1844, published by a schismatic faction in the Church which was attempting to oust Smith from power, alleged that "in order to avoid public exposition from the common course of things," pregnant plural wives "are sent away for a time until all is well; after which they return, as from a long visit."[115]

T. Edgar Lyon, a leading contemporary authority on the Nauvoo period, has related another account of how children by Smith's plural wives may have been handled. When Dr. Lyon was working in Nauvoo in 1968–69, a man introduced himself by saying: "How would you like to meet a descendant of Joseph Smith who has never been out of the Church!" Since none of Smith's children by Emma remained affiliated with the Utah Church, the man's statement showed that he believed himself descended from one of Smith's polygamous unions. The man told Dr. Lyon of three families—Farnsworth, Dibble, and Allred—in each of which lived one of Smith's plural wives. In each case, when the plural wife became pregnant, she and the recognized wife in the household both went into seclusion, as was the practice for visibly pregnant women at the time. After the plural wife's child was born, the recognized wife in the household reappeared and presented the child as belonging to her. At least one of the children was born from these polygamous unions before Smith's death. After his death, these plural wives went to Utah, were married to other men, and had children by them.[116] These and similar traditions can be adduced to suggest that there may well have been children by Joseph Smith's polygamous unions, although indisputable proof of any such descendants is unlikely.

It is less difficult to explain the apparent lack of children born to the plural wives of Joseph Smith's followers prior to his death, since most of them were married for a shorter time and to fewer women in this period. One account of how pregnancies among plural wives of high Church officials were handled was given by Kimball Young, the late sociologist of Mormon polygamy and a descendant of Oscar Young, the first acknowledged child by any of Brigham Young's plural wives. According to Kimball Young, plural wives who became pregnant, including Oscar Young's mother, Harriet Cook, went into seclusion in the second floor of the Erastus Snow home in Nauvoo. The second floor had an entrance that was separate from the remainder of the house. The Snow family was small enough to live entirely on the first floor. Food and other necessities were discreetly brought to the wives who lived on the second floor.[117] The original construction of the Erastus Snow house does correspond with this account of Kimball Young's. In addition, the fact that an unusual 1846 holograph letter from Brigham Young to "Mrs. Hariot Cook" was sent in care of the Erastus Snow home suggests that she may have been living there at the time as well.[118] Quite possibly other arrangements were made in cases of other plural wives, but these examples at least suggest some of the possibilities.

Irregularities and Forgotten Practices

Apparent discrepancies between belief and practice were numerous during the chaotic early days of the development of polygamous practice. Perhaps the most severe conceptual difficulties are raised by the strong evidence that Joseph Smith took as plural wives a number of women who had living husbands and that he asked some of his closest followers to give him their wives as well. Of course some of these marriages may have been only for "eternity," as was apparently the case in two instances in which wives of Smith's closest associates were sealed to him after his death.[119] As the numerous posthumous sealings attest, marriage to Joseph Smith "for eternity" obviously had considerable appeal.

Other allegations that Smith asked married women to become his wives may be instances of what might be called the "Potiphar's wife syndrome," in which women to whom Smith refused his attentions alleged that he had attempted to seduce them. Another possibility is suggested by the charge that Smith's followers leveled against Orson Pratt's wife Sarah, after John C. Bennett's exposé alleged that Smith had commissioned Bennett to ask Mrs. Pratt to become Smith's plural wife. Smith's supporters said that this account was simply a cover for Bennett's own improper relations with Mrs. Pratt. In this, as in almost all other cases, the tangle of allegation and counter-allegation is so complex that one cannot reliably determine exactly what did happen. True or false, such character defamations by both sides did much to disrupt the social atmosphere in Nauvoo. Probably any attempt to secretly introduce and regulate unorthodox marriage practices not sanctioned by law would have led to similar problems, no matter how the process was handled.

When all the contradictory and unreliable evidence about Joseph Smith's plural wives is fully explored and unreliable stories discounted, a hard core of puzzling data remains which demands an explanation if we are to understand the dynamics of the early development of plural marriage. If one accepts Latter-day Saint sources, it seems clear that Smith had full sexual relations with some women who were at the same time legally the wives of other men.[120] Based on such evidence, it is also clear that Smith did ask some of his followers to give him their wives, whatever his motives in such cases may have been.

In a sermon delivered on February 19, 1854, in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Jedediah Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young,

discussed the confusion that arose when Joseph Smith asked for the wives of some of his followers:

> When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, "Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; 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.
>
> . . .
>
> If Joseph had a right to dictate me in relation to salvation, in relation to a hereafter, he had a right to dictate me in relation to all my earthly affairs. . . .
>
> . . .
>
> Did the Lord actually want Abraham to kill Isaac? Did the Prophet Joseph want every man's wife he asked for? He did not, but in that thing was the grand thread of the Priesthood developed. The grand object in view was to try the people of God, to see what was in them.[121]

This account suggests a part of the context within which Joseph Smith at least *asked* some of his followers for their wives.

A similar but more concrete statement appears in Orson F. Whitney's biography of his grandfather, Heber C. Kimball. Allegedly Joseph Smith asked Heber to give him Vilate to be his wife, saying that this was a requirement. After enormous inner turmoil, Heber presented Vilate to Smith. At that point, Smith wept, embraced Heber, and said that he had not really wanted Vilate. He had only been determining if Heber's loyalty to him were absolute. There and then, Smith proceeded to seal Heber and Vilate for time and eternity.[122] If this story is an accurate representation of events—and it is hard to believe that there could be any reasonable motive for fabricating such a story and printing it in a standard biography of a respected Mormon leader—it suggests that Smith was showing supremely poor judgment. A number of Mormons whose loyalty to Smith was not so absolute apostatized or began working to undermine his leadership within the Church after they alleged that he had attempted to marry their wives.[123]

How are such actions to be explained? Most non-Mormons and anti-Mormons have simply assumed that Smith was indulging his sexual impulses in these and other cases. Most Mormon writers, on the other hand, have tried to explain the evidence away or ignore it entirely, hoping that it would be forgotten. Neither approach is very satisfactory. What was happening in Nauvoo was considerably more remarkable than a "common sense" point of view is apt to recognize. The process must be judged in terms of its own dynamics, including Joseph Smith's millennial framework and the problems that are inherent in any transitional period between two different and partially incompatible value systems.

