This same idea emerges from the letter Smith wrote to Miss Rigdon after she refused his proposal. He compared God to a loving parent who was willing to bestow certain privileges on his children, but only on His conditions. He wrote:

A parent may whip a child, and justly, too, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost . . .

Everything that God gives us is lawful and right; and it is proper that we should enjoy His gifts and blessings whenever and wherever He is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without law, without revelation, without commandment, those blessings and enjoyments would prove cursing and vexations in the ends, and we should have to lie down in sorrow and wailings of everlasting regret.⁸¹

Some thought that Nancy had been divinely rebuked when her younger sister revived briefly from her deathbed and admonished Nancy: "It is in your heart to deny this work; and if you do, the Lord says it will be the damnation of your soul."⁸²

The best evidence that the letter to Nancy Rigdon is authentic is its reproduction without the addressee's name, in Smith's *History*

High Priests' Quorum, in Nauvoo, April 27th, 1845, 'Upon the Course and Conduct of Mr. Sydney [sic.] Rigdon, and Upon the Merits of His Claims to the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (Liverpool: James and Woodburn, 1845), pp. 27-29.

⁸¹ *Sangamo Journal*, August 19, 1842. (See also HC 5:134-136; and Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967], pp. 255-257.) The idea that Smith was "testing" Miss Rigdon is also confirmed by George W. Robinson who said "He wished to ascertain whether she was virtuous or not, and took that course to learn the facts!!!" (J. C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 246.) Compare also stanz 13 and 14 of "Buckey's First Epistle to Jo," *Warsaw Signal*, April 25, 1844.

⁸² *T&S* 3:922-923; HC 5:121.

and in Joseph Fielding Smith's compilation of the teachings of Joseph Smith. Roberts does, however, explain that it obviously referred to plural marriage.⁸³ There is also a partial copy in the LDS Church Archives entitled, "The Letter of the Prophet Joseph Smith to Miss Nancy Rigdon."⁸⁴

The communication does not contain a specific proposal of marriage, because it was intended as a theological justification for the doctrine, apparently in answer to her objections. Smith told Nancy that at various times God had given commandments, but in specific instances He contravened them by revelation. "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is" he told her. God gave Solomon all the desires of his heart, "even things which might be considered abominable to all who understand the order of heaven only in part," he wrote, "but which in reality were right because God gave and sanctioned by special revelation."⁸⁵

After admonishing her about promiscuous conduct, Smith explained to Nancy, as he had to Benjamin Johnson before, that plural marriage was foreshadowed in the Parable of the Talents. The blessings of those who reject it, like the talent hid in the earth by the wicked and slothful servant, will be "bestowed on those who will receive and occupy; for unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have

⁸³HC 5:134. The original source for the inclusion of this document in Smith's *History* is unknown at present.

⁸⁴Original in the LDS Church Archives. See also the comments of T. F. Olney in the *Sangamo Journal*, September 23, 1842.

⁸⁵*Sangamo Journal*, August 19, 1842.

abundantly." In conclusion he described God as "more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe," however, to those who are wicked He "is more awful in the executions of His punishments."⁸⁶

The letter failed in its purpose, and the attempts on the part of both Smith and Rigdon to avoid permanent rupture were also fruitless.⁸⁷ On January 10, 1843, Bennett wrote a letter addressed to Sidney Rigdon and Orson Pratt. Boldly he told them the details of his plans to go to Missouri and there assist in the attempts to extradite or kidnap Smith. Rigdon received the letter first and passed it on to Pratt without a word to Smith, but Pratt immediately went to the Prophet with the news.⁸⁸

Smith was incensed that Rigdon, his counselor in the Presidency, had not shown him the letter. He saw in this additional evidence that Rigdon was co-operating with Bennett. He gave the letter to John Taylor, who wrote a scathing editorial for the *Times and Seasons*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Even before the publication of the letter by Bennett, Smith and Rigdon had been quarreling. (HC 5:46.) On July 11, 1842, Rigdon wrote a letter inviting Smith and his brother to meet him for a ride into the Prairie "that alone we may settle forever all difficulties, and be again at everlasting peace." (Sidney Rigdon to Joseph Smith, July 11, 1842. Original in LDS Church Archives.) Several things indicate that Rigdon was trying to prevent an open break. He at least made a token effort to deny Smith's authorship of the letter to his daughter, and if he was losing ground in the church leadership why didn't he make a clean break? Furthermore there are several professions of faith by Rigdon during this period. (For example see, *T&S* September 15, 1842; and D. B. Huntington, statement, 1843. Original in the Statement Collection in the LDS Church Archives.)

⁸⁸ HC 5:250-251.

Smith also instructed Taylor to bring Rigdon before a church court. When the type was set and Taylor was ready to proceed with the trial, he went to Smith and asked if he should continue as directed. Smith "paused for a moment, then replied, 'I Think you had better not, we will save him if we can.'" ⁸⁹

As it turned out they could not. From the summer of 1842, Rigdon continued to drift from the Church. On at least three occasions, Smith tried to oust him from the Presidency. ⁹⁰ Before the martyrdom Rigdon moved to Pittsburgh, but, on the death of Joseph Smith, he returned to Nauvoo in a vain attempt to capture the leadership of the Church. Failing at this, he went back to Pennsylvania and started a church of his own. Mormonism had lost another of its brightest lights.

Other Defections

Other defections of lesser importance resulted from the scandal in the summer of 1842, and collectively they demonstrate that the Bennett revelations were hurting the Church internally. The illiterate Melissa Schindle provided General Bennett with another tale of attempted seduction by Joseph Smith. He not only tried to seduce her, she said, but she also knew he had been in bed with another woman. However, William Smith warned his readers that Schindle's credibility was severely jeopardized because she was a harlot. ⁹¹

⁸⁹Journal History, January 10, 1842. This has been erroneously placed in the Journal History a year too early due to a misdate in the letter.

⁹⁰McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness*, p. 123.

⁹¹*The Wasp*, July 27, 1842.

Miss Martha Brotherton also accepted Bennett's call to tell her story. It was first published in the *St. Louis Bulletin* on July 15, 1842, and was quickly copied in the *Sangamo Journal* and the *Warsaw Signal*.⁹² Her account was filled with all the familiar elements. She told of being taken to a locked room by Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young. There she was told of the special revelation permitting plural marriage. She repeatedly refused their advances and finally Smith was brought in, but he too failed to sway her. Brigham Young denied the story as a "base falsehood;" Kimball said it was "without foundation in truth;" and *The Wasp* sneered that Bennett was the "pimp and file leader of such mean harlots as Martha H. Brotherton. . . ."⁹³

Troubles with Miss Brotherton antedated her July affidavit. Joseph Fielding, a member of the same company which came from England as the Brothertons, reported that he preached to the immigrants several times on the doctrine of the gathering. Several, including the Brothertons, were "rather hurt at my plain way of telling them what tribulations they might expect." He anticipated that "brother B. from Macclesfield" was likely to send home an evil report.⁹⁴ William Clayton wrote to William Hardman and explained in detail the Brotherton difficulties.

Old Mr. B. and daughter, like many others, were assailed by the apostate crews, who lay scattered on the banks of the river; and all manner of evil reports

⁹²*Sangamo Journal*, July 22, 1842; *Warsaw Signal*, July 23, 1842.

⁹³Brigham Young, affidavit, August 25, 1842; Heber C. Kimball, affidavit, August 27, 1842, both in *Affidavits and Certificates*; and *The Wasp*, August 27, 1842.

⁹⁴Joseph Fielding to Parley P. Pratt, August 1842, in *MS 3:77*.

were sounded in their ears, until they became discouraged; and, finally, almost denied the faith before they came near Nauvoo.

People coming here with their minds thus prejudiced, will naturally construe everything they see and hear into evil, and will imagine evil where there is none. In this state the B--ton family came, and were something like spies, afraid to be spoken to by any one, lest they should be ensnared, and especially afraid to meet Joseph Smith, lest he should want their money. After remaining a short time here, they went back to Warsaw, where some of the greatest enemies reside, and, I am sorry to say, have joined in the general clamour and business of circulating evil reports, some of which I, MYSELF KNOW POSITIVELY TO BE FALSE.⁹⁵

Martha was also implicated in the original investigation of Bennett in May of 1842.⁹⁶ At the April 1842 general conference, both the Prophet and his brother Hyrum took note of stories "alleging that a sister had been shut in a room for several days, and that they had endeavored to induce her to believe in having two wives."⁹⁷

Testimony is conflicting about the Brotherton case, but the evidence of Martha's besmirched reputation is compelling. Besides associating with anti-Mormons in Warsaw, she may have also been associating with ladies of ill repute in that city. Certainly members of her own family considered her unworthy. Her sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, as well as her brother-in-law, John McIlwrick, swore an affidavit to the effect that Martha was a liar, was guilty of dishonesty, and was seen in a compromising situation with a young

⁹⁵William Clayton to William Hardman, March 30, 1843, in MS 3:75.

⁹⁶*The Wasp*, October 15, 1842.

⁹⁷T&S 3:763.

man.⁹⁸ Interestingly, if Smith and others did approach Martha on the plural marriage issue, it may have been on a similar basis as that of the one made to Nancy Rigdon. In 1849 John Bowes said that William Arrowsmith talked with Joseph Smith about the case and reported: "Smith did not deny what Martha relates, but said that Brigham Young and he did it to try her, as they had heard an evil report of her."⁹⁹

The story has a somewhat ironical conclusion. On June 27, 1843 Vilate Kimball wrote to her husband that Parley P. Pratt and his wife had come to her for instruction about plural marriage. Smith had started to teach them but they were interrupted in the middle of the conversation. They told her Smith had "appointed" a plural wife for Pratt. "I dare not tell you who it is," she said, "you would be astonished and I guess some tried."¹⁰⁰ The one "appointed" was Elizabeth Brotherton, Martha's sister. Pratt married her on July 24, 1843.¹⁰¹

In September, the *Sangamo Journal* carried a letter from T. F. Olney who said that he could no longer remain a member of the Church while "polygamy, lasciviousness and adultery are practiced by some of its leaders."¹⁰² Other defections occurred that fall, and it is probable that they were related to the Nauvoo difficulties. *The Wasp*

⁹⁸ John McIlwrick, Elizabeth Brotherton, Mary McIlwrick, affidavit, August 27, 1842, in *Affidavits and Certificates*.

⁹⁹ Bowes, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁰ Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, June 27, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰¹ Pratt, *Autobiography*, p. 462.

¹⁰² *Sangamo Journal*, September 23, 1842.

noted on September 17 that forty apostate Mormons passed down the river from Nauvoo. Then, in October ten Saints withdrew. "Agrieved [sic.] by the conduct of Joseph Smith and others of the leaders of the Church," they said, "we have been most scandalously imposed upon in matters and things of Divine character."¹⁰³

Bennett's Whirlwind Tour

John Cook Bennett was not content with a mere newspaper campaign against Mormonism. The interest and controversy created by his letters as well as his personal animosity convinced him that there was more to do and that there was also money to be made if the matter were properly exploited. After his visits to Carthage, Warsaw, and Springfield, he embarked on an extended speaking tour, beginning at St. Louis. From there he went to Louisville, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and on to the East. Illinois newspapers kept track as his itinerary took him to New York, Boston, Salem, back to New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Kalamazoo, Chicago, and eventually to Springfield and St. Louis. As the reports came in, the Saints in Nauvoo were quick to respond to his newest allegations.¹⁰⁴

Details of Bennett's travel between St. Louis and New York are sketchy, but they do reveal his basic purpose and intention. While

¹⁰³*The Wasp*, September 17, 1842; *Sangamo Journal*, October 14, 1842.

¹⁰⁴For example, Bennett was fond of saying certain people in Nauvoo were about to leave the Church and reveal what they knew of the corruption there. For several denials of such charges by Sidney Rigdon, John Weld, Chauncy and Francis Higbee, see *The Wasp*, September 24, 1842; December 3, 1842; and *T&S* 3:47, respectively.

in St. Louis in July of 1842 he was apparently contemplating publishing a book on Nauvoo Mormonism. However, two local papers reacted negatively to the idea. The *St. Louis Gazette* was opposed to it because there were already too many seeking to make money through accounts of the Saints. They also suspected his motives and wondered why he waited until after his expulsion to attack the Mormons.¹⁰⁵

On Saturday July 23, he passed through Louisville on board the steamer *Importer*. The editors of the *Louisville Daily Journal* met with him, publishing a letter in which he outlined five reasons why he opposed Mormonism. His fifth point read: "Under the new order of things, all the property of *the saints*, with their wives and little ones, is to be consecrated to Joe, to subserve his purposes and gratify his passions!"¹⁰⁶ On Sunday Bennett was in Cincinnati. At the Broadway Hotel he made "many startling disclosures of the iniquities practiced by Joe Smith. . . ."¹⁰⁷ He was in Cleveland on July 30, and at that time he outlined the basic structure of his book. "The 'History of the Saints' will give a full account of this nondescript lodge of the Mormon ladies of pleasure and the fine arts, including all their *Cloistered, Chambered, and Cyprian maids and maidens!!*"¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Stanley B. Kimball, "The Saints and St. Louis, 1831-1857; An Oasis of Tolerance and Security," *BYU Studies*, XIII (Summer, 1973), 496-497.

¹⁰⁶ *Louisville Daily Journal* [Louisville, Kentucky], July 27, 1842.

¹⁰⁷ James J. Tyler, *John Cook Bennett, Colorful Freemason of the Early Nineteenth Century*, Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio (n.p., n.d.), pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁸ J. C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

A number of reports arrived which related the details of Bennett's lectures and his frequent encounters with Mormon missionaries. Late in August, Bennett and a companion, noted anti-Mormon Origen Bachelier, were lecturing on "The Secret Wife System at Nauvoo" at the Second Congregational Church in New York City. An advertisement promised their lecture would "lay bare the absurdities, enormities and dangers of Mormonism."¹⁰⁹ Indeed, they proved so controversial that one correspondent to the *New York Herald* complained that the lectures were "too licentious for the age," suggesting if they were continued Bennett and Bachelier deserved "tar and feathers."¹¹⁰ Robert Foster, a Mormon who attended the August 31 lecture, agreed. But he found that, even with his "fiend like smile and feigned vivacity," Bennett could not get a response from the audience. Bennett's attack was so personal that Foster could not resist fighting back. He called Bennett a liar and the audience shouted for a debate. Foster declined, but assured them that their lecturer was a whoremonger and blasphemer. Foster reported that the next lecture was so obscene it was for gentlemen only.¹¹¹

In a second communication from New York, Foster said that he had read the *Herald's* report of the Bennett lecture in its September 4

¹⁰⁹ *New York Daily Tribune*, August 29, 1842. Bachelier had been an active anti-Mormon before his coalition with Bennett. (See *T&C* 3:775; Origen Bachelier, *Mormonism Exposed, Internally and Externally* (New York: n.p., 1838).

