

chronic rheumatism for two years and could not even raise her hand to her head. But “the prophet laid hands upon her, and she was healed immediately.”

Remarkably, a non-Mormon source gives an even fuller account. The Johnsons were visiting at Joseph Smith’s home when conversation turned to “supernatural gifts” in the apostolic church:

Some one said, “Here is Mrs. Johnson with a lame arm; has God given any power to men now on the earth to cure her?” A few moments later, when the conversation had turned in another direction, Smith rose, and walking across the room, taking Mrs. Johnson by the hand, said in the most solemn and impressive manner: “*Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command thee to be whole,*” and immediately left the room.

The company were awe-stricken at the infinite presumption of the man, and the calm assurance with which he spoke. The sudden mental and moral shock—I know not how better to explain the well attested fact—electrified the rheumatic arm—Mrs. Johnson at once lifted it up with ease, and on her return home the next day she was able to do her washing without difficulty or pain.

It was at this point that Marinda was called home from school, reluctantly met Joseph Smith, and soon converted. Smith and Sidney Rigdon stayed at the large Johnson farmhouse as they preached in the Pomfret area, so Marinda became closely acquainted with the young prophet at this time. Soon other Johnsons were converted. In February 1831 Lyman was baptized by Rigdon, and two months later, on April 31, Marinda was baptized at the age of fifteen. A week and a half after that, on May 10, Joseph Smith baptized Luke Johnson.

Marinda later wrote, “The next fall [after her baptism] Joseph came with his family to live at my father’s house. He was at that time translating the Bible, and Elder Rigdon was acting as scribe.” Joseph Smith wrote, “On the 12th of September I removed with my family to the township of Hiram, and commenced living with John Johnson ... from this time until the fore part of October I did little more than to prepare to recommence the translation of the bible.”

III. Night Mobbing

When Joseph and Emma Smith had stayed with the Johnsons for some seven months, they went to bed one night, on March 24, 1832, and fell into a peaceful sleep. Then, with no warning, a mob of some forty or fifty men broke into the Johnson house in search of the prophet. Marinda described the event:

A mob, disguising themselves as black men, gathered and burst into his

[Smith's] sleeping apartment one night, and dragged him from the bed where he was nursing a sick child. They also went to the house of Elder Rigdon, and took him out with Joseph into an orchard, where, after choking and beating them, they tarred and feathered them, and left them nearly dead. My father, at the first onset, started to the rescue, but was knocked down, and lay senseless for some time.

According to Luke Johnson, Smith was stretched on a board, then "they tore off the few night clothes that he had on, for the purpose of emasculating him, and had Dr. Dennison there to perform the operation. But when the Dr. saw the prophet stripped and stretched on the plank, his heart failed him, and he refused to operate."

The motivation for this mobbing has been debated. Clark Braden, a late, antagonistic, secondhand witness, alleged in a polemic public debate that Marinda's brother Eli led a mob against Smith because the prophet had been too intimate with Marinda. This tradition suggests that Smith may have married Marinda at this early time, and some circumstantial factors support such a possibility. The castration attempt might be taken as evidence that the mob felt that Joseph had committed a sexual impropriety; since the attempt is reported by Luke Johnson, there is no good reason to doubt it. Also, they had planned the operation in advance, as they brought along a doctor to perform it. The first revelations on polygamy had been received in 1831, by historian Daniel Bachman's dating. Also, Joseph Smith did tend to marry women who had stayed at his house or in whose house he had stayed.

Many other factors, however, argue against this theory. First, Marinda had no brother named Eli, which suggests that Braden's accusation, late as it is, is garbled and unreliable. In addition, two antagonistic accounts by Hayden and S. F. Whitney give an entirely different reason for the mobbing, with an entirely different leader, Simonds Ryder, an ex-Mormon, though the Johnson brothers are still participants. In these accounts the reason for the violence is economic: the Johnson boys were in the mob because of "the horrid fact that a plot was laid to take their property from them and place it under the control of Smith." The castration, in this scenario, may have only been a threat, meant to intimidate Smith and cause him to leave Hiram.

After describing the event, Marinda wrote only, "Here I feel like bearing my testimony that during the whole year that Joseph was an inmate of my father's house I never saw aught in his daily life or conversation to make me doubt his divine mission." While it is not impossible that Marinda became Smith's first plural wife in 1831, the evidence for such a marriage, resting chiefly on the late, unreliable Braden, is not compelling. Unless more credible evidence is found, it is best to proceed under the as-

sumption that Joseph and Marinda did not marry or have a relationship in 1831.

IV. Orson Hyde

In 1833 the Johnsons moved to Kirtland, where Marinda began to spend time with a dynamic young convert named Orson Hyde. The next year, on September 4, they married, with Sidney Rigdon officiating. A résumé of Hyde's life to that point offers the portrait of a fervent, energetic missionary. From other sources we know that he was a strong-minded man and a forceful speaker. Born on January 8, 1805, in Oxford, New Haven, Connecticut, he had served as a pastor in the Campbellite movement, then was baptized a Mormon on October 2, 1831, while working as a clerk in the Gilbert and Whitney store in Kirtland. Almost immediately he was sent on a mission to Boston with Samuel Smith in 1832. The next year he was appointed clerk to the First Presidency. Like Lyman and Luke Johnson, he followed Joseph Smith on the arduous Zion's Camp march in 1834, an expedition that tried the participants' faith but also served to confirm them in their religious commitment and prepare them for future church leadership.

At the time of their marriage, Marinda was nineteen and Orson was twenty-nine. The couple set up housekeeping as young marrieds in Mormon Kirtland. A few months later, on February 15, 1835, Orson Hyde was ordained an apostle, as were Luke and Lyman Johnson, so Marinda suddenly had three close family members in the apostleship. However, in the earliest Mormon church, the twelve apostles were presiding traveling missionaries (the "Traveling Presiding High Council"), not the central authority of the church as they are today, which meant that Marinda would spend a great deal of time in her next fifteen years of marriage separated from Orson, enduring the hardships of a missionary wife.

In early March the Twelve was called on a mission to the eastern states. Hyde left on May 4, at a time when Marinda was expecting her first child. Orson apparently returned to Kirtland long enough to attend a school led by Sidney Rigdon, then returned to his mission, and William McLellin, another apostle, wrote to his wife that Orson had made disparaging comments about the Rigdon school. As a result on August 4 the Kirtland High Council, the central council of the church at the time, "withdrew [their] fellowship" from Hyde. On September 26 the Twelve returned from the eastern states, and Orson and McLellin confessed their wrongdoing and were forgiven. This tempest in a teapot must have been disheartening for Marinda, but then a real calamity overwhelmed her when her first child, Nathan, was born in December and died at birth.

For the time being, Marinda would remain a shadow behind her