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Plurality, Patriarchy, and the Priestess: Zina D. H. Young's Nauvoo Marriages

*Martha Sonntag Bradley and
Mary Brown Firmage Woodward*

In the evening's dusk of 27 October 1842, Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs and her husband, Henry Bailey Jacobs, sat down to supper. Zina was six months pregnant with their first child. Henry had recently returned from a mission to the eastern states and was about to leave on another. They had much to talk about for it was Zina's wedding day. That afternoon, Zina's brother Dimick had sealed her to the Prophet Joseph Smith as one of his plural wives.¹

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¹ The marriage ordinance, or sealing, as first initiated by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, joins husbands and wives in a marriage union for "time and eternity." Children

Zina's and Henry's story is one of the most challenging in LDS Church history. By the time Zina was twenty-five, she was married to one man and sealed to two others—both presidents of the Mormon Church.² She was a member of the elite inner circle of Saints; and in the Great Basin, she became a leader of Mormon women. Zina's story has assumed mythic proportions over time, both her version and those of others presenting intriguing questions about the relationship between content, form, and motive. Nevertheless, examining the story of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young's Nauvoo marriages from a feminist perspective can help us understand the origins of plural marriage and particularly how it enhanced Mormon patriarchy. By introducing plural marriage in the early 1830s to the most trusted inner circle of Saints, Joseph Smith created a new community order, a secretive and exclusive system of loyalties, and a network of familial ties based on patriarchy. Plural marriage created a dynamic instituted by male priesthood power and dependent on a supportive, obedient, compliant female class.

Zina Diantha Huntington was eighteen years old when she arrived with her parents and younger siblings at Quincy on the banks of the Mississippi. They had been members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for six years, difficult years during which they had been driven from several homes. The men in Zina's family were priesthood leaders and confidants of Joseph Smith. Her father, William Huntington, helped organize the exodus of the Mormons out of Missouri.

born under this covenant are similarly sealed to their parents. In Mormon temples, these ordinances are available by proxy for the dead (not practiced in Nauvoo). One could also be sealed for time only or for eternity only. Zina and women like her who were sealed for eternity but not for time were referred to as "spiritual wives." It is not always clear whether these marriages were sexually consummated.

² Zina was sealed for eternity to Joseph Smith and for time to Brigham Young. For convenience, instead of using her full name (Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young) we will refer to her by the form she traditionally used and by which she was most often known during her life: Zina D. H. Young. The name of her sister, Presendia Huntington Buell Kimball, appears in contemporary documents in at least three ways: Presendia, Prescendia, and Prescindia. We have standardized it here to Presendia.

William Huntington was a prosperous farmer in upstate New York with two hundred acres of land, a house, two good barns, a large stock of cattle, horses, carriages, and farming implements nearly debt free. Then he and his wife, Zina Baker Huntington, joined the Mormons in 1835. Within months, William sold off his property and moved with eight of their ten family to Kirtland. (One child had died in infancy; a grown son, Chauncy, stayed behind in Watertown). The children, ranging from early twenties on down, were Dimick, Presendia, Adaline, Nancy, William, Zina, Oliver, and John. By the time the Huntingtons left Kirtland for Missouri in July 1838, William had lost most of their savings and was, like many others, struggling to help his family survive.

They went first to Far West, then to Adam-ondi-Ahman where William acted as a commissary for the people who fled from mob violence in Far West. After the surrender of the Church in Far West, William became a special agent for the poor in the movement out of Missouri. Family friend Benjamin F. Johnson was inspired by their courage. "Zina and her mother were much devoted to their religion," he wrote, "and often at Mother Huntington's did we have the most spirited and enjoyable testimony of power and never has it left me." Zina's fluency in speaking in tongues seemed particular evidence of her special status in the community of Saints.³

Religion had always been the center of existence for Mother Zina. As a young woman during the second Great Awakening, she searched for a personal awareness of the spirit, hungry for assurance that there was a God and that he approved of her life. Zina Diantha was, therefore, raised in a home where discussions of spiritual matters were intermixed with speculation about the weather or recipes for the morning's bread. Tradition and gender dictated the borders of their world. Still, gender did not restrict their access to spirituality with its attendant personal and social power. The rhetoric of Mormonism allured them with its descriptions of being God's chosen people; after Nauvoo, an afterlife as queens and priestesses ministering to kingdoms, principalities,

³ Benjamin F. Johnson, "My Life's Review," 57, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

and worlds without end was added to this general Christian picture. Nevertheless, in the Mormon context, actual power—patriarchal priesthood power—was male, extended to women through their association with righteous men.⁴

Furthermore, the Huntingtons coped with personal and social disruption in their frequent and dramatic moves. Accelerated change resulting from the Industrial Revolution, from the American obsession with acquiring land, and from the drive toward improved social status upset traditional gender roles in Jacksonian society.⁵ Thus, the two Zinas also sought stability in

⁴ Michael Quinn's essay, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority*, edited by Maxine Hanks, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), pp. 365-409, suggests an alternative viewpoint. Endowed Mormon women have always had the priesthood, according to Quinn although the Church has never created offices for Mormon women for the exercise of that power. Contemporary tradition on the issue is that Mormon women have access to priesthood through their husbands. According to Quinn, "The conferral of priesthood on *individual* women occurred through what Joseph Smith and associates called the "Holy Order" or "Anointed Quorum" (men and women who had received the priesthood endowment) (p. 366). Quinn effectively establishes that there was some confusion among Church leaders about the significance of the endowment in terms of priesthood during 1842-43. Numerous contemporary accounts show their struggle to find the right language with which to describe the empowering Mormon men felt from the endowment and its significance in relation to their wives. Quinn describes their "euphemisms" to describe the second anointing, again struggling to accurately catch its significance. Nevertheless, it is the assertion of this paper that Smith never intended to extend actual priesthood power to women, but rather instituted a male priesthood hierarchy which permanently excluded them from admittance. Again, language seems to be key in understanding the distinction between the male relationship to priesthood and the female relationship. Women in the early church clearly understood and frequently maintained that they had access to priesthood and that they had the right to it, but that the men in their lives—usually their husbands but occasionally their fathers—were to act as mediators with the Lord. It was only through their relationship with men that women had actual access to priesthood power.

⁵ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), offers significant insights into the relationship between religion and culture in the early days of the American republic, arguing that during these important decades American religion was democratized and common people played a new role in religious activity.

their relationships through religion.

When they arrived in Illinois in April 1839, they were “blessed with good health.”⁶ Nevertheless, they had lost all their material possessions and had, with the other Saints, been in danger of injury or death, suffered from malnourishment, and undergone the rigors of the recent winter. Brothers Dimick and William, Jr., had preceded the family to Illinois, and Dimick had secured a cabin four miles east of Quincy where the families stopped for two or three weeks. Father William had gone straight to Commerce, where he lived with Sidney Rigdon. When he summoned the family, they obediently moved on, lingering only long enough to bury Dimick’s little daughter. They arrived, only three days after Joseph Smith and his family, on 16 May 1839. It was “a wild, forsaken, sickening place, for it was very sickly there,” Oliver later remembered. Brother William took up residence with Joseph Smith and “stayed there all summer”⁷ in 1839, but the rest of the family clung together, struggling to survive on the disease-ridden swampland east of the Mississippi River. Zina’s reminiscence corresponds with Oliver’s—a city of “sickness [and] poverty,” transformed into blessings [brought through] the word of God by his Prophet.”⁸ Joseph Smith sent his adopted daughter, Julia Murdock Smith, then nine years old, to nurse the Huntingtons and made a personal circuit of all the families suffering with illness daily, laying his hands in blessing upon the most critically ill.⁹

The family sank to its lowest point on 8 July 1839 when Zina Baker Huntington died from malaria. Oliver lamented:

⁶ William Huntington, Sr., “A Brief Sketch of the Life of William Huntington Sen.,” photocopy of a holograph in my possession. This autobiographical essay (undated) details William’s life before the Saints left Nauvoo and also includes diary entries between 9 February 1846 and 2 August 1846. After being in the possession of the family for a number of years, it is part of the Zina D. H. Young Collection, Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives).