The revelation on plural and celestial marriage makes quite clear that marriages based on the standards of the external world were not considered valid for eternity:

> All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made, and entered into, and sealed, by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity . . . , (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time, on whom this power and the keys of the priesthood are conferred,) are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; . . . .
>
> . . .
>
> Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; . . . .[124]

Later Mormon theology has naturally taken this statement as referring to the afterlife. Mormon theology and practice in Nauvoo and early Utah, however, were an attempt to apply presumptive heavenly standards directly on earth. Earthly and heavenly standards were seen as inextricably intertwined; an imminent earthly millennium was to be realized. In marriage, this meant that the standards of "the world" were invalid. Marriage, whether monogamous or polygamous, was only valid under the sanction of the "new and everlasting covenant" *as sealed and practiced on earth.*[125] Mormon initiatory ceremonies, from baptism to the more elaborate temple rites, involved a rebirth into a new and different world that was being created on earth by the Church. Prior to the initiation into the new standards, however, there was a brief but disruptive interregnum when neither set of standards was operative and the basis of social authority was unclear.

Possibly the best analysis of this development in Nauvoo is provided in the following statement by a former member of Smith's secret Council of Fifty, a council which, along with other Church agencies, attempted to regulate the transition:

> About the same time [1842] 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 and inspired men of God. That 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. That there should exist 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.[126]

This statement by John D. Lee suggests the interplay between marital dissatisfactions and the larger theological framework that underlay the introduction of plural marriage.

In addition to the larger argument that the revelation on plural and celestial marriage superseded all earthly bonds and covenants, a second argument also suggests why Joseph Smith might have asked for the wives of other men. Speaking before a conference in the Tabernacle on October 8, 1861, Brigham Young is reported to have discussed the ways "in which a woman could leave a man lawfully." The primary valid cause for giving a divorce was: "When a woman becomes alienated in her feelings & affections from her husband, ..." "Also there was another way—in which a woman could leaved [*sic*] 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."[127]

This passage suggests that in early Utah it may have been possible for a married woman to "move up" in the hierarchy without securing a formal divorce. Could this practice date back to Joseph Smith?[128] If so, it provides a further link which could help to explain otherwise strange early practices. Note that early Mormon belief stressed that wives, just as all other temporal and spiritual blessings, were held as a stewardship or trust from God, subject to the continuing good behavior of the husband. When John Hyde apostatized in the mid-1850s, for example, his wife was considered automatically forfeited, and she was remarried to another worthy man who could ensure her salvation.[129] If Joseph Smith approached wives of some of his followers who were on the verge of apostasy, as numerous allegations suggest, he might have justified that action by the view that since those men had become unworthy and had forfeited their salvation, they had also forfeited their wives. Needless to say, however internally logical such a view might have been, it could only have further embittered Smith's relations with associates whose loyalties were wavering or already lost.

The "all previous covenants suspended" and the "moving up" arguments still fail to cover adequately all possible cases under which Joseph Smith appears to have approached or taken married women as plural wives. A third, extremely conjectural possibility remains. If true, it could probably account for all additional cases for which there is reliable documentary evidence. The earliest basis for this third argument is a passage in the revelation on plural and celestial marriage which declares: "And as ye have asked concerning adultery, verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with *another* man, *and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing*, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed" [emphasis added].[130] Jason Briggs, who was a bitter anti-polygamist and life-long opponent of the Utah Mormons as well as one of the most intellectually astute early leaders of the RLDS Church, asserted that this passage could be taken to mean that when a polygamist was gone for many years, as sometimes happened, it would theoretically be possible for another man to be appointed by the President of the Church, through the power of the holy anointing, to serve the part of a temporary husband until the return of the first one. The children born under such arrangements would be considered to belong to the first man. Thus, while he was absent in the service of the Church, his "Kingdom," which was heavily dependent on the number of his children, would not suffer loss.[131]

This is, to say the least, an extraordinary allegation. Is it supported by any reliable evidence? Would such a practice have been compatible with early Mormon intellectual and social concerns? It must be noted that no conclusive manuscript evidence explicitly supporting such a practice in the early Church has come to my attention, and that the one statement in printed Mormon sources which suggests the possibility of this practice, is, at best, ambiguous.[132] If any practice of temporal "proxy husbands" ever existed, it must have been on an exceedingly limited scale, and it must have been very soon discontinued as a social experiment. Nevertheless, there exist a small number of early allegations of a practice of appointing proxy husbands which cannot be dismissed out of hand.

The primary source for allegations of proxy husbands is John Hyde, who rose rapidly in the Church and then apostatized during the troubled period of the Reformation of 1856–57, in one of the most bitter of such breaks. Although Hyde frequently exaggerates or fails to understand the deeper spirit underlying Mormon actions, his factual allegations often are surprisingly accurate. Hyde stated:

> As a man's family constitutes his glory, to go on a mission for several years, leaving from two to a dozen wives at home, necessarily causes some loss of family, and consequently, according to Mormon notions, much sacrifice of salvation. This difficulty is however obviated by the

> appointment of an agent or proxy, who shall stand to themward [*sic*] in their husband's stead. . . . This is one of the secret principles that as yet is only privately talked of in select circles, and darkly hinted at from their pulpits and in their works. They argue that the old Mosaic law of a "brother raising up seed to his dead brother" is now in force; and as death is only a temporary absence, so they contend a temporary absence is equivalent to death; and if in the case of death, it is not only no crime, but proper; so also in this case it is equally lawful and extremely advantageous! This practice, commended by such sophistry, and commanded by such a Prophet was adopted as early as Nauvoo.
>
> Much scandal was caused by others than Smith attempting to carry out this doctrine. Several, who thought that what was good for the Prophet should be good for the people, were crushed down by Smith's heavy hand. Several of those have spoken out to the practices of the "Saints." [Consider the case of John C. Bennett.] Much discussion occurred at Salt Lake as to the advisability of revealing the doctrine of polygamy in 1852, and that has caused Brigham to defer the public enunciation of this "proxy doctrine," as it is familiarly called. Many have expected it repeatedly at the late conferences. Reasoning out their premises to their natural and necessary consequences, this licentious and infamous dogma is their inevitable result.[133]

