

CHAPTER XLV

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW MARRIAGE SYSTEM FOR THE CHURCH

ANOTHER matter of very great importance, and one which has exercised a great influence upon the course of events in the church belongs to the year 1841; and many things of our history in this Nauvoo period will be all the plainer if the matter referred to be considered now. Reference is made to the introduction, in practice, of the marriage system which afterwards obtained in the church.

ETERNITY OF THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

The chief and greatest feature of this marriage system—usually called “Celestial Marriage,” by members of the church—¹ because conceived to be the marriage system that obtains in celestial worlds—is the eternity of the marriage covenant. “Until death us do part,” is usually the mutual covenant of man and woman in the orthodox “Christian” marriage ceremony.² That is, the marriage covenant is understood among Christian churches generally as being a matter that pertains to time only, the contract obligations ending with death. But the new marriage law of the Church of the Latter-day Saints regards the incident of death not at all, but makes the covenant of marriage to hold for time and for all eternity; a covenant which is sealed and ratified by that power of the priesthood in the administrator which binds on earth and it

1. The term “Celestial Marriage” is not used in the revelation that makes known the eternity of the marriage covenant; nor in any of the books recognized as the authoritative scriptures of the church. In books of a secondary character, however, written by prominent elders of the church, and in some affidavits given upon the subject of the introduction of the system into the church, the term is frequently used (see affidavits of Joseph B. Noble, B. F. Johnson, John Benbow *et al.*, *Historical Record*, Jensen, pp. 221, *et seq.*) The Prophet Joseph also uses the term in his journal under date of August 25, 1843, as follows: “My brother Hyrum in the office conversing with me about the new revelation upon *Celestial Marriage*” (*History of the Church*, Period I, vol. v, p. 541).

2. See the *Book of Common Prayer*, Church of England, article, “Solemnization of Matrimony.”

is bound in heaven.³ That is, the covenant of marriage holds good through time and will be in effect and of binding force in and after the resurrection. In other words this marriage system regards man as enduring eternally, and formulates his marriage covenants in harmony with that view of him. Of course this contemplates the continuation of the marriage state in eternity. Not only the spiritual and intellectual companionship, but all the relations of the wedded state, with the joys of parentage—"the power of endless lives," being among the means of man's exaltation and glory.

That this is a view of marriage quite distinct from the orthodox Christian view, goes without saying. It throws a new light upon man's future existence. It destroys the vagueness which through nearly all ages has hidden the glory and exaltation destined for man in the future eternities of God. It should be said, in this connection, that the revelation of God to Joseph Smith, even before this marriage system was made known, held out to man the hope of a tangible, future existence in a resurrected, immortal body of flesh and bones quickened by the spirit, and clothed with the glory of an immortal youth. The future life was to be a reality, not merely a land of phantoms; man's heavenly home was to be upon the earth, after the earth had become sanctified and made a celestial sphere. His relations with his kindred and friends were to be of a nature to satisfy the longings of the human heart for society, for fellowship; and needed only the revelation of this marriage system to complete the circle of his promised future felicity. For grant to man in his resurrected state a real, tangible existence; an immortal youth that knows no pain or sickness or disease; the power to have knowledge and wisdom as the centuries, the millenniums and eternity roll by; grant him power to build and inhabit; to love and be loved; and add to that the associations of superior intelligences

3. Jesus said unto Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (*St. Matt.* xvi:19.)

and the power of endless lives—the power and privilege to perpetuate his race under an eternal marriage covenant—grant this, and the future happiness, exultation and glory of man stands revealed as being absolutely without limitations, and far greater and beyond in majesty anything within his power to conceive in his present state of development.

The primary principle of the marriage system of the church, I repeat, is *the eternity of the marriage covenant*; but owing to the fact that the system also included the doctrine of the rightfulness—under given specific conditions—of a plurality of wives, the importance and grandeur of the doctrine of the eternity of the marriage covenant, to a very great extent, has been obscured by the discussion of and the popular clamor concerning the plurality feature of the new marriage system.