⁷ Oliver Huntington, *Diary*, 39-40, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

⁸ Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Young, *Autobiography*, n.d., not paginated; Box 2, file 17, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

⁹ *Ibid.*

"There was scarce anone [*sic*] well and strong enough to dig a grave. . . . Indeed, we were a pitiful sight and none to pity us but God and his prophet."¹⁰ Still in the throes of fever, the survivors moved into a house that brother William and Dimick had built in the woods along the banks of the river. "There Oh God, witness the scenes we have passed through! We were all sick and hardly able to get a drink of water. He only knows how we lived or on what we lived for none of us was able to work hard."¹¹

Benjamin F. Johnson found them in this plight:

Mother Huntington, with others just before my arrival had sickened and died, while Sister Zina, under this great bereavement was confined to her bed with no one of the family [present]. And while feeling to mourn with her and to sorrow in the sickness and death around me; it was still a great happiness to minister comfort to her who was thoughtful of me when a homeless prisoner and comparative stranger. And I will here say that thru all my associations of youth, by no one was I more impressed with [the] purity and dignity of true womanhood than by her.¹²

Joseph Smith manifested the tenderest solicitude for this struggling and bereaved family. In a story that paralleled that of others bonded to him during that difficult time, he had all of the children except Oliver (who went to Hiram Clark's) brought to his house where Emma nursed them back to health. Eighteen-year-old Zina stayed for three months during the winter of 1839-40. In an undated autobiography, Zina praised the Smiths' generosity: "My Fathers life was dispared of. President Joseph took us all home except Oliver he went to Hiram Clarks (they having built a house) some times 30 or 40 would come from there tents and wagons to shake with the ague or have chills on President Smiths floor just to be in the shade. Sister Emma was like a mother, and [I] Fancy I can see the pales of Gruel and quarts of Composition that was retailed to the sick in those shadowy times."¹³ All of the children

¹⁰ Oliver Huntington, *Diary*, 40.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Benjamin F. Johnson, *Biographical Sketch of Zina D. Young*, 1896, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

survived, and the widowed William married Lydia Clisbee Partridge, the widow of the first bishop of the Church, Edward Partridge, later that year.

That same winter at the Smith residence, Zina received numerous courtship visits from Henry Bailey Jacobs, a friend of her brothers, who often accompanied Oliver to the house. Simultaneously, Joseph Smith in private conversations taught her the principle of plural marriage, suggesting that she become his spiritual wife.¹⁴ He pressed her for an answer on at least three separate occasions, but she avoided answering him. Weighing against such a proposal was her affection for Emma, her respect for traditional Christian monogamy, the strangeness of this new matrimonial system, and the secrecy it would require. Influencing her toward acceptance were Zina's gratitude for the kindnesses done her whole family and, more importantly, her wholehearted acceptance of him as her spiritual, ecclesiastical, and social leader. She considered him a prophet, God's spokesman, and the embodiment of male priesthood power which was so intimately interwoven with her view of Mormonism as the only church that held divine authority, the only church of which God approved.¹⁵ As an eighteen-year-old girl, she must have also felt flattered by a proposal from the group's most powerful and influential male.

Zina is most circumspect, even in later reminiscences, about her reaction; but records of other young women similarly ap-

¹³ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*. Between 1839 and 1842, Joseph and Emma Smith and their four children lived in the "Homestead," a log and frame house on the west side of Main Street just south of the intersection of Main and Water streets. It was not large, and the constant stream of patients and guests must have severely strained their resources. Joseph Smith III later remembered that the house was "generally overrun with visitors. There was scarcely a Sunday in ordinary weather that the house and yard were not crowded—the yard with teams and the house with callers. This made a heavy burden of added toil for Mother and unnecessary expense for Father." In Mary A. Smith Anderson and Bertha A. Anderson Hulmes, eds., *Joseph Smith III and the Restoration* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1952), 72. Although the Word of Wisdom had been announced in Kirtland, the "composition" to which Zina refers was most likely a liquor-based home remedy for digestive disorders.

¹⁴ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

proached while working in the Smith home may be somewhat analogous. Zina's stepsisters Eliza and Emily Partridge moved into the old Homestead a year later in 1841 to care for the Smith children. Emma was as kind and charitable toward them as she had been with Zina. During the spring and summer of 1842, Smith independently introduced both young women to the idea of celestial marriage. Emily Partridge remembered much later in Utah: "But I had shut him up so quick that he said no more to me untill the 28th of Feb. 1843, (my nineteenth birthday) and I was married [to him] the 4th of March following."¹⁶

Fifteen-year-old Lucy Walker Kimball and her three brothers and sisters moved into the Smith home during the summer of 1841 after the death of their mother and subsequent illness of their father. In 1842 Joseph Smith asked Lucy if he might speak with her privately, that he had a message for her. "I have been commanded of God to take another wife," he said. "And you are the woman." Astonished by his request, she described it as "a thunderbolt" that shook her to her soul. He asked me if I believed him to be the Prophet of God. . . . He explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage. [He] said this principle was again to be restored for the benefit of the human family. That it would be an everlasting blessing to my father's house, and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end."¹⁷ If Lucy's experience is typical, Smith foresaw how plural marriage would connect the families of the most faithful and was not reluctant to use his priesthood authority as prophet to convince those reluctant to make this dramatic change in attitude toward marriage.

Because Lucy did not immediately accept his proposition, Smith encouraged her to pray "sincerely for light and understanding" on the matter. "I thought I prayed sincerely," she would later remember. "But was so unwilling to consider the matter

¹⁶ Emily Dow Partridge Young, "Account of Early Life in Kirtland and Nauvoo," typescript, n.p., LDS Church Archives.

