

# A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-three Plural Wives

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## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS: COUNTING WIVES

SOME READERS MAY REGARD the accompanying chart of Joseph Smith's plural wives as overly conservative. Fawn Brodie counted forty-eight wives in her biography of Joseph Smith; more recently D. Michael Quinn listed forty-six, and George D. Smith forty-two.<sup>1</sup> Yet in problematic areas it seems advisable to err on the side of caution, and consequently I identify only thirty-three wives. In time, perhaps, some of the "possible" wives will move into the certain category. Until that happens, I believe we should regard them as subjects for further research rather than as women whose marriages to Joseph can be conclusively demonstrated.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 2d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985), 457-88; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 587; George D. Smith, "Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46: A Preliminary Demographic Report," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Spring 1994): Chart, #122.

2. Because of the complexity of Mormon marriage practice and experimentation, there is a great deal of ambiguity concerning what constituted marriage in early Mormonism, and Mormon theological terms for marriage and plural marriage can be confusing. I define as marriage any relationship solemnized by a marriage ceremony of some sort. "Sealing" as used in early Mormonism is a complex term that deserves extensive study, but as it developed in Nauvoo Mormonism, it often meant the linking of man and woman for eternity as well as for time, i.e., eternal marriage. If two males were "sealed," i.e., a father and a son, it obviously was not a marriage. But when a man and a woman (not siblings or parent-child) were "sealed," the sealing was always a marriage. There is at least one example in Mormon history of the male marriage partner performing the sealing ceremony himself. See Willard Richards diary, 23 Dec. 1845, cited in Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 228.

# Joseph Smith's Plural Wives

Date of Marriage	Status	Age	Name at Time of Marriage	After Joseph
[early 1833]	SG	[16]	1. Fanny Alger	Separates from Joseph; marries Solomon Custer, non-LDS
[1838?]	MD	37?	2. Lucinda Pendleton (Morgan) (Harris) *George Harris, LDS, high councillor	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Harris; Nauvoo temple proxy marriage to Harris/Smith; later divorces Harris
5 Apr. 1841	SG	26	3. Louisa Beaman	Proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith
27 Oct. 1841	MD	20	4. Zina Diantha Huntington (Jacobs) *Henry B. Jacobs, LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Jacobs; polyandrous proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith; remains with Jacobs; eventually leaves Jacobs and becomes Young's connubial wife
11 Dec. 1841	MD	31	5. Prescendia Lathrop Huntington (Buell) *Norman Buell, disaffected LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Buell; polyandrous proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith, but stays with Buell; eventually leaves Buell and becomes Kimball's connubial wife
6 Jan. 1842	WD	33	6. Agnes Moulton Coolbrith (Smith) (widow of Don Carlos Smith)	Proxy marriage, G. A. Smith (for Don Carlos); then Smith goes to Utah while Agnes stays in St. Louis; marries William Pickett, problematic Mormon, technically a polyandrous union; she and Pickett eventually separate
8 Feb. 1842	MD	23	7. Sylvia Sessions (Lyon) *Windsor Lyon, LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Lyon; polyandrous proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith; remains with Lyon till he dies; remarries Ezekiel Clark, non-LDS, then divorces; goes to Utah with Heber C. Kimball again?
end of Feb. 1842	MD	23	8. Mary Elizabeth Rollins (Lightner) *Adam Lightner, non-LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Lightner; polyandrous proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith; stays with Lightner till his death
9 Mar. 1842	MD	47	9. Patty Bartlett (Sessions) *David Sessions, LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Sessions, till his death; remarries, John Parry, for time
Apr. 1842	MD	27	10. Marinda Nancy Johnson (Hyde) *Orson Hyde, LDS apostle	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Hyde; eternal marriage to Hyde in Nauvoo temple; later, eternal proxy marriage to Joseph Smith; eventually divorces Hyde
before June 1842	MD	50-51?	11. Elizabeth Davis (Goldsmith) (Brackenbury) (Durfee) *Jabez Durfee, LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Durfee; after Joseph's death, separates from Durfee; proxy marriage to Cornelius Lott/Smith, then separates from Lott
before 29 June 1842	MD	[53-54]	12. Sarah Kingsley (Howe) (Cleveland) *John Cleveland, non-LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Cleveland; polyandrous proxy marriage to John Smith/Joseph Smith, but remains with Cleveland till her death
before July 1842	WD	[37-38]?	13. Delcena Johnson (Sherman)	Proxy marriage to Almon Babbitt (for Lyman Sherman)
29 June 1842	SG	38	14. Eliza Roxcy Snow	Proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith
27 July 1842	SG	17	15. Sarah Ann Whitney	With Joseph Smith alive, polyandrous "pretend" legal marriage to Joseph Kingsbury; after Joseph Smith's death, "separates" from Kingsbury, proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith
Aug. 1842	WD	37	16. Martha McBride (Knight)	Proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith; separates?
Feb. 1843	MD	33	17. Ruth Vose (Sayers) *Edward Sayers, non-LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Sayers, till his death
spring 1843	SG	16	18. Flora Ann Woodworth	Remarries, Mr. Gove, non-LDS
4 Mar. 1843	SG	19	19. Emily Dow Partridge	Proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith
8 Mar. 1843	SG	22	20. Eliza Maria Partridge	Proxy marriage to Amasa Lyman/Smith; later divorces him
2-22 Apr. 1843	SG	30	21. Almira Woodard Johnson	Remarries, Reuben Barton (proxy marriage?)
1 May 1843	SG	17	22. Lucy Walker	Proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith

May 1843	SG	17	23. Sarah Lawrence	Proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith; divorce; remarries Joseph Mount
May 1843	SG	19	24. Maria Lawrence	Proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith?; separates?; proxy marriage to Almon Babbitt/Smith
May 1843	SG	14	25. Helen Mar Kimball	Proxy marriage to Horace Whitney/Smith
1843, before summer	SG	29-30	26. Hannah Ells	Never remarries; dies [1845]
1 June 1843	MD	29	27. Elvira Annie Cowles (Holmes) *Jonathan Holmes, LDS	Remains with polyandrous first husband, Holmes; proxy marriage to Holmes/Smith
12 June 1843	SG	58	28. Rhoda Richards	Proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith; separates, or never cohabits
July 1843	SG	32-33	29. Desdemona Fullmer	Proxy marriage to Ezra Taft Benson/Smith; separates; remarries, Harrison McLane; separates.
summer 1843	SG	27-28?	30. Olive G. Frost	Proxy marriage to Brigham Young/Smith
20 Sept. 1843	SG	19	31. Melissa Lott	Proxy marriage to John Bernhisel/Smith; separates; remarries, Ira Willis
[1842-43?]	SG	[14?]	32. Nancy M. Winchester	Proxy marriage to Heber C. Kimball/Smith; divorces; remarries, Amos Arnold
2 Nov. 1843	WD	56	33. Fanny Young (Carr) (Murray)	Never remarries
Possible Wives (Ambiguous Evidence or Very Limited Evidence)				
1832-33? 1841-43?	SG? MD?	43-44? 54-57?	1. Vienna Jacques	Marries Daniel Shearer, 1838; separates by 22 January 1846
before 11 Feb. 1841? 1841-43?	WD?	32-33?	2. Hannah Ann Dubois (Smith)	Marries Philo Dibble, 11 February 1841; marries Dibble for eternity in Nauvoo temple, 15 January 1846
pre-June 1842?	SG?	48-51?	3. Sarah Bapson	
pre-June 1842?	MD? WD?		4. Mrs. G*****	
1841-43?	WD	24-27?	5. Sarah Scott (Mulholland) (Mulholland dies November 1839)	Marries Heber C. Kimball, proxy marriage for Mulholland
1841-43?	SG	23-26?	6. Mary Houston	Proxy marriage, Heber C. Kimball, for Joseph Smith
1841-43?	MD? WD?	?	7. Mrs. Tallor	
1842/43?	MD	38-39?	8. Mary Heron (Snider)	Continues with polyandrous first husband

SG: Single at time of marriage to Joseph Smith.

WD: Widowed at time of marriage to Joseph Smith.

MD: Married to another man at time of marriage to Joseph Smith. This creates polyandry, as the woman always continued to cohabit with the "first husband" in Joseph Smith's polyandrous marriages.

Early posthumous marriages to Joseph Smith (marriages in which the woman was sealed to Joseph Smith after his death): 1. Mary Ann Frost (Steams) (Pratt); 2. Olive Andrews; 3. Jane Tibbetts; 4. Phebe Watrous (Woodworth); 5. Aphie Sanborn (Dow) (Yale); 6. Cordella Morley; 7. Sally Ann Fuller; and Lydia Kenyon (Carter). There is no evidence that they married Joseph Smith during his lifetime. Morley, in fact, said that she had not married Joseph during his lifetime.

#### Definitions

**Proxy marriage:** A marriage in which one partner is sealed for eternity to a deceased person, with a living partner standing "proxy" for the deceased person. In the case of a woman, she is married to a deceased man, usually in a temple, with a living man standing proxy for the dead man. In early Mormon history the woman was always sealed for time to the living man who acted as proxy. All children from the proxy marriage would be sealed eternally to the deceased husband, not the biological father. Note: In this list all proxy marriages link the woman to Joseph Smith for eternity, unless another man is specified.

**Polygamy:** A man or woman has two or more marriage partners simultaneously.

**Polygyny:** A man is married to two or more women simultaneously.

**Polyandry:** A woman is married to two or more men simultaneously.

What criteria can we use to substantiate a woman's marriage to Joseph during his lifetime? In 1869 Joseph F. Smith responded to his cousin Joseph Smith III's claim that his father did not practice polygamy and prepared affidavits for Joseph Smith Jr.'s living plural widows to sign regarding their marriages to him.<sup>3</sup> A signed affidavit from a woman is very good evidence. A woman writing in a journal or autobiography that she married Joseph is also good evidence. If a third party witnessed a marriage, his or her testimony or affidavit or reminiscence is also valuable, especially if the person involved was a close family member and supplies convincing detail, anecdotal or documentary.

Multiple pieces of evidence increase the reliability of a claim of plural marriage. Even if we do not have an affidavit or a good holographic statement from a woman, if five pieces of evidence point to her as a wife, they add up convincingly.

The contours of a woman's life also support or weaken the likelihood that she married Joseph Smith. For instance, while two or three problematic pieces of evidence suggest that Vienna Jacques may have married Joseph, the rest of her life does not make her look like his plural wife. (Some writers think she married Joseph in Kirtland; but then she immediately left him for Missouri, where she married another man. Nor did she have a proxy marriage to him in the Nauvoo temple.) Documentation that a woman lived in Joseph's home is good supporting evidence for the possibility of a marriage (though obviously not conclusive by itself).

A woman's name appearing on certain reliable lists is also good evidence. Although John Bennett was unreliable in many ways, he was a Nauvoo insider, and his small 1842 list of Joseph's plural wives has been

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A "spiritual wife" was not a woman married "in name only," for eternity only; a "spiritual wife" was a woman bound to a man by a strong spiritual/ritual link. A "spiritual" marriage often included sexuality, and offspring resulted. A "spiritual" marriage often included sexuality and sometimes offspring. See Emily Partridge, *Autobiography*, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, at the birth of her first child to Brigham Young in 1846, whom she refers to as a "spiritual child." Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney wrote, "At that time spiritual wife was the title by which every woman who entered into this order was called, for it was taught and practiced as a spiritual order" (*Plural Marriage as Taught By the Prophet Joseph* [Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882], 15). Nevertheless, many of these women testified that they had had sexual relations with Joseph Smith; see below.

3. See Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS archives), MS 3423. Danel W. Bachman analyzed and listed these affidavits in his "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith," M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975, 346-54, cf. 107; cf. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 19-32, 21n (which describes the four books of affidavits).

independently verified.<sup>4</sup> In 1887 Andrew Jenson, using affidavits and relying on living widows of Joseph, produced a credible list of twenty-seven wives.<sup>5</sup> Smaller lists, from both pro- and anti-Mormons, are also reliable.<sup>6</sup>

The eight "Possible Wives" listed in the chart are supported by limited and/or problematic evidence (sometimes only one attestation in a late source). In addition, there is often contradictory evidence. For instance, Hannah Dibble's marriage to Joseph Smith is supported by two pieces of evidence in late sources that refer to a "Mrs. Dibble" or a "Sister Dibble" as Joseph's wife. Yet it is not certain which Mrs. Dibble is referred to. Hannah lived in Joseph's home briefly, but then Joseph officiated at her marriage to Philo Dibble, who did not seem to act as a "front husband," as at least one other man did. Later she married Philo, not Joseph, for eternity in the Nauvoo temple.