¹¹⁰ *The New York Herald*, September 1, 1842.

¹¹¹ *The Wasp*, September 24, 1842.

issue and was so incensed that he wrote to the editor. But his letter was not published. He described the lecture as "one of the filthiest mouthfuls that ever dropped from the lips of mortal man."¹¹² On the other hand, Bennett got J. W. Hallenback, to swear that Foster was a sinister "Danite" henchman, sent to kill Bennett and that he had a "bold and unblushing female" with him who was thought to be a spiritual wife.¹¹³

Bennett spent his time in Boston lecturing and gathering information in preparation for the publication of his book. The still famous *History of the Saints* came off a Boston press in the fall of 1842. In Salem, Massachusetts, two merchants assailed Bennett's co-lecturer, Mr. West, prior to his debate with Mormon missionary Erastus Snow. Speaking in phrenological terms, *The Wasp* said that the report of the merchants showed that West's "bump of amittiveness was quite as prominent as that of John C. Bennett's."¹¹⁴

Sometime in November Bennett was lecturing in Buffalo. The *Illinois State Register* noticed that he was "making money by it very fast." But editor Walters quoted Sir William Scroggs, who said, "I know of no man so likely to invent his testimony, as he who makes his living by the wonderful character of his testimony."¹¹⁵ Bennett's encountered another Mormon missionary in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The

¹¹²*Ibid.*, October 15, 1842. The account of Bennett's obscenities is in the *New York Herald*, September 4, 1842.

¹¹³J. C. Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-292.

¹¹⁴*The Wasp*, November 12, 1842.

¹¹⁵*Illinois State Register* [Springfield, Illinois], December 16, 1842.

General told the townspeople that E. M. Webb was a "Danite" sent out to execute him. This was a good excuse to skip town without paying his debts to the Presbyterians and his tavern bill. The local citizens thought it took an "uncommon degree of credulity" to believe Bennett's stories.¹¹⁶ The *Chicago Democrat* likewise reported a debate between a Mormon minister and Bennett. Although the minister, a Mr. Anderson, "had not the advantage of an education," his talent and tact reportedly "sustained his part admirably well and proved himself a great proficient in scriptural knowledge." The Chicago Mormons said Bennett's lectures on "female fixings" and similar things at Nauvoo were "false as hell."¹¹⁷

Bennett was back in Illinois in January of 1843. Smith stood trial in Springfield in the last week of December and reported that Bennett was there "a few days after we left there . . . [because] he is determined, if possible, to keep up the persecution against me."¹¹⁸ From Springfield Bennett attempted to enlist the aid of the defected Rigdon and Pratt, telling them that he was on his way to Missouri to assist in the effort to take Smith. On January 13, he was in Alton, Illinois where he was giving a lecture in the "Old Court Rooms." The broadside advertising the event is the only one known to be extant. It shows the variety of subjects his lectures covered. Bennett was to:

give an account of *Joe Smith's* Golden Bible; the Divining Rod; the Urim and Thummin; the Daughter of Zion, (Danites); Destroying Angel, (Destructives);

¹¹⁶*T&S* 4:167.

¹¹⁷*The Wasp*, January 14, 1843.

¹¹⁸*HC* 5:250.

Mormon Miracles; Joe's Spiritual Wife System; the Great Mormon Seraglio; Holy Order Lodge; the Mormon Priesthood, &c. &c., together with the *Treasonable Designs of the Leaders of that Sect--their Burglaries, Robberies, and Murders.*¹¹⁹

All of this was to cost only twelve cents, and only gentlemen were admitted.

Bennett continued the same pattern in St. Louis while he also promoted another attempt to extradite Smith. However, this attempt was defused by Smith's release by Judge Pope in Springfield in December. Shortly after this, Bennett disappeared from the scene of active opposition to the Mormons, although one suspects he was not far away. As he wrote Rigdon, "the war goes bravely on, and although Smith thinks he is now safe, the enemy is near, even at the door. He has awoke the wrong passenger."¹²⁰

It is difficult to measure the effect Bennett's attacks had upon the Church because both Mormon and gentile reaction to them varied.

¹¹⁹ Broadside, January 13, 1843. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹²⁰ Journal History, January 10, 1842, p. 3. (See also HC 5:250.) Bennett is known to have associated for awhile with the Strang faction. He also forged a fascinating revelation purported to be from Joseph Smith appointing Sidney Rigdon as his successor. (*The Prophet*, May 10, 1845; and Orson Hyde, *Speech*, p. 29.) Research needs to be done to evaluate Bennett's possible role in authoring other documents which are suspected as forgeries with Masonic motifs, like the letter of appointment to Strang and an alleged letter from Joseph Smith regarding a plan for world wide government based on a Masonic pattern. (See Reed Durham, "Is There No Help For the Widow's Son," Presidential Address to the Annual Mormon History Convention at Nauvoo, Illinois, April, 1974. Mimeograph copy in possession of the author.) It seems paradoxical that Bennett would associate with either Strang or Rigdon in a religious context unless he felt he could dupe them into giving him power or promote additional sexual escapades.

His book, for example, met with mixed reaction. It was universally rejected by the Saints. Non-Mormons responded unevenly, depending on their position regarding Mormonism.¹²¹

Mormons who encountered Bennett or his influence were not agreed as to the impact he was having. At first Smith himself apparently thought Bennett could not "do much" to hurt the Church.¹²² In the early stages perhaps this was so, for on July 14, 1842 Abraham Lincoln wrote of the publication of Bennett's first letter in the *Sangamo Journal* that "Bennett's Mormon disclosiers [sic.] are making some little stir here, [Springfield] but not very great."¹²³ In December of 1842 a Mormon missionary in Franklin County, Indiana said that "Bennettism has militated in our favor there, for he is personally known by some of the citizens."¹²⁴ Similarly, Isaac Galland noted that in St. Louis Bennett's affidavits and lectures "are taken . . . with great allowances."¹²⁵ Newel Knight was also optimistic in his retrospective evaluation. He recalled that Bennett's "sudden light," like a "streak of lightening, left a black cloud and disappeared with a hush mumbling of distant thunder, that never hurt any body."

¹²¹A negative *New York Herald* review is quoted in *The Wasp*, November 12, 1842. See also a review of J. L. Colby in *Ibid.*, January 7, 1842.

¹²²Joseph Smith to Bro. Page, July 11, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹²³Roy P. Balser, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, I (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1853), 291-292.

¹²⁴*Journal History*, December 22, 1842.

¹²⁵Isaac Galland to Joseph Smith, March 11, 1843. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

Knight continued:

He exposed his own sins, and went to the devil where he belonged. There was a clan of apostates, associated with Bennett, who now stalked forth to help destroy the Prophet's character, and even the Church, but all their efforts like steam from a boiling kettle, made a shower an instant then dissolved to come again.¹²⁶

But Knight and the others were somewhat overoptimistic or premature in judgment. Evidence shows that there was widespread fear among many churchmen that Bennett had successfully impeded the progress of Mormonism. Isaac Haight, who arrived in Nauvoo from New York early in July, found Nauvoo "very excited" about Bennett's recent excommunication.¹²⁷ Later that month, James Flanagan encountered a Campbellite minister in Kentucky. He was warning the people about the false teachers of Mormonism. He also demanded from Flanagan a sign that he represented the true God, whereupon he "read a Newspaper which contained some of Bennett's base calumnies & Sat Down." Flanagan retorted that the best sign he had was that the servants of Satan "always came round with as strong testimony [sic.] as a Newspaper or an Almanack [sic.] and demanded signs," whereas "the Servants of God came

¹²⁶Newel Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹²⁷Journal History, July 5, 1842. On July 16, 1842 Robert D. Foster wrote to Joseph Smith from De Ruyter, New York. He had just arrived from Nauvoo. Of the Bennett scandal he writes: "be assured Sir that he has found many votaries but it gives me much pleasure to state that they are mostly birds of the same feather (viz.) (Blackbirds). . . . His career is very short [.] [I]llustrated better by one of your own familiar trite sentences . . . (viz.) its affect upon reasonable community is equal to the affects of water upon the Gooses Back, producing no change deeper than its glassy surface like Bennetts Borrowed Oratory [,] deep toned [sic.] far fetched. . . ." (Robert D. Foster to Joseph Smith, July 16, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives.)

with the Scripture & the word of God in their mouth to substantiate [sic.] the truth."¹²⁸

On a more serious note, Lorenzo Wasson observed that in Philadelphia the disclosures of Bennett caused the faith of some to fail and others to doubt. In September of 1842 Erastus Snow said that, in Massachusetts, Bennett and West "turned away some from the faith that were beginning to believe, and the enemies of the cause were hardened more for they seemed to believe 20 lies before one truth." Snow immediately published a pamphlet "refuting Bennett's falsehoods."¹²⁹ According to John Eldridge, who wrote to Brigham Young in January of 1844, the Bennett scandal was still around, but was dying "very fast."¹³⁰

The Mormon Counter-Attack

Joseph Smith and the Church also reacted as though they had been deeply wounded by Bennett. They responded vigorously. The basic tack of the Church was to vilify and discredit Bennett's character so severely that his reputation for honesty, integrity, and morality could not be relied on. Moreover, the character of Smith would shine out in bold relief against such a dark backdrop.

¹²⁸James Flanagan, Journal, p. 23-24. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹²⁹Erastus Snow, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34. A search in the most extensive bibliography available, located in the LDS Church Archives turned up no known copy of this pamphlet.

¹³⁰John Eldridge to Brigham Young, January 2, 1844, as quoted in the Journal History, January 2, 1844.

In its countermaneuvers the Church adopted its traditional two-pronged approach. First, Smith met Bennett point for point in the press and in public sermon. On Thursday, July 27, 1842, *The Wasp* published an "extra" with the headline "BENNETTIANA: or the Microscope With Double Diamond Lenses." The first of four pages contrasted Bennett's writings in the *Times and Seasons* with his letters in the *Journal*. This "Bennett as he was--Bennett as he is" approach was followed up by three pages of affidavits, letters, and rebuttals. Thereafter a continuous stream of vitriol flowed from the pen of William Smith and his contributors regarding the Bennett scandal.¹³¹

Some Mormons also developed a behind-the-scenes strategy against Bennett's character. In the early days of his church activity, Bennett had written many articles for the *Times and Seasons* under the pseudonym Joab. In January of 1842, Charles V. Dyer wrote to Bennett questioning him on his views of slavery, specifically asking about a recent occurrence in Missouri. Bennett's reply revealed his abolitionist leanings. Smith also responded to the correspondence with a letter against the oppressive character of the Missourians.¹³² When Bennett went to Missouri in 1842 to agitate the people in their anti-Mormon feelings, Calvin Warren wrote to Smith suggesting that the Bennett letter to Dyer, "will ensure no little attention for Bennett in Jefferson City! They

¹³¹ Almost every issue of *The Wasp* contained some reference to Bennett and the scandal he had caused.

¹³² *T&S* 3:723-725. In June of 1842 Smith argued that neither his nor Bennett's letter showed them to be abolitionist. (*T&S* 3:808.)

say they can *kill* him with it. I suppose they dont [sic.] mean murder."¹³³

When Bennett was in Missouri again in 1843 George Bachman wrote to Missourian Moses Wilson reminding him that

Bennett possesses those feelings and sentiments in relation to your beloved and happy state; which if carried out would Cause Jackson County to become the scene of action for the same bloody Tragedy which was acted in Southampton County Virginia and of which the writer was unfortunately a witness. . . . That Bennett possesses those feelings and sentiments may be learned from his conversations, his speeches and his writings [.] Under that insidious and hypocritical smile and profession of friendship of his you find concealed a heart black with Sentiments of Abolitionism Libertinism falsehood deceit and treachery. . . . A coat of tar and feathers is what abolitionist generally get with us. But your people must be Judge of what punishment this insulter of their laws and institutions deserves.¹³⁴

The second thrust of the attack involved sending missionaries throughout the states, armed with published refutations of Bennett's charges. Brigham Young recorded in his history that on August 26, 1842 some of the Twelve Apostles met with the Prophet. At that time, Smith directed that Elders should be sent out to "disabuse the public mind in relation to the false statements of Dr. J. C. Bennett."¹³⁵ Smith

¹³³ Calvin Warren to Joseph Smith, July 13, 1842. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹³⁴ George Bachman to Moses Wilson, January 20, 1843. Copy in the LDS Church Archives. This copy was sent to Joseph Smith with a cover letter of explanation that Bachman conceived himself as acting a similar part in protecting Joseph Smith that Jonathan did for David by shooting an arrow into the air to warn of evil or to deter the attacker. (See George Bachman to Joseph Smith, January 21, 1843. Original in the LDS Church Archives.) Compare 1 Samuel 20:18-42.

¹³⁵ MS 26:151.

stated that he wanted them to "deluge the state with a flood of truth."¹³⁶ He appointed a special conference for the purpose of calling these Elders and further directed that the affidavits against Bennett be printed that the missionaries "might have authentic and strong testimony to lay before the public."¹³⁷ On Monday, August 27, 1842, 380 Elders volunteered to accept the assignment.¹³⁸ In the meantime Young helped prepare the affidavits, which were printed on the press of *The Wasp* on August 31. Immediately Young and others were busily engaged in countering Bennett's influence.

Present research has not shown who these 380 missionaries were or to what extent they carried out Smith's desires, but, as we have noted above, a number of them regularly reported to Nauvoo on their encounters with the Bennett problem. Certainly much manpower and effort was channeled away from normal proselytizing efforts to this public relations matter. It is also clear that Bennett stirred emotions that did not dissipate in 1844, but burst forth with renewed intensity to help bring Smith to his death in June of that year.

¹³⁶HC 5:132.

¹³⁷MS 26:151.

¹³⁸*Ibid.* For Smith's remarks on this occasion see HC 5:136-139.

CHAPTER VIII

POLYGYNY AND THE PRELUDE TO MARTYRDOM

Thus far this study has revealed significant turmoil within the Church over the plural marriage issue, and it has hinted that there was an equal external displeasure which contributed to persecution and pressure upon the Church. Although Nauvoo had peaceful beginnings and gave initial promises of progress for Mormonism, the Saints' experience in this community came to a tragic end. Pressure continued to mount until it violently exploded like an overheated steam boiler. Over the years there had been at least three attempts to extradite the Prophet to Missouri on charges against him for crimes allegedly perpetrated prior to his settlement in Illinois. Increasingly, non-Mormon neighbors turned against Smith and his followers. Then, on June 27, 1844, a mob invaded the Carthage city jail and murdered Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Subsequently, in 1846, approximately 12,000 Mormons were driven from the state.