¹⁷ Lucy Walker Kimball, "A Brief But Intensely Interesting Sketch of Her Experience Written by Herself." Copied for the Federal Writers Project by Elvera Manful, Ogden, Utah, 1940; typescript copy at the Utah Historical Society.

favorably that I fear I did not ask in faith for light. Gross darkness instead of light took possession of my mind.”¹⁸ Apparently her turmoil did not go unnoticed, for Smith soon asked her for another private conference. Attempting to ease her mind about the implications of the proposed secret union he said, “Although I can not under existing circumstances, acknowledge you as my wife, the time is near when we will go beyond the Rocky Mountains and then you will be acknowledged and honored as my wife.” He continued, “I have no flattering words to offer. It is a command of God to you. I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you.”¹⁹ That night Lucy’s feelings changed; she was sealed to Smith on 1 May 1843 in the Smith home by William Clayton.²⁰

When Smith asked Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, the wife of Adam Lightner, to become his plural wife, she asked for a witness. “If God told you that why does he not tell me?” Smith responded to this resistance with an appeal to her loyalty: “He asked me if I was going to be a traitor.” He told her to pray, that an angel had promised him she would have a witness. Mary received the desired witness from “an angel of the Lord,” and confessed, “If ever a thrill went through a mortal it went through me. . . . I had been dreaming for a number of years I was his wife. I thought I was a great sinner. I prayed to god to take it from me for I felt it was a sin.”²¹

¹⁸ Ibid, 13.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. After Joseph’s death Lucy Walker was sealed for time to Heber C. Kimball on 8 February 1845 and bore ten children,

²¹ Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Remarks at Brigham Young University at age 87, 14 April 1905,” LDS Church Archives. Rex Eugene Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 140, suggests that Mary interpreted her sealing as meaning that she would share in Joseph’s salvation in the celestial kingdom. She later remembered Joseph saying that “all the Devils in hell should never get me from him.” Her patriarchal blessing corroborates: “Great is thy glory and exaltation with thy husband the prophet who is working for thee in the presence of our Father. . . . Thou shalt be a Queen to reign in the kingdom and dominion that are appointed unto him.”

Like Mary Elizabeth, Zina yearned after righteousness and, like her stepsisters, was confused by Smith's request. She remembered lamenting, "O dear Heaven, grant me wisdom! Help me to know the way. O Lord, my god, let thy will be done and with thine arm around about to guide, shield and direct. Illuminate our minds with intelligence as you do bless the earth with light and warmth."²²

Zina leaves no record whether the public courtship of Henry Bailey Jacobs made the secret courtship of Joseph Smith less or more confusing, nor does she say whether she had been courted before. Henry was strikingly eligible, a handsome twenty-three-year-old with brown eyes and dark curly hair whose violin entertained the Nauvoo Saints. Like Zina, Henry was born in upstate New York in Jefferson County where he was baptized in 1832. An ardent missionary and popular preacher, he wrote for local publications. Zina leaves no record of their courtship; but Henry was friends with all three Huntington brothers, William's partner in a coffin-making enterprise and Oliver's companion on several future missions. When Zina returned to her father's house in the spring of 1840, Henry's frequent visits must have seemed quite natural. There is no record of Zina's continued contact, if any, with Joseph Smith during the next year. On 7 March 1841, twenty-year-old Zina married Henry Bailey Jacobs, convinced that by so doing she had circumvented any further overtures from Smith.²³ An announcement appeared that day in the *Times and Seasons*: "MARRIED—In this city March 7th by Elder John C. Bennett, Mr. Henry B. Jacobs and Miss Zina D. Huntington."²⁴

A family tradition relates that Henry and Zina had asked Smith to perform their marriage. He consented but did not appear, and John Bennett officiated in his place. When Zina later asked Smith about his absence, he reportedly said that "he couldn't give to one man [the woman] who had been given him by the Lord. The Lord had made it known to him that she [Zina] was to be his Celestial

²² Zina D.H. Young, Autobiography, ZDHY Collection, LDS Archives.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Times and Seasons* 12 (7 March 1841): 334.

wife."²⁵

Zina's description in her autobiography of this first of three wedding days is sedate but happy: "I was Married to Mr. Henry Bailey Jacobs. He had been a missionary preaching the Gospel for some time. His Father Henry Jacobs was one of the first elders in the Church, faithful and true until the last."²⁶ In short, she characterizes Henry and his father by their commitment to the Church, a valuation that would have important consequences later.

Henry and Zina's first home was a log house with a dirt floor. They created a makeshift "built-in" bed with two-inch auger holes bored into the corner logs of the cabin, fitted with hickory saplings, its "mattress" a cowhide tacked to the frame and padded with straw. Zina became pregnant almost immediately, but her thoughts that first summer were not the tender anticipations of an expectant mother, happy in the love of her husband. Rather, she continued to be tormented by the feeling that she had rejected the Lord's will by failing to follow the prophet's counsel. Although extant records do not document any further contact with Joseph Smith, it seems unlikely that she would have been so perplexed and tormented if he had not specifically told her that her marriage to Henry Jacobs had not removed her beyond his interest.

During that first summer, she prayed continuously for understanding and strength. Almost certainly, she returned repeatedly to the larger underlying issue: her acceptance of his spiritual authority over her. "I received a testimony for myself from the Lord of this work, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God before I ever saw him, while I resided in the state of New York, given in answer to prayer," she told a public gathering in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in an undated address years later. "I knew him in his lifetime, and know him to have been a great true man and a servant of God."²⁷

In October 1841 Smith sent Dimick with an unwelcome

²⁵ Emma Jacobs to Oa J. Cannon, letter included in an untitled narrative written by Cannon about Zina, 22-23, Oa J. Cannon Collection, LDS Church Archives.

²⁶ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*, [page?]

²⁷ Zina D. H. Young, *Address in the Tabernacle*, n.d., typescript copy of holograph, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

message to force Zina to a decision. "Joseph said, Tell Zina I have put it off and put it off until an angel with a drawn sword has stood before me and told me if I did not establish that principle [plurality of wives] and live it, I would lose my position and my life and the Church could progress no further."²⁸ But when Dimick came, Zina's anguish had been resolved, and she was emotionally prepared to accept the sealing.

No record exists of how Zina explained her decision to Henry or whether she felt additional pressure because the message bearer was her brother. Whatever personal demons they wrestled with, Henry gave his tacit approval believing that "whatever the Prophet did was right, without making the wisdom of God's authorities bend to the reasoning of any man."²⁹ It is unclear whether Zina told Henry about Smith's request before their marriage or if he fully understood what this meant. Regardless, Henry was so convinced of Smith's prophetic mission he was willing to obey, even when it meant relinquishing his claim on Zina in the next life.

From Zina's later writings, part of the appeal was clearly a continuation of family relationships, even though it required a "sacrifice" that Zina considered dishonorable:

When I heard that God had revealed the law of Celestial marriage that we would have the privilege of associating in family relationships in the worlds to come I searched the scriptures and by humble prayer to my Heavenly Father I obtained a testimony for myself that God had required that order to be established in his Church. I made a greater sacrifice than to give my life for I never anticipated again to be looked

²⁸ As quoted by Zina D. H. Young, "Joseph, the Prophet His Life and Mission as Viewed by Intimate Acquaintances," *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm Supplement*, 12 January 1895, 212. She made this statement at a memorial service commemorating Smith's birthday, for many years a feature among those who had known him. This particular meeting was held 24 December 1894 at Salt Lake City Sixteenth Ward. Speakers included Robert T. Burton, Rachael Grant, Samuel H. B. Smith, Joseph F. Smith, Frederick Kesler, Zina D. H. Young, Lucy Walker Kimball, Bathsheba W. Smith, Walter Wilcox, Claudius V. Spencer, Angus M. Cannon, John Smith, Elizabeth Roundy, Edward Rushton, and Homer Duncan. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1954), 212.

²⁹ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*.

upon as an honorable woman by those I dearly loved.³⁰

As clearly as Henry, she considered this request a test of faith and obedience. "Could I compromise conscience," she asked rhetorically, "lay aside the sure testimony of the Spirit of God for the Glory of this world after having been baptized by one having authority and covenanting at the waters edge to live the life of a saint?"³¹

Dimick performed the rite that sealed Zina and Joseph on the banks of the Mississippi River on 27 October 1841. By that time, Smith had been sealed to five other women besides Emma: Fanny Alger, Louisa Beaman, Lucinda Pendleton Morgan, Nancy Marinda Johnson Hyde, and Clarissa Reed Hancock.³² There is no contemporary evidence that Zina and Joseph consummated this union, although Zina later signed an affidavit that she was Smith's wife in "very deed."³³ Nevertheless, Smith was never far from Zina's thoughts from that time. Her journal reports no private interviews or visits, refers to him in the such exalted and reverential terms as "The Sanctified," but reports minutely on his comings, goings, and speeches.