For another example, Orson Whitney, the son and nephew of two of Joseph's wives, referred to Mary Houston as "[wife] of the Prophet." She married Smith (after his death, for eternity) and Heber C. Kimball (for time) in a Nauvoo temple proxy marriage. But Orson made some troubling mistakes in his listing of Heber's wives,<sup>7</sup> and one wonders if he referred to her as Joseph's wife because of the proxy marriage. There is no supporting evidence for Houston marrying Joseph Smith while he lived.

This leads to my final category: "Early Posthumous Proxy Marriages," sealings to Joseph Smith after his death. Most women sealed to Joseph during his life recommemorated their marriage after his death in an early proxy marriage. Consequently, I believe they should be consid-

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4. John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints, or, An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842; originally published in the *Sangamo Journal*), 256: Mrs. A\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\* [Agnes Smith], Miss L\*\*\*\* B\*\*\*\* [Louisa Beaman], Mrs. B\*\*\*\* [Presendia Buell], Mrs. D\*\*\*\* [Elizabeth Durfee], Mrs. S\*\*\*\* [Patty Sessions], Mrs. G\*\*\*\* [Unidentified], and Miss B\*\*\*\* [Sarah Bapson?].

5. *Historical Record* 6 (May, 1887): 219-40, 233-34. See Keith Perkins, "Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974, 40.

6. Joseph Jackson's short list includes three women; see Joseph Jackson, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Experiences of Joseph H. Jackson in Nauvoo: Disclosing the Depths of Mormon Villainy Practiced in Nauvoo* (Warsaw, IL: n.p., 1844); reprinted in Jackson, "Wonderful Disclosures Respecting Mormons," in *New York Herald*, 5 Sept. 1844, 1. A later list from a sympathetic source is in Benjamin Johnson's *My Life's Review* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1947), on Hannah Dibble, see above.

7. For example, he doublelists three women; see Stanley Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball, Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 307; add to Stan Kimball's list Nancy Maria Winchester (Smith Kimball) and Nancy Maria Smith, who are probably the same person.

ered as possible wives of Joseph during his lifetime. But there is no reliable evidence that every one of these women married Joseph during his life. Only the posthumous marriage to Joseph is certain. In fact, Cordelia Morley, one of these women, stated in a memoir that she never married the living Joseph Smith. Thus the practice of marrying Joseph posthumously had begun by the time of her proxy sealing.<sup>8</sup> Other early posthumous-only marriages to Joseph are Augusta Adams Cobb Young (1848) and Amanda Barnes Smith (1852).<sup>9</sup> There is also evidence that Mary Ann Frost Stearns Pratt married Parley P. Pratt, not Joseph, for eternity during Joseph's lifetime, so she is probably another early posthumous-only marriage to Joseph.<sup>10</sup>

Thus I arrive at thirty-three well-documented wives of Joseph Smith.<sup>11</sup> I believe we can rely on this smaller number with a greater degree of confidence than previous estimates, and that a certain or nearly certain sample of the wives allows us to make an overview that will tell us a great deal about the women themselves, about Joseph, and about early Mormon polygamy.<sup>12</sup> (I should also note that Joseph Smith proposed to at least five additional women, all of whom turned him

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8. Cordelia Morley Cox, Autobiography, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

9. Marriage record, Augusta Cobb and Joseph Smith, 14 Apr. 1848, Brigham Young papers, LDS archives; Amanda Barnes Smith, Memoirs, Lee Library; and in Hulda Cordelia Thurston Smith, "To My Children and Grandchildren," ed. Lyman Platt, *The Nauvoo Journal* 4 (Fall 1992): 3-7.

10. Family Record of Parley P. Pratt, in Belinda Marden Pratt's journal, 11 Mar. 1850, LDS archives; microfilm of holograph, Utah State Historical Society. Mary A. S. Winters, "Mothers in Israel," *Relief Society Magazine* 3 (1916): 580-81, 643. However, Mary Ann Frost's marriage history in Nauvoo has its complexities; see Wilford Woodruff journal, 21 Jan. 1844, in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal 1833-1898* (Murray, UT: Signature Books, 1983-85), 2:340.

11. Other scholars, and family descendants, may have evidence that will move possible or posthumous wives into the category of certain wives. I welcome any information relating to the women on this list, especially documents of any sort by the women or their close relatives.

12. For general introductions and full-length studies of early Mormon polygamy, see Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," and Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). Van Wagoner's *Mormon Polygamy* also provides a useful overview of Latter-day Saint polygamy. E. Carmon Hardy's *Solemn Covenant* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992) is indispensable for its evocation of the importance of polygamy to Mormons before their passage to monogamy. For an introduction to Joseph Smith, and his first wife, Emma Hale (Smith), see Donna Hill's *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977) and Linda Newell and Valeen Tippet Avery's *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

down.<sup>13</sup> Antagonistic—and sometimes sensational—sources identify other women as wives of Joseph Smith.<sup>14</sup> And there are more proposals in

13. These are:

SARAH MELISSA GRANGER (KIMBALL); see *Historical Record* 6:232, cf. Jill Mulvay Derr, "Sarah M. Kimball," in *Sister Saints*, ed. Vicky Burgess-Olson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 23-40;

RACHEL IVINS (GRANT); a plural wife of Jedediah Grant and the mother of Heber J. Grant, she was later sealed to Joseph Smith, not Grant, for eternity. See Ronald Walker, "Rachel R. Grant: The Continuing Legacy of the Feminine Ideal," in *Supporting Saints*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and David Whittaker (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1985), 17-42, 23-24;

LYDIA MOON; see William Clayton journal, 15-17 Sept. 1843, in George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1991), 120;

CORDELIA C. MORLEY (COX); see her Autobiography, Lee Library; and

ESTHER JOHNSON; see Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 96.

14. These are:

MARY ANN ANGELL YOUNG; in John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1877), 147;

JANE SILVERTHORNE (LAW); see Bathsheba W. Smith, Deposition, 8th Circuit Court, 1892 Temple Lot Case, in *Complainant's Abstract of Pleading and Evidence...The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Complainant, vs. The Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri* (Lamoni, IA: Herald, 1893; this is an abbreviated publication of the complete transcript, a copy of which is available in LDS archives); and John Hawley, Autobiography (Jan. 1885), 97, archives, Auditorium, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri (hereafter RLDS archives). Hawley also lists as wives of Joseph MRS. FRANCIS HIGBY, MRS. LYMAN WIGHT, AND MRS. ROBERT D. FOSTER: "When Brigham Young got the records of the Church in his hands, after the death of Joseph Smith, he found by examination that . . . Laws wife and Higbys wife and L Wights wife and Fosters wife had all been Sealed to Joseph, as their Husbands could not Save them." This source is problematic. Did Joseph marry these women without their knowledge, by proxy, while they were living? It is difficult to believe that they would marry Joseph while they were distancing themselves from Mormonism and polygamy. Furthermore, Jane Law elsewhere asserted that Joseph proposed to her and she refused. Cf. Lyndon W. Cook, "William Law, Nauvoo Dissenter," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22 (Winter 1982): 47-72 (65); and his *William Law: Biographical Essays, Nauvoo Diary, Correspondence, Interview* (Orem, UT: Grandin Books, 1994);

MRS. EDWARD (BLOSSOM), in Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits, or the Truth About the Mormon Leaders, 1830-1886* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Press & Publishing, 1886), 65-66. Mr. Blossom was an apostle under Brigham Young, according to Wyl's source, an example of the occasional unreliability of unsympathetic sources, as there was no apostle named Blossom (this does not prevent Brodie from listing Mrs. Blossom as wife number 37);

MRS. (WHITE), in Wyl, 55;

MRS. (MILLER), a widow: Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 255;

WIDOW (FULLER) (WARREN), in Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 293; and

MISS MORRIS, in "Celebrated Career Closed. Exterminator of Mormons Dies at Louisiana, Mo.," newspaper obituary, ca. 15 Feb. 1895, of David Conkling, in Henry Stebbins papers, P24, f22, RLDS archives.

anti-Mormon sources,<sup>15</sup> at least one of which—that made to Nancy Rigdon—has been convincingly documented.<sup>16</sup>)

### THE TIMING OF JOSEPH SMITH'S MARRIAGES

As we trace the trajectory of Joseph's marriages, we find that he experimented with plural marriage in Ohio and Missouri in the 1830s. Detailed records of these marriages are not extant, but I believe that the evidence, when weighed carefully, suggests that they were authentic plural marriages.<sup>17</sup> In 1841 Joseph cautiously took three wives. The next year

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15. Some of the following are fairly well documented; others are sensationalist and badly documented:

JANE SILVERTHORNE (LAW), wife of William Law; see his diary, 13 May 1844: "[Joseph] ha[s] lately endeavored to seduce my wife, and ha[s] found her a virtuous woman," quoted in Cook, *William Law*, 65; Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 147; Jackson, *Narrative*, 21; Edward Bonney, *The Banditti of the Prairies: A Tale of the Mississippi Valley* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke & Co., 1881), 18, repr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 16-17. Cf. Cook, *William Law*, 64-65. As was typical in cases where women accused Joseph of proposing to them, loyalist Mormon sources accused the woman of adultery with another man (see the Sarah Pratt case below, and the Nancy Rigdon case): Alexander Neibaur journal, 24 May 1844, LDS archives;

SARAH BATES (PRATT); see Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 77-81; Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Summer 1986): 69-99, 71-72; Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 228-31;

LEONORA CANNON (TAYLOR); see John M. Whitaker journal, 1 Nov. 1890, Marriott Library; Wyl, 70-72;

ELIZA WINTERS; see Hiel Lewis, "The Mormon History," *Amboy Journal*, 6 Aug. 1879; E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 268; Stanley Ivins, Notebooks 1:337, Utah State Historical Society.

MELISSA SCHINDLE; see Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 253; *Sangamo Journal*, 15 July 1842; Charles A. Shook, *The True Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914), 71.

EMELINE (WHITE); see Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 234-35, 247, 249;

MRS. ROBERT D. FOSTER; affidavit of M. G. Eaton, 27 Mar. 1844, in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 15 May 1844; cf. previous note and Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 312;

MRS. WILLIAM SMITH; see Jackson, *Narrative*, 29;

MRS. LUCY SMITH (MILLIGAN); see Jackson, *Narrative*, 29;

LAVINIA SMITH; see Jackson, *Narrative*, 29-32;

WILLIAM MARKS'S DAUGHTER; see Ann Eliza Webb Young, *Wife No. 19* (Hartford, CT: Dustin, Gilman, 1876), 70; and

ATHALIA RIGDON; see Clark Braden and E. L. Kelley, *Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church . . . and the Church of Christ, Disciples* (St. Louis, 1884), 391.

16. J. Wickliffe Rigdon affidavit, reprinted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1905; repr. Deseret News Press, 1950), 97-101; cf. Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 241-50; F. Mark McKiernan, *Sidney Rigdon* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1971), 115-19; and Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 290-310.

17. Some writers have argued that these early relationships were not marriages. For an opposing view, see my "Fanny Alger Smith Custer: Mormonism's First Plural Wife?" *Journal of Mormon History*, Spring 1996.



he married eleven women during the first six months. New marriages then stopped for five months, perhaps because of the John Bennett scandal, in which Joseph's former right-hand man published a series of sensational exposes of Joseph's alleged misdeeds, including a lurid discussion of his polygamy.<sup>18</sup>

However, during the first half of 1843 Joseph added fourteen more wives to his family, including five in May. After July his marriages stopped abruptly, with only two exceptions, in September and November. There are no well-documented marriages during the last eight months of Joseph's life, a striking fact, especially when contrasted with the number of wives he married in 1842 and early 1843.