TIME OF THE MARRIAGE REVELATION

The revelation making known this marriage doctrine came about in this way; first it should be stated, and it is evident from the written revelation itself, which bears the date of July 12th, 1843,—that the doctrine was revealed and the practice of it begun⁴ before the partial⁵ revelation now in the *Doctrine and Covenants* was written. As early as 1831 the rightfulness of a plurality of wives under certain limitations and special conditions was made known to Joseph Smith.

In the latter part of that year, especially from November, 1831, and through the early months of 1832, the Prophet with Sidney Rigdon as his amanuensis was earnestly engaged at Hiram, a village in Portage county, Ohio, twenty-eight miles south of Kirtland, in translating the Jewish scriptures. It

4. See *Doctrine and Covenants*, sec. cxxxii. Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet is commanded in verse 52 of the revelation "to receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me," which proves that the doctrine and its practice was in existence before the revelation was committed to writing.

5. *Ibid*, verse 66. "And now, as pertaining to this law, verily I saw unto you, I will reveal more unto you, hereafter; therefore let this suffice for the present." Hence I say "partial revelation" in the text.

must have been while engaged in that work that the evident approval of God to the plural marriages of the ancient patriarchs attracted the Prophet's attention, and led him to make those inquiries of the Lord to which the opening paragraphs of the written revelation of July 12, 1843, refer, *viz:*—

“Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand, to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines; behold! and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.”

THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT OF MARRIAGE

God's answer to the Prophet, however, went far beyond the scope of the latter's inquiry. The Prophet had asked why the Lord justified the Hebrew patriarchs and some of the later Hebrew prophets in having a plurality of wives, and God in his answer said:

“Prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold! I reveal unto you *a new and an everlasting covenant*; and if ye abide not that covenant then ye are damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as instituted from before the foundation of the world: *And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant*, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof, must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God. And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these:— 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 that, too, most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power— * * * are of no efficacy, virtue or force, in and after the resurrection from the dead: for all contracts that are not made unto this end, have an end when men are dead.”

PLURALITY OF WIVES

Around this central principle of the new marriage sys-

tem the instructions and admonitions of the rest of the revelation, in the main, articulate. In the matter of the Prophet's direct inquiry as to the ancient patriarchs having a plurality of wives, the revelation said:

"God commanded Abraham and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? *Because it was the law*, and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling among other things the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it. * * * David also received many wives and concubines, as also Solomon and Moses, my servants; as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; *and in nothing did they sin, save in those things which they received not of me.*"

The revelation renewed this privilege of a plurality of wives under the law of God, Joseph Smith holding the keys of power by which said relationships were to be authorized.

"And again, verily I say unto you, my servant Joseph, that whatsoever you give on earth, and to whomsoever you give any one on earth, by my word, and according to my law, it shall be visited with blessings, and not cursings, and with my power, saith the Lord, and shall be without condemnation on earth, and in heaven: For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily, I seal upon you exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father."

Still later in the revelation it is said that if a man take more than one woman to wife under the authority here conferred upon the Prophet, he would not be under condemnation, for under those circumstances the man would be receiving his wives upon the same principle and under the same conditions that the *Bible* patriarchs and prophets received theirs, namely, under the sanction and approval of divine law and authority.⁶

6. The statement of the text is made with care on this point, because the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never stood as the advocate of indiscriminate or the general practice of a plural marriage system, under mere human, legal sanctions. Such a general practice would doubtless be mischievous and lead to the disasters which opponents have from time to time charged to the more limited and specifically guarded practice of the principle under what the Latter-day Saints held to be divine sanctions, restraints and regulations. It was indeed a principle of religion to the Latter-day Saints, a holy sacrament, and not at all designed to become a general

When the new marriage law was first revealed in 1831, it was also made known to the Prophet that the time had not yet come to teach or practice this doctrine in the church, but that time would come later.⁷ The Prophet, however, did make known what had been revealed to him to a few trusted friends, among whom were Oliver Cowdery and Lyman E. Johnson, the latter confiding what the prophet had told him to Orson Pratt, his missionary companion. With these and a few other exceptions, perhaps, the knowledge of the truth and righteousness of this principle in the future marriage system of the church was for some time locked up in the bosom of the Prophet.