Zina's and Henry's surrender to the authority of Joseph Smith is the key to understanding the origins of plural marriage and the creation of Mormon patriarchy. When Smith reinvented a world through revelation, the New World's Zion, he created a condition of anomie, throwing all norms into flux, casting out and recasting all assumptions about morality, theology, law, and community. For Zina and others like her, Joseph Smith was the central unifying character in a new, often confusing state of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² For verification of Zina's and Joseph's marriage, plus the earlier sealings, see Danel W. Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage," (M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975). The evidence includes a personal affidavit, a personal statement, witnesses present, other Mormon statements, inclusion on Andrew Jenson's list, non-Mormon statements, and temple sealings according to Fawn Brodie.

³³ Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 4 vols., LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1:5, 4:5.

reality. Smith had promised them, "All you who will not find fault with the words of life and salvation that God reveals through me for the salvation of the human family, I will stand like an officer of the gate, and I will see you safe through into the celestial kingdom."³⁴

Zina's statements show no conscious awareness of the Church's male orientation and direction. Clearly, Mormon society was already patriarchal in both fact and ideal. Plural marriage enhanced patriarchy by placing new emphasis on faithful, often powerful priesthood holders. Furthermore, after the temple rituals were initiated in Nauvoo and Smith had more clearly articulated the ideal of celestial marriage, a woman's salvation was conditional on her husband's successful ascent into celestial glory. This linkage guaranteed that women would follow men in the patriarchal ordering, accepting their place in a deferential system that led from the faithful and obedient wife through her husband to Jesus Christ. Thus, a woman's ability to achieve salvation could be defined almost exclusively in marital terms.³⁵

³⁴ As quoted by Zina D. H. Young, "Joseph, the Prophet," 212.

³⁵ Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 83-84, suggests that women moved from an essentially peripheral social (though emotionally powerful) role in the Kirtland Temple to play a more significant and active role in the temple ceremonies of Nauvoo. These ordinances, available to both women and men, "opened up a new concept of spiritual participation relating to the 'privileges, blessings and gifts of the priesthood' which not only enhanced their position in the church but offered limitless potential in the hereafter." Women like Zina felt empowered by temple ordinances and the formation of the Relief Society, particularly, according to Madsen, Joseph's frequent mentions of his intent to bestow the "privileges, blessings, and gifts of the priesthood" on women. Such privileges were conditioned upon a woman's marriage to a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. An analogy is the "virtual representation" so long debated by the founding fathers. Before the Revolutionary War, all British subjects were represented by members of Parliament regardless of where they lived. The actual representation the colonists favored was specific to a particular geographical area or group of people. Nor was the "virtual priesthood" of women real power in the Mormon system. Rhetorical aggrandizement helped women accept their role in Mormon society but failed to change the reality. Priesthood was male. Women exercised or benefitted from priesthood only secondarily and contingently,

The language of acceptance used to describe plural marriage included angels, submission, obedience, and manifestations of the Spirit. Certainly this was true for the young women whose cases most closely resembled Zina's: Lucy Walker, Mary Elizabeth Rolins Lightner, Emily Dow Partridge, and Eliza Partridge. All were intelligent, sensitive young women of deep spirituality, perplexed by the doctrine and struggling with its theological and social ramifications. Standing at the pinnacle of patriarchal priesthood power, Smith held the keys to signs and witnesses supporting the doctrine. Most of the women who were sealed to Smith before his death did so because they felt God wanted them to obey. When they accepted Joseph Smith's system of angels and revelation linked to plural marriage and submitted to his authority, their new status, even as secret plural wives, helped expand and enhance the patriarchy with the network of family alliances thus formed. Zina's three brothers—Dimick, William, and Oliver—were devoted to the prophet even before her sealing. The sealing of Zina and Smith connected the Huntington men to Smith in a new way, for they became part of a family kinship network associated with Mormonism's patriarchal elite.

Each new woman brought into an eternal union increased not only the potential size of the family kingdom but the man's exaltation as well. Benjamin F. Johnson later remembered Smith teaching during this time period about the eternal implications of the families created through plural unions. "The First Command was to 'Multiple' [sic] and the Prophet taught us that Dominion and power in the great Future would be Commensurate with the no [number] of 'Wives Childin and Friends' that we inherit here and that our great mission to earth was to Organize a Neculi of Heaven to take with us. The increase of which there would be no end."³⁶

Six weeks after Zina's sealing, Dimick further solidified the family connection to Joseph Smith by sealing to him a second

through association with a righteous male.

³⁶ In Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Biggs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Press, 1976), 47.

sister, Prescendia Huntington Buell on 11 December 1841. She had married Norman Buell in 1827 at age sixteen in New York, bore two sons, and was baptized with him in 1836. Norman apostatized from the Church in 1839 but moved with her to Lima, Illinois, in the fall of 1840, a year and a half after Zina and her parents reached Nauvoo. In 1880 Prescendia attempted to explain this difficult period to her eldest granddaughter, "The Lord gave me strength to Stand alone and keep the faith amid heavy persecution."³⁷

Like Zina, Prescendia continued to live with her husband; but when the body of the Church prepared to move west, she left him, was sealed to Heber C. Kimball in 1846, and joined his large household, eventually bearing him two children in addition to the seven by Buell. The Huntingtons were a close family, affectionate and emotionally supportive even in Utah. The brothers contributed a significant portion of Zina's economic support, even after she was living in Brigham Young's household, and Zina visited Prescendia every few days.³⁸ Thus, it seems likely that Zina confided her situation, not only to her brothers but, perhaps more importantly, to her sister, receiving the emotional support she needed as she negotiated her split commitment between her two husbands.

Maintaining the secrecy of the plural union was an absolute requirement; and in some ways, the need to maintain surface normalcy probably made Zina's life easier because she could concentrate on the typical events of a young wife's life. She gave birth to Henry's son, Zebulon, on 2 January 1842. On 24 March she and Dimick's wife, Fanny Allen Huntington, joined the Nauvoo Female Relief Society at the group's second meeting. She later wrote approvingly of the first meeting she attended, "This Society was the means of doing much good."³⁹ Henry left on his fourth mission on 30 May 1843; and that same year, she opened

³⁷ Prescendia Huntington Buell Smith Kimball to Her Eldest Grand Daughter, Letter, 1 April 1881, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

³⁸ See Marilyn Higbee, ed., "A Weary Traveler": The 1848-50 Diary of Zina D. H. Young," *Journal of Mormon History* 19 (Fall 1993): 86-125.