This puzzle has a number of possible answers, though none is conclusive. Some have suggested that Joseph came to have doubts about polygamy before his death. Nauvoo Stake president William Marks wrote in 1853,

When the doctrine of polygamy was introduced into the church as a principle of exaltation, I took a decided stand against it; when stand rendered me quite unpopular with many of the leading ones of the church . . . *Joseph, however, became convinced before his death that he had done wrong*; for about three weeks before his death, I met him one morning in the street, and he said to me, "Brother Marks . . . We are a ruined people." I asked, how so? he said: "This doctrine of polygamy, or Spiritual-wife system, that has been taught and practiced among us, will prove our destruction and overthrow. I have been deceived," said he, "in reference to its practice; it is wrong; it is a curse to mankind, and we shall have to leave the United States soon, unless it can be put down and its practice stopped in the church" (emphasis added).<sup>19</sup>

According to Marks, Joseph told him that he (Marks) must excommunicate all who practiced polygamy and that he (Joseph) would support

18. Bennett, *History of the Saints*.

19. William Marks, "Epistle", *Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ* 3 (July 1853): 52-54 (published in St. Louis, by C. B. Thompson). Cf. Richard Howard, "The Changing RLDS Response to Mormon Polygamy: A Preliminary Analysis," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3 (1983): 14-28. See also Joseph F. Smith journal, Aug. 28, 1870, LDS archives, in which Emma is reported by Joseph W. Coolidge to have said to him in 1846, "Joseph had abandoned plurality of wives before his death." Coolidge strongly disagreed with her. William McLellin writes, in a July 1872 letter to Joseph Smith III, RLDS archives, that Emma told him "one night after she and Joseph had retired for the night, he told her that the doctrine and practice of Polygamy was going to ruin the church. He wished her to get up and burn the revelation." When she declined, he burned it himself. This, of course, contradicts the more common tradition that Emma burned the revelation; see Clayton affidavit, in *Historical Record* 6:226, further references in Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma* 154. Quinn takes the less common tradition seriously; see *Origins of Power*, 147. Isaac Sheen, cited in Shook, *True Origins of Mormon Polygamy*, 152-55, also supports it. This is one of those perplexing points in Mormon history where good, seemingly reliable evidence can be found on both sides of a question.

him. This testimony seems to reflect an early RLDS perspective (though the RLDS church had not yet been organized); nevertheless, we should take it seriously.

One could argue that if Joseph believed this, we would have other documentation for it from his inner circle of friends. Marks was not in the inner polygamy circle. However, one could use the eight-month cessation of plural marriages before Joseph's death as support for Marks's story.<sup>20</sup>

Another possibility is that the decrease and discontinuation of marriages was a result of tensions with Emma, Joseph's first wife, who threatened to leave him during this period.<sup>21</sup> If Emma had left, the resulting scandal might have been disastrous for Joseph. He was also under pressure from internal opponents of polygamy such as his counselor in the First Presidency, William Law. Whether he had come to believe polygamy was wrong, or was merely pausing temporarily, as he had during the Bennett scandal, is uncertain. But the eight-month cessation of polygamous marriages before his death is one of the most remarkable phenomena in Joseph's life.

The twenty-five or so wives whom Joseph married in early 1842 and 1843 are testimony to the fact that plural marriage was not simply a footnote to his life or theology—particularly since he knew that exposure of his polygamy could be disastrous for the church. When he began to teach the principle of plural marriage (usually the prelude to a proposal) to Sa-

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20. William Law's Nauvoo diary, 29 Mar. 1844, 48, in Cook, *William Law*, has Hyrum Smith saying that he and Joseph had abandoned the practice of polygamy: "Hyrum Smith was here a few days ago. He beg'd for peace; we told him of the corrupt operation which had been practised upon us; he could not deny it . . . he said they were not doing anything in the plurality of wife business now, and that he had published a piece against it." This statement is supported by *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 Mar. 1844): 474, which criticizes the proposition that "a man *having a certain priesthood*, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here [in Nauvoo]: I say unto you that that man teaches *false doctrine*, for there is no such doctrine taught here; neither is there any such thing practised here." However, we also find in Law's diary, in a 13 May entry (53), the allegation that Joseph had proposed marriage to Law's wife. Law demands that Joseph "acknowledge also that ~~he had lately endeavored to seduce my wife, and had found her a virtuous woman.~~" If this actually happened, then Joseph clearly had not abandoned his polygamy and polyandry, just a month before his death. However, like many events in Mormonism, it is flatly contradicted by another source, the Alexander Neibaur diary, 24 May 1844, LDS archives. Neibaur alleges that Jane Law tried unsuccessfully to seduce Joseph Smith, then told her husband that Joseph had proposed to her. In Jane Law's favor, it is well documented that Joseph had married at least eleven already married women (see below), one of whom (Marinda Hyde) was the wife of an apostle. If Joseph did propose marriage to the wife of a prominent opponent of polygamy, a member of the First Presidency, it can only be seen as an act of considerable recklessness. See above for the allegation that Jane Law actually did become Joseph's plural wife. It is impossible to sort out the crossfire of evidence on this question within the limits of this essay; a fuller study is needed.

21. Newell and Avery, 158, cf. 164, 179.

rah Kimball, at the time married to Hiram Kimball, "He said that in teaching this he realized that he jeopardized his life."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, some of Joseph's marriages were polyandrous—he was joined to women who were already married to other men<sup>23</sup>; and such relationships could involve a jealous husband.

Thus the doctrine of plural marriage was of central importance to Joseph, for religious, doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and emotional reasons. William Clayton, Joseph's scribe and companion in Nauvoo, remembered that Joseph spoke of little else in private in the last year of his life.<sup>24</sup> As Joseph developed the principle of sealing ordinances that connected families for eternity, this doctrine was inextricably bound up with plural marriage. Later nineteenth-century Mormons taught that a monogamist could not gain complete salvation,<sup>25</sup> a belief clearly based on Joseph's teachings.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE NUMBER OF JOSEPH SMITH'S WIVES

Though thirty-three is less than forty-eight, it is still a large polygamous family. One may wonder why Joseph did not marry five wives, or two or three, and then stop. This would have been safer and would have complied with the reportedly divine command to practice polygamy. However, he apparently believed that exaltation, including deification,<sup>27</sup>

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22. According to Sarah, *Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 232: "Early in the year 1842, Joseph Smith taught me . . . the doctrine of plural marriage . . . I asked him to teach it to some one else."

23. See above, in the chart, and further discussion below.

24. Clayton, in *Historical Record* 6:226: "We were scarcely ever together, alone, but he was talking on the subject, and explaining that doctrine and principles connected with it."

25. For example, Orson Pratt, in a speech on 7 October 1874, said,

I did hope there was more intelligence among the Latter-day Saints, and a greater understanding of principle than to suppose that any one can be a member of this Church in good standing and yet reject polygamy. The Lord has said, that those who reject this principle reject their salvation, they shall be damned, saith the Lord; those to whom I reveal this law and they do not receive it, shall be damned. Now here comes in our consciences. We have either to renounce Mormonism, Joseph Smith, Book of Mormon, Book of Covenants, and the whole system of things as taught by the Latter-day Saints, and say that God has not raised up a Church, has not raised up a prophet, has not begun to restore all things as he promised, we are obliged to do this, or else to say, with all our hearts, "Yes, we are polygamists, and believe in the principle, and we are willing to practice it, because God has spoken from the heavens" (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng.: F. D. Richards, 1854-86), 17:225-26; cf. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 14-19, 84-113).

26. Cf. William Clayton affidavit, in *Historical Record* 6:226: "From him [Joseph Smith] I learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on the earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fulness of exaltation in celestial glory." Cf. D&C 132:26.

27. For the Mormon doctrine of exaltation, see Joseph Smith's King Follett discourse in Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 340-62; also D&C 132, the revelation on plural marriage.

depended on the size of a man's family *sealed to him in this life*. Benjamin Johnson, a brother of Joseph's plural wife Almera Johnson and a close friend of Joseph, wrote: "The First Command was to 'Multiply' and the Prophet taught us that Dominion & powr in the great Future would be Comensurate with the no [number] of 'Wives Childin & Friends' that we inheret here and that our great mission to earth was to Organize a Neculi [nucleus] of Heaven to take with us. To the increace of which there would be no end."<sup>28</sup>

By this doctrine, exaltation depended on having a numerous family sealed to one in this life. The emphasis on increase echoes the Abrahamic promise, in which God promised Abraham that his posterity would be as plentiful as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16; 16:10; 17:6; 18:18; 22:17). Early Mormons taught that Joseph had the doctrine of plural marriage "revealed to him while he was engaged in the work of translation of the Scriptures."<sup>29</sup> Daniel Bachman concludes that it was the translation of Genesis, specifically the Abraham passages, that prompted Joseph to ask about plural marriage in February 1831 and receive his first revelations on the topic.<sup>30</sup> The example of Abraham clearly had a powerful impact on Joseph; Abraham and the Abrahamic promise are prominently mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 132, the revelation on polygamy and exaltation.<sup>31</sup>

The idea that one had to be sealed to one's family nucleus *in this life* may depend on another biblical passage, Matthew 22:30, in which Jesus states that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Joseph apparently interpreted this to mean that this life, not the next, was the place where one had to create one's "extended family,"

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28. In Benjamin Johnson to George Gibbs, 1903, LDS archives, published in Dean R. Zimmerman, ed., *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1976), 47. Cf. the Nauvoo journal of Joseph Fielding, edited by Andrew F. Ehat, in *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (Winter 1979): 133-66, 154: "I understand that a Man's Dominion will be as God's is, over his own Creatures and the more numerous they greater his dominion."

29. Joseph Noble, who sealed Louisa Beaman to Joseph in 1841, "Plural Marriage," *Millennial Star* 16:454 (minutes of Davis Stake conference); cf. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 61.

30. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 67-68, n53; Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 64-67.

31. D&C 132:1, 29-37, the Abrahamic promise in v. 30; D&C 132:65; cf. Book of Abraham, in *The Pearl of Great Price*.

one's kingdom, by marriage.<sup>32</sup> Orson Pratt, in a discourse given in 1859, taught this explicitly.<sup>33</sup>

Thus Joseph's practice of polygamy, influenced strongly by these two scriptures, is another example of the early American Christian primitivism that shaped him and early Mormonism. The Old Testament, with its prophets and temples and polygamy, is a central thread running through Joseph's life and is clearly a primary source for his sense of prophetic mission and his doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

The importance of the size of one's eternal family, and the necessity of building it up on this earth, is shown by the custom of adoption practiced in the late Nauvoo period by Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, who would have grown men, with their families, sealed to them as "sons"; these sons would even sign their name with their "father's" last name. In the late Nauvoo period, among the elite Mormon leadership, there reportedly was competition to add new members, "sons," to their adoptive families. Young had a number of "children" in his adoptive family; one of his adoptive sons, John D. Lee, in turn, had his own sizeable adoptive family.<sup>35</sup> This is explainable in light of the principle of degree of one's salvation according to the size of one's earthly "kingdom." Marrying plural wives was a comparable method of extending

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32. This passage is also quoted in D&C 132:16. Cf. "Letter from Gen. Bennett," in *Hawkey Eye*, New Series, No. 28 (Burlington, IA), 7 Dec. 1843: "[Joseph Smith teaches that] as they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in Heaven, in eternity, it has been revealed to him that there will be no harmony in heaven unless the *Saints* select their companions and marry IN TIME, FOR ETERNITY!!! They must marry in time so as to begin to form that sincere attachment and unsophisticated affection which it is so necessary to consummate in eternity in order to the peace of Heaven." Cf. Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 15-16.

33. *Journal of Discourses* 6:358-59.

34. For Mormon primitivism, see Marvin S. Hill, "The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and New York," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (1969): 351-72; Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989). For non-Mormon religious primitivism in America, see Richard Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Richard Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence, Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Thomas Alexander, *Things In Heaven and Earth, the Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, A Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 16-17, 91, 341; Gordon Irving, "The Mormons and the Bible in the 1830's," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 (Summer 1973): 473-88.

35. Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:178; speech by Brigham Young, Feb. 1847, in *The Journals of John D. Lee, 1846-1847*, ed. Charles Kelly (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), 77-84, cf. 93-94; Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830-1900," *Brigham Young University Studies* 14 (Spring 1974): 291-314; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 195-99; Juanita Brooks, *John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992), 73-74; Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball*, 129; Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 114.

one's family in this life so as to increase one's power, dominion, exaltation in the next. Marriage, sealing, and adoption, in fact, were nearly interchangeable concepts. When John D. Lee married two women in 1845, he wrote in his diary, "About this time my family began to increase by the Law of Adoption. Feb 5, 1844 [1845] Nancy Bean was adopted into my family April 19, 1845 Louisa Free was also admitted—taking upon her my name."<sup>36</sup>

In Helen Mar Kimball's marriage to Joseph Smith, Joseph and Heber C. Kimball, Helen's father, desired the marriage so that Heber's family would be linked eternally to Joseph, thus assuring their salvation.<sup>37</sup> Michael Quinn, with his interest in prosopography, emphasizes the fact that Joseph's plural marriages linked him with important men in the church.<sup>38</sup> This would have given the two connected parties both earthly and eschatological advantages.