Note that Hyde himself described the existence of proxy husbands primarily as a "principle" rather than a present "practice." Hyde's only specific allegation of the practice of such arrangements was the case of Joseph Smith himself, and according to Hyde, Smith did not allow his followers such privileges. Hyde appears correct in his assertion that from a Mormon theoretical and social perspective the practice of a limited arrangement of proxy husbands for some missionaries' wives would have appeared logically consistent. Since logic based on unorthodox premises is a primary characteristic of the early Mormon faith, it would seem unlikely that early Mormon leaders could have avoided *considering* such a possibility, even if they never actually introduced such a practice. If such a practice ever existed, it must have been on a very limited scale and must have soon been discontinued. Intellectually, the idea of a form of proxy marriage, the provisions of which have force only in the afterlife, still remains a part of Mormon belief. Briefly stated, when the husband of a woman who had been sealed to him "for time and eternity" dies, that woman is free to marry another man "for time" only. Mormon theology teaches that in the afterlife the children who had been born on earth to this latter union would be part of the family of the first husband to whom the woman had been sealed for "eternity."[134]

This belief is a highly unorthodox elaboration of the Old Testament

Jewish practice of the levirate. The levirate is based on the Jewish concern for carrying on the family name through a male line. Thus, in Mosaic law, when a man died leaving a widow and no male heirs, it became the duty of the next oldest brother to marry the widow and raise up children to the dead man's name. The much misunderstood "sin of Onan," for which God is said to have slain him, lay in practicing *coitus interruptus* with his brother's widow and thereby failing to fulfill his obligation to raise up children to that family line.[135] That this practice of the levirate, which implies the possibility of polygamy, was widely accepted is evident from the incident in the New Testament in which Jesus was asked about marriage in the afterlife.[136] When the Mormons conceived their unusual elaboration of the levirate, it is possible that they could have linked present and afterlife together in a complex fashion. Likewise, marriage sealings "for eternity" did not refer simply to a future heavenly state; they also made possible new earthly marriage forms, including polygamy. In early Mormonism, the distinction between heavenly ideals and earthly practice is often uncertain.

From a practical point of view, the possibility of appointing a temporary proxy husband, under strict controls, to provide temporal and emotional support for the harassed wives of absent missionaries must sometimes have appeared desirable. Apparent practices of this sort by Joseph Smith himself have led to erroneous allegations that he sanctioned polyandry.[137] If such practices ever occurred, they could be seen as showing compassion for the enormous strains under which wives of missionary elders were placed when they underwent what amounted to prolonged periods of "widowhood." It is known that Mormon men sometimes were assigned to help with the temporal support of women whose husbands were away on missions. Such support, particularly when the woman was actually living in the man's household, would naturally have had a tendency to lead to more intense emotional involvement. Some women must have wondered why, if men could have plural wives, they should not be granted a similar privilege, even if it was only to have a temporary replacement for their absent husband.

Whether this sort of arrangement ever occurred under official sanction remains a matter of conjecture, but if such an intellectual rationale existed, it could provide a satisfactory explanation of documented or highly probable cases in which Joseph Smith sustained relations with married women who continued to remain with their original husbands.[138] Given Smith's mind-set and concern for authority, it seems inconceivable that he could have done what he apparently did without believing that he had a higher justification for his actions.

However appealing an abstract social or intellectual argument for

allowing proxy husbands might have been, such arrangements could not have been practiced on any scale without leading to anxieties, jealousies, and uncertainties that would have threatened to tear the Church apart. Perhaps the most judicious assessment of this issue was provided by T. B. H. Stenhouse. He said:

> The Author has no personal knowledge, from the present leaders of the Church, of this teaching; but he has often heard that something yet would be taught which "would test the brethren as much as polygamy had tried the sisters." By many elders it has been believed that there was some foundation for the accusation that Joseph had taught some sisters in Nauvoo that it was their privilege to entertain other brethren as "proxy husbands" during the absence of their liege lords on mission. One lady has informed the Author that Joseph so taught her. All such teaching has never been made public, and it is doubtful if it ever extended very far, if, indeed, at all beyond a momentary combination of passion and fanaticism.[139]

Liminality and Communitas

How is one to explain the many extraordinary early developments associated with the introduction of Mormon polygamy? Taken in isolation, the introduction of new marriage and social forms in the Mormon Church might well appear bizarre or disordered. However, a comparative perspective from anthropology and studies of other millenarian movements suggests that the Mormon experience may in many respects serve as a paradigmatic illustration of such transition states. The discussion presented in Chapter I on the characteristics of the "liminal" phase of rites of passage or larger social transitions is especially applicable to the Mormons. In such an itermediary state, an individual is suspended between two worlds, between an old order that is dying and a new order that is yet to be born. A person's position is then ambiguous: "he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state." A feeling of intense comradeship, egalitarianism, and exhilaration is experienced as a sense of direct personal contact replaces the institutional constraints that normally separate individuals. Men and women become malleable, capable of being molded by their leaders into new cultural forms of great beauty and power.

This tone of feeling and the associated release of powerful emotions, which is so difficult to convey in words, is unmistakably present in the early Mormon experience. That experience shows the passionate involvement, camaraderie, and enthusiasm of the selfless Mormon dedication to what they saw as the supremely important goal of realizing the kingdom

of heaven on earth. There is a pervading sense of awe and wonderment that mysteries which had been hid since before the foundation of the world are now to be revealed, and a corresponding heady sense of exhilaration. Whether it be in cases of men leaving wives and children to go bravely into the unknown "without purse or scrip," or of women sacrificing their husbands temporarily and trusting in God to bring them through, the Saints felt an extraordinary closeness as they engaged in a common enterprise that they felt was of cosmic significance. Distinctions between "mine" and "thine" were reduced to an absolute minimum in the face of a common challenge and crisis. In Heber C. Kimball's oft-repeated phrase, Mormons undergoing this transition process were expected to become as "clay in the hands of the potter"; totally subordinating their wills to that of the group, they would allow themselves to be reshaped into a new and more perfect social form as Latter-day Saints.