³⁹ Zina D. H. Young, Autobiography.

a “school of small schollars in my house being lonely.” (She crossed out the words “it helped to pass the times as my husband. . . .” Perhaps she might have completed her thought—“was frequently gone.”)⁴⁰ The loneliness was real; but even privately Zina seemed reluctant to complain. Henry went on a least eight missions between May 1839 and May 1841 that varied in length between two weeks and four months and two weeks. Regardless of the length, Zina missed Henry while he served missions, suffering insecurity for herself and Zebulon that seems to have been even more trying than the inevitable financial privation. “This morning Henry again set out on another mission,” she wrote on 21 January 1845. “. . . Wilt thou preserve me in his absence, O Lord, and my little son, and thy name shall have all the glory.”⁴¹ Henry left no diary or letters from this period, but Zina records nothing in her journal suggesting that he ever complained or resented the demands on him. In Henry’s repeated absences, Zina did not, as might be expected, refocus her attention on Joseph Smith. Instead, she turned to the world of female kin and friends. During one typical week, she visited female friends five out of seven days, assisted in a birth and attended meetings at “the stand,” again with a woman friend. Henry was away when Joseph was killed in June 1844, and Zina shared her grief with her women friends: “Spent the day at Sister Jonese’s [sic], Carlos Smiths Widdow [Agnes Coolbrith Smith], the girls that resides with her, Louisa Bemon [Beamon], and Sister Marcum [Hannah Markham]. Very plesent to day, but ah what drearryness and sorrow pervades every bosom.”⁴²

Privately, she wrote a poignant lament that contained a partially coded reminder of her complicated situation: “O God how long before thou wilt avenge the innosent blood that has be[e]n shed? How long must widdows mourn and orp[h]ans cry before thou wilt avenge the Earth and cause wickedness to seace. Wilt thou hasten the day, O Lord, in thine own way. Wilt thou

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Zina D. H. Jacobs, *Diary*, 5 June 1844–21 September 1845, Zina D. H. Young Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁴² Ibid., 4 July 1845.

Prepare me to stand all things and come of[f] conqerrer through him who hath Loved us, and give me a seat in the selestial Kingdom with the Sanctified.”⁴³ The last phrase is particularly telling. Clearly, Zina grieved the loss of a leader but looked toward a glorified relationship with Smith in the celestial kingdom—not the familial and domestic relationship of husband and wife but something grander. Though vaguely conceptualized, it was characterized by victory and exaltation, “seat” suggesting either a feast, a throne, or both.

Although Zina does not try to record the intensifying political and social pressures mounting against the city, she could not help but be aware of them and fear them. She redoubled her spiritual efforts to combat her loneliness and insecurity. She was, from childhood, drawn to the things of God. Now the Church wove the fabric of her life. She acknowledges on nearly every page of her diary the hand of providence. Actuated by the highest ideals of self-sacrificing Christian service, she cared ceaselessly for others. Although she always lived in less than adequate homes and moved three times after her marriage in Nauvoo, she generously opened her home to the sick and developed important nursing skills she would call upon in Utah in her work as a midwife and healer. “The saints had to struggle for the needfuls of life,” she wrote. “[Nauvoo] was a very sickly place, ponds or swamps of stagnate water, musketos in abundance until drainage could be affected.”⁴⁴

As difficult as these years had been for Henry and Zina, the next three years challenged their faith to the limits. These were the years of her second sealing and the somewhat brutal ending of her conjugal relationship with Henry.

Although no challenge to the solidity of Zina and Henry’s marriage exists, their union, solemnized by John C. Bennett, acting as both civil and ecclesiastical leader, was simply a civil contract. Most ecclesiastical leaders in Nauvoo also enjoyed considerable civic power, recognized at least by Nauvoo and not challenged by the state of Illinois. In the anomie of Nauvoo, one

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1844.

⁴⁴ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*.

way the Mormons dissolved civil marriages was by superseding them with a covenant of eternal marriage, a “higher law” that overrode previous marriages without the necessity of a divorce.

Although such a system required compliant men—and especially compliant women—it seems to have operated efficiently in establishing the plural marriage network. Some women whose husbands were not members of the Church or whose civil marriages had never been replaced with sealings entered plural marriages; their motivations are not always known, nor is the type and degree of priesthood persuasion employed in such unions; however, the situations of these polyandrous wives is suggestive. Augusta Adams Cobb joined the Church in Boston during 1832, but her husband did not. When she married Brigham Young on 2 November 1843, she was still technically married to her husband. However, because the Church had never recognized her civil marriage, Brigham Young did not think it was necessary to secure a civil divorce. Ironically, other civil marriages (such as Joseph Smith’s justice-of-the-peace marriage to Emma or Brigham Young’s marriage to his second monogamous wife, Mary Ann Angell Young) were recognized and maintained throughout their lives. Again, the fluidity and lack of regularity in the early Church reflect Smith’s efforts to reshape familial relationships in ways that would strengthen the social structure of the fledgling church.

Orson Pratt soundly criticized civil law in 1847: “As all the ordinances of the gospel Administered by the world since the Aposticy of the Church was illegal, in like manner was the marriage Cerimony illegal.” He labeled the offspring of these unions as bastards in need of adoption into the priesthood to “become sons and legal heirs to salvation.”⁴⁵ John D. Lee, an adopted son of Brigham Young, recalled the improvisational atmosphere of this normless period in 1877: “If a [couple’s] marriage 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.”⁴⁶ Although Lee made

⁴⁵ As quoted by Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenny. 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 3:260.

no verbal differentiation between men and women, plural marriages, especially in Nauvoo, were arranged by men. Women typically entered plural marriage upon the request of a male priesthood carrier who invoked his own righteousness and assured her that God would provide confirmation if she asked.⁴⁷

“We are told that the Prophet Joseph requested the Quorum to marry and take care of his widows,” Zina’s granddaughter would write, “and in some cases Joseph Smith’s plural wives were given their choice of the Twelve as their husbands for time, to give them the full honor and protection of marriage with an apostle.”⁴⁸ These men, the highest in the priesthood hierarchy, became proxies in life for Smith. Zina’s sister Presendia was sealed to Heber C. Kimball under this arrangement. Henry left on yet another mission after witnessing the sealing of twenty-five-year-old Zina for time to Brigham Young, twenty years her senior, in the Nauvoo Temple 2 February 1846 and resealed to Joseph Smith for eternity. This event occurred one month after Henry and Zina received their endowments on 3 January 1846. She also received the second endowment or “fulness of the priesthood,” from Apostle John Taylor.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled: Including the Remarkable Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee* (St. Louis: Vandawallew, 1892), 146-47.

⁴⁷ Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers*, 142, describes this situation as being evidence of the simultaneous existence of “the suborder of human law and the suborder of priesthood or divine law. There is an interrelationship between these two forms of law. Since they are based on different premises, however, they are not always consistent. In spheres where both operate, this inconsistency can result in ambiguous rules and regulations.”

⁴⁸ Cannon, untitled narrative, 23.