When Jedediah Grant preached on the subject of Joseph's plural marriages, he referred to them in terms of Joseph "adding to his family": "When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel."<sup>39</sup>

Thus in Joseph's Nauvoo ideology, a fullness of salvation depended on the *quantity* of family members sealed to a man in this life; this puts the number of women Joseph married into an understandable context. This doctrine also makes it clear that, though Joseph's marriages undoubtedly had a sexual dimension (see the following sections), important theological concepts also drove his polygamy, as well as the related purpose of gaining the highest possible exaltation by linking elite families to

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36. In Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 65. In his *Mormonism Unveiled*, 106, Lee mentions being sealed to these women.

37. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, Autobiographical Sketch, 1881, LDS archives; also in Linda Newell papers, Marriott Library, and fully discussed in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 150-51, 337.

38. D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1932: An American Elite," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1976, 74: "Through polygamous marriages, a Mormon General Authority could marry the close relatives of his associates in the hierarchy, thus reinforcing preexisting kinship connections and also introducing into the hierarchical family other General Authorities who were otherwise unrelated. Apparently Joseph Smith began this process." Though Quinn emphasizes dynastic aspects of Joseph's marriages, he would probably agree that there were complex reasons for these marriages, in which spiritual attraction, sexual attraction, and desired dynastic links all combined. Joseph would have been attracted to the women he knew well, and he simply knew the Mormon elite better than other Mormons. In fact, the polyandrous marriages (see below) might reasonably pose a threat to the stability of Joseph's relationships with "first husbands," as the case of Orson Pratt shows. Even proposals to unmarried daughters could endanger Joseph's relationships with their fathers, as the case of Sidney Rigdon shows.

39. *Journal of Discourses* 2:13-14 (19 Feb. 1854).

him for both earthly and eternal reasons.<sup>40</sup>

### THE AGES OF JOSEPH SMITH'S WIVES

We next look at the ages of Joseph's wives at the time they were sealed to him. In the age group 14 to 20 are eleven wives—33 percent; in the group 21-30, nine wives—27 percent. In the group 31 to 40, eight wives—24 percent. In the group 41 to 50, there is a substantial drop off: two wives, or 6 percent. In the group 51-60, three wives, or 9 percent.

The teenage group of wives is the largest, though the twenty-year and thirty-year groups are comparable. This finding contradicts the folk-wisdom in Mormonism that sees polygamy as beginning in order to take care of older unattached women. In actual practice, this age summary suggests that sexual attraction was an important part of Joseph's plural marriages. However, the command to multiply and replenish was also part of his polygamy theology, so non-sexual marriage was not part of the polygamous program, as Joseph taught it.

We may ask why Joseph married a few older women. Two reasons can be offered. First, two of these women, Fanny Young Murray and Rhoda Richards, were wives of favored apostles, so the marriages may be considered dynastic. Interestingly, Joseph's youngest wife, Helen Mar Kimball, was the daughter of another loyal apostle, Heber C. Kimball, so that marriage may be considered dynastic also, not motivated solely by sexual interest.

Second, older women served as teachers and messengers to introduce and convert younger women to polygamy in Nauvoo. Elizabeth Durfee and Patty Sessions belong in this category.<sup>41</sup> Eliza R. Snow acted in this capacity in Utah.<sup>42</sup> For Mormon feminists unsympathetic to patriarchal polygamy, this is probably one of the most troubling aspects of Mormon plural marriage: women co-opting younger women into the order.<sup>43</sup>

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40. Brodie emphasized the sexual dimension of Joseph's marriages almost to the exclusion of other motivations; see Marvin Hill's critique, "Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*," *Church History* 43 (1974): 78-96 (93-95), also Hill's "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7 (Winter 1972): 73-85. "With regard to plural marriage, where Brodie is so confident that the real Joseph Smith, the pleasure lover and sensualist, shows through, there is no evidence in his writings to suggest that he thought of it in other than religious terms" (76). This is not to deny a sexual/emotional dimension in Joseph's plural marriages; it simply was not the only motivation. See my article, "Fawn Brodie on Joseph Smith's Polygamy: A Critical View," forthcoming in a volume of essays on Brodie from Utah State University Press in 1996.

41. Emily Partridge, *Autobiography*, 4; Jackson, *A Narrative*, 14.

42. Fanny Stenhouse, *Tell It All* (Hartford, CT: A. D. Worthington, 1874), 430-32.

43. Cf. B. Carmon Hardy, "The Lords of Creation: Polygamy, the Abrahamic Household, and Mormon Patriarchy," *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Spring 1994): 140-41.

## SEX IN JOSEPH SMITH'S MARRIAGES

Emma Hale Smith, Joseph's first wife, told Lucy M. Smith, wife of Apostle George A. Smith, that Joseph's wives were "celestial" only, that he had no earthly marital relations with them. "They were only sealed for eternity they were not to live with him and have children." Lucy later wrote that when she told this to her husband,

He related to me the circumstance of his calling on Joseph late one evening and he was just taking a wash and Joseph told him that one of his wives had just been confined and Emma was the Midwife and he had been assisting her. He [George A. Smith] told me [Lucy Smith] this to prove to me that the women were married for time [as well as for eternity], as Emma had told me that Joseph never taught any such thing.<sup>44</sup>

Because of claims by Reorganized Latter-day Saints that Joseph was not really married polygamously in the full (i.e., sexual) sense of the term, Utah Mormons (including Joseph's wives) affirmed repeatedly that Joseph had physical sexual relations with his plural wives—despite the Victorian conventions in nineteenth-century American religion which otherwise would have prevented mention of sexual relations in marriage.

For instance, Mary Elizabeth Rollins (Lightner Smith Young) stated that she knew of three children born to Joseph's plural wives. "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."<sup>45</sup> Melissa Lott (Smith Willes) testified that she had been Joseph's wife "in very deed."<sup>46</sup> Emily D. Partridge (Smith Young) said she "roomed" with Joseph the night following her marriage to him and said that she had "carnal intercourse" with him.<sup>47</sup>

Other early witnesses also affirmed this. Benjamin Johnson wrote, "On the 15th of May . . . the Prophet again Came and at my hosue [house] occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Later Bishop Partridge as his wife."<sup>48</sup> Joseph Noble wrote that Joseph told him he had spent the night

44. Statement, dated 18 May 1892, signed by Lucy M. Smith, wife of George A. Smith, George A. Smith papers, Marriott Library.

45. Mary Lightner, "Remarks" at Brigham Young University, 14 Apr. 1905, 5, Mary Lightner collection, Lee Library.

46. Affidavit of Melissa Willes, 3 Aug. 1893, quoted in Raymond Bailey, "Emma Hale: Wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952, 98-100; cf. Temple Lot, 98, 105; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 156.

47. Temple Lot Case (complete transcript), 364, 367, 384; see Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 15.

48. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 44.



with Louisa Beaman.<sup>49</sup>

When Angus Cannon, a Salt Lake City stake president, visited Joseph Smith III in 1905, Joseph asked rhetorically, if these women were his father's wives, "how was it that there was no issue from them." Cannon replied,

All I knew was that which Lucy Walker herself contends. They were so nervous and lived in such constant fear that they could not conceive. He made light of my reply. He said, "I am informed that Eliza Snow was a virgin at the time of her death." I in turn said, "Brother Heber C. Kimball, I am informed, asked her the question if she was not a virgin although married to Joseph Smith and afterwards to Brigham Young, when she replied in a private gathering, "I thought you knew Joseph Smith better than that."<sup>50</sup>

Cannon went on to mention the one case in which a plural wife of Joseph Smith claimed to have had a child by him: Sylvia Sessions (Lyon) and her child Josephine Lyon (Fisher).<sup>51</sup> Josephine left an affidavit stating that her mother, Sylvia, on her deathbed told her (Josephine) that she (Josephine) was the daughter of Joseph Smith.<sup>52</sup> This affidavit will be examined in more detail later.

Finally, posterity was an important theological element in Joseph's Abrahamic promise justification for polygamy.<sup>53</sup> It would be extremely odd if his actual polygamy did not include the possibility of offspring.

Thus there is a great deal of evidence that Joseph Smith had sexual relations with at least some of his wives. The explanation for the lack of

49. Temple Lot Case, 427.

50. Angus M. Cannon, statement of interview with Joseph III, 23, LDS archives.

51. *Ibid.*, 25-26: "I will now refer you to one case where it was said by the girl's grandmother that your father has a daughter born of a plural wife. The girl's grandmother was Mother Sessions . . . She was the grand-daughter of Mother Sessions. That girl, I believe, is living today, in Bountiful, north of this city. I heard prest. Young, a short time before his death, refer to the report . . . The woman is now said to have a family of children, and I think she is still living."

52. One might interpret the Fisher affidavit as referring to Josephine as a non-biological child of Joseph who would be sealed to him in the eternities, because Sylvia had married Joseph for eternity. However, the Cannon statement shows that Patty Sessions (Smith) (and nineteenth-century Mormons such as Cannon and Brigham Young) understood Josephine to be Joseph's biological child, so the Fisher affidavit should be interpreted as referring to a biological child.

53. See Johnson statement, above. Johnson also wrote that Joseph taught him "plainly" "that the whole object and end of matrimony was the procreation of our species and that the command to multiply and replenish the earth fell upon all the children of Adam both in obligation and privilege." "Open Letter to the President of the United States" [Grover Cleveland], 15 Jan. 1886, LDS archives, quoted in E. Dale LeBaron, "Benjamin Franklin Johnson: Colonizer, Public Servant, and Church Leader," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966, 80.

children may be that, because of secrecy in Nauvoo polygamous practice, some of Joseph's children grew up under other names, as Mary Lightner suggested.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Joseph's wives may not have had numerous posterity because he was not able to visit them regularly, both because of legal problems (he was often arrested or hiding from the law in Nauvoo) and because Emma watched him carefully and it was difficult to arrange meetings (however furtive) with his wives.<sup>55</sup> Finally, on top of these pressures, he soon had many wives and often added new wives to his family, so he would have been hard pressed to visit all of these wives frequently and regularly.<sup>56</sup> In addition, later polygamy has shown that many husbands usually had favorite wives, so Joseph probably neglected some of his. All of these factors would have combined to limit the number of children. However, it is clear that some of his plural wives did have children, if we can rely on the statements of George A. Smith, Josephine Fisher, and Elizabeth Lightner. Finally, some of Joseph's wives were married to other men in polyandrous relationships, so such wives would probably have children by their "first husbands," with whom they were cohabiting regularly, not by Joseph.

Despite all of this evidence, some have continued to argue that Joseph did not have marital relations with his plural wives, using the following arguments:

First, some have concluded that Helen Mar Kimball, who married Joseph when she was fourteen, did not have marital relations with him. This is possible; there are cases of Mormons marrying underage women

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54. See also Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 310n111.

55. There is a letter from Joseph to a wife, Sarah Ann Whitney, in which he arranged a secret meeting with her and her parents. See Joseph Smith to Newel, Elizabeth, and Sarah Ann Whitney, 18 Aug. 1842, in Dean Jesse, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 539-40; in this letter he instructed the family to come only if Emma was not there and to burn the letter after reading it.