The present chapter seeks to evaluate the extent to which plural marriage may have been a factor in these difficulties, specifically in the death of the Smith brothers. Traditional examinations of Mormon non-Mormon conflict in Illinois and elsewhere have emphasized the obvious social, cultural, and religious tensions between the Saints and

their gentile neighbors.¹ In these studies plural marriage is often treated as a factor that stimulated conflict. In other words, some analysts have concluded that Mormon sexual standards were so divergent from the norms of Illinois society that they caused extreme reactions.² This view has considerable validity, but certain recent studies of community conflict and violence also suggest other fruitful approaches to this subject. The studies of Richard Dykstra, Ronald Walters, and Gustive Larson are relevant to an understanding of the conflict, both in the more confined Mormon religious community and in the larger Mormon-gentile social situation in Illinois.

The first step in assessing the role of plural marriage and its importance in the Nauvoo crisis is to determine what the non-Mormon attitudes were toward the principle. Very few archival materials on this topic and period have been collected by the major repositories of Mormoniana. However, anti-Mormon critics in and around Nauvoo freely expressed their opinions in newspapers. Therefore, the most readily available source of information on their attitudes toward the events of the time is the local press.

Internal Schism and the *Nauvoo Expositor*

Many and varied pressures faced Joseph Smith in the last six months of his life. He was wanted in Missouri as a fugitive from justice, and there was clamor around Nauvoo to the effect that he was a

¹See n. 25 chapt. ii.

²Godfrey, "Causes of Mormon non-Mormon Conflict," chapt. vii.

tyrant, shielded from justice by a contrived city charter. There was also considerable excitement over the large Nauvoo Legion as well as concern over Mormon domination of the local Masonic order and political scene.

In addition, the Prophet faced increasing difficulties with internal apostasy. After the departure of John C. Bennett, dissident Mormons remained leaderless and maintained no discernible organization. Disillusioned and apostate Saints tended to leave Nauvoo and attack the monolithic church from a safe distance. But a series of minor events set the stage for the dramatic events of 1844, climaxed by the creation of a major organized conspiracy against Joseph Smith. The investigations and disciplinary actions of the summer of 1842, the reading of the revelation on plural marriage before the High Council, the secret diffusion of polygyny among an ever-widening group of believers, and the unusual techniques Smith used in implementing the doctrine--all produced negative reactions and aroused the ire of opponents.

Before Joseph Smith's death, three pairs of Mormon brothers became alienated and formed a nucleus for dissent. One source of disunion by the end of January, 1844 was Smith's counselor, William Law. A lengthy session of the city council on January 5th of that month brought the matter into the open. On the night of the meeting, Smith confided in his journal his suspicions that aides Law and William Marks were traitors.³

³HC 6:170.

There were persistent rumors that Smith had designs on Law's wife, while, as has been noted, there may have been some attraction between Emma Smith and William Law. On April 18, 1844, Law, his wife Jane, his brother Wilson, and Robert D. Foster were excommunicated from the Church for "unchristian like conduct."⁴ The full nature of the difficulty between William Law and Smith is unknown, but Alexander Neibaur recorded in his journal that the Prophet told him Law wanted to be sealed to his own wife for eternity. Smith, however, refused on grounds that Law was guilty of adultery. Jane Law wanted to know the reason for refusal, but Smith would not tell her. A few days later she enticed Smith into her home, unsuccessfully playing the part of Potiphar's wife with him. When Law came home, she told him that the Prophet had proposed marriage to her.⁵

Law's brother, Wilson, also had a falling out with the Prophet. The latter's church status remains somewhat puzzling since his brother said he never joined the Church, but Smith's records show that Wilson was excommunicated on April 18. However, he had seemed friendly toward Smith and had served as Major General in the Nauvoo Legion. Evidently the split was revealed by a poem that Smith thought Wilson Law submitted to the *Warsaw Message* on February 1. This piece, entitled "Buckeye's Lamentation for Want of More Wives," attacked the Mormon Leader and spiritual wifery in these words:

⁴HC 6:341.

⁵Alexander Neibaur, Journal, p. 15. Typescript in the LDS Church Archives.

But Joe at snaring beats them all,
 And at the rest does laugh;
 For *widows* poor, and *orphan girls*,
 He can ensnare with *chaff*⁶
 He sets his snare around for all,
 And very seldom fails
 To catch some thoughtless *Partridges*,
Snow-birds or *Knighl-ingales*!⁶

Smith called this a bit of "doggerel" which breathed a "very foul and malicious spirit."⁷

In April the *Warsaw Signal* printed a second poem, entitled "Buckey's [sic.] First Epistle to Jo." Primarily concerned with the Nancy Rigdon episode, it is not mentioned in Smith's *History*.⁸ But four days after its appearance, the Prophet suspended Law for "unbecoming conduct," and directed Charles C. Rich to take command of the Legion.⁹ Wilson Law faced a court martial and was cashiered on May 9, 1844.¹⁰

At the same meeting in January when Smith began to suspect Law and Marks, he also made new public charges against Francis Higbee. He referred to some private matters which he said Higbee would prefer to keep hidden. Suggesting that Higbee was not the best company for young men, Smith said, "I by no means consider him the standard of the city."¹¹ Within five days Higbee preferred charges against Smith for

⁶*Warsaw Message*, February 4, 1844. See appendix E for the entire poem.

⁷HC 6:210.

⁸*Warsaw Signal*, April 25, 1844.

⁹Joseph Smith, Orders to Charles C. Rich, April 29, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰HC 6:362.

¹¹HC 6:169.

slander, and a few days later Orson Pratt initiated countercharges against Higbee. The young lawyer was brought before the Municipal Court in Nauvoo on January 16, at which time a tenuous reconciliation was achieved between the parties, each man forgiving the other.¹²

It was to be a short-lived reunion, however. Late in February, Orismus Bostwick was fined \$50.00 for supposedly boasting that "he could take half a bushel of meal . . . and get what accomodation he wanted, with almost any woman in the city."¹³ Indignant at this aspersion upon their virtue, the women of Nauvoo held four separate meetings on March 9 and 16. They unanimously approved a strongly-worded statement censuring Bostwick for his conduct and adopted resolutions thanking the city officers for ridding their society of his presence.¹⁴ Francis Higbee, attorney for the defendant, announced that he would appeal the case. Smith publicly wondered if Higbee did not want to take the case to Carthage--a center of rabid anti-Mormon activity in Hancock County--in order to stir up a mob.¹⁵

By May Smith and Higbee were again openly at odds with one another. Higbee signed a complaint against Smith seeking \$5,000.00 damages. When notice of this suit was served on him on May 6, Smith petitioned the Nauvoo Municipal Court for a writ of habeas corpus. The Prophet contended that he had not committed an identifiable crime and

¹²HC 6:174, 177, 178.

¹³*Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844. See also the *Warsaw Signal*, March 27, 1844.

¹⁴*Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844.

¹⁵HC 6:225.

that Higbee was acting maliciously and vindictively. Higbee initiated the proceedings in Carthage. It was the practice, though, to rely on the nearest Justice of the Peace to try the accused person. Smith had escaped arrest on previous occasions by going to friendly Nauvoo justices. When the petition was heard, it appeared that Higbee was the one on trial. Several witnesses rehashed the sordid details of the Bennett-Higbee sexual exploits.¹⁶ The published minutes of the hearing are vague, but on May 17, A. W. Babbitt wrote from Carthage requesting Smith to provide him with documents to be used in his defense against Higbee there.¹⁷ The next day Higbee was excommunicated from the Church.¹⁸

Smith followed his past procedure by publishing the minutes of the hearing on the petition in the *Times and Seasons* on May 15. Also, on May 29, the High Council published the old material from the 1842 investigation of Higbee's brother, Chauncy.¹⁹ That same day a lengthy letter from Francis Higbee appeared in the *Warsaw Signal*. It revealed that he was still fuming over the Prophet's treatment of Nancy Rigdon. He accused Smith of slandering her and himself.²⁰ In the meantime the Higbee-Smith case remained on the docket in Carthage. On May 23 Smith received word that William Law had pressed charges against him for

¹⁶*T&C* 5:536-542.

¹⁷A. W. Babbitt to Joseph Smith, May 17, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁸*HC* 6:398.

¹⁹*T&S* 5:535-542; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 29, 1844.

²⁰*Warsaw Signal*, May 29, 1844.

adultery. Four days later he decided to go to Carthage and settle the affair. When he arrived, he found the Higbees there too. Smith's lawyers tried to bring the case to trial immediately, but the prosecution delayed, and the case was continued until the next term.²¹

While these problems were transpiring, Smith also had a personal falling out with Robert D. Foster. Although Foster had been implicated in the 1842 difficulties, he had remained somewhat faithful to Smith, keeping him informed of Bennett's activities while in New York. But here too, the peace was temporary. Late in March of 1844 M. G. Eaton swore that Foster told him that, while he [Foster] was away from home, Joseph Smith paid a visit to his wife. In the course of the visit he allegedly tried to seduce her after proposing spiritual marriage. Smith stayed for dinner, and, while the meal was in progress, Foster returned home. Later Foster demanded that his wife explain what the Prophet had been up to. When she refused to tell him, he angrily threatened her life. He frightened her so much that she fainted. Upon regaining her senses, she finally told him what had happened.²² On March 23, 1844 Joseph Smith's secretary entered the following in his journal, describing a second visit to Mrs. Foster. Clayton wrote:

President Joseph asked Sister Foster if she ever in her life knew him guilty of an immoral or indecent act. She answered, "No." He then explained his reasons for asking; which were, he had been informed that Dr. Foster had stated that Joseph made propositions to his wife calculated to lead

²¹HC 6:403, 413.

²²M. G. Eaton, affidavit, March 27, 1844, cited in the *T&S* 5:541-542.

her astray from the path of virtue; and then asked if ever he had used any indecent or insulting language to her. She answered, "Never." He further asked if he ever preached anything like the 'plurality of wife' doctrine to her other than what he had preached in public? She said, "No." He asked her if he ever proposed to have illicit intercourse with her, and especially when he took dinner during the doctor's absence. She said, "No."²³

At a municipal council meeting on April 13, Smith openly confronted Foster, asking him if he knew of any time that he had made untoward advances to Foster's wife. Foster refused to answer the questions put to him. Thereupon the Prophet preferred charges against him for "unchristian-like conduct in general, for abusing my character privily, for throwing out slanderous insinuations against me, [and] for conspiring against my peace and safety. . . ."²⁴ On May 18, Foster was excommunicated from the Church along with the Laws.

The situation grew even more tense on April 26. On that date Smith accompanied the town marshal when he went to arrest Augustine Spencer for assaulting his own brother, Orson. A crowd gathered, and Robert Foster's brother, Charles, drew a pistol, threatening Smith's life. A struggle followed in which the two Fosters and Chauncy Higbee were arrested. They were each fined \$100.00, but immediately appealed the case. Smith then had Robert Foster arrested for threatening his secretary, Willard Richards. The next day at the hearing Smith and Foster engaged in verbal combat.²⁵

²³HC 6:271.

²⁴HC 6:333.

²⁵HC 6:344. See also the statement by the city marshall J. P. Greene in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 1, 1844 and reproduced in HC 6:348-349. Greene later put the story in affidavit form. (Affidavit, May

As late as Friday, June 7, 1844, Robert Foster gave indications of some desire to return to the Church if he could have a private interview with the Prophet. Smith suspected treachery and declined, but he did offer to meet publicly if each man's friends were present. Foster rejected this proposal, and that evening it was reported that he was telling people that Smith offered him money to return to the Church and keep quiet. He also sent Smith an "extremely saucy and insulting letter"²⁶ Among other things, he charged: "You have trampled upon every thing we hold dear and sacred. You have set all law at defiance, and profaned the name of the Most High to carry out your damnable purposes. . . ."²⁷

Meanwhile the Laws, Higbees, Fosters, and others concluded that Smith was a fallen prophet, and started a church of their own. There is some evidence, not yet fully researched, suggesting that the new coalition also began to plot the overthrow and perhaps the death of Joseph Smith. At the very least, the freedom with which members of this group brandished pistols and heaped abusive language upon him

25, 1844. Original in the Statements Collection in the LDS Church Archives.)

Augustine Spencer was very likely a member of the dissident faction. Parley P. Pratt wrote to Smith from Richmond, Massachusetts to the effect that Spencer had written a letter that was "going the rounds in this nabourhood [sic.] and is fraught with the most infamous Slander and Lies concerning Joseph Smith and Others. . . ." (Parley P. Pratt to Joseph Smith, May 30, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives. See also HC 6:354-355.) The nature of the charges was that Smith was drinking, carousing, dancing, swearing, and "Keeps six or Seven young females as wives etc."

²⁶ HC 6:430.

²⁷ Robert D. Foster to Joseph Smith, June 7, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives. See also HC 6:437.

gave Smith reason for apprehension.²⁸

The dissident group also decided to print a newspaper in Nauvoo. On May 7, 1844 their press arrived in Nauvoo, and three days later the prospectus of the new *Nauvoo Expositor* came off the press. It promised to devote itself to a "general diffusion of useful knowledge" and to political independence. Part of its columns were to be "devoted to a few primary objects, which the Publishers deem of vital importance to the public welfare. . . ."²⁹ These "primary objects" included the abuses of the city charter, advocacy of its repeal, political revelations, disquisitions on religious toleration, opposition to a union of church and state, and the censure of "gross moral imperfections." Ostensibly it appeared that the editors did not intend to emphasize sexual abuses. However, a letter from Francis Higbee to Thomas Gregg in May of 1844, reveals that they intended to exploit this matter

²⁸Contemporary evidence is scattered throughout volume six of Smith's *History*. (See also Jesse Price, affidavit, August 5, 1844, in the LDS Church Archives, and Cyrus Cadfield and Gilbert Bilnap, affidavit, June 18, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives.)

There are two traditions that young boys were invited to participate in the plot but they acted as spies and helped Joseph Smith. Both accounts lean toward the miraculous and melodramatic. (See Hannah R. Larson, affidavit, undated. Carbon copy in the LDS Church Archives, and Horace Cummings, "Conspiracy at Nauvoo," *The Contributor* V [April, 1844], 251-260.) The latter is an account of two young boys who got embroiled in the conspiracy and supposedly attended, at Smith's request, a meeting where 200 people took an oath to kill Smith. When the boys turn came they refused and were only saved by divine intervention. This account has considerable doubt cast upon its historicity due to many factual errors, (i.e., the discussion about plural marriage between Smith and the boys) the second hand nature of the account, and the obvious intent of the author to relate a "faith promoting" story.