This intense sense of camaraderie, combined with an implicit trust in the authority of their leaders, is clearly indicated in a letter of Joseph Smith's. This letter appears beyond reasonable doubt to have been sent to Nancy Rigdon by Joseph Smith after she had refused his proposal of marriage.[140] The letter begins by saying that: "Happiness is the object and design of our existence" but that this can only be achieved through "virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness and keeping all the commandments of God. But we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them. . . . That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another." The letter continues:

> A parent may whip a child, and justly too, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost.
>
> This principle will justly apply to all of God's dealings with his children. Everything that God gives us is lawful and right; and it is proper that we should enjoy his gifts and blessings whenever and wherever he is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without law, without revelation, without commandment, those blessings and enjoyments would prove cursings in the end. . . .

The letter concludes:

> Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive; and, at the same time, is more terrible to the workers of iniquity, more awful in the executions of His punishments, and more ready

> to detect every false way, than we are apt to suppose Him to be. He will be inquired of by His children. He says: "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find;" but, if you will take that which is not your own, or which I have not given you, you shall be rewarded according to your deeds; but no good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly before me, and do my will in all things—who will listen to my voice and to the voice of the servant whom I have sent; for I delight in those who seek dilligently to know my precepts, and abide by the law of my kingdom; for all things shall be made known unto them in mine own due time, and in the end they shall have joy.[141]

At a cursory first reading, this statement might be taken for mere sophistry. Such an explanation is too simple, however. When this letter is viewed within the context of Joseph Smith's larger sense of mission and from the perspective of anthropological analyses of the process of change, it clearly reveals an exceptional awareness of the whole basis of social order and human relatedness itself. In a related example, Joseph Lee Robinson remembered that when Smith spoke of polygamy in Turkey or India, he declared: ". . . God dosnt care what laws they make if they will live up to them. . . ."[142] In other words, faced with conditions of extraordinary social fluidity, Joseph Smith appears to have realized at the deepest possible emotional level how variable were the social forms within which certain underlying values may be expressed. The one absolute essential was that authority itself not be questioned. There must be one common basis of belief and practice to achieve unity and avoid social chaos. Joseph Smith felt that he himself was uniquely called by God to exercise that unifying authority and create that consensus of belief for his followers.

This Pauline awareness that the spirit of the gospel can be expressed in a number of different external forms depending upon changing circumstances is a key component of the Mormon concept of authority, particularly in the early period. Joseph Smith frequently acted with remarkable rapidity to introduce new social forms such as the Order of Enoch, yet he could discard such forms equally quickly when they proved ineffective in contributing to the achievement of the underlying goals for which they had been established. What was essential—and what remains essential in the Mormon Church to this day—is that there be a consensus that the head of the Mormon Church is ultimately able authoritatively to determine the specific social forms through which the underlying spirit is expressed as the Church deals with the ever-changing temporal circumstances affecting its existence.

Another side of this concern for authority is the direct personal sense

of communion or "communitas" present in the transitional phase between two divergent and partially opposed states of being. Powerful emotions, including sexual emotions, are frequently liberated during this phase. One cannot read for long in the Mormon literature without realizing that Joseph Smith's passionate sincerity and direct emotional engagement with his followers was a key element of his appeal and charisma. But such emotional power was a two-edged sword; it could lead to passionate love or, equally, to passionate hatred. There often seemed to be no middle ground. Either one was for the prophet, or one was against him.

For the most part, the Mormons appear to have attempted to minimize the inevitable disruption of the transition process, just as earlier they had attempted to eliminate some of the more extreme excesses of the revivalistic fervor to which some of their members had been subject. But disruptive phenomena at this stage could not be entirely eliminated. At precisely this critical point in their development, many millennial groups founder. Normal rites of passage within a society are socially sanctioned and have a known end point. In contrast, for millennial groups such as the Mormons the end point and the means of arriving at it are often less clear. Thus such groups frequently disintegrate due to internal dissension or are broken up by an external society that feels threatened by the group's unorthdox behavior and claims. The Mormons skillfully avoided the danger of disintegration at this stage. Effective and often ruthless leadership, maintenance of secrecy at all costs, a generally well-formulated sense of the desired end point—and eventually a forced migration to the relative isolation of the intermountain West—were among the factors that made the successful Mormon transition possible.

The Bennett Scandal

The preceding developments and conflicts were for the most part contained within the circle of Joseph Smith's most intimate followers. But the new beliefs and practices could not long be kept secret from the majority of Church members or from the outside world, as may be seen from the observations of Charlotte Havens, an articulate young non-Mormon resident of Nauvoo.[143] Rumors of strange new standards and unusual behavior soon became widespread, and distorted accounts began circulating. Since the entire movement to introduce plural marriage was carried on secretly, unrecognized by law, and in direct violation of existing moral and religious standards, Mormon authorities must have found it very difficult to check variant interpretations arising within the group. There is necessarily a great difference between polygamy as accepted in a long-established tradition and polygamy when newly introduced into a situation

92. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, p. 388.
93. Exactly what relationship existed between Joseph Smith and the twenty-seven women listed as his plural wives in Jenson, "Plural Marriage," pp. 233–234, is unclear. Of this list, full marriage dates are given in ten cases; no date is given in the cases of two women who presumably were married to Smith before Nauvoo; and no dates are given for the marriages of ten women who presumably were sealed to him in some fashion in Nauvoo. Of the list of forty-eight plural wives of Joseph Smith presented in Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 335–36, 457–88, approximately one third appear to have been sealed to him for "time and eternity"; another one third may or may not have been sealed to him for "time and eternity"; and approximately one third were presumably sealed to him only "for eternity," or else are of such dubious and unsubstantiated character that little can be said about them. Brodie makes use of a number of apostate accounts in drawing up her list. Some of these may contain important information, while others, such as William Hall's account, are of extremely dubious accuracy and must be evaluated with the caution used in evaluating any malicious gossip. Stanley Snow Ivins's list of eighty-four alleged plural wives is found in a Miscellaneous Folder in his collection at the Utah State Historical Society, and is most readily available in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, n.d.), pp. 41–47. Again, the precise nature of the relationship, if any, that Joseph Smith had with these women is unclear. Ivins includes eleven women in his list who were sealed by proxy to Joseph Smith long after his death, but who, he says, *might* have been married to Smith during his life.