56. A recent study has concluded that there are only six days in a woman's menstrual month when she can become pregnant. Since these six days are difficult to pinpoint precisely, a couple desiring pregnancy should have intercourse frequently. If a couple has intercourse once a week, there is a 10 percent chance of pregnancy in a typical month; with daily intercourse, there is still only a 25 percent chance of pregnancy in a typical month. In addition, a third of all pregnancies result in miscarriage. Allen J. Wilcox, Clarice R. Weinberg, and Donna D. Baird, "Timing of Sexual Intercourse in Relation to Ovulation," *New England Journal of Medicine* 333 (7 Dec. 1995): 1517-21, cf. 1563. Joseph Smith almost certainly was having daily sexual relations with *none* of his thirty to forty plural wives. In addition, miscarriages and infant mortality rates in malaria-ridden Nauvoo would have further limited what few children he had by plural wives. Furthermore, he married the majority of his wives in 1842 and especially 1843, less than a year before he died. However, as we have seen, Mary Elizabeth Lightner said she knew of three children of Joseph who were raised under other names. Of these three, one, Josephine Lyon Fisher, has been convincingly documented.

but not having relations with them until they were older.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, there is no definite evidence that Helen Mar Kimball did not have relations with Joseph.<sup>58</sup>

We have seen that Emma Smith stated that Joseph's marriages were for eternity only, not for time ("time" marriages would include sexuality). But there is convincing evidence that many of Joseph's wives were married to him for eternity and time, with sexuality included. Eliza Snow, in her autobiography, wrote that "I was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, for time and eternity, in accordance with the *Celestial Law of Marriage* which God has revealed."<sup>59</sup>

Some have pointed out that Mary Rollins (Lightner Smith Young), a polyandrous wife, said, in 1905, "I . . . was sealed to Joseph for Eternity." Thus, they argue, Joseph had no relations with her, a polyandrous wife, as he was married to her for eternity only. However, it is not clear that she meant that she was sealed to Joseph for eternity only, not for time. Apparently she was merely emphasizing eternity in this statement.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Lightner testified in three different places that she was also sealed to Joseph for time. For example, in a 1902 statement she said, "Brigham Young Sealed me to him [Joseph], for time & all eternity."<sup>61</sup>

Zina Huntington (Jacobs Smith Young) also had a polyandrous relationship with Joseph Smith and her first husband, Henry Jacobs. As in the case of Lightner, she gave an interview in which she referred to her marriage to Joseph as "eternal," not for "time." However, at another time in the interview she strongly emphasized that she was married to Joseph for time and eternity:

[Zina:] . . . he [Joseph Smith] married me . . . When Brigham Young returned from England, he repeated the ceremony

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57. For instance, John D. Lee married a girl aged fourteen during the 1856 Utah Reformation with the understanding that he would not have a sexual relationship with her until she was older. She put off having sex with him and eventually fell in love with Lee's oldest son. Lee released her from the marriage to him and gave her to his son with his blessing. Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 233, 239-40. See also Juanita Brooks, *Emma Lee* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1975), 8, 11.

58. See n37. This evidence is ambiguous, not proving or disproving cohabitation.

59. Autobiography, in Bancroft Library, 13, film in LDS archives; published in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995). Patty Sessions, a polyandrous wife, wrote, "I was sealed to Joseph Smith by Willard Richards March 9 1842 in Newel K Whitneys chamber Nauvoo, for time and all eternity." Patty Bartlett Sessions journal, page after 16 June 1860, LDS archives.

60. Lightner, "Statement."

61. "Statement, Febr. 8, 1902," Mary Lightner collection, Lee Library; Lightner, autobiography, Utah State Historical Society: "in the month of March 1841 [1842] Brigham Young Sealed us for time, and all Eternity"; Lightner, 23 Mar. 1877 affidavit (Scott Kenney collection, Marriott Library).

for time and eternity. . . . I was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity.

[Question:] Mrs. Young, you claim, I believe, that you were not married to him for time?

[Zina:] For eternity. I was married to Mr. Jacobs, but the marriage was unhappy and we parted . . .

[Q:] Is it a fact then, Mrs. Young, that Joseph was not married to you only in the sense of being sealed for eternity?

[Zina:] As his wife for time and eternity.

[Q:] Mrs. Young, you have answered that question in two ways; for time, and for time and eternity.

[Zina:] I meant for eternity.<sup>62</sup>

Some interpreters have placed great weight on these statements to show that Zina's marriage was "spiritual" only. But the interview is so contradictory on this issue (the elderly Zina was obviously flustered by the RLDS judge's harsh questions) that it cannot be used as solid evidence to prove anything about her marriage in this respect. One even wonders if there was a significant distinction between marriage for eternity and marriage for time and eternity among the early Mormons. Present-day Mormon temple marriages are called eternal marriages, though it is generally understood that they include time also.

Finally, Joseph married some women who were older; in later Mormon polygamy it was customary that there would be no sexual relations in such a case.<sup>63</sup> So it is possible that Joseph had no marital relations with these middle-aged or older women.

In conclusion, though it is possible that Joseph had some marriages in which there were no sexual relations, there is no explicit or convincing evidence for such a marriage (except, perhaps, in the cases of the older wives). And in a significant number of Joseph's marriages, there is evidence for sexual relations.

#### MARITAL STATUS AT TIME OF MARRIAGE: POLYANDRY

Eighteen of Joseph's wives were single when he married them and

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62. Wight interview, "Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young," *Saints Herald* 52 (11 Jan. 1905): 29.

63. Brigham Young told Horace Greeley, "I have some aged women sealed to me upon the principle of sealing which I no more think of making a wife of than I would my Grand Mother." Clerk's report of interview, 13 July 1859, Lee Library, cited in Jeffrey Johnson, "Determining and Defining 'Wife': the Brigham Young Households," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Fall 1987): 57-70, 58. Cf. a similar statement by John D. Lee, quoted by Stanley Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," in D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 173.

had never been married previously. Another four were widows; one, Agnes Coolbrith Smith, was the widow of his younger brother, Don Carlos, making this a strict Levirate marriage. However, the remaining eleven were married and cohabiting with their husbands when Joseph married them. Another woman, Sarah Ann Whitney, married Joseph, then married a man concurrently in a civil, "pretend" marriage. Thus I use the term polyandry—which means one woman married to two men simultaneously—to describe these marriages.<sup>64</sup>

Polyandry is one of the major problems found in Joseph Smith's polygamy, and many questions surround it. Why did Joseph at first choose primarily polyandrous marriages? Did the "first" husbands know about the marriages, and if so, how did they feel about them? Did they willingly or reluctantly allow the marriages to Joseph? Did such marriages with Joseph include sexuality, and what was the doctrinal rationale for them?

In the past Joseph Smith's polyandry has often been ignored or glossed over. But if these women merit our serious attention, we must document and discuss their marriages. Joseph F. Smith, seventh president of the LDS church, and Andrew Jenson, Assistant Church Historian, spearheaded documenting these women's plural, polyandrous marriages to Joseph Smith, including affidavits with dates of marriage. These women's other, civil marriages and dates of childbirths are also easily documented in early sources. These dates have forced the issue for the historian. The only option is to come to as complete and balanced an un-

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64. For introductions to polyandry in world religions and anthropology, see Prince Peter, *A Study of Polyandry* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963); S. D. Singh, *Polyandry in Ancient India* (Delhi: Vikas, 1978); Y. S. Parmar, *Polyandry in the Himalayas* (Delhi: Vikas, 1975); Manis Kumar Raha and Palash Chandra Coomar, eds., *Polyandry in India* (Delhi: Gian, 1987), with general bibliography at 20-22; W. H. Sangre and N. E. Levine, eds., *Women with Many Husbands: Polyandrous Alliance and Marital Flexibility in Africa and Asia*, a special issue of *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 11 (1980); G. D. Berreman, "Pahari Polyandry: A Comparison," *American Anthropologist* 64 (1962), 60-75. Polyandry is rare compared to polygyny and is virtually never found without polygyny. Often polyandry and polygyny are combined (multiple men taking multiple wives, with each wife being married to each man), and the result has been called polygynandry. Polyandry is often fraternal, i.e., two brothers marry a woman. Anthropologists have seen polyandry as serving to lessen tensions between brothers; it also increases the security of a wife and family in the prolonged absence of one brother. Some suggest that community of wives among brothers is an extension of community of possessions and wealth, in cultures where brothers inherit equally. Mormon polyandry was never systematized and was always secret, so none of these parallels applies fully. However, as there was a strong fraternal dimension to Mormon ecclesiastical fellowship, and as one's relationship with Joseph Smith was crucial for one's earthly and eternal welfare, some of these dynamics may have been in effect. See the quote by Jedediah Grant on consecrating one's wife (almost seen as a possession) to Joseph if required to do so.

derstanding as possible of their marriages.<sup>65</sup>

One misconception concerning Joseph's polyandry is that it was a practice represented in only one or two unusual marriages; however, fully one-third of Joseph's plural wives, eleven of them, were polyandrous. If we superimpose a chronological perspective, we see that of Joseph's first twelve wives, nine were polyandrous. In Joseph's early marriages, polyandry was the norm, not the anomaly. (His later marriages were largely to single women, with two exceptions in 1843.)

This phenomenon might be easier to understand if one viewed these marriages to Joseph as a sort of *de facto* divorce from the first husband. However, the fact is that divorce from the first husband occurred in none of these cases, while Joseph was alive. After he married them, they continued to live with their "first husbands."

One explanation for Joseph's polyandry generally holds that the first husbands in these polyandrous marriages were disaffected from the church or were non-Mormon. In such a situation, Joseph would have married the woman to save her, and the woman would have wanted to be married to Joseph as a righteous husband who could bring her salvation. One might also expect the woman to leave the unworthy man.<sup>66</sup>

Such an interpretation, however, is not supported by the totality of the evidence. Of the twelve certain polyandrous marriages (counting Sarah Ann Whitney), only three had non-member husbands: Mary Rollins (Lightner), Ruth Vose (Sayers), and Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland). And only one first husband was disaffected from the church when Joseph married the wife—Norman Buell, husband of Presendia Huntington.

All other husbands were active and in good standing in the church at the time Joseph married their wives. In fact, many were prominent church leaders and/or close friends of Joseph. George W. Harris, husband of Lucinda Pendleton, was a high councillor in Missouri and Nauvoo, a position somewhat equivalent to that of modern-day general authority. Henry Jacobs, husband of Zina Huntington, was a devoted friend of Joseph and a faithful missionary. Orson Hyde, husband of Marinda Johnson, was an apostle and was on a mission to Palestine when

65. Pioneering treatments are found in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 124-36; and Richard Van Wagoner, "Mormon Polyandry in Nauvoo," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Fall 1985): 67-83.

66. Bachman emphasizes this interpretation of Joseph's polyandry in "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 124-36: "Three of Smith's wives experienced marital difficulties in their first marriage, and it appears that he [Joseph] wed them out of concern for both their earthly and eternal welfare." He adds that Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner was married to a non-Mormon, so Joseph married her for the same reasons. Then he does mention, "two or three of them [Joseph's other polyandrous wives' marriages to their "first husbands"] do not appear to have been unsatisfactory unions." However, Bachman's emphasis here is on the problematic husbands; "two or three" satisfactory unions is an understatement.

Joseph married his wife. Though Orson had turned against Joseph in Missouri, he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve in full fellowship during his mission. Jonathan Holmes, husband of Elvira Cowles, was a bodyguard of Joseph and was one of his pallbearers after his death. Windsor Lyon was a member in good standing at the time Joseph married his wife, Sylvia Sessions, and lent Joseph money after the marriage. David Sessions, husband of Patty Bartlett, was also a member in good standing.

These data lead to the conclusion that Joseph married these women not because they were married to non-members, but because they were married to faithful Mormons who were close, devoted friends of his. This again suggests that the men knew about the marriages and permitted them.

As we have seen, it has been suggested that Joseph married polyandrously when the marriage was unhappy, but this does not square with the evidence. If it were true, it would have been easy for the woman to divorce her husband, then marry Joseph. But none of these women left her "first husband" while Joseph lived; in fact, some stayed with their "first husbands" till death. In the case of Zina Huntington Jacobs and Henry Jacobs—often used as an example of Joseph marrying a woman whose marriage was unhappy—Joseph married her just seven months after she married Henry, and Zina stayed with Henry for years after Joseph's death. Their separation was forced, when Brigham Young (who had married Zina polyandrously in the Nauvoo temple) sent Henry on a mission to England and began living with Zina himself.

Having rejected the theory that Joseph married polyandrously when the marriages were already unsatisfactory or involved non-member husbands, we turn to statements in the historical record that supply a convincing rationale for Joseph Smith's polyandry. First, Joseph regarded marriages performed without Mormon priesthood authority as invalid, just as he regarded baptisms performed without Mormon priesthood authority as invalid. Thus all couples in Nauvoo who accepted Mormonism were suddenly unmarried, granted Joseph's absolutist, exclusivist claims to divine authority. John D. Lee wrote:

About the same time the doctrine of "sealing" for an eternal state was introduced, and the Saints were given to understand that their marriage relations with each other were not valid. That those who had solemnized the rites of matrimony had no authority of God to do so. That the true priesthood was taken from the earth with the death of the Apostles . . . They were married to each other only by their own covenants, and that if their marriage relations had not been productive of blessings and peace, and they felt it oppressive to remain together, they were at liberty to make their own choice, as much as if they had not been married. That it was a sin for people to live together, and

raise or beget children in alienation from each other. There should be an affinity between each other, not a lustful one, as that can never cement that love and affection that should exist between a man and his wife.<sup>67</sup>

This is a radical, almost utopian rejection of civil, secular, sectarian, non-Mormon marriage. Such "lower" marriage was even a "sin" unless a higher "affinity" cemented the partners together.