⁴⁹ Nauvoo Proxy Sealings, 1846, 61, Nauvoo Sealings and Adoptions, 511-12; Family History Library, Salt Lake City. These records state that Amanda Barnes Smith and Augusta Adams Cobb Young, both plural wives of Brigham Young, were also present, though whether as participants or witnesses is not known. According to emerging Mormon theology, a man could be sealed to any number of women, but a woman could be sealed to only one man. Thus, if the husband in a sealed couple died, the woman could not be sealed to a second man. Any offspring that resulted from subsequent unions would be born under the covenant she and her first husband had formed. Therefore, when Zina was sealed

Connubial relations with Joseph Smith, if any occurred at all, had certainly been infrequent and irregular. Now both sisters became wives in fact to their apostle-husbands, acting as proxies for Joseph Smith, while remaining spiritual wives of Joseph Smith. At this point their civil marriages to Henry Jacobs and Norman Buell were considered canceled, although no formal divorce or documented ceremony of negation was performed, as nearly as it is possible to determine. Furthermore, it is obvious that Henry considered himself Zina's husband until bluntly informed to the contrary by Brigham Young after they arrived at Mt. Pisgah.⁵⁰

Once again, no contemporary record exists of Zina's motivations nor of her understanding of the implications of this second sealing. Family tradition maintains that Brigham Young urged Zina to take the step, assuring her that "if she would marry him she would be in a higher glory."⁵¹ Certainly he made similar state-

to Brigham as proxy for Joseph Smith, Zina and Brigham's single child, a daughter named Zina, was considered to be the eternal offspring of Joseph Smith. As Orson Pratt explained in *The Seer* 1 (1853-54): 142, the second husband was "obliged to enter into a covenant to deliver her up with all her children to her deceased husband in the morning of the first resurrection. In this case, the second husband would have no wife only [except] for time, neither could he retain his children in the eternal worlds, for they, according to the law of Heaven, would be given up to the wife and her first husband."

⁵⁰ When Hyrum Smith discussed the ordinance of temple sealing with his second wife, Mary Fielding Smith (his first wife, Jerusha Barden, had died on 13 October 1837), he told her that he could be sealed to Jerusha in that same way that one could do work by proxy for the dead. He could then be sealed as well to Mary. Mary responded by saying, "I will act as proxy for your wife that is dead and I will be sealed to you for eternity myself for I never had any other husband. I love you and I do not want to be separated from you nor be forever alone in the world to come." Manuscript History, 8 April 1844, LDS Church Archives. The concept of proxy sealing could take such strange forms as that recorded in the Pratt family. Parley P. Pratt, an apostle, stood as proxy for Joseph Smith and was sealed vicariously to his own estranged wife, Mary Ann Frost Pratt, on 6 February 1846. Mary Ann cohabited with Pratt after that time although there is no evidence of the nature of their new relationship. Pratt explained, "By mutual consent of parties and by the advise [sic] of President Young [Mary Ann] was sealed to Joseph Smith [then deceased] for Eternity and to her former husband [Parley] for time, as proxy." Parley P. Pratt, writing in the diary of another plural wife, Belinda Marden Pratt, 11 March 1851, LDS Church Archives.

⁵¹ Cannon, untitled narrative, 15. Oa is quoting her brother, Briant S. Jacobs,

ments on numerous occasions in public discourses. In October 1861 general conference, he asserted: "There was another way—in which a woman could leave a man—if the woman preferred—another man higher in authority and he is willing to take her. And her husband gives her up—there is no Bill of divorce required in the case it is right in the sight of God."⁵² Zina makes no comment that illuminates her preference in the matter, but her behavior was consistent with her obedience to priesthood authority in the past. We do not know how willing Henry was to relinquish his marriage to Zina or even if either of them understood that this second sealing was the end of their union.

In an ironic replay of the first sealing, Zina was again pregnant during the ceremony. Obviously she was unable to manage the exodus from Nauvoo on her own, so in a heroic display of continued commitment, Henry supervised their departure on 7 February 1846, only five days after the sealing. Zina remembered the event sadly:

Clear and cold we left our house all we possessed in a wagon left many things standing our house unsold for most of our neighbors were as ourselves on the wing. Shall I ever forget standing on Major Russells porch seeing Thomas Grovers wagon had sunk on a sand bar. The Brethren taking the little ones from the wagon cover. The bows just peeped above the water. At the same time the bells were ringing, the Temple was on fire and we leaving our homes for the wilderness trusting God like Abriha[m]. After we had crossed the river I sent back a pair of stockings to get a little thread and a few needles not knowing when we should again have the opportunity.⁵³

For the next four months together, Zina's and Henry's wagon crawled across the muddy roads of Iowa to Mt. Pisgah. Meanwhile, Zina's new husband supervised the entire migration of over a thousand wagons. Although Zina does not always make daily diary entries, she mentions no encounter of any kind with him, whether public or private.

who in turn is recalling the words of their aunt, Zina Young Card, the daughter of Zina and Brigham.

⁵² James Beck, *Notebooks, 1859-65*, Vol. 1, LDS Church Archives, reports a speech delivered by Brigham Young at General Conference, 8 October 1861.

⁵³ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*.

The men in Zina's life—her father, her brothers, and her priesthood-leader husbands—reshaped her family life. She struggled with her feelings, torn between loyalty to Henry and obedience to a higher law. But interestingly, she seems not to have admitted any question about the “fairness” or “rightness” of the idea. She later reflected: “This taking of wives was not hailed by the leaders of the Church as a pleasure—undertaking [it] we do honor this the requirement of God or be cut off could the world see both men and women of this Church in there true light how differently they would view us—in poverty, oppressed within with aposticy, with out our enemies not knowing what they ware doing.”⁵⁴

She spent the last six weeks of her pregnancy under trying conditions, though “Mr. Jacobs . . . done all he could for my comfort. The wagon cover was not dry for two weeks, rain and snow visiting us.”⁵⁵ Their second son, Henry Chariton Jacobs, was born 22 March less than twenty miles away from Nauvoo at the crossing of the Chariton River. Zina's son Zebulon later described the event in his autobiography:

March 21st we came to and crossed the Chariton river. The train camped on the east side. Father and a batchelor [*sic*] friend decided they would go over and camp on a dry point just above the road as there was plenty of wood, and the clouds were threatening. The next morning I was bundled up bright and early, taken out of the wagon and deposited in the forks of a scrub oak, and was told “to keep quiet or I would fall and crack my head.” Becoming restless, father called to me and said “be a good boy for a few minutes, and I shall show you something.” In a short time he came and got me. I was tired of sitting in the rain. Father took the damp shawl off me then leaned me towards the head of mother's bed. “What do you see over there?”, “Mama,” “What else?” At that moment I heard a baby squeak. Catching sight of a little red squirming face, father was kept busy holding me. Mother said “you have got a little brother, Henry Chariton Jacobs.”⁵⁶

Zina's stepsister, Eliza Partridge Smith Lyman, after 1849 the plural wife of Amasa Lyman, recorded this pitiful scene in her

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Zebulon Jacobs, *Autobiography*, n.d., 1; Zina D. H. Young Collection.

journal: "At the Chariton river we came across Henry Jacobs wagon in the mud. Zina in bed on the top of the load so near the wet cover that she could barely raise her head, a babe in her arms but a few days old and no wagon near or friend to do anything for her."⁵⁷

After seeing Zina safely camped at Mt. Pisgah with her father and stepmother, Henry bade her good-bye in what must have been their most difficult parting yet. Brigham Young had called him on a mission to England with Oliver Huntington on 31 May 1846. He was reportedly so ill that men had to "put him on a blanket and carry him to the boat to get him on his way."⁵⁸ He survived, but his shattered emotional state can be seen in a letter that captures his struggle between love for Zina and loyalty to priesthood authority. On 25 June 1846, just before sailing from New York City for Europe, he wrote reassuringly:

All we have to do is stand still and see the Salvation of God in all things whether in Life, or in death, whether in time or Eternity Zina my mind never will change from worlds without End no never the same affection is there and never can be moved. I do not murmur nor complain at the Handlings of god no veryly no. . . . I do not blaime any person or person no may the Lord our Father Bless Brother Brigham and . . . tell him for me I have no feelings against him nor never had; all is right according to the Law of Celestial Kingdom of our god and Joseph. Zina be comforted be of good cheer and the god of our fathers bless you. I know your mind has been troubled about menny things but fear not all things will work together for good for them that Love God therefore be subject to council as you have commenced and you will be saved.⁵⁹

In England Henry was placed in charge of the Clithero-Preston Branch, the largest in his mission, with Oliver B. Huntington as his counselor. Another letter to Zina expresses steadfast faith in the eventual justice of God:

⁵⁷ Eliza Partridge Smith Lyman, *Journal*, March 1846, typescript, 4; LDS Church Archives.