The major primary and secondary accounts on which this analysis of Joseph Smith's plural wives is based include Jenson, "Plural Marriage," pp. 219–34; Joseph F. Smith, Jr., *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage;* Temple Lot Case [U.S. Circuit Court (8th Circuit)] in Church Archives, printed in abbreviated form as *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, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1893), hereafter cited as *Abstract of the Temple Lot Case;* Shook, *Origin of Mormon Polygamy;* Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, esp. pp. 297–322, 334–47, and 457–588; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy;* and Vesta P. Crawford Papers, Univ. of Utah Special Collections. Bachman's "Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith" is the most comprehensive Mormon analysis of the affidavits concerning Joseph Smith's plural marriages, and must be consulted by all serious scholars concerned with these issues. Since the closing of the records on Joseph Smith's marriage sealings in the Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City to researchers, that data is available for the use of historians and genealogists in Thomas Milton Tinney, "The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Junior: First President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (typescript, 1973; a copy is held in the Utah State Historical Society Library and the University of Utah Library, both in Salt Lake City). Many important primary anti-Mormon sources exist, but their use has been de-emphasized in this section. Insofar as most of these sources, whether Mormon or non-Mormon, tend to focus on Smith's personal behavior, they tend to ignore the important social issues that are of most interest to historians. As Brigham Young stated emphatically in *Journal of Discourses*, 4: 78, a prophet's personal conduct is not necessarily a measure of the validity of his general program.

94. The chief source used here for Lucy Walker's experience is a typescript copy of her account made by the Federal Writer's Project in 1940. This version is almost identical to that held in manuscript in the Church Archives, except that the latter contains a fuller account of Lucy Walker's experiences following Joseph Smith's death. A version omitting almost all references to plural marriage was printed in the *Woman's Exponent* 39 (1910): 31, and *passim*. The testimony in the Temple Lot Case also should be consulted.

    Some of Joseph Smith's other plural wives for whom extensive documentation exists include Eliza R. Snow, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Sarah Ann Whitney, Emily and Eliza Partridge, Helen Mar Kimball, and Melissa Lott.
95. Since Lucy Walker's accounts were written many years after the events she describes, her lack of clarity in giving dates is understandable. According to Joseph F. Smith, Jr., *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, p. 55, William Clayton's Private Journal for May 1, 1843, states: "At the Temple. At 10 married Joseph to Lucy Walker." The whereabouts of Clayton's Journal is not currently known.
96. Typescript analysis of various characteristics of Joseph Smith's plural wives as indicated in Vesta P. Crawford Papers.
97. Compare this type of experience to conventional rites of passage as described in Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, and Turner, *Ritual Process*.
98. Vilate Kimball, Letter dated June 24, 1843, to Heber C. Kimball, in Winslow Whitney Smith Papers, box 5, folder 2, Church Archives. This was called to my attention by Jan Shipps. This letter was also printed, in part, with slight modifications, in Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (September 15, 1882): 58.
99. See Quinn, "The Mormon Hierarchy," pp. 246–91.
100. *Historical Record* 6 (May 1887): 237.
101. Letter of Joseph Smith's, dated August 18, 1842, in Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives. This letter has been photographically reproduced, along with a line by line transcription, in H. Michael Marquart, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: n.p., n.d.), pp. 6–9. Marquart's accompanying text provides background information and a suggestion of the fluidity of marital relationships during the early development of polygamy in Nauvoo.
102. See Tinney, "Royal Family," for a full reproduction of the relevant temple sealing records. This list includes all women who are known to have been sealed to Joseph Smith, either during his life or after his death. Unfortunately, it is little more than a listing of evidence and fails to ask most of the historically interesting questions.
103. Temple Lot Case (complete transcript), pp. 364, 367, 384.
104. Affidavit of Melissa Willes, August 3, 1893, as reproduced in Bailey, "Emma Hale," pp. 98–100. In the Temple Lot Case (complete tran-

script), p. 98, 105, Melissa Willes emphatically stated that she was married to Joseph Smith for time and eternity, even if it was not officially so recorded, and she gave the room number in Smith's home where she allegedly spent the night with him.