Another relevant doctrinal statement comes from an 1861 speech by Brigham Young, which is preserved in two versions:

Also there was another way—in which a woman could leave [a] man—if the woman Preferred—another man higher in authority & he is willing to take her. & her husband gives her up—there is no Bill of divorce required in the case it is right in the sight of God.<sup>68</sup>

The Second Way in which a wife can be seperated from her husband, while he continues to be faithful to his God and his priesthood, I have not revealed, except to a few persons in this Church; and a few have received it from Joseph the prophet as well as myself. If a woman can find a man holding the keys of the priesthood with higher power and authority than her husband, and he is disposed to take her he can do so, otherwise she has got to remain where she is . . . there is no need for a bill of divorcement . . . To recapitulate. First if a man forfeits his covenants with a wife, or wives, becoming unfaithful to his God, and his priesthood, that wife or wives are free from him without a bill of divorcement. Second. If a woman claims protection at the hands of a man, possessing more power in the priesthood and higher keys, if he is disposed to rescue her and has obtained the consent of her husband to make her his wife he can do so without a bill of divorcement.<sup>69</sup>

This statement gives two options: (1) if a man apostatizes from the

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67. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 146. Jedediah Grant, in 1854, remembered Nauvoo members saying about marriage, "Joseph says all covenants are done away and none are binding but the new covenants" (*Journal of Discourses* 2:13-14). Orson Pratt said in 1846, "As all the ordinances of the gospel Administered by the world since the Aposticy of the Church was illegal, in like manner was the marriage Cerimony illegal" (Wilford Woodruff journal, 15 Aug. 1846 [Kenney, 3:260]). There are similar statements by others collected in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 126-28; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy* 45-47; cf. D&C 132:18; Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 57. For early Mormon absolutist authoritarianism, see Mario S. De Pillis, "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," 13-36, in Quinn, *New Mormon History*; Hill *Quest for Refuge*, 28, 204.

68. James Beck Notebooks, 1859-65, Vol. 1, 8 Oct. 1861, LDS archives; as quoted in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 162. Cf. Frederick Kessler diary, 8 Oct. 1861, Marriott Library.

69. "A Few Words on Doctrine," speech at Tabernacle by Brigham Young, 8 Oct. 1861, Brigham Young addresses, recorded by George Watts, LDS archives. Published in *For We Men Only*, ed. Dennis Short (Salt Lake City: Short, 1977). Cf. Campbell and Campbell, "Divorce Among Mormon Polygamists," in Quinn, *New Mormon History*, 195.



church, his wife can leave him without a formal divorce<sup>70</sup>; (2) if a woman desires to be married to a man with greater priesthood authority than her current husband has, and if both men agree, she may be sealed to the second man without formal divorce. Brigham reports that he learned this from Joseph Smith.<sup>71</sup> In some ways, this principle applies to Joseph's polyandrous marriages. He clearly was regarded as having more priesthood authority than any other living man, so he would be the most authoritative, spiritually desirable, second husband available.

The emphasis on the woman's desire is notable. In nineteenth-century Utah there are well-documented cases in which women asked to be married to a general authority.<sup>72</sup> In Nauvoo, however, such cases would not be frequent, as polygamy was still secret. Also interesting is the emphasis on the volition of the first husband. This would be consistent with the suggestion made above, that the first husbands in Joseph's polyandrous marriages often knew about the marriages and permitted them.

The statement by Jedediah Grant referred to above will now be quoted more fully. My explanations are in brackets:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, "Joseph says all covenants [previous marriages] are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants [marriage by priesthood sealing power]; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?" "I would tell him to go to hell." This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church [i.e., unwilling to consecrate everything to Joseph as mouthpiece of God] . . . What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? [he would give it all willingly] Or if he came and said, "I want your wife?" "O yes," he would say, "here she is, there are plenty more" . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man's wife he asked for? He did not . . . the grand object in view was to try the people of God, to see what was in them. If such a man of God should come to me and say, "I want your gold and silver, or your wives," I should say, "Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got." A man who has got the Spirit of God, and the light of eternity in him, has no trouble about such matters.<sup>73</sup>

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70. This happened to John Hyde in the mid-1850s; he left the Mormon church and his wife was immediately divorced from him. Heber Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses* 4:165, said: "the limb she was connected to was cut off, and she must again be grafted into the tree, if she wishes to be saved"; cf. Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 162.

71. A Utah example: Hannah Grover left her husband, Thomas Grover, because he was not prominent in the church, though a faithful member. Then she was sealed to Daniel Wells, a member of the First Presidency; see Campbell and Campbell, "Divorce Among Mormon Polygamists," 194.

72. E.g., Adelia Wilcox and Heber Kimball; see her Autobiography, LDS archives.

73. *Journal of Discourses* 2:13-14, 19 Feb. 1854.

This remarkable testimony to Joseph's polyandrous marriages from a sympathetic source touches on many areas of interest. First, Grant sees the practice in terms of extended family organization: "When the family organization was revealed." Polyandry would obviously link families to Joseph. "Joseph began, on the right and the left"—frequently—"to add to his family." Joseph is creating a large extended family through plural, sometimes polyandrous, marriages. "Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants." Here we have the doctrine that previous marriages are of no effect, "illegal," in Orson Pratt's words. Grant expresses disapproval of those who were asked to give up their wives and refused.<sup>74</sup> He also shows what the proper attitude should have been when Joseph requested a wife: instant, unquestioning consecration of the wife and all other "possessions" to the prophet, if necessary. Then he states that Joseph did not want *every* wife he asked for, which implies that he wanted some of them (and Jedediah would have known about some of the polyandrous marriages). The emphasis here is on Joseph's testing his followers: "the grand object in view was to try the people of God." Jedediah was probably thinking of Vilate Kimball and, perhaps, Leonore Taylor. Yet the fact that at least eleven women were married to Joseph polyandrously, including the wife of prominent apostle Orson Hyde, shows that in many cases Joseph did not ask for the wife of a man only as a test; sometimes the test included giving up the wife.

Another doctrine that apparently influenced Joseph's polyandrous marriages was the Mormon belief in the pre-existence, which holds that our spirits lived with God before birth and were given special assignments there relating to what we would do here. According to Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Smith, who was married to Adam Lightner when Joseph proposed to her, "Joseph Said I was his, before I came here. he said all the Devils in Hell should never get me from him."<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere she wrote that Joseph told her he had been commanded to marry her, "or Suffer condemnation—for I [Mary] was created for him before the foundation of the Earth was laid."<sup>76</sup> Apparently, if Joseph had a spiritual intu-

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74. Heber C. Kimball was so asked and was extremely reluctant but finally complied (see Whitney, *Heber C. Kimball*, 333-35). John Taylor reportedly was also asked and was also extremely reluctant (John M. Whitaker journal, 1 Nov. 1890, Marriott Library). Joseph seems to have released these two from the request, stating that he had been testing them. Orson Hyde's wife, Marinda, on the other hand, was certainly married to Joseph. Jane Law also accused Joseph of approaching her, and her husband, William, believing her, was not willing to give her up; they subsequently left the church. Horace Cummings, *Contributor* 5 (Apr. 1884): 255; Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 147.

75. "Statement," 8 Feb. 1902, see above.

76. Autobiography; cf. Lightner's 1905 letter to Emmeline Wells, Lee Library, Mary Elizabeth Lightner collection.

ition that he was linked to a woman, he asserted that she had been sealed to him in the pre-existence, even though she was legally married to another man at the time. But, as we have seen, he taught that civil marriages performed without the priesthood sealing power were not valid, and were even sinful at times. Therefore, the link in the pre-existence would take priority over a marriage performed by invalid authority, secular or "sectarian," in this life. John D. Lee wrote that a spiritual "affinity" took precedence over secular ceremonies. Perhaps Joseph Smith also felt, as the Brigham Young statement suggests, that men with higher priesthood had a greater aptitude for spiritual affinity.

According to an antagonistic (but early and eyewitness) source, William Hall, the doctrine of "kindred spirits" was found in Nauvoo polyandry. According to this report, Joseph taught that "all real marriages were made in heaven before the birth of the parties."<sup>77</sup> This statement is supported by Lightner. There is at least one early "friendly" reference to the "kindred spirit" doctrine in marriage in the Nauvoo period. In an 1845 patriarchal blessing William Smith said, "But the fullness of her salvation cannot be made perfect until her companion is with her and those who are of his Kingdom, for the kindred spirits are gathered up and are united in the Celestial Kingdom of one."<sup>78</sup>

Thus heavenly marriage in the pre-existence required earthly polyandry. Certain spirits were "kindred," matched in heaven before this life. They were born into this life, and because of unauthorized marriages performed without priesthood sealing power, the wrong spirits became linked "illegally." But when the kindred spirits recognized each other, the "illegal" marriage became of no effect and the "kindred" partners were free to marry each other—this time through the priesthood sealing power for eternity.

Apparently, however, Joseph would allow the wife to continue living with her first husband after such a marriage. As has been mentioned, there were no formal divorces as a result of his polyandrous marriages, and cohabitation with the first husband continued. But the first husband would recognize that he and the wife were not sealed for eternity—they

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77. William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed* (Cincinnati: I. Hart, 1852), 12-13, cf. 41-43. Ann Eliza Young, writing in 1876, also reported that Joseph taught the doctrine of "kindred spirits" when he proposed marriage to women who were already married (*Wife No. 19*, 70-71).

78. Patriarchal Blessing by William Smith, 16 July 1845, at Nauvoo, on the head of Mary Ann Peterson, "sitting as proxy" for Ann B. Peterson, deceased. She was the dead wife of Charles Petersen. "Utah Pioneer Biographies," Federal Writers Project, 23:103-104, cf. Ivins Notebooks 5:276. A later reference from one of Joseph Smith's plural wives, Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, told a woman friend, after kissing at parting, that "we were kindred spirits before we came on this planet." Helen Mar Whitney diary, May 28, 1886, Helen Mar Whitney collection, Merrill Library, Utah State University.

were married only till death. Joseph would be married to her for eternity. When eternal sealings were repeated in the Nauvoo temple in late 1845 and early 1846, two "first husbands," George Harris and Jonathan Holmes, stood as proxy for Joseph Smith as their wives were sealed to the prophet for eternity. Another "first husband," Henry Jacobs, stood as witness when his wife, Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith, was sealed eternally to Joseph in the Nauvoo temple, though Brigham Young, not Henry, stood proxy for Joseph in this case. Then Henry served as a witness as his wife was sealed to Brigham Young for time. After which, Henry and Zina with their son Zebulon began the pioneer trek to the west. Zina bore a second son to Jacobs, Henry Chariton, halfway across Iowa.

This kind of marriage was not viewed as eternal polyandry. A man could be sealed to many women for eternity, but a woman could be sealed to only one man for eternity. One might call it practical polyandry—i.e., on earth there were clearly two co-existent marriages—but they were of different types. According to Joseph Smith's "eternal," authoritarian perspective, only one marriage was "real," that performed by priesthood authority and eternal.

Neither of these concepts—the divine illegality of civil, sectarian marriage and the idea of higher, spiritual "affinity" between male and female spirits (even though they may happen to be married civilly to other people)—was original to Joseph Smith, though he developed them in his idiosyncratic way. An early study, *Spiritual Wives* by William Hepworth Dixon, published in 1868,<sup>79</sup> traces the roots of these concepts to Protestant Europe. He sees Emmuel Swedenborg as another important exponent of the tradition.<sup>80</sup> In Joseph Smith's era, we find the Rev. Erasmus Stone, who had a vision of men and women in the sky looking at each other with yearning and pain; he interpreted this to mean that "in the present stage of being, men and women are nearly always wrongly paired in marriage." The people in the vision were looking for their true mates with whom they had true affinity, a crucial word in this tradition. Stone then proceeded to find a married woman, Eliza Porter, with whom he developed a spiritual affinity.<sup>81</sup> When true affinity is found, such love would not be limited to this life, but would be eternal, and so we have a comparison to the Mormon doctrine of eternal marriage. There is a parallel in Swedenborg to pre-existent matching of spirits, the doctrine Joseph taught Mary Elizabeth Lightner when he proposed to her: "Two souls which grew up together before life are bound to find each other again on

79. William Hepworth Dixon, *Spiritual Wives* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1868).

80. *Ibid.*, 2:193: "Nearly all the contracts made on earth, says the Swede, are null and void from the beginning, because these unions are not made with natural pairs."