⁵⁸ Oa J. Cannon, "Short Sketch of the Life of Henry Jacobs," Oa J. Cannon Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁵⁹ Henry Bailey Jacobs, *Letter to Zina D. H. Young*, 25 June 1846, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

Dear and respected companion. . . I must say I have been greatly blest since I left the Camp of Israel I never felt the power of God so sensible never in my life as I have on this Mission . . . there is power in the priesthood yet and god lives as in the day of old . . . Zina I have not forgotten you my love is as ever the same . . . and hope it will continue to grow stronger to all Eternity worlds without End when families are joined together and become one consolidated in truth when the keys of the Resurrection will be restored and the fullness of the Gospel given the Law of the Celestial Kingdom be in force and every man and woman will know there place and have to keep it though there will be shiftings in time and revisions in Eternity all be made right in the End . . . my kindest love to all the 12 . . . kiss my Little ones and tell them about there father . . . I am ever your well wisher.⁶⁰

Although this letter does not express the thought very clearly, it suggests that Henry accepted Zina's second sealing, believing somehow that if they were both faithful to earthly priesthood authority, they might be reunited in the afterlife, that the lines separating one patriarchal organization from another would be erased, and that all would "be made right in the End." At this point, he clearly considers himself still married to Zina in some sense, although he calls himself a "well wisher" instead of a husband and refers to her as "companion" rather than a wife. It seems likely that he did not know Brigham Young planned to establish connubial relations with Zina.

In Mt. Pisgah, Zina lived in a room about fourteen feet square, part of a double log house built by her father who had been assigned to preside over Mt. Pisgah with Charles C. Rich. When almost five hundred able-bodied men enlisted in the Mormon Battalion and set off for California, the responsibility for dependent women and children increased manyfold. Zina, in addition to caring for four-year-old Zebulon and newborn Chariton, promptly began nursing the sick. At one time she had ten in her small room. Her father became ill and died 19 August 1846.

Charles Decker, Brigham Young's son-in-law, and others were passing Mt. Pisgah in late September 1846 and offered to

⁶⁰ Henry Bailey Jacobs, Letter to Zina D. H. Young, 19 August 1846, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

take Zina with them as far as Winter Quarters in Nebraska. On 1 October, Zina left her twice-widowed stepmother and started toward Winter Quarters, riding on a bag of oats in Decker's wagon. At night her feather bed was "made up on the top of the barrel heads being careful to get the hip bone into the top of one barrel."⁶¹ Toward the end of the journey they were plagued by heavy rains. Not far from Winter Quarters, the wagon became mired in mud and Brother Decker had to ride horseback for extra teams to pull the wagon out.

With relief, Zina recounted their arrival in the fall of 1846. It was her first experience with living as a plural wife among "the Girls," or Brigham Young's other wives, and she was doubly relieved to find the experience a positive one:

Arrived in Winter Quarters all safe was welcomed into my new home [the home of Brigham Young] lived with the President's Family some 6 or 7 of us in a tent. Log cabins ware erected, a meeting house also had now and then a dance to cheer us, good meetings, friendly visits kind associations in this my new life, knowing we ware here the cause of God had commanded. The sun shone in the midst of all this inconvenience. Some of the Girls [wives] it was the first time they had ever left there parents, but the Pres was so kind to us all, nothing but God could have taught him and others how to be so kindly to there large Families. This order not being on the Earth for 1800 years with all our traditions like garments woven around us, some could act upon principles with better justice than others, not all are capacited alike in any respect.⁶²

A year later in August 1847, Fanny Huntington, Dimick's wife, wrote to the missionaries, informing them that Zina was living with some of Brigham's other wives in Winter Quarters. Oliver hastily wrote a reassuring but poignant letter to Zina. "Henry is here and herd the letter. He says all is right, he don't care. He stands alone as yet. I have had almost as much trial about you as he has. I have had to hear, feel and suffer everything he has--If you only knew my troubles you'd pitty me."⁶³

⁶¹ Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*.

⁶² Zina D. H. Young, *Autobiography*, described as September 1846, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

⁶³ Oliver Huntington, Letter to Zina D. H. Young, 27 August 1847, Oa J. Cannon

Brigham Young left on 5 April 1847 to accompany the vanguard to the Great Basin, returning in August. Zina spent the winter of 1847-48 with his other wives and their children. Some were already trusted friends, including her stepsisters. Resolutely and cheerfully they strengthened themselves and each other by giving voice to their belief that they were serving a holy mission, pleasing the Lord, and establishing a great and glorious cause by their ability to live plural marriage. Illness and malnutrition created a desperate need for sisterly nursing; scarce resources and winter weather restricted their activities, but blessing meetings and spiritual meetings where they spoke in tongues intensified the general feeling of sisterhood among the women of Winter Quarters. It seems clear as well that “the girls,” or an unidentified inner circle of women formerly sealed to Joseph Smith drew special solace from their association with each other.⁶⁴

Henry and his new English wife, Aseneth Babcock Jacobs, arrived at Winter Quarters in November. Aseneth was a twenty-two-year-old widow—Henry’s age; ironically, she was also the mother of a five-year-old son named Zebulon. Zina mentions no conversation or contact with Henry during the next six months until Henry and Aseneth left for Utah with Captain John Lytle in 1848 with the second hundred in Brigham Young’s Division.

Brigham Young departed again for Utah in May 1848. Zina waited until the spring of 1849 when Oliver brought her and her children to Utah with his own family. She took up residence in quarters in the Old Fort reserved for Brigham Young’s wives. Zina’s relationship with Brigham during this period is quite formal. She notes his comings and goings, particularly when he gives her food or supplies. Clearly she accepted him as her religious leader, but a poignant entry marks the day their relationship changed:

As I sat in my wagon with a hart tender as if berieved of a dear friend meditating I was aroused by a knock on the wagon. BY came to inform me a room was finished etc., etc., etc. O did not [I] seek a

Collection.

⁶⁴ Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” *Sunstone* 8 (July-August 1983): 11-19.

lone retreat beside a murmuring the water rolled over a fall of about 3 feet where the sound of my voice would not be heard there. I wept yes wept bitterness of Soul ya sorrow and tears that wore round [sic] from a heavy heart. Sadness for a while took her seat in my heart and reigned Predominant for a short time. I could exclaim O Lord have mercy on me. Yes I did say it with all my heart and I believe he will hear me in his own time and answer me. About 4 PM I moved into the room⁶⁵

A year later in April 1850, she gave birth to Brigham Young's daughter.

Henry and Aseneth lived for a time in northern California, where their son, George Theodore Jacobs, was born on 15 October 1848. Although no records have been found in corroboration, a family tradition maintains that Henry Jacobs married a second plural wife, Sarah Taylor, in Arizona in 1850.