105. Ibid., p. 451.
106. Ibid., p. 427.
107. Johnson, Letter to George Gibbs, p. 12.
108. The original "Sketch of My Life" by Eliza R. Snow is held by the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California. The portions dealing with polygamy were reprinted in Spencer J. Palmer, "Eliza R. Snow's 'Sketch of My Life': Reminiscences of One of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives," *BYU Studies* 12 (Autumn 1971): 125–30.
109. Typical of such statements in the Temple Lot Case (complete transcript), pp. 96–97, 99, Melissa Willes denied that she had any children by Joseph Smith but she refused to say anything about other children that he may have had because "I told you that I couldn't swear to any body else's children but my own. . . ."
110. Even Joseph Smith's acknowledged plural wives went by the names of the men whom they remarried, or, as in the atypical case of Eliza R. Snow, who was remarried to Brigham Young but had no children by him, retained their maiden names. Children born to wives of Joseph Smith who had been sealed to him for eternity bore the names of their natural father even though Mormon theology taught that the children would belong to Joseph Smith's family after they died. Thus, it may be assumed that if Smith had children by any of his plural wives, they would have borne the surnames of the families which reared them.
111. James L. Kimball, Jr., who is making a detailed demographic reconstruction of Nauvoo based on census records and other information, expressed his personal puzzlement to me at a number of cases of children who appear in early Utah census records but not in those from Nauvoo. Their age in Utah would have suggested that they should have been counted in the Nauvoo census also. This discrepancy in the record could be due to errors by the census takers, to various forms of "adoption" by the Mormons, or to factors connected with the early development of polygamy.
112. Mary E. Rollins Lightner, Remarks at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, p. 5.
113. Handwritten statement by Lucy Meserve Smith, dated May 18, 1892, in the George A. Smith Papers, University of Utah Special Collections; called to my attention by Robert Flanders.
114. See Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 345–46, 470–71. Part of Brodie's unidentified documentation for her assertion in this case is found in a handwritten letter of John R. Young to Vesta P. Crawford in April 1931, Vesta Crawford Papers; called to my attention by Robert Flanders.
115. This is part of a low-keyed description of the manner in which plural wives were said to have been taken by Mormon leaders in Nauvoo. This statement in the *Expositor* is compatible with other Mormon and apostate accounts. In fact, if anything, it is understated.
116. Personal conversation with T. Edgar Lyon, June 27, 1974. This account could easily be reconciled with that of the *Expositor*, above, which indicated that pregnant plural wives disappeared from public view. Although there are a number of family traditions in Utah of children by plural wives of Joseph Smith, I have not been able to investigate them closely enough to determine their possible validity. If Smith had children by women who were legally married to other men, such children obviously would not have been publicly acknowledged. For examples of such allegations, see Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 301–8, 334–47.
117. Personal conversation with T. Edgar Lyon, July 19, 1974. Also see T. Edgar Lyon, "The Development of Church Organization and Doctrine, 1839–1846" (Mimeo, LSD Institute of Religion talk, March 1, 1968), p. 9.
118. This letter, dated June 23, 1846, was sent by Brigham Young to his plural wife, "Mrs. Hariot [*sic*] Cook." On the cover of the letter, its destination is indicated as "Snow House." Reproduced in full in Fawn M. Brodie, "A Letter from the Camp of Israel, 1846," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 33 (Autumn 1971): 67–70.
119. Mary Ann Frost Pratt, first wife of Parley P. Pratt, was sealed to Joseph Smith "for eternity" in February 1846, and Nancy Marinda Johnson Hyde, first wife of Orson Hyde, was sealed to Joseph Smith "for eternity" on July 31, 1857. It cannot be positively determined whether or not early cases of sealings "for eternity" were for eternity *only*.
120. One example of a seemingly clear case based on LDS sources is that of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs. In an interview with J. W. Wight on October 1, 1896, in the Zina D. H. Young Papers in the Church Archives, Zina was unwilling to give the date or even the year of her marriage to Joseph Smith. When asked how she could have been married to Joseph Smith "for time and eternity," as she asserted, while she was at the same time the wife of Henry Jacobs for "time," she became very upset and said: "I do not wish to reply. I only know that this is the work of God upon this earth, and I know by testimony from God that Joseph Smith was a Prophet." This interview is reproduced in Elder D. Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed* (Independence, Mo.: Reorganized Church of Latter-Day Saints, 1911), pp. 212, 216. The Mormon writer Vesta Crawford lists eight other cases of Joseph Smith's plural wives who were married women with living husbands, Vesta Crawford Papers. See Bachman, "A Study of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith," for details on many of these cases.
121. *Journal of Discourses*, 2: 13–14.
122. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pp. 333–35. According to Whitney, Joseph Smith asked Heber for Vilate in this manner prior to acquainting him with the implications that the idea of celestial marriage had for the practice of plurality of wives. When Heber was informed about plural marriage and commanded to take a plural wife himself, Joseph Smith told him not to tell Vilate about the situation for fear she would not accept it. Actions of this sort were almost certain to lead to serious misunderstandings, particularly in cases of individuals whose loyalty was not so total as was that of Heber and Vilate Kimball. For a more detailed description and analysis of the reactions of members of the Kimball family to the introduction of polygamy, see Stanley B. Kimball, "Heber C. Kim-

ball and Family: The Nauvoo Years," *BYU Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 447–79. Also see my paper/response, " 'Puritan Polygamists': The Strains and Challenges of the Transition to Polygamy in the Heber C. Kimball Family"; presented at the Mormon History Association session of the Organization of American Historians meetings in St. Louis on April 8, 1976.

123. A classic case was reported in the affidavit of M. G. Eaton on March 27, 1844, printed in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on May 15, 1844. The affidavit describes in detail Robert D. Foster's allegations that Smith had tried to seduce his wife. Although the affidavit does not mention Smith by name, other sources make clear that he was the person whom Foster was accusing. Some of the other individuals who joined the *Expositor* group also became disaffected due in part to similar misunderstandings.
124. Doctrine and Covenants, 132:7, 15.
125. In denying the allegations made by the *Expositor* concerning polygamy, Hyrum Smith "referred to the revelation read to the High Council of the Church, which has caused so much talk about a multiplicity of wives. . . ." He said "that said Revelation was in answer to a question concerning things which transpired in former days [see Doctrine and Covenants, 132:1–2], and had no reference to the present time." The first part of this statement was correct. The second part appears to have constituted an elaborate evasion of the issue: the *question* was in reference to former times, not to the present; the *practice* which arose out of the answer to that question about former times, however, most certainly did have implications for the present—but *only* when a person was apprised of the revelation and commanded by Joseph Smith to enter into the practice. Then the practice of polygamy became mandatory and very much a part of this world. See *Nauvoo Neighbor* Extra, June 17, 1844. The text of the Extra is also reprinted in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on June 19, 1844.
126. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled,* pp. 146–47.
127. James Beck Notebooks, 1859–1865, vol. 1, in Church Archives; report of a speech by Brigham Young on October 8, 1861.
128. In the original stenographic report of Brigham Young's speech of October 8, 1861, he states that he and a few others learned this belief from Joseph Smith himself. Brigham Young Addresses, box 49, folder 8, in Church Archives. An unauthorized transcription of this speech has been reproduced by present-day schismatic Mormons in Dennis R. Short, *For Men Only: The Lord's Law of Obedience* (Salt Lake City: Dennis R. Short, 1977), pp. 85–90.
129. *Journal of Discourses,* 4: 165.
130. Doctrine and Covenants, 132:41.
131. *Messenger* 1 (March 1875): 17.
132. One source with a bearing on these issues is the letter of Brigham Young to Mrs. M. R., a Mormon woman of Manti, Utah, dated March 5, 1857; typescript copy of the original letter in my possession. On the face of it, the letter would appear to imply at least theoretical approval by Brigham Young of a form of temporal proxy arrangement. A closer analysis of the letter and an investigation of additional evidence, however, suggest that such an interpretation can not be conclusively established. Seen in context, a number of ambiguities arise. The whereabouts of the woman's earlier letter to Brigham Young on February 22, 1857, is apparently not known. Thus we cannot be sure what the nature of her husband's dysfunction was, concerning which Brigham Young responded in the letter of March 5th: ". . . if I was imperfect and had a good wife I would call on some good bror. to help me. that we might have increase; that a man of this character will have a place in the Temple, receive his endowments and in eternity will be as tho' nothing had happened to him in time." In addition, the couple had already had two children (in 1841 and 1846) prior to their conversion to Mormonism in 1853, so the two children born subsequently to the letter (on October 13, 1858, and on January 26, 1861, both in Manti) need not be explained as due to any extraordinary circumstances. It is highly significant that, according to the autobiography of the first child born in Manti, the relationship between him, his father, and his younger brother was extremely warm. Finally, it is always possible that this letter represents an example of Brigham Young's exaggerated rhetoric. Even if the letter means what it appears on the surface to mean, it is significant that the relationship, whatever it may have been, was an honorable one and fully sanctioned by the Church.