81. *Ibid.*, 2:15-17.

earth."<sup>82</sup>

Stone's story, like Joseph Smith's, was the product of the Burnt-over District in New York; much of this experimentation developed in a Protestant revival atmosphere. The "Spiritual Wives" polyandrous doctrine, a concept foreign to twentieth-century Mormons, was part of Joseph Smith's *zeitgeist*.<sup>83</sup> Though the system was clearly subject to the danger of abuse, it was developed by sincerely religious men: "the advocates of Spiritual wifehood are, and have been, for the most part ministers of the gospel, men of thought and learning," wrote Dixon.<sup>84</sup>

We return now to the question of marital relations in polyandrous marriages. Some have thought that Joseph did not have physical relations with his "polyandrous" wives if the husband was faithful to the church or that the "first husband" did not have sex with the wife. Such a theoretical relationship has been called "pseudo-polyandry."<sup>85</sup> The evidence that is sometimes used to support this theory is the affidavit of Josephine Fisher, daughter of Sylvia Sessions (Lyons), one of Joseph's polyandrous wives. As previously noted, Josephine reported that Sylvia told her that she, Josephine, was the daughter of Joseph Smith. "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."<sup>86</sup>

There are a number of problems with this statement. Sylvia was married to Windsor Lyon in 1838, then was married to Joseph Smith on 8 February 1842. Windsor was disfellowshipped from the church, but only after 7 November 1842. Thus Josephine's, or Sylvia's, statement is incorrect; Sylvia was sealed to Joseph while her husband was a church member in good standing. Possibly she was gliding over the polyandry, as has often happened in the Mormon historical record. Did Sylvia really mean

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82. Quoted in John Cairncross, *After Polygamy Was Made a Sin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 174-75.

83. See Whitney Cross, *The Burnt-Over District* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 243-45.

84. Dixon, 1:89. The charlatan Robert Matthews ("Mathias the Prophet") also taught and practiced these principles. See Gilbert Seldes, *The Stammering Century* (New York: John Day Co., 1928), 126-27, "matched spirits." See also *Memoirs of Mathias the Prophet*, in Ivins Notebook 7:157-60; William Stone, *Matthias and His Impostures* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1835), 171, "all the marriages in the world were illegal," see also 169.

85. Andrew Ehat, "Pseudo-Polyandry: Explaining Mormon Polygyny's Paradoxical Companion—the Microscopic View," talk given at Sunstone Symposium, Washington, D.C., Aug. 1985.

86. Statement to Andrew Jenson, 24 Feb. 1915; cf. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 41. Disfellowshipment and excommunication were often equivalent in the early Mormon church. Cf. Nauvoo High Council minutes, 22 Sept. 1841, LDS archives, typescript in Marquardt collection, Marriott Library: "Seconded & caried that he should be disfellowshipped and his name erased from the church roll by the unanimous voice of the Branch."

that she had sexual relations with Joseph only when Windsor was dis-fellowshipped? Again, this is problematic. Would an antagonistic husband have tolerated a wife who withheld sexual privileges from him? It could easily produce an explosive situation; yet none of these husbands divorced their wives during Joseph's lifetime.

Another piece of evidence used to show that polyandrous wives were married only for eternity, not for time, is the interview with Zina Huntington (Jacobs) (Young). We have already seen that this interview is unsatisfactory evidence for taking either side of the argument. In the same way, Mary Elizabeth Lightner's statement that she was married to Joseph for eternity (as a polyandrous wife) has been used to show that she was not married to him for time; but she elsewhere specifically and repeatedly stated that she was married to Joseph for time and eternity. Patty Sessions, another polyandrous wife, also stated that she was married to Joseph for time and eternity.

Therefore, there is no good evidence that Joseph Smith did not have sexual relations with his wives, previously single or polyandrous. On the other hand, there is evidence that he had relations with at least some of his wives, including one polyandrous wife, Sylvia Sessions Lyon, who bore the only child of Joseph Smith for which we have affidavit evidence.

Finally, one wonders why these "first husbands" apparently acquiesced to their wives' marriages to Joseph. One possibility is that they were promised spiritual rewards in return. Such was the case with the fathers of three "single" plural wives. When Fanny Alger was married to Joseph, her family looked upon the sealing as an honor to them, according to Ann Eliza Webb. In the same way, when Sarah Whitney was sealed to Joseph, he rebaptized her parents and gave special blessings to her father, Newel Whitney. Heber C. Kimball wanted his daughter Helen to marry Joseph so that there would be an eternal connection between the two families, and Joseph himself told her that the marriage to him would ensure her family's salvation.<sup>87</sup>

If we can apply these phenomena to the polyandrous families, including the husbands, it would explain some of the dynamics of polyandrous marriages: the husbands may have been promised that Joseph's marriage to their wives would contribute to their own exaltation after this life. "Buckeye's Lament," a piece of anti-Joseph doggerel published shortly before his death, supports this interpretation. "But if you yield

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87. Fanny Alger: Ann Eliza Webb Young, *Wife No. 19*, 66-67. Sarah Ann Whitney: Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 121-22; Kenneth Godfrey, "Causes of Mormon/Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, 1839-1846," Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1967, 99n27. Helen Kimball Whitney: Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Autobiographical Sketch*, 1881, LDS archives, also in Linda Newell papers, Marriott Library.

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*."<sup>88</sup> The phrase "your daughters and your wives" clearly suggests that Joseph offered salvation to "first husbands," as well as to the fathers of his brides.

It should also be borne in mind that the men and women involved in Nauvoo polygamy and polyandry did not understand it thoroughly; it was new doctrine; it was not preached openly; and though Joseph taught polygamy to his inner circle, practical experience often differed from didactic religious doctrine. So a husband giving his wife to Joseph may not have understood fully what the marriage meant. Helen Mar Kimball, a non-polyandrous wife, found her marriage to Joseph to mean more on an earthly plane than she had expected. Possibly the husbands and wives in polyandrous triangles had the same experience. In Nauvoo-period theological terminology, there was some ambiguity in the terms "sealing" and "marriage," and it is possible that some men and women did not understand that "sealing" also meant "marriage" and included sexual relations. It is unfortunate that we do not have a full, frank memoir from even one of the polyandrous "first husbands"; we only have two autobiographies from two polyandrous wives, Mary Elizabeth Rollins and Zina Huntington.

## CONCLUSION

Whatever the uncertainties in documentation for this polyandrous

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88. *Warsaw Message*, 4 Feb. 1844, in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," App. E, 338-40, cf. 264-65. A number of factors support the historical validity of this poem and a companion piece by the same author. For instance, the author knew of Joseph's marriage to the Partridge sisters and to Martha McBride Knight and of his unsuccessful proposal to Nancy Rigdon, so he must have been an insider of some sort. In addition, the doctrine that one could be sealed up with little possibility of damnation is reflected in D&C 132, the revelation on polygamy, vv. 26-27. See also Joseph Smith to Sarah Ann Whitney, 23 Mar. 1843, LDS archives, as quoted in Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 244. In the Clayton/Kimball journal, 1 Jan. 1846, in Smith, *Intimate Chronicle*, 247, Brigham Young performed a marriage in the Nauvoo temple: "He then pronounced them Husband & Wife, and Sealed them together as such for time and for all eternity, and also sealed them up to eternal life, against all sins, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is the shedding of innocent blood . . ." So in Nauvoo Mormonism eternal marriage perhaps always sealed the participants up to eternal life, granting no sin against the Holy Ghost. Cf. Clayton journal, 16 May 1843, in Smith, *Intimate Chronicle*, 102. This would supply strong motivation for entering into a plural marriage.

Joseph felt that Wilson Law was the author of "Buckeye's Lament," *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), 6:210. The author characterizes himself as a devout follower of Joseph who has become disillusioned and has wept "burning tears" after pleading with Joseph to repent. See "The Buckeye's First Epistle to Jo," *Warsaw Signal*, 23 Apr. 1844, in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 341-44.

aspect of Latter-day Saint practice, there is a clearly discernible outline of ideology in the Mormon historical record that explains the development and rationale for the practice of Mormon polyandry. "Gentile" marriages were "illegal," of no eternal value or earthly validity; marriages authorized by Mormon priesthood and prophets took precedence. Sometimes these sacred marriages were thought to re-enact pre-mortal marriages or to fulfill pre-mortal linkings and so justified a sacred marriage superimposed over a secular one. Mormonism's intensely hierarchical nature allowed a man with the highest earthly authority—a Joseph Smith or a Brigham Young—to ask for the wives of men holding lesser priesthood authority. The authority of the prophet would allow him to promise higher exaltation to those involved in the triangle, both the wife and her first husband.

But with polyandry, as with the better-known polygyny, despite the elaborate doctrinal justifications, despite the reverence for a modern prophet and the unquestioning devotion to a restored biblical religion, the emotional challenges of this new marriage system must have been tremendous. In the cases of most of the polyandrous wives, the human dimensions are not recorded; the polyandry is not even openly acknowledged. However, the wives and husbands must have felt conflicted. Puritanical New England morality and attachment to the first husband or wife undoubtedly warred with devotion to Joseph Smith, viewed as an infallible oracle of God, and to a church and community that was believed to be a restoration of primitive Christianity. Only in the marriage of Zina Huntington and Henry Jacobs, enigmatic as their relationship was, do we even have hints of the human price that Joseph's polyandrous system demanded.

#### APPENDIX: WRITTEN SOURCES FOR JOSEPH SMITH'S PLURAL WIVES (REFER TO CHART)

##### *I. Certain Wives*

1. FANNY ALGER: Mosiah Hancock Autobiography, 63, LDS archives; Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 38-39; *Historical Record* 6:233; Young, *Wife No. 19*, 66-67; Chauncey Webb, in Wyl, 57; Oliver Cowdery letterbook, 21 Jan. 1838, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; 4 Apr. 1899 sealing, Salt Lake Temple Sealing Records, Book D, 243, GS film 184,590, Family History Library; Thomas M. Tinney, "The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Junior: First President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," typescript, 1973, 41, 63, LDS archives and Marriott Library.

2. LUCINDA PENDLETON: *Historical Record* 6:33: "Lucinda Harris,



also one of the first women sealed to the Prophet Joseph"; Sarah Pratt, in Wyl, 60; 4 Apr. 1899 sealing, Salt Lake Temple Sealing Records, Book D, 243; Tinney, "Royal Family," 41, 63; Nauvoo temple proxy marriage, Sealing and Adoption Book A, 505, 323, Family History Library and Marriott Library; edited version available in Family History Library, film 193, 368.

3. LOUISA BEAMAN: Noble affidavit, in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930), 2:102; Erastus Snow affidavit, in *Historical Record* 6:232, 233; speech by Joseph Noble, 19 Dec. 1880, in Andrew Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:515 (Noble), 610 (Erastus Snow); Noble, in Wilford Woodruff journal, 22 Jan. 1869, in Kenney, 6:452; Noble, in Temple Lot Case, transcript, 368, 424-27; Noble, in Franklin D. Richards journal, 22 Jan. 1869 (loose sheet, numbered 145), LDS archives; Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 256, "Miss L\*\*\*\*\* B\*\*\*\*," 229; Joseph Noble address, 11 June 1883, at stake conference, Centerville, Utah, in Journal History, date; Orson Pratt, in "Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith," *Millennial Star* 40 (16 Dec. 1878): 788; Young, *Wife No. 19*, 72.

4. ZINA DIANTHA HUNTINGTON: Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:5, 4:5, cf. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 348; *Historical Record* 6:233; Autobiography, in Bradley and Woodward, "Plurality, Patriarchy, and the Priestess"; Oliver Huntington journal, 18 Feb. 1883, 27 Oct. 1887, Lee Library; Wight interview, "Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young," *Saints Herald*, 11 Jan. 1905, 29; "Woman's Mass Meeting," *Woman's Exponent*, 1 Dec. 1878, 98. Select secondary sources: Emmeline Wells, "A Distinguished Woman: Zina D. H. Young," *Woman's Exponent*, 1 Dec. 1881, 99; Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed*, 43-44; Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 132, 146.