²⁹*Prospectus of the Nauvoo Expositor*, May 10, 1844. A copy of the prospectus can be found in the Journal History, May 10, 1844.

for all it was worth. "Above all," Higbee wrote,

it shall be the organ through which we will herald the Mormon ribaldry. It shall also contain a full and complete exposé of his *Mormon Seraglio* or *Nauvoo Harem*--; and his unparelled and unheard of attempts at seduction.

As it regards Joe I am as well satisfied that he excells Solomon, Tiberius, or even the black prince of Dahomeny himself, among the women as I am that he is the biggest [sic.] villain that goes unhung.³⁰

Dr. Dallin Oaks has shown that the paper, when it was issued on June 7, 1844, "assailed the Mormon leaders on three fronts: religion, politics and morality."³¹ Of the three, the "most pervasive theme" was the alleged immoral conduct of Smith and his associates. It was conspicuously discussed in a lengthy "Preamble" which included a series of resolutions and affidavits.

Smith was outraged at this affront in his own city. He convened a session of the city council on June 8, 1844. The council declared the rival newspaper a public nuisance and ordered the constable to close down the establishment. On the night of June 10, 1844 the press was destroyed and the type scattered.³² The proprietors immediately went to Carthage and swore out a writ for Smith's arrest. Subsequent events are complicated. Suffice it to say that Smith agreed to stand trial under the promised protection of Governor Thomas

³⁰F. M. Higbee to Mr. Gregg May ?, 1844. Original in the Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

³¹Dallin Oaks, "The Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor," *Utah Law Review*, IX (Winter, 1965), 868.

³²The minutes of the June 8, meeting are found in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 19, 1844.

Ford. He went to Carthage and was incarcerated there with his brother and other allies in the town jail. On the sweltering afternoon of June 27, 1844 the jail was stormed and the brothers killed. There are reports that some of the proprietors of the *Nauvoo Expositor* were in town and encouraged those who took part in this attack.³³

Given the past histories of the publishers of the *Nauvoo Expositor* and their own ethical limitations it is doubtful that they were genuinely concerned about Mormonism as a moral threat. In view of Smith's propensity for open, and often public confrontation with these men and his unrestrained habit of exposing their misconduct, it seems more likely that theirs was a personal vendetta. But they may have had other motives as well.

Robert Dykstra, in a recent study of frontier cattle towns, has discovered some interesting tendencies toward conflict similar to those that existed in Nauvoo. Dykstra specifically differs with those who have sought to validate Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis that democracy was a natural outgrowth of frontier conditions. He rejects the notion that democracy evolved most fully in settlements where the range of problems was greatest, where there was a "similar level of social and economic status and aspirations among the people" (homogeneity), and where there was an absence of a ready-made leadership structure. Under these conditions, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick argue,

³³HC 6:543, 553, 554, 560.

community problems led to collective and peaceful decision-making, which was the essence of democracy.³⁴

Dykstra, however, finds four major conceptual and interpretative errors in this thesis. First, he notes that the typical frontier town was not self-contained and hermetically-sealed from outside cultural and religious issues. Public opinion from outside the community did play a major role in the decision-making process. Second, the pioneer community did not possess a formal organization which logically and rationally strove to achieve specific goals, as a modern corporate body might do. In other words, these towns sometimes languished because of internal economic conflict or "non-purposeful" community behavior. Third, local problems sometimes divided rather than unified early town-dwellers. Finally, Dykstra questions the idea that popular decision-making was necessarily peaceful in character.

Dykstra does not argue that democracy was absent on the frontier. Indeed, he accepts the view that certain democratic mechanisms were often fostered by the pioneer town-building process. But he does question the type of experience which spawned these mechanisms. His study of cattle towns suggests that community conflict was the more typical decision-making apparatus.³⁵

These observations seem relevant to a study of the internal difficulties in Nauvoo. It was a frontier town, but not a democratic community. Smith was opposed by dissidents who were anxious about his

³⁴Dykstra, *op. cit.*, pp. 371-378.

³⁵*Ibid.*

increasing authoritarianism in religious, political, and social matters as well as the general growth of secular interests within Mormonism. With his anti-pluralistic tendencies, Joseph Smith tried to keep a tight reign on Nauvoo in the tradition of biblical theocracies. Indeed, his notion of the kingdom of God stressed the legitimacy of political power. He taught that the true order of government was a "theodemocracy."³⁶ That meant that God would reveal His will to His spokesman and the Prophet would govern the people with their consent. However, if the people withheld their consent, this did not negate the legitimacy of Smith's authority or his measures. It merely meant that nonconformists could not participate in the Zion society.

This growing authoritarianism in the Church and an endless appeal to "Higher laws" alarmed many, led by the Nauvoo coalition of dissidents.³⁷ It appears that the editors of the *Expositor* were using the sexual issue for its sensational and shock value. The real issue, though, was Smith's assertion of power. In 1887 William Law wrote:

When I left Nauvoo I left Mormonism behind, believing that I had done my part faithfully, even at the risk of my life, and believing also, that the *Expositor* would continue to do the work it was intended to do. The Saints thought that they had killed it; whereas, by destroying the press, they gave it a new lease of life and extra power to overthrow them and drive their followers from the state.³⁸

Similar testimony comes from anti-Mormon Joseph Jackson who swore on June 21, 1844 that he had heard Francis Higbee say that the critics'

³⁶ *Journal History*, April 15, 1844.

³⁷ For a discussion of the importance that the issue of "higher law" played in this conflict see, Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975), pp. xi-xiii, 11-15, 210-214.

press had been "set up . . . for the destruction of the city." Moreover, said Jackson, Higbee indicated that he "meant to kill" Joseph and Hyrum Smith.³⁹

While it cannot be asserted positively that internal conflict was ultimately successful in achieving a more democratic operation in Nauvoo, it appears that this was one of the purposes of anti-Smith agitation. Attacks on the sexual and marital behavior of the Mormon leadership was an effective means of creating prejudice against the methods and tactics of arbitrary administration.

Whereas political considerations may have outweighed sexual concerns in the arguments of some Nauvoo dissenters, this was certainly true of the positions taken by the non-Mormon press in other parts of Illinois.⁴⁰ Evidence gathered from a survey of selected Illinois newspapers shows that, except for isolated periods, Mormon plural marriage was not the major issue in the press during the Mormon stay in Illinois. This was the case with the most rabidly anti-Mormon as well as the more moderate newspapers. Even when the Saints' sex and marriage patterns were discussed, reference was commonly made to their political influence.

³⁸ William Law to Wilhelm Wyl, January 7, 1887, in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 3, 1887.

³⁹ Joseph H. Jackson, affidavit, June 21, 1844. Original in the LDS Church Archives.

⁴⁰ The idea that politics and Mormonism's relationship thereto was the real issue is not new. Mrs. Brodie took notice of it in 1946. (Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 380-381.) This has also been a persistent theme of George Gayler. ("The Mormons and Politics in Illinois: 1839-1844," *Illinois State Historical Society Journal*, XLIX [Spring, 1956], 48-66; "The 'Expositor' Affair, Prelude to the Downfall of Joseph Smith," *The Northwest Missouri State College Studies*, XXV [February, 1961], 3-15. Compare also, Robert B. Flanders, "The Kingdom of God in Illinois: Politics in Utopia," *Dialogue*, V [Spring, 1970], 26-36.) (See map in appendix G.)

The Springfield Papers

The climate of opinion in Springfield, as might be expected, was greatly conditioned by the state political situation. The foremost factors in shaping the political mood, aside from the state politicians themselves, were the Whig-dominated *Sangamo Journal* and the Locofoco-controlled *Illinois State Register*. The continuing feud between the two papers gathered momentum with the publication of Bennett's disclosures. Each paper accused the other of partisan reaction to the revelations, and both were probably right. Political power was the overriding issue in the debate.

As soon as Simeon Francis learned that John C. Bennett had bolted from Mormonism and heard rumors that the "Danites" were after him, he called upon Bennett through the columns of the *Sangamo Journal* to come out with an immediate exposure of the corruption in Mormonism. As a partisan Whig organ, the *Sangamo Journal* received Bennett with open arms, and, from the editors' point of view, with good reason. August was an election month, and this was their chance to retaliate against the Mormons for recently switching their support from the Whigs to the Democrats.

In Missouri the Mormons had supported the Democratic party, but Joseph Smith lost his confidence in Democratic President Martin Van Buren after a visit to Washington in 1839 when Smith failed to convince the President to support Mormon efforts to gain redress for the Missouri expulsion. Therefore the Prophet and the growing Mormon block vote supported William Henry Harrison and local Whig candidates in the August, 1840 election. Whig pleasure with the Mormons continued

through the next year as the Mormons voted for their candidates in the 1841 Congressional runoff. Things were different, however, in the 1842 gubernatorial election. Whigs who had counted on the Mormon majority in Hancock County to break the near split between the two parties there were rankled when Smith switched support to Locofoco candidate Thomas Ford.⁴¹

The Democratic press quickly charged the Whig "junto" in Springfield with deal-making when Bennett's initial exposé appeared in the July 8 issue of the *Sangamo Journal*. William Walters, editor of the *State Register*, said that the *Journal* was merely the organ of political opportunists who were using Bennett to serve their own ends. According to Walters, Bennett had been in Springfield in the last of June to bargain with the junto. The editor further accused the Whigs of trying to turn attention from the important issues of the upcoming election to that of Mormonism. Bennett's dagger, he said, "is aimed at the breast of democracy concealed by a pretended aim at Mormonism."⁴²

This was to be the *Register's* motto through the remainder of the debate. Walters would encourage the publication of Mormon disputes, he said, if they were intended to do justice. But, since they were designed to influence the approaching gubernatorial election, he could place no confidence in them. Bennett, he argued, was cast out of the

⁴¹ In addition to the references cited in n. 39, a good overview of the political situation can be found in JoAnn Shipps, "The Mormons in Politics: the First Hundred Years" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1965).

⁴² *Illinois State Register*, July 8, 1842.

Mormon temple and summoned to Springfield by "a herd of kindred spirits." The junto was a harlot about to bring forth a "litter of cripled and mis-shapen [sic.] half witted men, women and children, and divert the attention of the people from a sober consideration of the important interests involved in the election."⁴³

Refusing to take Bennett seriously, the *Register* twitted Simeon Francis' report of great excitement over the disclosures. The only excitement Walters noticed was among the "whig loafers about town."⁴⁴ On a more serious note, Walters admitted that a hot controversy was going on between the Mormons and the *Journal*, but objected to the publication of Bennett's letters on the grounds that they were too obscene and vulgar for print in respectable newspapers. Francis, he charged, was disregarding public decency by printing statements that shocked the virtuous, chaste, and moral citizens of the state.⁴⁵

Evidence in the *Journal* confirms Walter's assertions. From the first, Simeon Francis' intent was politically motivated. He encouraged Bennett to expose Mormonism because he desired the people of Illinois to denounce Smith, preventing the Prophet from filling the two highest offices in the state "with his own creatures."⁴⁶ When

⁴³*Ibid.*, July 15, 1842.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.* Walters found this to be even more reprehensible because Francis had criticized some years before, the publication of an account of a squirrel's head being shot off on grounds that the subject was "unfit to be introduced to the families." He wanted to know where the concern for family morality was now.

⁴⁶*Sangamo Journal*, July 1, 1842.

Smith denounced Bennett and maligned Mrs. Pratt's character, Francis condemned the insults, hoping that now the Democrats "would be ashamed of their allies, by whose vote they wish to elect him Governor. . . ." ⁴⁷

After the August election, Francis chastized the Mormons for throwing away their franchise by becoming dupes of Smith. "They do not deserve," he warned, "the sympathies--and we were going to say--*privileges*, of freemen." ⁴⁸ And when Bennett's credibility came under the attack, the *Journal* defended him as reliable and contended that everyone not "tinctured with Mormonism" or not expecting to gain "by pandering to the wishes of Joe Smith" should accept him as reliable too. ⁴⁹

Simeon Francis needed very little help in seeing the political motivation behind the *Register's* reaction to Bennett. The *Register* gave little notice to the entire episode; but what little it did give was generally favorable to the Mormons and critical of Bennett. Francis asserted that the Democratic attempt to cover-up the Mormon dispute was intentional; that in reality the Democrats had made a deal with the Mormons in granting the Nauvoo charter in 1840 and were now seeking a return favor from them in accordance with the previous contract. ⁵⁰

What position did the Locofocos and the *Register* take in relation to the disclosures? he asked rhetorically. Answering his own question, Francis said that some Democrats ignored them, others wanted them

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, July 29, 1842.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, August 19, 1842. (*Italics in the original.*)

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, November 11, 1842.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, July 29, 1842.

repressed until after the election, but the net effect was to conceal crimes of the blackest dye simply to insure the Mormon vote.⁵¹ Later in July, when Mormon James Adams was speaking in Springfield, the *Journal* said he was there to "arrest the current indignation" against the Mormon-Democratic coalition.⁵²

After this initial battle was over, the sex issue soon fell into the background in the Springfield press, as did Mormonism generally. Again this suggests that politics was the primary focus of editorial interest. The *Register* remained almost totally aloof from the Mormons' religious differences even into the month of June, 1844.⁵³ The *Journal* was somewhat more attentive to the subject, but presented it in a low key between the fall of 1842 and the late spring of 1844. The *Journal's* criticism of Smith even mellowed somewhat when he gave himself up to

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, July 29, 1842.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, January 19, 1843 and subsequent issues. The notion that the dominant concern was Mormon influence in politics is strengthened by a rough analysis of the number of issues in which politics and marriage were brought up. Between July 1, 1842 and December 29, 1842, the *Sangamo Journal* printed articles concerning the Bennett episode (including the letters) in fourteen separate issues. For the same period eleven separate issues had articles on politics. It should be remembered, however, that even the articles on sex and marriage were couched in a political context. More importantly, while the polygamy issue died out during the years 1843 and 1844 (only two articles were found) politics and other issues continued to show up. At least ten issues had articles on Mormon involvement in politics.

The same trend is true for the *Register*. There was also a significant decline in Mormon-related articles after the August election. The decline persisted with only periodic mention of the Mormons until the election of 1843 when there was again a minor flurry of activity. The year 1844 is virtually a desert until the fatal month of June. During this period the author found Mormon related items in twenty-six separate issues, one of which was related to plural marriage and seven which were definitely political in nature.