Corroborative evidences of the fact of the revelation having been given previous to the date on which it was committed to writing—July 12th, 1843,—are to be found in the early charges against the church about its belief in “polygamy.” For example: when the book of *Doctrine and Covenants* was presented to the several quorums of the priesthood of the church for acceptance in the general assembly of that body, the 17th of August, 1835, an article on “marriage” was presented by W. W. Phelps, which for many years was published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. It was not a revelation, nor was it presented as such to the general assembly of the priesthood. It was an article, however, that represented the views of the assembly on the subject of marriage at that

practice under merely human laws. It is unfortunate that the world outside of the church of the Latter-day Saints was not impressed with this phase of the subject; for then it would have been apparent that the thing the world argued against and fought against—a general plural marriage system free for all to adopt, considered to be destructive of the monogamous marriage system and a menace to the home itself—was not the thing upheld and contended for by the Latter-day Saints, who hold that the privilege of plural marriage was to be limited to persons of high character, approved lives, and living under the most sacred obligations to chastity, and granted this privilege of the church's marriage system only under the most carefully guarded permission of the church, amounting to divine sanction. Such were the limitations put upon the practice of the plural feature of the marriage system given to the church, and the proof that they never sought to make their plural marriage system of general practice, under merely human sanctions, is seen in the fact that neither under the “State of Deseret” nor while in full control of the territory of Utah, having both governorship and legislature under Brigham Young, 1850-58, they enacted no law legalizing polygamy.

7. See Orson Pratt's statement given later in this chapter.

time, unenlightened as they were by the revelation already given to the Prophet on the subject. What the Prophet Joseph's connection was with this article cannot be learned. Whether he approved it or not is uncertain, since he was absent from Kirtland on a visit to the saints in Michigan⁸ at the time the general assembly of the priesthood accepted it.

In this article on marriage the following sentence occurs:

"Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."

From this it is evident that as early at least as 1835 a charge of "polygamy" was made against the church. Why was that the case unless the subject of "polygamy" had been mooted within the church? It is not unlikely that someone to whom the Prophet had confided the knowledge of receiving a revelation concerning the rightfulness of plural marriage—under certain circumstances—had unwisely made some statement concerning the matter.

In the *Messenger and Advocate* for May, 1837, the following occurs as a resolution adopted by the seventies at Kirtland:

"First that we will have no fellowship whatsoever with any elder belonging to the quorums of the seventies who is guilty of polygamy or any offense of the kind, and who does not in all things conform to the law of the church contained in the Bible and in the book of *Doctrine and Covenants*.

[Signed,]

"DANIEL S. MILES, *Chairman*."

"ELIAS SMITH, *Clerk*."⁹

Again in July, 1838, in Missouri, in a series of questions asked and answered through *The Elders' Journal*, the following occurs: "Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?" To which the answer is given: "No, not at the same time."

8. See *History of the Church*, Period I, vol. i, pp. 243-253.

9. *Messenger and Advocate*, May, 1837, p. 517.

This again represents the belief of the saints at that time, unenlightened as they were by the revelation received by their Prophet. But again, why this question unless there had been some agitation on the subject? Had some one before the time had come for making known this doctrine to the church, again unwisely referred to the knowledge which had been revealed to the Prophet some seven years earlier?

All these things united make it plainly evident that the revelation on marriage was given long before the 12th of July, 1843—which marks only the date on which the revelation was committed to writing—and doubtless as early as 1831.

In addition to these indirect evidences is the direct testimony of the late Elder Orson Pratt, of the council of the twelve apostles. In 1878, in company with President Joseph F. Smith, Elder Pratt visited several states east of the Mississippi in the capacity of a missionary; and at Plano, Illinois, at a meeting of the so-called “Reorganized Church of the Latter-day Saints,” he was invited by the presiding officer, a Mr. Dille, and the meeting, to occupy the time, which he did. In his remarks, according to his own and his companion’s report of the meeting, occurs the following:

THE TESTIMONY OF ORSON PRATT

“Elder Pratt gave a plain, simple narration of his early experiences in the church, relating many interesting things connected with its rise; explained the circumstances under which several revelations were received by Joseph, the Prophet, and the manner in which he received them, he [Elder Pratt] being present on several occasions of the kind. Declared at such times Joseph used the “seer stone” when inquiring of the Lord, and receiving revelations, but that he was so thoroughly endowed with the inspiration of the Almighty and the spirit of revelation that he often received them without any instrument or other means than the operation of the spirit upon his mind. Referred to the testimony which he received of the truth while yet only a boy. Testified that these things were not matters of belief only with him, but of actual knowledge. He explained the circumstances connected with the coming forth of the revelation on plural marriage. Refuted the statement and belief of those present that Brigham Young was the author of that revelation; showed that Joseph Smith the Prophet had

not only commenced the practice himself, and taught it to others, before President Young and the twelve had returned from their mission in Europe, in 1841, but that Joseph actually received revelations upon that principle as early as 1831. Said Lyman Johnson, who was very familiar with Joseph at this early date, Joseph living at his father's house, 'and who was also very intimate with me, we having traveled on several missions together, told me himself that Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle. Joseph declared to Lyman that God had revealed it to him, but that the time had not come to teach or practice it in the church, but that the time would come.' To this statement Elder Pratt bore his testimony. He cited several instances of Joseph having had wives sealed to him, one at least as early as April 5th, 1841, which was some time prior to the return of the twelve from England. Referred to his own trial in regard to this matter in Nauvoo,¹⁰ and said it was because he got his information from a wicked source, from those disaffected, but as soon as he learned the truth, he was satisfied.

(Signed) "ORSON PRATT,"

(Signed) "JOSEPH F. SMITH."¹¹

It was in the fall of 1840 that the Prophet began to take the steps which resulted in the introduction of plural marriages as a practice in the church. According to the affidavit of Joseph B. Noble, given before James Jack, a notary public, in and for the county of Salt Lake, Utah, in June, 1869, Joseph Smith declared to Noble that he had received a revelation from God on the subject, and that an angel of the Lord had commanded him [Joseph Smith] to move forward in the said order of marriage; and further, that the said Joseph Smith requested him [Joseph B. Noble] to step forward and assist him in carrying out the said principle.¹²

Joseph B. Noble also gave a second affidavit concerning the beginning of the practice of plural marriage by Joseph Smith, as follows:

10. "Orson Pratt," says the late President John Taylor, "also had some difficulties while we were in Nauvoo, arising out of the introduction of the celestial order of marriage." President Taylor then proceeds to relate the labors of various members of the quorum of the twelve with Elder Pratt, his excommunication from the church, his final reconciliation with the Prophet, his restoration to the church and subsequent service therein, (*Succession in the Priesthood*, 1881, pp. 18-20). This is the circumstance referred to in the above "report."

11. Signed report of Elders Pratt and Smith, *Millennial Star*, vol. xl, nos. 49, 50, 1878.

12. Noble's affidavit is on file in the Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

“Territory of Utah,
County of Salt Lake,

Be it remembered that on this 26th day of June, A. D. 1869, personally appeared before me, James Jack, a notary public in and for said county, Joseph Bates Noble, who was by me sworn in due form of law, and upon his oath saith, that on the fifth day of April, A. D. 1841, at the city of Nauvoo, county of Hancock, state of Illinois, he married or sealed Louisa Beamen, to Joseph Smith, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, according to the order of celestial marriage revealed to the said Joseph Smith.

(Signed) “JOSEPH B. NOBLE.”

“Subscribed and sworn to by the said Joseph Bates Noble the day and year first above written.

JAMES JACK, *Notary Public.*”¹³

From this it will appear that the plural marriage feature of the new marriage system, under the restrictions already noted, was introduced as early as the 5th of April, 1841. On the return of the twelve, later in the summer of 1841, the Prophet began to teach the doctrine to them and urged the importance of putting it into practice. It was not received very readily by the twelve. After reciting the Prophet’s urgency in the matter, Elder John Taylor, who became the third president of the church, says:

“We [the twelve] seemed to put off, as far as we could, what might be termed the evil day.”¹⁴ Brigham Young said in a discourse delivered at Provo on July 14, 1855, that “If any man had asked me what was my choice when Joseph Smith revealed that doctrine [plurality of wives], provided that it would not diminish my glory, I would have said, ‘Let me have but one wife.’ * * * Some of these my brethren [referring to prominent elders on the platform at the time] know what my feelings were at the time Joseph revealed the