Like this letter, the one passage with which I am familiar in official printed Mormon sources which might be construed as a reference to a practice of assigning temporal proxy husbands is also ambiguous. In a public speech on October 4, 1857, Erastus Snow first stressed the importance of each woman's doing her best to cooperate with her husband honor him as Lord. He then declared:

> **I ask can you get into the Celestial Kingdom without him? Have any of you been there? You will remember that you never got into the Celestial Kingdom without the aid of your husband. If you did, it was because your husband was away, and someone had to act proxy for him.**

Journal of Discourses, 5: 291. Although at first reading this passage might appear to refer to the type of hypothesized temporal proxy arrangement suggested here, the use of the past tense in the passage suggests that Snow was probably referring to the temple endowment ceremony instead. Similar confusion regarding public references to the endowment ceremony may account for some of the other allegations that the Church sanctioned temporal proxy arrangements during this period.

A statement by an ex-Mormon who was evidently well informed about the events of the Mormon Reformation of 1856–57, alleged that in a public speech during that period Heber C. Kimball had presented an argument for temporal proxy husbands, and that when a group of angry women descended on Brigham Young the next day to ask whether he endorsed such beliefs or not, he simply parried them with an evasive answer. This statement appeared as an open letter to Brigham Young signed "A Mormon and Defender of the Truth" in *Christian Advocate* of March 1877, as quoted in Ivins, Notebook 8: 233–34. For another statement giving such allegations, see the account of John Benjamin Franklin, as recorded in Ivins, Notebook 1: 113–14. In contrast to the highly polemical and obviously imaginary accounts characteristic of many

semi-novelistic exposés of Mormon polygamy, the relatively few allegations of temporal proxy husbands that appear in the literature are usually given in an essentially straightforward manner by individuals who appear basically accurate in their other statements.

133. Hyde, *Mormonism*, pp. 87–88.
134. For an early description of the various categories of marriage sealings, see Orson Pratt's comments in the *Seer*, pp. 141–43. A contemporary doctrinal statement of Mormon marriage beliefs about plural and celestial marriage is found in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), in several different articles.
135. Genesis 38:8–10.
136. Matthew 22:15–22; Mark 12:18–27; and Luke 20:27–40. For information relating to allegations of a relationship between Emma Smith and William Law, see Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits, or The Truth about the Mormon Leaders, 1830–1886* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Publishing Co., 1886), p. 108; and Wilhelm Wyl's interview with William Law, as reported in *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 3, 1887.
137. For instance, see Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, esp. pp. 301–4, 335–37. Also consider the puzzling relationship of Willard Richards to Orson Hyde's wife, Nancy Marinda Johnson Hyde. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith and Polygamy*, pp. 80–87.
138. Vesta Crawford lists nine women she says were married to Joseph Smith while still having living husbands; see Vesta Crawford Papers. Fawn Brodie lists twelve such alleged cases, at least one of which is highly conjectural; see *No Many Knows My History*, pp. 335–36. There is strong reason to believe that in at least some of the cases cited by Crawford and Brodie, the women remained with their original husbands while they also sustained a sexual relationship with Joseph Smith. The most clear-cut such case is that of Zina D. Huntington Jacobs, who remained with Henry Jacobs until 1846. Also consider the complex cases of Elvira Cowles and Sara Ann Whitney. For additional evidence on puzzling cases of this kind, see Bachman, "A Study of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith."
139. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, p. 301.
140. The letter was first printed in Bennett's *History of the Saints*, pp. 243–45. Bennett stated that Smith had proposed marriage to Nancy Rigdon and had been refused. After that refusal, Smith had allegedly dictated the letter through his secretary, Willard Richards, to Nancy Rigdon. In a roundabout and equivocal statement, the Mormon paper, the *Wasp*, stated on August 27, 1842, that the letter was more moral than anything that Bennett would write, but that Smith was not the author. In the *Wasp* on September 3, 1842, Nancy's father, Sidney Rigdon, asserted that the use of the letter was not authorized by his daughter and that he considered its publication a violation of the "rules of gallantry." Rigdon also noted that the letter was not in Smith's hand but rather in the hand of another person. In an affidavit of July 28, 1905, Nancy Rigdon's brother, John W. Rigdon, confirmed the truth of Bennett's allegations and commented on the hard feelings between the Rigdon family and Joseph Smith that the episode had produced. Joseph F. Smith, Jr., *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, pp. 83–84. The letter is currently printed in the *History of the Church*, 5: 134–36, with wording identical to Bennett's version, as an essay on "happiness" that was given by Joseph Smith under unspecified circumstances. Even apologetic contemporary Mormon scholarship now accepts as fact that the letter was authorized by Joseph Smith after his marriage proposal to Nancy Rigdon had been rejected. For instance, see John J. Stewart, *Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Mercury Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 170–71.
141. *History of the Church*, 5: 136.
142. Robinson, Journal, p. 24.
143. Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, pp. 116–23, print some of her letters.
144. Two important and as yet largely untouched sources providing a more positive perspective on Bennett's activities are the Ralph V. Chamberlain Papers and the Martin Wilford Poulson Papers in the Brigham Young University Special Collections. Arriving at a realistic assessment of Bennett's role is extraordinarily difficult. Later Mormon historiography has tended to assume that Bennett did not really know the factual details of the development of polygamy in Nauvoo. This seems highly improbable. Given Bennett's pivotal position in the secular life of Nauvoo and his high position in the Church as an "Assistant President" (an office which apparently was created just for him and which was discontinued after his apostasy), it strains credulity to believe that Joseph Smith would not have taken the man into his full confidence. B. H. Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1900), p. 136, succinctly stated a major reason why Joseph Smith initially became attracted to Bennett: "Joseph said Bennett was the first man who'd do exactly what he wanted done, the way it should be done, and at once." Bennett was capable, imaginative, and initially something of a sycophant, but as soon as he had created his own power base, he became an extraordinarily disruptive figure. The social disorganization in Nauvoo which could allow a man like Bennett to rise and fall so rapidly deserves serious historical attention.
145. These were the evaluations, respectively, of Kimball, "Study of the Nauvoo Charter," p. 25, ftn. 21, which sees Bennett as an excellent example of the "booster type" described in Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Vintage, 1965); personal conversation with Robert Flanders in summer 1974; and Thomas Ford, *History of Illinois* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs, 1859), p. 263.
146. The anti-Bennett exposés and the Poulson and Chamberlain Papers suggest how incapable Bennett was of staying with a single project for any length of time. Bennett's religious affiliations ranged from the Campbellites to the Methodists, the Mormons, and the Stangite Mormons. As summarized by the medical historian Frederick C. Waite, Bennett's medical career included writing a short book on gynecology, establishing a number of short-lived colleges, making use of medical innovations in his private practice, and helping to found several state medical societies. Following Bennett's Mormon interlude, which included a brief and similarly stormy affiliation with the Strangite organization, he returned to secular life to reestablish a successful medical practice, write an important treatise

