

formal element and entirely in keeping with Smith's polygamous practice during the Nauvoo period.<sup>27</sup>

### Dynasticism

D. Michael Quinn, in his 1976 dissertation, "The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832–1932: An American Elite," and Danel Bachman, in his previously mentioned thesis, have demonstrated another major, non-sexual motivation for Joseph Smith's polygamy: dynasticism.<sup>28</sup> Using polygamy, Smith could link important church leaders to himself, which would bring earthly and eschatological benefits both to him and to the church leaders. On an earthly level, marrying a man's daughter has throughout history created a political bond between two men. Virtually all of Roman history will illustrate this: political alliances, *amicitiae*, were often sealed by marriages.<sup>29</sup> On an eschatological level, those who "married into" Smith's eternal family believed that they had been given a promise of fuller exaltation and salvation. Smith, on the other hand, by his theology of salvation through familial quantity,<sup>30</sup> furthered his own exaltation. The classic example is Joseph marrying Heber C. Kimball's daughter, Helen Mar. She wrote about her father: "Having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet Joseph . . . [he] offered me to him."<sup>31</sup> Here we see polygamy being used to link the president of the church to an important apostle. Helen Mar's son also wrote of the marriage in dynastic terms: "Soon after . . . a golden link was forged whereby the houses of Heber and Joseph were indissolubly and forever joined. Helen Mar, the eldest Daughter of Heber Chase and Vilate Murray Kimball, was given to the Prophet in the holy bonds of celestial marriage."<sup>32</sup> It is significant that Helen Mar was Joseph's youngest known wife, marrying him when she was fourteen. Brodie emphasizes that he married young women for sensual reasons, but here we find explicit evidence in a source that Brodie knew showing that there were other motives involved in a marriage to a young teenager. In fact, it is possible

that Joseph Smith never had sexual relations with Helen Mar; there is no unambiguous documentation, positive or negative, on the issue.<sup>33</sup>

Other marriages that show dynastic elements are the marriages of Joseph to Sarah Ann Whitney (linking Joseph to Bishop Newell Whitney); to Zina and Presendia Huntington (linking him to his close friend Dimick Huntington, as well as to High Councillor William Huntington, their father); to Fanny Young (linking him with Brigham Young, her brother, an apostle); to Rhoda Richards (linking him with Willard Richards, her brother, an apostle); and to Melissa Lott (linking him with loyalist Cornelius Lott).

It is possible that even Smith's polyandry, his marriage to women already married (of which there are eleven instances among the "certain" wives), had dynastic overtones. The fact that some men, after Joseph Smith's death, knowingly gave their wives to him for eternity in the Nauvoo temple suggests this, as does a passage from the anti-Mormon poem published during Joseph's life, "Buckeye's Lamentation for Want of More Wives," which hints that some men would receive greater salvation by giving their wives to the prophet.<sup>34</sup> The writings of Henry Jacobs, the "first husband" in the best-documented polyandrous triangle, show that he felt a great reverence for Joseph Smith even though he knew that his wife would be married to Joseph in eternity;<sup>35</sup> this would fit comfortably within the dynastic model for explaining some polygamous marriages.

It should also be noted, however, that polygamous marriages could serve to endanger important hierarchical relationships, as the cases of Nancy Rigdon and Elvira Cowles show. Joseph's proposal to Nancy, and her emphatic refusal, caused dramatic tensions between Joseph and his long-time counselor Sidney Rigdon. And Elvira Cowles Holmes's polyandrous marriage to Joseph was perhaps instrumental in turning her father, Austin Cowles, a counselor in the Nauvoo stake presidency, against Joseph and later into William Law's dissenting church. Cowles's affidavit in the *Nauvoo Expositor* was one of the most explicit

anti-polygamy documents in that important publication. On the other hand, Jonathan Holmes, “first husband” in the polyandrous triangle with Smith and Elvira, was one of the pallbearers at Joseph’s funeral.<sup>36</sup>

Sexuality was undoubtedly an element in Joseph Smith’s plural marriages, and Brodie was correct in seeing it as an important motivating factor in his polygamy. However, to view it as the only, or by far the most important, motivating force in his theory and practice of polygamy, as she does, resulted in an unbalanced picture of Joseph Smith and his religiosity. Joseph Smith’s burnt-over district biblical primitivism and his desire to arrange earthly and heavenly dynastic linkings with other Latter-day Saint leaders must also be considered.

### Joseph Smith’s Children by Polygamous Marriages

Brodie produced a list of six children she felt may have qualified as children of Joseph Smith by his polygamous wives. A careful evaluation of this list, however, leads to the conclusion that none of these children is a strong candidate for being a child of the Mormon prophet.<sup>37</sup> Brodie proposes:

1. Oliver Buell, son of Presendia Buell (see below).

2. A child Zina Huntington Jacobs had “while her husband, Henry Jacobs, was on a mission to England.” This story from William Hall is discussed and rejected earlier in this essay. Brodie may mean Zebulon Jacobs, but Zina was already pregnant with Zebulon when she married Joseph on October 27, 1841.

3. John Reed Hancock, son of Clarissa Reed Hancock. There is no known documentary evidence for Clarissa Reed Hancock ever marrying Joseph Smith. Brodie can only cite family “legend,” which is undocumentary, twentieth-century, unverifiable evidence.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the author has found that there are many descendants of Levi and Clarissa Hancock who deny this tradition. Furthermore, the autobiography of Mosiah Hancock explicitly states that Clarissa was not Joseph’s wife when she

It portrayed Joseph as sexual, and sexual outside of the bounds of marriage, even outside of a polygamous marriage. Newell Bringhurst's forthcoming biography of Fawn Brodie will perhaps tell us why it was so important for her to pursue such a perspective. But it is strikingly like something arrived at and clung to like a religious dogma. And Dale Morgan perceptively chided Brodie, telling her she was reasoning as weakly as conservative Mormons when arranging an argument from a chain of mere possibilities—"precisely as with the orthodox Mormon reasoning" are his words.<sup>55</sup> Often a rigidly conservative Mormon will arrive at a crisis of faith—sometimes because of reading Brodie, ironically enough—and will then turn into a rigidly fundamentalist non-believer. Instead of making the next step of thinking about religion with less rigidity and thus being able to gain some kind of sympathetic understanding of it (like Dale Morgan, who, despite his non-belief, was sincerely sympathetic toward Mormons and Mormonism), one rejects it all in totality. Perhaps Brodie, despite her brilliance, could not escape the absolutist, doctrinaire mentality she inherited from her father and uncle, both general authorities in the Mormon church. *No Man Knows My History* may be viewed as a conservative Mormon book in this paradoxical way.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, there is some reliable evidence that Joseph Smith's polygamous marriages did produce children. There is an affidavit by Josephine Lyon Fisher, a child of Sylvia Sessions Lyon Smith Kimball Clark, one of Joseph's polyandrous wives, which asserts that Sylvia, on her deathbed, told her that she, Josephine, was the biological child of Joseph Smith.<sup>57</sup> Although it is safest to assume that the children of Joseph Smith's polyandrous wives were not his, barring strong evidence to the contrary, such an affidavit as this qualifies as strong evidence to the contrary.

It is possible that Eliza Snow had a miscarriage;<sup>58</sup> and it is possible that Fanny Alger had a child, for she became pregnant while married to Joseph, according to one source.<sup>59</sup> So Brodie was certainly right in asserting that sexuality was part of Joseph