13. *Ibid.*

14. *The Life of John Taylor*, 1892; p. 100. Elder Taylor also adds in the same passage: “I had always entertained strict ideas of virtue, and I felt as a married man that this was to me, outside of this principle, an appalling thing to do. The idea of going and asking a young lady to be married to me when I already had a wife! It was a thing calculated to stir up feelings from the innermost depths of the human soul. I had always entertained the strictest regard of chastity. I had never in my life seen the time when I have known of a man deceiving a woman—and it is often done in the world, where, notwithstanding the crime, the man is received into society and the poor woman is looked upon as a pariah and an outcast—I have always looked upon such a thing as infamous, and upon such a man as a villain. * * * Hence, with the feeling I had entertained, nothing but a knowledge of God, and the revelations of God, and the truth of them, could have induced me to embrace such a principle as this.”

doctrine; I was not desirous of shrinking from any duty, nor of failing in the least to do as I was commanded, but it was the first time in my life that I had desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time."¹⁵

The world never made a greater mistake than when it supposed that plural marriage was hailed with delight by the elders who were commanded of the Lord to introduce its practice in this generation. They saw clearly that it would bring additional reproach upon them from the world; that it would run counter to the traditions and prejudices of society, as, indeed, it was contrary to their own traditions; that their motives would be misunderstood or misconstrued. All this they saw, and naturally shrunk from the undertaking required of them by this doctrine.

JUSTIFICATION FOR PRESENTING THIS SUBJECT

It has already been remarked that the consideration of this subject at this period of our history would aid the reader to understand more clearly many things in the subsequent events we have to relate. It is to be observed first of all that this principle of plural marriage had to be introduced secretly; firstly, because of the traditions and prejudices of the saints themselves; and, secondly, because of the advantage that their enemies surrounding them would have over the church if once the doctrine was publicly proclaimed. This enforced secrecy, which a reasonable prudence demanded, gave rise to apparent contradictions between the public utterances of leading breth-

15. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. iii, p. 266. It has been claimed, chiefly by the sons of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the founders of what is known as the "Reorganized Church of Latter-day Saints" that Joseph Smith never introduced either the doctrine or the practice of the plurality of wives in the church; but the evidence is overwhelmingly against this contention. In addition to the evidence incidentally existing in the text above, there is a large collection of affidavits upon the subject in the files of the Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, a number of which—ten in all—are published in the *Historical Record*, together with many less formal statements and evidences. Some of the affidavits and statements are from women who were married to Joseph Smith, and some by those who performed the ceremonies (*Historical Record*, Jenson, pp. 219-234), and other persons whose relationship to Nauvoo events gave them exceptional opportunities to know the truth of the matters whereof they testified. (See also Linn, who discusses the subject at length, *Story of the Mormons*, ch. x. Also Bancroft's *History of Utah*, pp. 158-166; and the *Notes* at the close of this chapter).

ren in the church and their having a plurality of wives under the new marriage law.¹⁶

Wicked men took advantage of the situation and brought sorrow to the hearts of the innocent and reproach upon the church by practicing and justifying promiscuous sexual relations. Some, possessed of a zeal without wisdom, and knowing in part of the existence of the new marriage system, hastened without authority to make public proclamation of it and had to be silenced, as, for instance, a number of elders who were reprovved by Hyrum Smith for preaching polygamy in a branch of the church at China Creek, near Nauvoo,¹⁷