Judge Pope for trial on Missouri's extradition request. Upon learning that Smith had submitted to Illinois law, editor Francis' fears were eased. But, when events grew more serious in Hancock County, he renewed his political harangues against the Saints' leadership.

The Warsaw Papers

Examination of the newspapers printed in the Hancock County town of Warsaw confirm the notion that the Mormon political threat was the focal point of most editorial comment, while the Mormons' sexual behavior in Nauvoo was a secondary issue. Three papers were printed in Warsaw in the years 1840-1844. First to appear, the *Warsaw Signal* was printed in two different periods by Thomas Sharp.⁵⁴ Between runs of the *Signal*, Thomas Gregg published the *Warsaw Message*. Both papers played an important role in Mormon non-Mormon relations.

Thomas Sharp had not been publishing his paper long before it was evident that he was one of the county's most bitter Mormon-haters. It is not known what caused this attitude, but Mormons certainly did little to assuage it. Less than a month after its inception, Joseph Smith cancelled his subscription to the paper, referring to it as a "filthy sheet--that tissue of lies--that sink of iniquity."⁵⁵ These caustic remarks by Smith were accompanied by vituperative

⁵⁴The first run of the *Signal* was from May of 1841 through October 1, 1842. The second was from February 14, 1844 through the end of the Nauvoo period.

⁵⁵*Warsaw Signal*, June 2, 1841. See also the June 9, 1841 issue.

personal attacks upon Sharp by William Smith, editor of *The Wasp* and brother to Joseph Smith.⁵⁶

Early in his editorial career, Sharp underwent an interesting political transition which was reflected in his editorial comment. Initially his paper was Whig-oriented. However, as Sharp's animosity toward the Mormons grew, he became an independent. He took this position in an effort to create a bi-partisan, anti-Mormon coalition.⁵⁷ In 1841, he helped to organize the Hancock County anti-Mormon party, designed to combat "political Mormonism."⁵⁸ From 1842 until the death of Joseph Smith, this organization played an increasingly significant role in the Hancock County conflict.

It is difficult to overestimate Sharp's concern that Mormonism was a political cancer spreading rapidly in the county and that it threatened to envelop state politics. He considered the Mormons dupes of Smith who somewhat slavishly submitted to his political dictums. One example of this attitude was expressed when Smith issued a directive to the Mormons scattered in outlying settlements to gather at Nauvoo. Sharp shuddered, "What will become of your dearest rights and most valued privileges when that ascendancy is gained which the . . .

⁵⁶William Smith was fond of calling Sharp, "Thom-ASS," and poking fun at the size of his nose. (*The Wasp*, April 30, 1842.) He also had a propensity for sarcasm and crudity. His vitriol and lack of good taste can be seen in his reference to Bennett in the July 16, 1842 issue when he said, "while he is unlocking his pandoran box for the *Sangamo Journal*, his friends, (if he has any) ought to give him a little State titty as well as suckle Tom Sharp on asses' milk."

⁵⁷*Warsaw Signal*, July 16, and 23, 1841.

proclamation is intended to effect?"⁵⁹ Each move the Mormons made was interpreted as having some sinister purpose. If the Saints wanted to buy a local section of school property that was up for sale, Sharp saw this as an attempt to squeeze the old citizens out. The growth of the Nauvoo legion created near panic as he exploded, "Is an army necessary to propagate religion?"⁶⁰ At the end of 1841, Sharp announced, "Politics are dead in this county." And he surmised that it would continue that way unless the political parties "consent to the degradation of uniting [with] a corrupt and degraded church, and suffer Joe Smith to become sole Dictator."⁶¹

It is therefore somewhat surprising to observe that Sharp, who had such animosity and preoccupation with Mormons, did not enlarge upon John C. Bennett's spicy accusations. Actually, Sharp was woefully uninformed about Bennett and was forced to rely on the *Journal* for his information. His low opinion of Bennett probably caused him to ignore the first hints of schism in Nauvoo. In reprinting the second and third letters from Smith's critic, Sharp commented that some might be offended by them. Nevertheless, he concluded that reader interest was so high that he "did not feel at liberty to withhold them on account of the author's want of delicacy."⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1842.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, June 9, 1841.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, June 29, 1841 and June 9, 1841.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, December 1, 1841.

⁶² *Ibid.*, July 23, 1842. On July 9, Sharp said, "Give it to them General, we like to see it--although there is no doubt that you yourself deserve a few SMALL compliments." (Compare also the *Signal* of August 6, 1842.)

To be sure, Sharp was personally incensed at the disclosures. But they merely confirmed his previous notions that Smith and other Mormon leaders were power-hungry tyrants, knaves, imposters, and immoral servants of Satan.⁶³ So he persisted in his narrow political concerns for about two years.

Financial difficulties forced Thomas Sharp to abandon the *Signal* in October of 1842. One of his associates, Thomas Gregg, filled the need of a non-Mormon newspaper in Hancock County with the publication of his *Warsaw Message* in January of 1843.⁶⁴ Devoted specifically to agricultural, political, and commercial matters, the *Message* at first took a moderate approach to the Mormon problem.⁶⁵ This was probably due to the fact that Gregg had been a resident in Missouri and had observed the dreadful persecutions the Mormons endured there. However, after the Whigs lost the congressional election in the summer of 1843, Gregg, who was a Whig, shifted in his attitude toward the Mormons.⁶⁶ That was not a year of important revelations or disclosures about Mormon sexual deviations in the press, yet Gregg was not adverse to

⁶³*Ibid.*, October 6, 1841.

⁶⁴The two men had significant differences of opinion relating to a statement made by Sharp in the *Signal*, August 13, 1842. Sharp in reference to the arrest of Smith for extradition said, "If he had resisted, we should have had the sport of driving him and his worthy clan out of the State *enmasse*. . . ." Gregg repudiated such a position in the August 20 issue.

⁶⁵*Warsaw Message*, May 10, 1843. Gregg refused to print an anti-Mormon poem, "For our lives we can see no good reason, why we or our correspondents, in our columns, should attack this or any other religious body." He also took a neutral position on the anti-Mormon parties proposal to divide Hancock County between the Mormons and non-Mormons. (*Ibid.*, January 28 and February 11, 1843.)

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, September 13, 20, 1843.

exploiting such tidbits as came to his attention.⁶⁷

Still, Gregg was primarily anxious about the Mormons' political strength. The publicity he gave to the numerous anti-Mormon conventions around the country completely overshadowed all other issues.⁶⁸ By mid-1843 the non-Mormons of Hancock County were becoming excited about lawlessness among the Saints. Conventions were called to discuss numerous reports of Mormon thefts, of gentile molestations in Nauvoo, and, above all apparent abuses of the Nauvoo charter.⁶⁹ Delegates to these meetings sometimes listened to charges of "spiritual wifery" and debauchery in Nauvoo. But the essence of their petitions was summed up in a plea agreed to at St. Mary's precinct on October 14, 1843, praying for action "to relieve us from this great moral and political evil."⁷⁰ As the situation deteriorated toward open violence, Gregg suggested that a compromise could be reached if the Saints would put aside Smith. Yet the editor feared that the Prophet would never yield the power he had obtained by his "hellish knavery." Indeed, his

⁶⁷For example, in the October 4 issue he called Smith a "Lusty Prophet" and also reprinted an article from the *Chicago Express* about Mormon missionaries persuading females to leave their homes to come to Nauvoo the "city of delights and terrestrial paradise."

⁶⁸*Warsaw Message*, September 3, 20, 27; October 4, 18; November 1, 8, 1843.

⁶⁹In the summer of 1843 Smith had successfully evaded extradition to Missouri for the third time. This last time it was by obtaining a writ of habeas corpus from the Municipal Court in Nauvoo, a power which Smith claimed was granted it by the charter. Citizens in the county viewed this action as a tyrannical abuse. It also convinced them that Mormons would not be brought to justice in Nauvoo.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, November 1, 1843.

proposal was ignored by some Mormons and rebuffed by others.⁷¹

Thomas Gregg also succumbed to the financial pressures of operating a press in Hancock County, but by February of 1844, Thomas Sharp was ready to try again. When he resumed publication of the *Warsaw Signal* his hatred of the Saints was ill-concealed. He acknowledged that his paper was anti-Mormon, stating, however, that he had no intention of trying to "lash the present angry state of feeling into a tempest."⁷² Nonetheless, he probably helped to do just that.

Actually, Sharp underwent a significant change in his feelings regarding mob action against the Mormons. In 1841, at the instigation of rumors, he pleaded that old settlers should not take the law into their own hands, and as late as February of 1844, he was still suing for peace.⁷³ But subtle shifts were beginning to appear. For example, in August of 1842, after Smith was arrested on the second extradition attempt, Sharp intimated that if Smith had not gone peacefully the community should have driven the Mormons out.⁷⁴ Late in February of 1844, he said that the gentiles must obey the law only as long as it

⁷¹"Hanibal" answered Gregg in the following words: "I can make no compromise with Nauvoo, as a community, while it avows allegiance to the Beast and the False Prophet. . . . No, Sir, I can never compromise with Jo Smith; nor yet with a community who consider his will as their pleasure--no matter how absurd. And more especially cannot I compromise with Jo Smith, until I shall have seen his inflated vanity and his intolerable audacity humbled and subdued. I have seen too much of his treachery, and felt too much of his dastardly tyranny, when in the plenitude of his power, he expected no resistance. Who, then, in view of his whole character, can make terms with such a being, . . .?" (*Ibid.*, January 17, 1844.)

⁷²*Warsaw Signal*, February 14, 1844.

⁷³*Ibid.*, February 21, 1844.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, August 13, 1842.

was a protection to them. Then in May he declared that if the Mormons shed one drop of blood the conflict would soon be general.⁷⁵ At the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, where no blood was shed, Sharp cried out, "War and extermination is inevitable! Citizens, ARISE, ONE, AND ALL. . . . We have no time for comment, every man will make his own. *Let it be made with POWDER AND BALL!!!*"⁷⁶

As the storm gathered force Sharp did not ignore the moral issues. In fact, he emphasized them more in 1844 than in 1842. However, his attacks were usually tied to political ramifications and were almost always very short. For example, in answer to a query from the *Alton Telegraph* as to why the *Signal* was giving such fierce opposition to the Mormons, Sharp listed numerous factors. Political domination led the list, followed by complaints of repeated insults and injuries to the people, of violations and evasions of the law, of the exploitation of immigrants, of tyranny and counterfeiting. Included in the list was the charge that the leaders of the Church were base seducers and violators of female virtue, all of whom were upheld by Smith.⁷⁷ In fact, Sharp was so angry he sought any and every charge he could find to lay at the feet of the Church. Mormon sexual practices simply added fuel to his fiery outbursts.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, February 21, 1844.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, June 12, 1844.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, April 25, 1844.

Other Papers

George Davis, Whig editor of the *Alton Telegraph* was less discrete about his motives for encouraging Bennett in 1842. He hoped the length of Bennett's letters would not discourage his readers because "we are beset by dangers which call for immediate and prompt action." He continued:

We intreat every man to read the statements of Bennett, and after he has done so, lend it to his neighbor. Unless Judge Ford is defeated for Governor, Mormonism will be triumphant in the State, and no man will be secure in either his life, liberty, or property.⁷⁸

Davis also claimed that some of Ford's friends had tried to dissuade Bennett, reasoning that he was hindering the campaign. But, said Davis, Bennett refused to desist because "he believes . . . that Judge Ford's consenting to be run as the Mormon candidate for Governor, should defeat him."⁷⁹

Just before the election Davis noted that important principles were at stake. If Ford was elected, he said, "Mormonism and religious despotism," under the leadership of the "adulterer" Joseph Smith, would "have succeeded in Illinois."⁸⁰ Yet, after the Whigs lost the election Davis had to admit that Bennett's disclosures may not have swayed the people in favor of the Whigs. In fact, they likely hurt the cause. He could not decide whether it was the "character of the witness" that led to the incredulity of the people; or his poor timing just prior to

⁷⁸*Alton Telegraph* [Alton, Illinois], July 16, 1842.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, July 30, 1842.

the election which caused them to distrust his motives; or whether citizen apathy toward the corruption in Nauvoo caused the defeat. But Davis was confident that the lack of Whig organization in the state was the source of the Whigs' impotence.⁸¹ Thereafter, Mormon marital practices and sexual mores virtually disappeared from the *Telegraph* as issues.

Perhaps the attitude of the press toward Joseph Smith and Mormonism just prior to the Carthage incident is best summarized by the editor of the *Quincy Whig*. One of the Higbees and a companion had been in Quincy in mid-May. They spoke about Smith and spiritual wifery, and shortly thereafter some Mormon missionaries came into town and refuted Higbee's statements. The *Quincy Whig* responded:

We think these Mormon missionaries are laboring under a mistake in one particular. It is not so much the particular doctrines, which Smith upholds and practices, however abominable they may be in themselves, that our citizens care about--as it is the anti-republican nature of the organization, over which he has almost supreme control --and which is trained and disciplined to act in accordance with his own selfish will. The spectacle presented in Smith's case--of a civil, ecclesiastical and military leader, united in one and the same person, with power over life and liberty, can never find favor in the minds of sound and thinking republicans.⁸²

These findings regarding the attitudes of anti-Mormon editors are consistent with contemporary research by other scholars. It is interesting to note that Gustive Larson's recent study of the national campaign against Mormon polygyny in Utah, suggestively entitled *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood*, finds the same pattern of

⁸¹*Ibid.*, July 30, 1842.

⁸²*Quincy Whig* [Quincy, Illinois], May 22, 1844.

reaction. Larson's thesis is that national politicians objected to the ironhanded political control that the Mormon leadership wielded over its members. Therefore, they resisted all attempts by the people of Utah territory to achieve the status of statehood until they could be assured that the Mormons were entering the mainstream of American democratic politics. Significantly, the weapon they used to create the necessary support for their measures was Mormon polygyny.⁸³

Moreover, a recent article by Ronald Walters has shown such an approach to be both understandable and indicative of many reformist attitudes. The immediacy of the desire to eliminate the Mormon problem was quite similar to the post-1830 drive to immediately abolish slavery. Walters notes that the sexual content in abolitionists' arguments was "not simply a result of sexual fears or sexual repression."⁸⁴ Rather, it had intellectual underpinnings in "changing, culturally determined attitudes about sex which made it understandable." These attitudes, combined with other assumptions, also guided abolitionists and shaped their proposals.