pressures under which Smith was living, pressures which apparently made him desire more than purely intellectual companionship.

It has been hotly contested whether Smith's relationships with his plural wives included full sexual intercourse. Some cases certainly did not. Women who were sealed to Smith only for "eternity" presumably had no physical relationship with him while he was alive, although there may be exceptions to this generalization among some of the women whose names appear in the 1846 Nauvoo Temple Record as sealed to him for "eternity." Following Smith's death a total of some 335 women were sealed to him, many of whom he had not even known.[102] If these two special groups are excepted, however, the almost unanimous testimony of Smith's followers, informed ex-Mormons and anti-Mormons, and his plural wives themselves was that his wives were, indeed, wives in every sense of the word, lacking only public acknowledgement. It is difficult to understand how Smith's followers could have been induced to adopt the new practices if he had not led the way himself.

Although admissions of unorthodox marital relations are obviously a highly personal matter, many of Joseph Smith's plural wives testified explicitly that they had had full sexual relations with him. Emily D. P. Partridge said she "roomed" with Smith the night following her marriage to him, and she also admitted that she had had "carnal intercourse" with him.[103] Melissa Lott testified that she was Joseph Smith's wife "in very deed."[104] Lucy Walker, when asked, "Did you live with Joseph Smith as his wife?" replied in irritation, "He was my husband, sir."[105] Joseph Bates Noble went so far as to claim that he saw Joseph Smith and Louisa Beaman, whom he sealed to Smith, in bed together. When pressed, Noble admitted that he hadn't actually *seen* them in bed together; Smith had told him the next day that they had slept together.[106] Probably Benjamin F. Johnson's statement that he had seen his sister Almera in bed with Smith was an extrapolation similar to that of Joseph Bates Noble.[107]

Perhaps more convincing than the direct testimony of Smith's wives is the tacit assumption underlying almost all major existing accounts—that contemporary sealings to him normally implied full marital relations. Eliza R. Snow's statement clearly makes this assumption and suggests the intellectual process by which the new practice could be accepted. When Eliza first heard that plural marriage was to be introduced into the Church, she found the idea "repugnant." She reflected, however, that "I was living in the Dispensation of the fulness of times, embracing all other Dispensations. surely Plural Marriage must necessarily be included, and I consoled myself with the idea that it was far in the distance, and beyond the period of my mortal existence." Shortly thereafter, however, she

heard that the time had come. She was sealed to Joseph Smith for "time and eternity."[108] Eliza's sense of repugnance and her entire statement only make sense if something other than spiritual relationships are being discussed here. Moreover, in order to interpret this in a "spiritual" sense, one would have to assume that marriage sealings for "time and eternity" as practiced in the later Mormon Church had changed since Smith's day.

If Smith did have full conjugal relations with many of his plural wives, why is there no solid evidence of any children born to him by his plural wives? Impotence is not a possible explanation: Emma bore children to Joseph Smith regularly throughout their marriage, even during times of considerable stress. Infrequency of sexual relations with any given plural wife could only provide a partial explanation for the lack of children by the wives. And abortion does not appear to be a plausible explanation. Not only was it in total opposition to Smith's emphasis on polygamy as a means of "raising up a righteous branch," but it also lacks reliable documentary support.

It is significant that despite their strong testimony to being wives of Joseph Smith in the fullest sense of the term, most women who claimed to have been married to him consistently refused, in the face of repeated questioning, to affirm or deny that they or other women had had children by him.[109] This reticence was entirely understandable. If information about Smith's children by plural wives were brought into the open, the line of questioning adopted by often-hostile interrogators would have been even more insulting, and other individuals' names would have been dragged into the discussion. Even if children by Smith's plural wives lived in Utah—as oral and written traditions there suggest—they probably would have borne the names of the family who reared them.[110] Detailed demographic work in progress on the Nauvoo period and early Utah suggests that some children became part of families in which they were not born, under puzzling circumstances.[111]

Evidence for children Smith may have had by plural wives is based largely on oral and family traditions. Mary Rollins Lightner, one of the most articulate and knowledgeable of Smith's plural wives, said: "I know he had six wives and I have known some of them from childhood up. I know he had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names."[112] Lucy Meserve Smith recalled that her husband George A. Smith told her of going to see Joseph Smith and finding him washing his hands after he had helped Emma—who had served as the midwife—deliver a child by one of his plural wives.[113] Persistent and apparently well-founded family tradition suggests that Eliza R. Snow conceived a child by Joseph Smith and suffered a miscarriage.[114] The *Nauvoo Expositor* of June 7,