16. The doctrine of plural marriage both by those who without authorization and, prematurely, undertook to teach it, and those who bitterly denounced it, was not properly apprehended either by such advocates or such denounciators. Plural marriage as taught by the Prophet was not the "polygamy" of the orient, with its attendant despotism and harems; nor the "bigamy" of western civilization, banned by the law of all the western nations, including our own, and in which the element of deception was always present by keeping the fact of the first and perhaps other marriages secret, thus betraying its victims to unsuspected disgrace and humiliation. And hence, because these overzealous advocates, and ill informed denounciators never truly represented the doctrine of the revelation on marriage, the denial of their misstatements of the doctrine and its practice was not regarded by the leading elders of the church as a denial of the doctrine of the revelation given to the Prophet; and while this may be considered a refinement in presentation that the world will not allow, it nevertheless represents a distinction that was real to those who were struggling with a difficult proposition, and accounts for the seeming denials referred to in the text above; as also later seeming denials made by John Taylor, in a public discussion with three ministers at Boulogne-sur-mer, France, 1850 (*Public Discussion in France*, included in *Orson Pratt's Works*, 1851 edition, England. Also *Life of John Taylor*, ch. xxiv); and by Parley P. Pratt in England, 1845 (*Millennial Star*, vol. vi, p. 22). Both Elders Pratt and Taylor in their denials were referring to the charges made by John C. Bennett and other apostates. Pratt says, in his denial: "Beware of seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, as first introduced by John C. Bennett under the name of 'the spiritual wife doctrine.' * * * It is but another name for whoredom, wicked and unlawful connection and every kind of confusion, corruption and abomination. * * * The *spiritual wife doctrine* of J. C. Bennett and numerous other apostates, is as foreign from the real principles of the church as the devil is from God, or as sectarianism is from Christianity." (*Ibid.*)

17. See *Times and Seasons* for March, 1844. The main point in Hyrum's letter is contained in the following paragraph:

"Whereas Brother Richard Hewitt has called on me today, to know my views concerning some doctrines that are preached in your place, and states to me that some of your elders say, *that a man having a certain priesthood may have as many wives as he pleases*, and that the doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrine, for there is no such doctrine taught here; neither is there any such thing practiced here. And any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine, is culpable, and will stand a chance to be brought before the high council, and lose his license and membership also." This denial is of the character of the denials referred to in note 16; compare the words in *italics* with the statement of the text as to the limitations, and special conditions under which plural marriage is to be allowed.

and later one Hiram Brown who did the same thing in Lapeer county, Michigan, for which he was disfellowshipped from the church and notified by Joseph and Hyrum to attend the conference in April of that year to give further account of his proceedings.¹⁸

Then again there were others who falsely taught that the Prophet approved of promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, and that there was no sin in such relations so long as they were kept secret and brought no scandal upon the community. This afforded villains their opportunity, and such men as John C. Bennett, the Laws, Wilson and William; Dr. Foster; the young Higbees, Chancy L. and Francis M., and others, to reap their harvest of lecherous wickedness. There was necessarily enough of mystery in the movements of the Prophet and his faithful brethren connected with the matter of plural marriage to give something of color to the false statements of these men, and hence many otherwise good people were deceived. The duty of the Prophet and his associates, however, to denounce this wickedness that had crept into the church, was not shirked by the leading elders of the church. The Prophet was bold in his denunciation of the evil; he ruthlessly unmasked corrupt men, and did all in his power to protect the innocent from the deceptions of the vicious, though it pulled down upon his own head the vengeful wrath of the ungodly.

Bearing this situation in mind, I am sure the reader will better appreciate the many complications which follow in this Nauvoo period of our history.

NOTES

1. THE REVELATION ON THE ETERNITY OF THE MARRIAGE COVENANT, AND PLURAL MARRIAGE COMMITTED TO WRITING

As stated in note 15 of this chapter it has been claimed that Joseph Smith did not receive the revelation on this subject, and was not responsible for the introduction of this practice in the church. In view

18. *Times and Seasons*, vol. v, no. 3, p. 423.

of these denials the circumstances under which the revelation was committed to writing, July 12th, 1843, will be of interest.

The account of it can best be told by the man who wrote the revelation as the Prophet Joseph dictated it to him, William Clayton; and the man who copied it the day following, Joseph Kingsbury; and from which Kingsbury "copy" the revelation was afterwards printed as it now stands in the current edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. In a sworn statement before John T. Caine, a notary public in Salt Lake City, on February 16th, 1874, William Clayton said:

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM CLAYTON

"On the 7th of October, 1842, in the presence of Bishop Newel K. Whitney, and his wife, Elizabeth Ann, President Joseph Smith appointed me temple recorder, and also his private clerk, placing all records, books, papers, etc., in my care and requiring me to take charge of and preserve them, his closing words being, 'when I have any revelations to write, you are the one to write them.' * * * On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office in the upper story of the brick store, on the bank of the Mississippi river. They were talking on the subject of plural marriage. Hyrum said to Joseph, 'If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take it and read it to Emma, and I believe I can convince her of the truth, and you will hereafter have peace.' Joseph smiled and remarked, 'You do not know Emma as well as I do.' Hyrum repeated his opinion and further remarked, 'The doctrine is so plain I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity and heavenly origin,' or words to that effect. Joseph then said, 'Well, I will write the revelation and we will see.' He [Hyrum] then requested Joseph to write the revelation by means of the Urim and Thummim, but Joseph in reply said he did not need to, for he knew the revelation perfectly from beginning to end.

Joseph and Hyrum then sat down and Joseph commenced to dictate the revelation on celestial marriage, and I wrote it sentence by sentence, as he dictated. After the whole was written Joseph asked me to read it through, slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct. He then remarked that there was much more that he could write on the same subject, but what was written was sufficient for the present.

Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. Joseph remained with me in the office until Hyrum returned. When he came back, Joseph asked him how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger.

Joseph quietly remarked, 'I told you you did not know Emma as well as I did.' Joseph then put the revelation in his pocket, and they both left the office.

The revelation was read to several of the authorities during the day. Towards evening Bishop Newel K. Whitney asked Joseph if he had any objection to his taking a copy of the revelation; Joseph

replied that he had not, and handed it to him. It was carefully copied the following day by Joseph C. Kingsbury. Two or three days after the revelation was written Joseph related to me and several others that Emma had so teased, and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy it and she had done so, but he had consented to her wish in this matter to pacify her, realizing that he knew the revelation perfectly, and could rewrite it at any time if necessary.

The copy made by Joseph C. Kingsbury is a true and correct copy of the original in every respect. The copy was carefully preserved by Bishop Whitney, and but few knew of its existence until the temporary location of the 'Camps of Israel' at Winter Quarters, on the Missouri river, in 1846. * * *

(Signed) "WM. CLAYTON."

"Salt Lake City, Feb. 16th, 1874."

TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY

On May 22, 1886, Joseph C. Kingsbury made the following statement before Charles W. Stayner, a notary public, in Salt Lake City:

"In reference to the affidavit of Elder William Clayton on the subject of the celestial order of patriarchal marriage, published in the *Deseret Evening News* of May 20th, 1886, and particularly as to the statement made therein concerning myself, as having copied the original revelation written by Brother Clayton at the dictation of the Prophet Joseph, I will say that Bishop Newel K. Whitney handed me the revelation above referred to either on the day it was written or the day following, and stating what it was, asked me to take a copy of it. I did so, and then read my copy of it to Bishop Whitney. We compared it with the original which he held in his hand while I read to him. When I had finished reading, Bishop Whitney pronounced the copy correct, and Hyrum Smith coming into my room at the time to fetch the original, Bishop Whitney handed it to him. I will also state that this copy, as also the original are identically the same as that published in the present edition, 1886, of the book of *Doctrine and Covenants*.

I will add that I also knew that the Prophet Joseph Smith had married other women besides his first wife Emma; I was also aware of the fact of his having married Sarah Ann Whitney, the eldest daughter of Bishop Newel K. Whitney, and Elizabeth Ann Whitney, his wife. And the Prophet Joseph told me personally that he had married other women in accordance with the revealed will of God, and spoke concerning the principle being commanded of God for holy purposes.

(Signed) "JOSEPH C. KINGSBURY."

2. THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF AUTHORSHIP

The internal evidence for the authorship of the revelation by Joseph Smith is perfect. Minutely compared with other numerous

revelations given out by him there can be no doubt that under the inspiration by which he wrote all his revelations, he is the author of it. This phase of the subject is somewhat exhaustively treated by the writer of this *History* in his Introduction to the fourth volume of the *History of the Church*, Period I. The treatise is too long to be quoted at length in this note, but the subject is presented under the following seven heads which indicate somewhat the nature and the thoroughness of the analysis:

I. *The Revelation Was Given in Answer to the Prophet's Inquiry, a Characteristic of Nearly All His Revelations.*

II. *It Possesses the Characteristic of Frankness in Reproving the Prophet.*

III. *The Evidence of the Largeness of Range in the Revelation on Marriage, a Characteristic of all his Revelations.*

IV. *The Evidence of Identical Phraseology in This and Other Revelations.*

V. *The Evidence of a Recurrence of Principles in the Revelation on Marriage That are Found in Other Revelations Through Joseph Smith.*

VI. *The Evidence of the Particularization of Ideas.*

VII. *The Evidence of Identity in Grandeur of Style.*

3. SUPPOSED CONFLICT BETWEEN THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE REVELATION ON MARRIAGE

In the second chapter of *Jacob, Book of Mormon*, is recorded a prohibition of a plurality of wives to the Nephites, which is very generally relied upon as proving an irreconcilable conflict between the Nephite scriptures and Joseph Smith's revelation at Nauvoo. If the passage in the *Book of Jacob* is true, it is urged, then the Nauvoo revelation must be false. The circumstances under which the passage in the *Book of Jacob* was given are these: When Lehi's colony departed from Jerusalem, 600 B. C., for the promised land of the western hemisphere, it was about evenly divided as to males and females; and hence, in justice to all, Lehi promulgated the commandment that among his people no man should have more than one wife. After the colony had been established in the land of promise, some began to depart from the commandment given through Lehi, and justified themselves in sexual immoralities because of the things written in the Hebrew scriptures they had brought with them, concerning David and Solomon; and under the reign of their second king, they "began to grow hard in their hearts," says Jacob, "and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices," such as David of old and Solomon his son practiced, "desiring many wives and concubines:" "This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures; for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David and Solomon his son. Behold David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord; wherefore, thus saith the Lord,

I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I the Lord God, will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord; for there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; for I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes."¹⁹

Here those desiring to show the conflict between this passage and the Nauvoo revelation on marriage close the quotation; and of course claim the victory for their contention. If they would but quote the very next verse, however, it would bring their house of cards tumbling about their ears, and disclose not only their uncandor, but the inadequacy of the passage to the purpose for which they quote it, and also what I can only regard as the dishonesty of their contention. The verse omitted from their *data*, reads:

"For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things."

That is to say, the Nephites had received a commandment from God that monogamy should be their marriage system. This commandment they disregarded and practiced whoredoms because of the things written of David and Solomon; whereupon comes their prophet Jacob and reproves them for their sins in this kind, reminds them of the commandment of the Lord to Lehi, and enjoins its observance as binding upon them; for if the Lord will do otherwise than that—or, to put into the words of Jacob—*"For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things."* That is, God has given a law to the Nephites that a man should have but one wife; if for any special reason the Lord would vary from that system, he would command his people, otherwise they should observe the commandment then given—for one man to have but one wife.

The answer then to this whole contention about a conflict between the Nephite injunction to monogamy and the Nauvoo revelation, justifying plural marriage, under certain conditions, is, that the time came when God would for special reasons give other instructions than those given to the Nephites; God "commanded" his people, and they obeyed. In other words the passage in *Jacob* may properly be regarded as a prophecy that such a change as indicated would be made, of which the Nauvoo revelation is the fulfillment.

It should be remarked in connection with the foregoing that it is significant that while David and Solomon are severely censured by Jacob, in the above passages, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Gideon, with other patriarchs and prophets known to have sustained plural marriage

19. *Book of Jacob*, ii:23-30.

relations, and with evident approval of God, are not mentioned as among those of evil example. And doubtless for the obvious reason—for there can be no other—that they did no other thing, to slightly paraphrase the Nauvoo revelation, than that which they were commanded of God to do, hence their vindication. While both David and Solomon in their irregular and sinful lives went beyond that, and sinned in those things which they received not of God and were under condemnation; and the Nephites, not understanding the scriptures, and justifying themselves in their whoredoms and in violating the commandment given to them through Lehi, were also under condemnation. They were under obligations, as are all people, to keep the law which God gives to them; if another law for any reason is necessary to the accomplishment of his special purpose, God will command his people, otherwise they are under obligation to keep the law he has already given them. And that is the whole lesson of this somewhat celebrated passage in the Nephite record—the *Book of Mormon*.