According to Walters, Americans generally feared any "dominance-submission" relationship in society, particularly in politics, because it violated freedom and individualism. Such a relationship ultimately led to the degradation, corruption, and final dissolution of society. Abuse was merely an "effect" of this relationship. The most extreme form of this type of an interface was found in the sexual conduct of men and women. Anti-slavery groups, anxious to prove that forced labor

⁸³Gustive Larson, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴Ronald G. Walters, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

had totally corrupted its adherents and was about to do the same to the nation, argued that masters and slaves engaged in considerable erotic conduct, imposed upon slaves by totally depraved masters.

This seems to have been the underlying issue in the anti-Mormon crusade in Illinois. The typical symbol used to describe Joseph Smith at this time was Mohammed, a symbol of uninhibited force. As events unfolded in Nauvoo, it appeared more certain each day to outsiders that Smith was a tyrant and that his followers were ready to answer his beck and call. Such power in the hands of one man endangered both the Saints' immediate neighbors and the state in general as foreign immigrants continued to flow up the Mississippi. From the viewpoint of the gentiles, this power was already leading to abuses in the early forties. The ultimate proof of the challenge and degrading effects this power possessed was the unnatural lust that had been wantonly unleashed in the city of the Saints. The only thing worse than a master abusing a female slave woman was a church leader who beguiled and overpowered women under religious pretexts, tearing down the restraints of conscience and society. Surely this was the ultimate in corruption and degradation. The solution had to be immediate and sure, and like the eradication of slavery it could only be enforced by violence.

Summary

Thus it appears that the internal schisms created in Nauvoo were not primarily doctrinal or theological or disputes about sexual matters. However, these issues were exploited for their full propaganda

value once the Smith-dissident controversy was under way. The primary issue for many of the apostate Mormons was Smith's inordinate use of his theocratic clout. Similarly, outsiders experienced a growing awareness of the political strength of the Mormon block vote. There was growing apprehension that Smith and his followers sought control of the county, the state, and, perhaps, the nation.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY

Perhaps no other topic in Mormon history has received more historical attention by historians than plural marriage. Yet the historiography of the subject is marred by serious omissions, both in content and interpretation. Heretofore, scholars have understandably neglected the beginnings of Mormon polygyny while commenting on its development in more easily studied later periods. The present investigation delves deeply into the roots of the matrimonial concept, which may have begun to emerge in the 1829 translation of the Book of Mormon. Certainly its outlines were evidenced in Smith's thinking by 1831 and throughout the Kirtland sojourn. The expansion of both the theology and the practice of plural marriage have been traced into the Nauvoo era and up to the death of Joseph Smith.

The popular psychological approach which attributes Smith's marital and sexual behavior to an overpowerful and uninhibited id, while tracing his theology to the protective propensities of the superego has been rejected. It has been demonstrated that Smith's major doctrinal innovations were essentially incubated in a peculiar prophetic, theological, and religious context. Whatever one may think of Joseph Smith as a religious leader, it is clear that he and those who followed him believed that he was an inspired prophet of God. The theory that he

invented plural marriage simply to gratify his personal lust cannot adequately explain the inception and evolution of the doctrine of polygyny in Mormonism.

Smith's prophetic self-image provided him with an unusual freedom to engage in novel thought and left him uninhibited by many societal norms. His concept of plural marriage was not just a utopian reaction to perceived shortcomings in contemporary marital systems. Rather, it enlarged the traditional importance of the family in American society by casting it in an eternal perspective. Plural marriage was part and parcel of the outgrowth of other significant and far-reaching ideas in Mormon hierology. Polygyny facilitated the unfolding practice of Mormon dynasticism; both concepts were foundation stones in the ideology of the kingdom of God and the creation of a perfect Zion society. However, it appears that there was a gradual theological development of these ideas. Incomplete comprehension, combined with characteristic zeal, sometimes led Smith to overreact or act unwisely in implementing his ideas. In turn, this caused misunderstanding and conflict, both in the Church and among non-Mormons.

A close examination of the attitudes of Joseph Smith's wives and others who engaged in the practice of polygyny reveals that the introduction of plural marriage initially encountered almost universal resistance. Only a sense of duty or a religious experience that convinced them that it was the will of God induced most Saints to accept their leader's revelations. A consideration of the number of Smith's plural wives also leads to the conclusion that other authors have not been as critical as they might have been in assessing pertinent source

materials. In many cases they have exaggerated the extent of his marital involvements, probably because of their desire to ridicule him and diminish his religious convictions. There were, it seems, some profound and highly complex theological as well as social reasons why Smith took plural wives who were widowed, orphaned, indigent, or already married.

Conflict was the most consistent product of the infusion of plural marriage into Mormon life. The most basic level of this conflict existed between the husband and his first wife. Even Joseph Smith experienced marital strains associated with the addition of plural wives to his family.

Next, friction arose among two groups within the Church. First, there were those who rejected multiple marriages on moral, ethical, or other grounds. Some such people left Nauvoo, convinced that their leaders were advocating or engaging in sinful practices. Most of these disaffected Mormons did not actively challenge or injure the Church *per se*. The second group, however, had an important impact upon the course of events, particularly in Nauvoo. They include persons who had conflicts with Smith, engaged in unauthorized plural marriages, or otherwise rejected established doctrines. In such cases, Smith acted swiftly, harshly, and, often, publicly. Many of those who were excommunicated remained bitter critics of Mormonism. They commonly vented their anger against Smith by attacking him in the local press. And their negative stand on plural marriage contributed to four major splits in church hierarchy between 1833 and 1844.

A third level of strife pitted the Mormons against the non-Mormon community. Personal vendettas arising from internal difficulties generated considerable public sentiment against the Church and created a vast public relations problem for its leaders. The existence of polygyny among the Mormons certainly offended a lot of the Saints' immediate neighbors. Yet plural marriage was secondary to power politics as a cause of the ferocious gentile opposition to Mormonism in Illinois. It was only one of the irritants which activated non-Mormons, bent upon forcing the Saints to conform to the standards of the dominant majority or suffer the consequences of ostracism and discrimination.

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APPENDIX A

OUTLINE MAP OF U.S. SHOWING EASTERN LOCATIONS OF MORMON ACTIVITY



APPENDIX C

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ON THE WIVES OF JOSEPH SMITH

Name	Birth	Marriage		Age at Marriage		Death	Marital Status at Time of Marriage	Husband	Date First Marriage
		Known	Supposed	Known	Supposed				
1. Fanny Alger	Sept. 30, 1816		1833		17	?	Single		
2. Lucinda Morgan	Sept. 21 1801		1838		37	?	Married	Geo. W. Harris	1831(?)
3. Prescinda Huntington	Sept. 7, 1810	Dec. 11 1841		31		Feb. 1, 1892(81)	Married	Norman Buell	Jan 26, 1827
4. Marinda Johnson	June 28, 1815	May, 1843	April 1839	27		?	Married	Orson Hyde	Sept. 4, 1834
5. Clarissa Hancock	Dec. 18, 1814	?	?		26-30	?	Married	Levi Hancock	?
6. Louisa Beaman	Feb. 7, 1815	June 5, 1841		26		May 16, 1850(45)	Single		
7. Zina Huntington	Jan. 31 1821	Oct. 27 1841		20		Aug. 29, 1901(80)	Married	Henry B. Jacobs	Mar. 7, 1841
8. Mary Rollins	? (1818)	Feb. 1842			24	Dec. 17, 1913(95)	Married	Adam Lightner	Aug. 11, 1835
9. Patty Sessions	Feb. 4, 1795	Mar. 9, 1842		53		Dec. 14, 1893(98)	Married	David Sessions	June 28, 1812
10. Delcena Johnson	Nov. 19, 1806		Before June, 1842		34-36	?	Widow	Lyman R. Sherman	
11. Mrs. Durfee	?		Before June, 1842	?	?	?	?		
12. Sally Fuller	Oct. 24, 1815		Before June, 1842		25-27	?	?		
13. Mrs. A. S.	?	?	?	?	?	?	Married?	?	?
14. Miss B.	?	?	?	?	?	?	Single		
15. Eliza Snow	Jan. 21 1804	June 29, 1842			38	Dec. 5, 1887(83)	Single		

Name	Birth	Marriage		Age at Marriage		Death	Marital Status at Time of Marriage	Husband	Date First Marriage
		Known	Supposed	Known	Supposed				
16. Sarah Whitney	Mar. 22, 1825	July 27, 1842		17		Sept. 4, 1873(48)	Single		
17. Sarah Cleveland	? 1825	? ?		? ?		?	Married	John Cleveland	?
18. Elvira Cowles	? ?	June 1, 1843		? ?		?	Married	John Holmes	Dec. 1, 1842
19. Martha McBride	Mar. 17, 1805	Summer 1842		38		Nov. 20, 1901(96)	Widow	Vinson Knight	July 26, 1826
20. Ruth Vose	Feb. 26, 1808	Feb. 1843		35		Aug. 18, 1884(76)	Married	Edward Sayers	Jan. 23, 1841
21. Desmodema Fullmer	Oct. 6, 1806	July 1843		34		Dec. 1899(75)	Single		
22. Emily Partridge	Feb. 28, 1824	Mar. 4, 1843		19		Dec. 1899(75)	Single		
23. Eliza Partridge	Apr. 20, 1820	Mar. 8 1843		23		?	Single		
24. Almera Johnson	Oct. 12 1812	Spring 1843		30		March 1896(84)	Single		
25. Lucy Walker	Apr. 30, 1826	May 1, 1843		17		Oct. 1, 1910(84)	Single		
26. Helen Kimball	Aug. 22, 1828		1843	15		?	Single		
27. Mona Lawrence	Dec. 18, 1823		Spring 1843	? 19		?	Single		
28. Sarah Lawrence	May 13, 1826		Spring 1843	? 17		?	Single		
29. Flora Woodworth	Nov. 17, 1826		Spring 1843		16	About 1846(?)	Single		
30. Rhoda Richards	Aug. 8, 1784	June 12, 1843		59		?	Single		

Name	Birth	Marriage		Age at Marriage		Death	Marital Status at Time of Marriage	Husband	Date First Marriage
		Known	Supposed	Known	Supposed				
31. Hanna Ellis	March 4, 1813		Before Summer 1843		27-30	1844(?)	Single		
32. Melissa Lott	Jan 9, 1824	Sept. 20, 1843		19		?	Single		
33. Fanny Young	Nov. 8, 1787	Nov. 2, 1843		56		June 11, 1859	Married(?)	Roswell Murry	1832
34. Olive G. Frost	July 24, 1816		April 12, 1843		27	Oct. 6, 1845	Single		
35. Mrs. Edward Blossom	?	?	?	?	?	?	Married	Edward Blossom(?)	
36. Olive Andrews	Sept. 24, 1818	?			22-26	?	?		
37. Mary Frost	Jan 11, 1809		After April 1843		24	?	Married	Parley P. Pratt	May 9, 1837
38. Elizabeth Davis	March 11, 1791	?	?		48-52	?	?		
39. Mary Huston	Sept. 11, 1818	?	?		22-26	?	?		
40. Vienna Jacques	1788	?	?		52-56	?	Single		
41. Cordelia Morley	Nov. 28, 1823	?	?		17-21	?	?		
42. Sarah Scott	?	?	?	?	?	?	Married(?)		
43. Sylvia Sessions	July 31 1818		Feb. 8, 1842		24	April 13, 1882	Single		
44. Nancy Smith	?	?	?	?	?	?	?		
45. Jane Tibbetts	Aug. 27, 1804	?	?		36-40	?	?		

Name	Birth	<u>Marriage</u>		<u>Age at Marriage</u>		Death	Marital Status at Time of Mar- riage	Husband	Date First Marriage
		Known	Supposed	Known	Supposed				
46. Pheobe Watrous	Oct. 1, 1805	?	?		35-39	?	?		
47. Nancy Winchester	Aug. 10, 1828	?	?		12-16	?	Single		
48. Sophia Woodman	Aug. 25 1795	?	?		45-49	?	?		

APPENDIX D

HELEN MAR KIMBALL'S RETROSPECTION ABOUT HER INTRODUCTION TO THE
DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE OF PLURAL MARRIAGE IN NAUVOO AT AGE 15

I thought through *this life* my time will be my own
 The step I now am taking's for eternity alone,
 No one need be the wiser, through time I shall be free,
 And as the past hath been the future still will be.

To my guileless heart all free from wordly care
 And full of blissful hopes--and youthful visions rare
 The world seemed [sic.] bright the thret'ning clouds were kept
 From sight and all looked fair but pitying angels wept.

Then saw my youthful friends grow shy and cold,
 And poisonous darts from sland'rous tongues were hurled,
 Untutor'd heart in thy gen'round sacrifice,
 Thou did'st not weigh the cost nor know the bitter price;

Thy happy dreems [sic.] all o'er thou' it doom'd alas to be
 Barr'd out from social scenes by this thy destiny,
 And o're thy sad'nd mem'ries of sweet departed joys
 Thy sicken'd heart will brood and imagine future woes,

And like a fetter'd bird with wild and longing heart,
 Thou'lt dayly [sic.] pine for freedom and murmur at thy lot;
 But could'st thou see the future & view that glorious crown,
 Awaiting you in Heaven you would not weep nor mourn.

Pure and exalted was thy father's aim, he saw
 A glory in obeying This high celestial law,
 For to thousands who've died without the light
 T'will bring eternal joy & make thy crown more bright.

I'd been taught to revere the Prophet of God
 And receive every word as the word of the Lord,
 But had *this* not come through my dear fathers' [sic.] mouth,
 I should ne'r have received it as Gods' [sic.] sacred truth.

APPENDIX E

Buckeye's Lamentation for Want of More Wives

1

I once thought I had knowledge great,
 But now I find 'tis small;
 I once thought I'd Religion, too,
 But I find I've none at all.
 For I have got but *one lone wife*,
 And can obtain no more;
 And the doctrine is, I can't be saved,
 Unless I've *half a score*!

2

The *narrow gate* that Peter kept,
 In ages long ago,
 Is locked and barred since he gave up
 The keys to *beardless Joe*.
 And Joe proclaims it is too small,
 And causes great delay,
 And that he has permission got
 To open the *broad way*.

3

The narrow gate did well enough
 When Peter, James, and John,
 Did lead the saints on Zion-ward,
 In *single file* along:
 When *bachelors*, like good old Paul,
 Could win the glorious prize,
 And *maids*, without a *marriage rite*,
 Reach "mansions in the skies."

4

But we have other teaching now,
 Of greater glories far;
 How a *single glory's* nothing more
 Than some lone twinkling star.
 A *two-fold glory's* like the moon,
 That shines so sweet at night,
 Reflecting from her gracious lord
 Whatever he thinks right.