5. PRESENDIA LATHROP HUNTINGTON: Letter (an autobiographical sketch), Presendia L. Kimball Smith to her eldest granddaughter living in 1880, 1 Apr. 1881, LDS archives; Presendia affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:7; *Historical Record* 6:233; Zina Huntington Young journal, 11 Dec. 1848, LDS archives; Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 256, lists as one of Joseph's wives "Mrs. B\*\*\*\*," for whom the only likely candidate is Presendia; Oliver Huntington journal, 18 Feb. 1883; [Emmeline Wells,] "A Venerable Woman: Presendia Lathrop Kimball," *Woman's Exponent*, 1 Apr. 1883, 163.

6. AGNES MOULTON COOLBRITH: Brigham Young journal, 6 Jan. 1842, LDS archives and Marriott Library; Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 256, "Mrs. A\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*"; Testimony of Mary Ann West in U.S. Circuit Court (8th Circuit) Testimony (1892), Manuscript Transcripts, 521, questions 676-79, LDS archives; Nauvoo Female Relief Society Minutes, 28

Sept. 1842, 89, LDS archives and Lee Library.

7. SYLVIA SESSIONS: Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, fd. 5, 1:60, 4:62, cf. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," affidavit #77 (unsigned, but supporting evidence makes this marriage close to certain); *Historical Record* 6:234; affidavit by Josephine Lyon Fisher, Sylvia's child, 24 Feb. 1915, LDS archives; Angus M. Cannon, statement of interview with Joseph Smith III, 25-26, LDS archives.

8. MARY ELIZABETH ROLLINS LIGHTNER: Autobiography, 18, Utah State Historical Society; 1905 letter to Emmeline Wells, Mary Lightner collection, Lee Library; Remarks given at BYU, 14 Apr. 1905, 2, Lee Library, in Tinney, "Royal Family," 255; Statement, 1902, Lee Library; affidavit, 1905; 23 Mar. 1877 affidavit (Scott Kenney collection, Marriott Library); letter to Wells, 21 Nov. 1880, in Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 39.

9. PATTY BARTLETT SESSIONS: Patty Sessions journal, p. after 16 June 1860, LDS archives; Jackson, *A Narrative*, 14, in Jackson, "Wonderful Disclosures Respecting Mormons," 1.

10. MARINDA NANCY JOHNSON HYDE: Joseph Smith journal, LDS archives, a list of marriages in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock, entered after 14 July 1843: "Apr 42 Marinda Johnson to Joseph Smith," in Scott Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1989), 396. For a second marriage to Joseph Smith, in May 1843, see Marinda Hyde affidavit, 1 May 1869, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:15, cf. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," #53, p. 348: "J. GILSON DIVINE" [Sidney Rigdon], "To the Sisters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," *Latter Day Saint's Messenger and Advocate* 1 (15 Mar. 1845): 154-58, 156; "W.," in *Warsaw Signal*, 11 June 1845, cf. Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 171; Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 147.

11. ELIZABETH DAVIS: Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 256, "Mrs. D\*\*\*\*\*"; Sarah Pratt, in Wyl, 54; Jackson, *A Narrative*, 14, links Elizabeth with Patty Sessions as a Mother in Israel who helped arrange polygamous marriages for Joseph. Patty Sessions was certainly married to Joseph. Emily Partridge, Autobiography, 4, LDS archives, shows Elizabeth relaying a marriage proposal to Emily, which confirms Jackson. Joseph often relied on previously married wives to educate and recruit new plural wives. A Nauvoo temple proxy marriage to Joseph is good supporting evidence, Sealing and Adoption Book A, 505; cf. p. 385: "Elizabeth Davis Smith."

12. SARAH KINGSLEY CLEVELAND: *Historical Record* 6:234. She witnessed Eliza Snow's marriage to Joseph, Eliza R. Snow affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:25, 4:24; Bachman, "A Study of the Mor-

mon Practice of Plural Marriage," 349. Standing as witness to a plural marriage was a duty often performed by a previously married wife.

13. DELCENA JOHNSON: Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 45, cf. 39, 40; Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 95 (ms, 91, LDS archives).

14. ELIZA R. SNOW: Autobiography, 12-14, original in Bancroft Library, cf. published in Beecher, *Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*; affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:25; *Historical Record* 6:233.

15. SARAH ANN WHITNEY: Sarah A. Kimball affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:36; 4:36; Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," #59; printed in Smith, *Blood Atonement*, 73; Elizabeth Whitney affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:72; 4:74, printed in Smith, *Blood Atonement*, 74; William Clayton, *Historical Record* 6:225; Joseph Kingsbury, *Historical Record* 6:226, 233-34.

16. MARTHA McBRIDE: affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:36; 3:36; Vault Folder, LDS archives, cited by Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," affidavit #69, printed in Smith, *Blood Atonement*, 72 (86, 1905 ed.).

17. RUTH VOSE: affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:9, 4:9, cf. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 348; *Historical Record* 6:234.

18. FLORA ANN WOODWORTH: Clayton affidavit, in *Historical Record* 6:225.

19. and 20. EMILY and ELIZA PARTRIDGE: affidavits in *Historical Record* 6:223. See also their autobiographical writings, e.g., "Autobiography of Emily D. P. Young," in *Woman's Exponent*, 1 Aug. 1885, 38.

21. ALMERA WOODARD JOHNSON: affidavit by Almera, in Smith, *Blood Atonement*, 70-71. Her brother Benjamin told the story of her marriage to Joseph at least three times: Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 41; Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 94 (ms, 90-91); and an affidavit, *Historical Record* 6:221, 234.

22. LUCY WALKER: Autobiography; Clayton journal, in Smith, *Intimate Chronicle*, 100; Eliza Partridge affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:30.

23. and 24. SARAH and MARIA LAWRENCE: *Historical Record* 6:223; Lucy Walker Smith Kimball, in the Temple Lot case (full transcript, 461, LDS archives); Helen Kimball Whitney, *Woman's Exponent*, 15 Feb. 1886, 138.

25. HELEN MAR KIMBALL: *Historical Record* 6:234; 1881 reminiscence, LDS archives.

26. HANNAH ELLS: John Benbow affidavit, see *Historical Record* 6:222-23, 234.

27. ELVIRA ANNIE COWLES: affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:78, 4:80; *Historical Record* 6:234.

28. RHODA RICHARDS: affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:17; Joseph Smith journal, 12 June 1843, Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 387.

29. DESDEMONA FULLMER: affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:32, 4:32; Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," #58; *Historical Record* 6:225.

30. OLIVE G. FROST: *Historical Record* 6:235, 234.

31. MELISSA LOTT: Lott family Bible, LDS archives; *Historical Record* 6:234, 5:119; affidavit: Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:23, 4:23, in Smith, *Blood Atonement*, 72, 55.

32. NANCY W. WINCHESTER: *Historical Record* 6:234; Whitney, *Life of Heber Kimball*, 431, 436.

33. FANNY YOUNG: Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 16:166-67; *Historical Record* 6:234; affidavit 1:52, by Augusta Young, Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," #73; Harriet Cook (Young) affidavit, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:14, in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," #103.

## II. Possible Wives

1. VIENNA JACQUES: Unsigned affidavit by Jacques, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 4:56 (Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," 350); Mrs. Warner Alexander, 1886 statement, LDS archives; information from Polly Beswick; cf. Newell and Avery, 67. Clair Noall to Fawn Brodie, 16 Sept. 1943, Noall papers, Marriott Library: "'Yes,' said Aunt Louie with no uncertainty when I asked her about Vienna's being sealed to the Prophet, 'She was sealed to him.'" All of this evidence is problematic. The affidavit was prepared for Jacques, but she evidently refused to sign it, possibly because she had not married Joseph, possibly because she did not want the marriage publicized. The Alexander affidavit is antagonistic and second-hand. The Noall letter is third hand.

2. HANNAH ANN DUBOIS: Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 96: "At this time I knew that the Prophet had as his wives, Louisa Beeman, Eliza R. Snow, Maria and Sarah Lawrence, Sisters Lyon and Dibble, one or two of Bishop Partridge's daughters, and some of C. P. Lott's daughters, together with my own two sisters." John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857), 84: "There is a Mrs. Dibble living in Utah, who has a fine son. She was sealed, among others, to Joseph Smith, although living with her present husband before and since. On the head of her son, Smith predicted the most startling prophesies about wielding the sword of Laban, revealing the hidden Book of Mormon, and translating the sealed part of the records. There is not a person at Salt

Lake who doubts the fact of that boy being Smith's own child." The chief opposing evidence is Hannah's eternal marriage to Dibble in the Nauvoo temple (Sealing and Adoption Book A, 243). Joseph Smith performed the marriage to Dibble: "On the 11th of February, 1841, I married a second wife—a Widow Smith of Philadelphia, who was living in the family of the Prophet. He performed the ceremony at his house, and Sister Emma Smith insisted upon getting up a wedding supper for us. It was a splendid affair, and quite a large party of our friends were assembled." Philo Dibble, "Philo Dibble's Narrative," *Early Scenes in Church History* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 92-93. This does not sound like a "pretend" marriage, as was the case with the Sarah Ann Whitney-Joseph Kingsbury marriage.

3. SARAH BAPSON: Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 256: "Miss B\*\*\*\*." The best candidate for this woman is Sarah Bapson, listed in a 4 April 1899 sealing: "The sealings of those named below were performed during the life of the Prophet Joseph but there is no record thereof. President Lorenzo Snow decided that they be repeated in order that a record might exist; and that this explanation be made." Fannie Alger, Lucinda Harris, Almera W. Johnson, Sarah Bapson, Flora Ann Woodworth, Fanny Young, Hannah Ells, Olive Frost, Sarah M. Cleveland, Sylvia Sessions (Lyon), Ruth Vose. Salt Lake Temple Sealing Records, Book D, 243, GS Film 184,590, Family History Library, as cited in Tinney, "Royal Family," 41, 63.

4. MRS. G\*\*\*\*: Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 256. As the other names in Bennett's list have been reliable, there is no good reason to doubt this one. However, there are at least nine women whose married names start with G, have six letters, and who were in Nauvoo in 1842. Without further evidence, it is difficult to narrow that group down. A leading candidate is Phebe Palmer (Graves), who received her endowment with Sarah Kingsley (Cleveland) (Smith) on 19 October 1845.

5. SARAH SCOTT: Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 431. "The wives of the Prophet who wedded Heber C. Kimball were . . . Sarah Scott." Cf. Sealing and Adoption Book A, 411.

6. MARY HOUSTON: Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 431. "The wives of the Prophet who wedded Heber C. Kimball were . . . Mary Houston." Proxy marriage to Smith/Kimball, Book of Proxy Sealings, Nauvoo #159; Sealing and Adoption Book A, 513.

7. MRS. TAILOR: Jackson, *A Narrative*, 14, links her with Patty Sessions and Elizabeth Durfee. As Patty Sessions and Elizabeth Durfee have been substantiated as wives of Joseph, there is no good reason to suspect Mrs. Taylor. Which Mrs. Tai[y]lor is another problem; there are at least three older women in 1842 Nauvoo with the married name Taylor: Agnes Taylor (Taylor), the mother of John Taylor; Elizabeth Patrick (Taylor); and Surviah (Taylor).

8. MARY HERON (SNIDER): Quinn, *Origins of Power*, 587.

*III. Early Posthumous Proxy Marriages*

1. MARY ANN FROST: Sealing and Adoption Book A, 513, 449 (6 Feb. 1846).
2. OLIVE ANDREWS: Book of Proxy Sealings, Nauvoo, #13; Sealing and Adoption Book A, 503 (15 Jan. 1846).
3. JANE TIBBETTS: Sealing and Adoption Book A, 503 (17 Jan. 1846).
4. PHEBE WATROUS: Book of Proxy Sealings, Nauvoo, #34; Sealing and Adoption Book A, 503, 555 (19 Jan. 1846).
5. APHIA SANBORN: Sealing and Adoption Book A, 511, 581 (27 Jan. 1846).
6. CORDELIA MORLEY: Book of Proxy Sealings, Nauvoo, #98; Cordelia Morley Cox, *Autobiography*, Lee Library.
7. SALLY ANN FULLER: "Sally Ann Fuller Smith," in "Obituary" section, *Deseret News*, 29 Mar. 1897, 2; proxy marriage to Joseph Smith/Samuel Gully, Sealing and Adoption Book A, 721 (29 Jan. 1847).
8. LYDIA KENYON: Endowment House Sealing Record, #65: early proxy marriage to Joseph Smith/Kimball.