5

A *tenfold* glory--thats the prize!
 Without it you're undone!
 But with it you will shine as bright
 As the bright shining sun.
 There you may reign like mighty Gods,
 Creating worlds so fair;
 At least a *world* for ever *wife*
 That you take with you there.

6

The man that has got ten fair wives,
Ten worlds he may create;
 And he that has got less than this,
 Will find a bitter fate.
 The one or two that he may have,
 He'd be deprived of then;
 And they'll be given as *talents* were
 To him who has got *ten*.

7

And 'tis so here, in this sad life--
 Such ills you must endure--
 Some *priest* or *king*, may claim your wife
 Because that you are poor.
 A *revelation* he may get--
 Refuse it if you dare!
 And you'll be damned *perpetually*.
 By our good *Lord* the *Mayor*

8

But if that you yield willingly,
 Your daughters and your wives,
 In *spiritual marriage* to our POPE,
 He'll bless you all your lives;
 He'll *seal* you up, be damned you can't,
 No matter what you do--
 If that you only *stick* to him,
 He swears HE'LL *take* you *through*.

9

He'll lead you on to the broad gate,
 Which he has opened wide--
 In *solid column* you shall march,
 And enter side by side.
 And no delay you'll meet with there,
 But "*forward march*" you shall:
 For he's not only our *Lord* Mayor
 But Lord LIEUTENANT-RAL

10

This is the secret doctrine taught
 By Joe and the *red rams**--
 Although in public they deny--
 But then 'tis all a sham.
 They fear the indignation just,
 Of those who have come here,
 With hands that's clean and honest hearts,
 To serve the Lord in fear.

11

Thus, all the *twelve* do slyly teach,
 And slyly practice, too;
 And even the *sage Patriarch*,
 Wont have *untied his shoe*:
 For sure, 'twould be quite impolite,
 If not a great disgrace,
 To have a *widow* sister fair
Spit in a Prophet's face!

12

But Joe at snaring beats them all
 And at the rest does laugh;
 For *widows* poor, and *orphan girls*,
 He can ensnare with *chaff*,
 He sets his snares around for all,
 And very seldom fails
 To catch some thoughtless *Partridges*,
Snow-birds or *Knight-ingales*!

12 [sic.]

But there are hundred other birds
 He never can make sing;
 Who wont [sic.] be driven nor *draged* [sic.] to hell,
 By *prophet*, *priest* nor *king*:
 Whose sires have bled in days gone by,
 For their dear country's cause;
 And who will still maintain its rights,
 Its *Liberty* and *Laws*!

*B.Y. & O.H.

APPENDIX F

The Buckey's [sic.] First Epistle to Jo

1

Friend Jo, I have been told of late,
 That you had got it in your pate
 A certain chief, to vent his hate,
 Had learned to sing;
 And had turn'd out a poem great,
 Or some such thing.

2

Because the "Warsaw Message" came
 With tidings from that *state* of fame,
 Like some great herald to proclaim
 Your wicked ways,
 Your tyranny [sic.] your *sin* and *shame*,
 In *these last days*.

3

With Buckey's trumpet sounding clear,
 That Democrat and Whig might hear,
 And *Priest-rid* Mormons, who in fear,
 Bow down to thee;
 That there is still one child who dare
 And will be free.

4

That Buckeye child lives in Nauvoo,
 And some there are, who know how true
 A friend, he ever was to you,
 In days that's past,
 Till *slanders base* around you threw
 Fair fame to blast.

5

Till for himself he's fairly seen
 That you were not what you had been,
 But that iniquity you'd screen
 In every way;
 And from fair *virture's* paths did lean
 Vile plans to lay.

6

Have you forgot the snare you laid
 For Nancy, (lovely Buckeye maid?)
 With all your priestly arts-array'd
 Her to seduce;
 Assisted by that wretched bawd
 Who kept the house.

7

But she, in virtues armour steel'd
 Was proof against what you *revealed*.
 And to *your doctrines* would not yield
 The least belief;
 Although the scriptures you did wield
 In your relief.

8

And when you saw, she would detest
 Such doctrines, in her noble breast,
 And did despise the man, 'tho priest;
 Who taught them too
 A sallow, yellow, lustful beast,
 Poor Jo, like you.

9

'Twas then you chang'd your *lovers sighs*
 And vengeful hate flash'd in your eyes
 When you found out she did despise
 You as a man;
 So took to circulating lies,
 Your usual plan.

10

Just that you might destroy her fame,
 And give to her a ruin'd name,
 So that if she should ever proclaim
 What you had tried;
 Your friends might turn on her the shame
 And say she lied.

11

But Joe, in this you fairly fail'd
 Though you her father's house assail'd
 She met you face to face; *you* quail'd
 Before her frown,
 And like a counterfeit she nail'd
 You tightly down--

12

Although you tried, by priestly power
 To make this gentle creature cower
 And eat her words, that you might tower
 In priestly pride;
 But strong in truth, she in that hour
 Told you you lied.

13

And when you found it would not do,
 Then like a coward paltroon, you
 Acknowledg'd what she had said, was true
 Unto her sire;
 But then you'd nothing more in view
 Than just to try her--

14

And put her on her guard, that she
 Might keep herself all pure and free
 From base seducers like to me,
 And *Joab* vile--
 For that it was reveal'd to thee
 We would beguile.

15

O Jo! O Jo!! thy slanderous tongue
 Some burning tears from me have wrung,
 And I had thought t' have held my tongue
 And nothing said--
 If thou had'st but repentance shown
 And shut thy head.

16

But thy repeated slanders vile
 Shall not be long borne by this child;
 Although by nature he is mild,
 And well disposed;
 Thy sins from continent to isle
 Shall be exposed.

17

Missouri's deeds shall come to light
 Though perpetrated in the night,
 By hirelings who thought it right
 To do thy will--
 By cabin conflagration bright
 To scalp and kill.

18

Repent, repent, there still is time--
 And add no more dark crime to crime.
 But think, how mighty and sublime
 Thy calling first--
 And in black sackcloth bow thee down
 Low in the dust--

19

And put away far from thy heart,
 Each wicked, *sensual* sinful art;
 And from the truth no more depart
 Long as you live--
 But stop and make another *start*,
 And I'll forgive.

20

If no, your dark deeds in Nauvoo,
 As well as in Missouri too--
 Like *Hamlet's* ghost shall rise to view,
 With *old white hat*--
 Then tremble tyrant, for but few
 Will sanction that.

21

But I must stop this long epistle,
 "My pen is worn down to the gristle,"
 And 'tis the poet's only missill [sic.]
 In truth's relief--
 For, be it known to all, this child
 Aint yet a chief--

22

'Tho he his lineage can trace
 Back to the *Bruce* and *Wallace* days,
 When they for Liberty did raise
 The sword, and broke
 (As I intend in these last days)
 A tryant's yoke.

APPENDIX G

MAP OF WESTERN ILLINOIS



APPENDIX H

AFFIDAVITS AND CERTIFICATES RELATING TO MORMON PLURAL MARRIAGE BEFORE THE DEATH OF JOSEPH SMITH

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
1. Thomas B. Marsh*	Feb. 15, 1838	Oliver Cowdery admitted he never said Joseph Smith was an adulterer.	<i>EJ</i> , July, 1838
2. George W. Harris*	Feb. 15, 1838	Oliver Cowdery admitted he never said Joseph Smith was an adulterer.	<i>EJ</i> , July, 1838
3. George H. Hinckle*	Feb. 15, 1838	Oliver Cowdery admitted he never said Joseph Smith was an adulterer.	<i>EJ</i> , July, 1838
4. J. C. Bennett	May 17, 1842	Joseph Smith never taught him immorality.	<i>TW</i> , July, 1842; <i>HC</i> 5:11
5. C. L. Higbee	May 17, 1842	Joseph Smith never taught him immorality.	<i>LDSCA</i>
6. Margaret J. Nyman	May 24, 1842	She was seduced by Chauncy Higbee under pretext of church doctrine.	<i>NN</i> , May 29, 1844; <i>MS</i> 23:657
7. Matilda J. Nyman	May 24, 1842	She was seduced by Chauncy Higbee under pretext of church doctrine.	<i>NN</i> , May 29, 1844; <i>MS</i> 23:657
8. Sarah Miller	May 24, 1842	She was seduced by Chauncy Higbee under pretext of church doctrine. Abortion.	<i>NN</i> , May 29, 1844; <i>MS</i> 23:657
9. F. M. Higbee	June 30, 1842	Joseph Smith wants J. C. Bennett out of the Church.	<i>SJ</i> , July 15, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 288-289
10. J. C. Bennett	July 2, 1842	Claims his testimony before the High Council was given under duress.	<i>SJ</i> , July 15, 1842
11. Melissa Schindle	July 2, 1842	Joseph Smith sleeps with widow Fuller.	<i>QW</i> , July 16, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 253-254
12. William Clayton	July 12, 1842	Bennett not under duress.	<i>AdC</i>
13. Martha Brotherton	July 13, 1842	Attempts by church leaders to secure her for a plural wife.	<i>HofS</i> , 236-240
14. Nauvoo City Council	July 20, 1842	Bennett testimony not taken under duress.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842; <i>HC</i> 5:67-68
15. William Law	July 20, 1842	Date of Bennett's excommunication.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842; <i>HC</i> 5:75-76
16. Daniel H. Wells	July 22, 1842	Bennett's conduct toward Smith after his trial.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842; <i>HC</i> 5:80-82
17. Elias Higbee*	July 22, 1842	Bennett's letters to the <i>Sangamo Journal</i> .	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842; <i>HC</i> 5:77-78

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
18. F. M. Higbee*	July 22, 1842	Bennett's letters to the <i>Sangamo Journal</i> .	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842; <i>HC</i> 5:77-78
19. Sidney Rigdon*	July 22, 1842	Denies association with Bennett.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842
20. Hyrum Smith	July 23, 1842	Bennett's trial and conduct.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842 <i>HC</i> 5:71-75; <i>A&C</i>
21. Pamela Michel*	July 25, 1842	Denies association with Bennett.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842
22. William Marks	July 26, 1842	Denies Bennett's charges. Bennett immoral.	<i>TW</i> , July 27, 1842
23. Brigham Young	Aug. 27, 1842	Brotherton affidavit false.	<i>A&C</i>
24. Heber C. Kimball	Aug. 27, 1842	Brotherton affidavit false.	<i>A&C</i>
25. John Hcllwrick Elizabeth Brotherton Mary Hcllwrick	Aug. 27, 1842	Character and conduct of Martha Brotherton.	<i>A&C</i>
26. Zeruah Goddard	Aug. 28, 1842	Conduct of Bennett and Sarah Pratt.	<i>A&C</i>
27. J. B. Backenstos	Aug. 28, 1842	Conduct of Bennett and Sarah Pratt.	<i>LDSCA</i> , <i>A&C</i>
28. Stephen Markham	Aug. 29, 1842	Bennett and Nancy Rigdon.	<i>A&C</i>
29. Mary Clift	Aug. 29, 1842	Gustavus Hills seduced her under pretext of church doctrine.	<i>LDSCA</i> , <i>JH</i> , Aug. 29, 1842
30. Vilate Kimball	Aug. 30, 1842	Denies Brotherton affidavit.	<i>A&C</i>
31. Robert Allison John Carter	Sept. 1, 1842	Character of J. C. Bennett before coming to Nauvoo.	<i>TW</i> , Oct. 1, 1842
32. Carlos Grove*	Sept. 3, 1842	Nancy Rigdon character.	<i>SJ</i> , Sept. 23, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 251
33. Sidney Rigdon	Sept. 3, 1842	Markham affidavit denied.	<i>SJ</i> , Sept. 23, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 251-252
34. George W. Robinson	Sept. 3, 1842	Markham affidavit denied.	<i>SJ</i> , Sept. 23, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 252
35. Mary Clift	Sept. 4, 1842	Seduced by Gustavus Hills under pretext of church doctrine.	<i>LDSCA</i>
36. Mary Clift	Sept. 4, 1842	Answers to questions by Gustavus Hills.	<i>LDSCA</i>
37. Henry Marks*	Sept. 10, 1842	Markham affidavit denied.	<i>SJ</i> , Sept. 23, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 252
38. J. W. Hallenback	Sept. 12, 1842	R. D. Foster in New York following Bennett. Has a spiritual wife with him.	<i>HofS</i> , 291-292

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
39. J. C. Bennett	Sept. 13, 1842	F. M. Higbee affidavit of June 30 is true. He was under duress.	<i>HofS</i> , 289
40. Robert Carter William Whitney Emerson Leland	Sept. 17, 1842	J. C. Bennett's veracity concerning Pratt and Rigdon.	<i>SJ</i> , Sept. 23, 1842; <i>HofS</i> , 233
41. M. G. Eaton	March 27, 1844	Conspiracy. Higbee on the spiritual wife system.	<i>T&S</i> 5:541-542 <i>MS</i> 23:182-183; <i>HC</i> 6:279
42. William Law	May 4, 1844	Read the revelation on plural marriage.	<i>NE</i> , June 7, 1844
43. Jane Law	May 4, 1844	Read the revelation on plural marriage.	<i>NE</i> , June 7, 1844
44. Austin Cowles	May 4, 1844	Hyrum Smith read the revelation to the High Council.	<i>NE</i> , June 7, 1844
45. Emily D. P. Young	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by H. C. Kimball on March 4, 1843.	SAB 1:22, 4:11
46. Emily D. Young	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by James Adams on May 11, 1843.	SAB 1:13; 4:13; <i>DEN</i> , Oct. 18, 1879; <i>HR</i> 6:233
47. Ruth V. Sayers	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Hyrum Smith in February of 1843	SAB 1:9; 4:9
48. Zina D. H. Young	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by her brother on October 27, 1841.	SAB 1:5; 4:5
49. Rhoda R. Smith	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Willard Richards on June 12, 1843.	SAB 1:17; 4:17; <i>BA</i> , 75
50. Prescindia L. H. Kimball	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by her brother on December 11, 1841.	SAB 1:7; 4:7
51. O. B. Huntington	May 1, 1869	Sealed Zina Huntington to Joseph Smith on December 11, 1841.	SAB 1:19; 4:19
52. Fanny M. Huntington	May 1, 1869	Witnessed the marriage of Zina and Prescindia Huntington to Joseph Smith.	SAB 1:21; 4:21
53. Marinda N. J. Hyde	May 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Brigham Young in May of 1843.	SAB 1:15; 4:15
54. Melissa L. Wells	May 20, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Hyrum Smith on September 20, 1843. Parents witnesses.	SAB 1:23; 4:23; <i>BA</i> , 72

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
55. Eliza R. Snow	June 7, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Brigham Young on June 39, 1842.	SAB 1:25; 4:25
56. David Fullmer	June 15, 1869	He was present when Hyrum Smith read the revelation on plural marriage to the High Council.	SAB 1:27-28; 4:27-28 BA, 79-80; HR 6:227
57. Lovina Walker*	June 16, 1869	Emma witnessed the sealing of the Partridge sisters to Joseph Smith.	SAB 1:30; 4:30 DEN Oct. 18, 1879; BA, 73: HR 6:223
58. Desdemona Fuller Smith	June 17, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Brigham Young in July of 1843.	SAB 1:32; 4:32
59. Sarah W. Kimball	June 19, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Newel K. Whitney on July 27, 1842.	SAB 1:36; 4:36; EA, 73
60. Mercy R. Thompson	June 19, 1869	Sealed to Hyrum Smith for time by Joseph Smith on August 11, 1843.	SAB 1:34; 4:34
61. Joseph B. Noble	June 26, 1869	Sealed Louisa Beaman to Joseph Smith on April 5, 1841.	SAB 1:3; 4:1; BA, 75; HR 6:221
62. Joseph B. Noble	June 26, 1869	Joseph taught him plural marriage. Related the visit of the angel to Smith.	SAB 1:38-39; 4:38-39; DEN, Oct. 18, 1879; HR 6:223
63. Eliza Partridge	July 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by James Adams on May 11, 1843.	SAB 2:33; 3:33; DEN, Oct. 18, 1879; HR 6:223; UofU
64. Eliza M. P. Lyman	July 1, 1869	Witnessed the marriage of Lucy Walker to Joseph Smith by William Clayton, in 1843.	SAB 2:30; 3:30; VF
65. Eliza M. P. Lyman	July 1, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by H. C. Kimball on March 8, 1843.	SAB 2:32; 3:32; VF
66. Eliza M. P. Lyman	July 1, 1869	Witnessed the sealing of Emily Partridge to Joseph Smith by James Adams on May 11, 1843.	SAB 2:34; 3:34; VF
67. Thomas Grover	July 6, 1869	Present when the revelation was read to the High Council by Hyrum Smith.	SAB 1:42; 4:42
68. Thomas Grover	July 6, 1869	Two wives sealed to him by Hyrum Smith in August of 1843.	SAB 1:44; 4:44
69. Martha M. Kimball	July 8, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by H. C. Kimball in the summer of 1842.	SAB 2:36; 3:36; VF; BA, 72

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
70. Mary Ann Young	July 10, 1869	Sealed to Brigham Young by Hyrum Smith.	SAB 1:46; 4:46
71. Lucy Ann Young	July 10, 1869	Sealed to Brigham Young by Joseph Smith on June 12, 1842.	SAB 1:48; 4:48
72. Augusta A. Young	July 12, 1869	Sealed to Brigham Young by Joseph Smith on November 2, 1843.	SAB 1:50; 4:50
73. Augusta A. Young	July 12, 1869	Witnessed the marriage of Fanny Murray to Joseph Smith on November 2, 1843.	SAB 1:52; 4:52
74. Charles C. Rich	July 12, 1869	Hyrum Smith taught him about plural marriage in May of 1844.	SAB 1:54; 4:54
75. Vienna Jaques**	July 20, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith(?)	SAB 4:56
76. John Pack	July 22, 1869	Hyrum Smith taught the family eternal marriage in August of 1843.	SAB 1:56-57; 4:59-60
77. Sylvia Lyon**	7 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith on February 8, 1842.	SAB 1:60; 4:62
78. Elizabeth B. Pratt	Aug. 2, 1869	Sealed to Parley P. Pratt by Hyrum Smith on July 24, 1843.	SAB 1:62; 4:64
79. Christopher Merkley	Aug. 3, 1869	Zenos Gurley's wife admits that Joseph Smith has plural wives. Difficulty between Joseph and Emma Smith.	SAB 2:21-23; 3:21-23; VF
80. Mary Ellen Kimball	Aug. 6, 1869	Witnessed a plural marriage of Howard Egan by Hyrum Smith in 1844.	SAB 1:64; 4:66
81. Lucy W. Kimball	Aug. 9, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by William Clayton on May 1, 1843.	SAB 1:66; 4:68
82. Joseph F. Smith* John Henry Smith S. H. B. Smith John L. Smith	Aug. 9, 1869	Certified an extract from William Claytons' journal explaining that he sealed Lucy Walker to Joseph Smith on May 1, 1843.	SAB 1:67; 4:69
83. Elizabeth and Sarah Whitney	Aug. 13, 1869	The authenticity of the August 18, 1842 letter from Joseph Smith, and donate it to the Church.	SAB 2:27-28; 3:27-28
84. Joseph F. Smith John Henry Smith Robert L. Campbell	Aug. 17, 1869	Certify an extrant from William Clayton's journal about Joseph Smith's difficulties with Emma over plural marriage.	SAB 4:70
85. Amos Fielding	Aug. 24, 1869	Learned of the revelation in December of 1843. On March 9, 1844 Joseph Smith pointed out one of his plural wives to Fielding.	SAB 1:70; 4:72

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
86. John Benbow	Aug. 28, 1869	Joseph taught him about plural marriage in the summer of 1843. Smith visited Hanna Ellis, his plural wife.	SAB 1:74; 4:76; DEN, Oct. 18, 1879 HR, 6:222
87. Elvira A. C. Holmes	Aug. 28, 1869	Sealed to Joseph Smith by H. C. Kimball on June 1, 1843.	SAB 1:78; 4:80
88. Nathan Tanner	Aug. 28, 1869	Heard Joseph Smith teach plural marriage in Montrose, Iowa in the spring of 1844, and also on the stand at Nauvoo.	SAB 1:76; 4:78
89. Lorenzo Snow	Aug. 28, 1869	Joseph Smith taught him about plural marriage in April of 1843. Eliza R. Snow married to Smith. The angel.	SAB 2:19-20; 3:19-20 VF; DEN, Oct. 18, 1879; HR 6:222
90. Elizabeth A. Whitney	Aug. 30, 1869	Witnessed the sealing of her daughter to Joseph Smith by her husband on July 27, 1842.	SAB 1:72; 4:74; BA, 74
91. Mary Ann Pratt	Sept. 3, 1869	Sealed to Parley P. Pratt by Hyrum Smith on July 24, 1842.	SAB 2:38; 3:38; VF
92. Mary Ann Pratt	Sept. 3, 1869	Witnessed the sealing of Elizabeth Brotherton to P. P. Pratt by Hyrum Smith on July 24, 1842.	SAB 2:40; 3:40; VF
93. Adeline B. A. Benson	Sept. 5, 1869	Sealed to E. T. Benson by Hyrum Smith on April 27, 1844.	SAB 2:42; 3:42; VF
94. Pamela A. Benson	Sept. 6, 1869	Sealed to E. T. Benson by Hyrum Smith on April 27, 1844.	SAB 2:44; 3:44; VF
95. Sarah P. Kimball	Sept. 7, 1869	Joseph Smith personally taught her about plural marriage and sealed her to H. C. Kimball in 1842.	SAB 1:80; 4:82
96. Orson Hyde ⁿ	Sept. 15, 1869	Sealed to Martha Browitt and Mary Ann Price by Joseph Smith.	SAB 2:45-46; 3:45-46 VF; BA, 74
97. James Alfred	Oct. 2, 1869	Present when Hyrum Smith read the revelation to the High Council.	SAB 1:82; 4:84
98. Aaron Johnson	Oct. 2, 1869	Present when Hyrum Smith read the revelation to the High Council.	SAB 1:84; 4:86
99. David Fullmer Thomas Grover Aaron Johnson James Alfred	Oct. 10, 1869	Present when the revelation was read by Hyrum Smith to the High Council. Certify the meaning of the High Council minutes.	SAB 2:47-48; 3:47-48
100. Roxsena R. Adams	Oct. 13, 1869	Sealed to James Adams by Joseph Smith on July 11, 1843.	SAB 1:86; 4:88

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
101. Benjamin F. Johnson	March 4, 1870	Introduced to plural marriage in April of 1842. Joseph Smith married his sister Almira. His mother sealed to John Smith.	SAB 2:3-0; 3:3-9 DEN, Oct. 18, 1879; HR 6:221-222.
102. Harriet Cook Young	March 4, 1870	Sealed to Brigham Young by Joseph Smith on November 2, 1843.	SAB 2:12; 3:12
103. Harriet Cook Young	March 4, 1870	Witnessed the sealing of Fanny Murray to Joseph Smith by Brigham Young on November 2, 1843.	SAB 2:14; 2:14
104. Clara Decker Young	March 4, 1870	Sealed to Brigham Young by Willard Richards on May 8, 1844.	SAB 2:16; 3:16
105. Joseph C. Kingsbury	March 7, 1870	Wrote the revelation on or about July 15, 1843 as Newel K. Whitney read it from the original.	SAB 2:18; 3:18
106. Jacob Peart	April 23, 1870	Hyrum Smith sealed his deceased wife to him in November of 1843.	SAB 2:50; 3:50
107. Ebenezer Robinson Angeline Robinson	Dec. 29, 1873	Hyrum Smith taught them plural marriage in the fall of 1843.	D&D, 368-371; TO, 164; FY, 50-51
108. William Clayton	Feb. 16, 1874	Taught about plural marriage in February of 1843. Sealed to Mary Moon by Joseph Smith on April 27, 1843. Sealed Lucy Walker to Smith on May 1, 1843. Recorded the revelation.	VF; DEN, March 20, 1886; HR 6:224-225
109. Gideon Carter	Feb. 27, 1874	Joseph Smith taught Lyman Wight plural marriage, Wight practiced it.	VF; S&P, 122-125
110. Howard Coray	June 12, 1882	Taught plural marriage by Hyrum Smith on July 22, 1843.	VF; HR 6:228-229; BA, 78
111. Almira Johnson Smith Barton	Aug. 1, 1883	Taught about plural marriage by Joseph Smith and became his plural wife.	VF BA, 70-71
112. Leonard Soby	Nov. 14, 1883	Present when Hyrum Smith read the revelation to the High Council.	D&D, 378-379 TO, 98-99; OH, Jan. 5, 1886
113. S. F. Whitney	March 6, 1885	Martin Harris received revelation to marry an Indian Squaw.	MLW, 9
114. William Law	July 17, 1885	He read the revelation in 1843. Confronted Joseph Smith about the difficulties it would bring.	TO, 129
115. Ebenezer Robinson	Oct. 24, 1885	Hyrum Smith taught Robinson and his wife about plural marriage in the fall of 1843.	D&D, 368-371; TO, 164; FY, 51

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
116. Leonard Soby	March 23, 1886	Present when Hyrum Smith read the revelation to High Council.	VF; BA, 80
117. Joseph C. Kingsbury	May 22, 1886	Copied the revelation from Clayton Ms. for Newel K. Whitney.	VF; HR 6:226
118. Charles S. Zane, Arthur L. Thomas, Rev. J. W. Jackson	May, 1886	Sarah Pratt honest and of good reputation.	TO, 129
119. Justus Morse	March 24, 1887	Taught plural marriage by Amasa Lyman. Had wives sealed to him by John Smith.	TO, 168-171
120. Malissa Wells	Aug. 4, 1893	Sealed to Joseph Smith by Hyrum Smith on September 20, 1843. Her visit with Joseph Smith III.	"ES", 98-100
121. Joseph A. Kelting	March 1, 1894	Introduced to plural marriage in the spring of 1844. Married two women shortly thereafter.	VF; SINP, 119
122. B. F. Johnson	Dec. 10, 1897, Oct. 28, 1898	His sister married to Joseph Smith. Emma consented.	Letter to Frank Feeley, Dec. 10, 1897, and certified to Oct. 28, 1898, UofU
123. Mary E. R. Lightner	Feb. 8, 1902	Marriage to Joseph Smith.	NM, 444
124. Lucy Walker	Dec. 17, 1902	Sealed to Joseph Smith by William Clayton on May 1, 1843. Cohabited.	VF; JH, May 2, 1843; BA, 68-69
125. Catherine P. Smith	Jan. 28, 1903	Sealed to Hyrum Smith by Joseph Smith in August of 1843.	VF; BA, 69-70
126. Joseph A. Kelting	Sept. 11, 1903	He asked Joseph Smith about plural marriage and received an affirmative reply.	VF
127. Bathsheba Smith	Nov. 18, 1903	Emma Smith opposed to plural marriage.	VF
128. Bathsheba Smith	Nov. 19, 1903	Joseph Smith taught plural marriage in 1840 saying the ancient order as it was in the days of Abraham would be restored.	VF; SAB 2:51-54; BA, 97-88
129. John W. Rigdon	July 28, 1905	Joseph Smith proposed to Nancy Rigdon.	VF; BA, 81-85
130. Bathsheba Smith	June 5, 1907	She was sealed for eternity to her husband. Emma Smith's remarks.	LDSCA
131. Almira K. Hanscom*	July 24, 1908	Joseph Smith proposes to her for Hyrum Smith.	LDSCA

Affiant	Date of Deposition	Subject of Deposition	Source
132. Josephine R. Fisher	Feb. 24, 1915	Her mother told her she was a child of Joseph Smith.	VF
133. James A. Armstrong	Nov. 18, 1952	A 1907 interview with Smith's coachman who verified that Joseph Smith taught plural marriage.	LDSCA

KEY:

* = Certificate	NE = Nauvoo Expositor
** = Incomplete affidavits. See ns. 10 and 26, chapt. iv.	NM = Brodie, No Man Knows My History
A&C = Affidavits and Certificates	NN = Nauvoo Neighbor
BA = J. F. Smith, <i>Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage</i>	OH = Ogden Herald
DEN = <i>Deseret Evening News</i>	QW = Quincy Whig
D&D = Bays, <i>Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism</i>	SAB = Smith, Affidavit Books (1-4)
EJ = <i>Elders Journal</i>	SinP = Roberts, <i>Succession in the Presidency</i>
"ES" = Bailey, "Emma Smith"	SJ = <i>Sangano Journal</i>
FY = Evans, <i>Forty Years Among the Mormons</i>	TO = Shook, <i>True Origin of Mormon Polygamy</i>
HC = Smith, <i>History of the Church</i>	T&S = <i>Times and Seasons</i>
HR = Jenson, <i>Historical Record</i>	TW = <i>The Wasp</i>
HofS = Bennett, <i>History of the Saints</i>	UofU = Harriott Library, University of Utah
JH = <i>Journal History</i>	VF = Vault Folder, LDS Church Archives
LDSCA = LDS Church Archives	
MLW = Tanner, <i>Mormonism Like Watergate?</i>	
MS = <i>Millennial Star</i>	