Henry continued to write heartrending letters to Zina until September 1852. On 2 September 1852 he lamented: "O how happy I should be if I only could see you and the little children, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. I am unhappy, there is no peace for poor me, my pleasure is you, my comfort has vanished. . . O Zina, can I ever, will I ever get you again, answer the question please."⁶⁶ According to family tradition, Brigham Young forbade Zina to receive these letters and put an official end to the connection; but there is reason to question the family tradition, and it is unclear when the two themselves considered the relationship over.

Zina met her new life with faith and courage, believing wholeheartedly in the mission of the Church to build the kingdom of God. She had close attachments to some of her sister wives, but especially relied on her own family. Presendia, Dimick, Oliver, and William visited her almost daily and gave her physical and emotional support. She became one of the great ladies of Mormonism, providing nurture and leadership that took the renewed Relief Society into the twentieth century.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Zina D. H. Young, *Diary*, 16 April 1849, Zina D. H. Young Collection.

⁶⁶ Henry Bailey Jacobs, *Letter to Zina D. H. Young*, 2 September 1852 (the last in this collection), Zina D. H. Young Collection.

⁶⁷ See Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher,

From a feminist perspective, however, Zina's life and marriages in Nauvoo are especially illuminating in establishing the connection between plural marriage and Mormon patriarchy. Feminist sociologist Anne Kasper suggests that human social life is the product of "minded individuals" capable of reflection and communication. She notes that sociologist Max Weber proposes that one must likewise study social action between individuals "in order to understand the individual as a social being, the formation of social structures, and the meaning systems of the culture." Unavoidably, actions emerge from either self-interest or the rules of society.⁶⁸ Behavior, therefore, reflects at least some of the values and beliefs of a culture, inconsistent and contradictory though such behavior often is. Gendered behavior likewise mirrors tradition, ideology, and belief.

By examining the role gender played in the dynamic of plural marriage and its relationship to Mormon patriarchy, some meanings emerge that take Zina's story beyond the response of faith to authority and adversity. Nauvoo plural wives, particularly the young women who accepted Joseph Smith's personal teachings, chose to enter polygamy based on a distinct set of assumptions about religion, their position in Mormon society, and their sense of the future. Polygamy was a new social institution that they were able to accept by redefining it in terms of a female world view.

Simply put, what was the female interpretation of Mormon theology? How did they understand gender and patriarchy? It is important to realize that women experienced Mormonism differently from men. But were they simply passive recipients of theological interpretations that so radically altered their lives? Or did they reshape them and find meaning somewhere in the interplay between informal familial networks and official hierarchal social structure? Zina's willingness to enter plural marriage and her

Women of Covenant (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 127-50; Zina D. H. Young, *Diaries*, Zina D. H. Young Collection; her "How I Gained My Testimony of the Truth," *Young Woman's Journal* 4 (April 1893): 317-19; and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The 'Leading Sisters': A Female Hierarchy in Nineteenth Century Mormon Society," *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 25-39.

⁶⁸ Anne Kasper, "Consciousness Re-evaluated: Interpretive Theory and Feminist Scholarship," *Sociological Inquiry* 56 (1986): 30, 36.

success at subduing her own feelings in doing so indicates that she did the latter. It expresses her effort and willingness to mediate her personal life within the formal patriarchal structure of Mormonism⁶⁹

Family discourse provided Zina, Presendia, Eliza, Emily, Mary Elizabeth, and others like them with a distinctly female image of themselves and their function in this emerging religious tradition, an image that was both powerful and sacred. Despite the transformative potentialities of Jacksonian America, the female world was in fact contracting, coalescing about a few sweeping assumptions about gender and role.

These women lived in a largely secular culture, but their entrance into Mormonism gave them the possibilities of a sacred world. Within that sacred world lay an inner, more sacralized world: the world of celestial marriage and, in particular, plural marriage. As plural wives, women had a significant role to play in the sacred community. The formal stable world of religious patriarchy where they had access to only limited power was still preferable to the informal secular patriarchal world with uncertain access to power.⁷⁰

By equating home, family, and the feminine with the spiritual and by assigning sacredness to plural marriage, these women

⁶⁹ Debra Kaufman, "Engendering Family Theory: Toward a Feminist-Interpretive Framework," in *Fashioning Family Theory*, edited by Jetse Spray (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 125, observes, in her study of newly orthodox Jewish women, that a feminist interpretive model explains how a woman can often "simultaneously be a victim and agent, subject and object."

⁷⁰ There are striking similarities between the way women in Nauvoo accepted plural marriage and Debra Kaufman's work on newly orthodox Jewish women. Kaufman studied a group of fundamentalist women, at least half of whom began their journey toward Jewish orthodoxy partly as a backlash against feminism and any liberation movement they perceived as valuing individual freedom above social responsibility. Paradoxically, almost all of them selectively incorporate and adopt values and practices about the family and about men that some feminists share. "Therefore, while most of these women openly reject feminism, or what they perceive feminism to represent and advocate, they also maintain a gender identity deeply informed by and consonant with many values associated with some contemporary feminists who celebrate the female and the feminine." Kaufman, "Engendering Family Theory," 128.

could believe that they were valued and respected in the Mormon community. For women like Zina and her mother, Zina Baker Huntington, their personal/social roles as women, wives, and mothers were also their religious roles. The distinctions between their private and religious world blurred as the family and the role of the female assumed sacred status. Furthermore, many of them had experienced the familial and economic instabilities of the early nineteenth century. The stability of this new order must have been appealing in ways that autonomy-valuing Americans of the twentieth century must make an imaginative effort to understand.

Mormon women in Nauvoo formed an economically dependent class. Survival depended on aligning their lives with men sufficiently powerful to dominate hostile environmental forces. Clearly, plural marriage not only affected one's religious life but also had economic, social, and political repercussions. Zina's economic position had caused her uncertainty and suffering. As a young wife in Nauvoo, Zina was more frequently alone than with her husband. Although she had a sympathetic network of family and friends, she knew what it was to support herself.⁷¹ Surely the prospect of traveling to the West and beginning a new life in a strange and wild environment made the prospect of becoming a member of Brigham Young's family much less threatening.

It is also easier to understand why men would be willing to accept the doctrine of plural marriage. As the keystone of family organization, the male's importance was highlighted by plurality. He was the apex of the family hierarchy, given socially sanctioned sexual partners, and granted expanded reproductive capabilities. It was the model of his potential for deity.

Marriage was, for nineteenth-century women, the first moment in their adult lives when they were empowered. Choosing to marry or not to marry, and whom to marry, radically changed the boundaries of their lives. These choices that women made defined their interaction with the community and implied an engagement with the future.

⁷¹ Zina's Nauvoo diary is filled with frequent references to brother William's generosity. During Henry's absences, Zina occasionally moved in with William and his new wife Lydia.

One theory of feminist biography provides an insight into Zina's choice: "A confined and limited future diminishes possibility and that in turn will effect how far a woman thinks she can go in acting for and from herself."⁷² When Zina acquiesced to Joseph Smith's and later Brigham Young's priesthood authority, she moved with the current of change in the Church, filled with a sense of the spirit that colored all her decisions. Another feminist scholar finds that the rhythm of women's lives is marked by repetition and waiting which create "simply another mode of being," inducing a kind of "serendipitous passivity. . . . Responding in this way to the whim of the moment is markedly different from imposing your will on time. . . . The passivity so induced is that of a light object thrown into the water; it is not the object that determines its direction, but the movement of the water."⁷³ While we might assume that such a choice indicates an exercise of some power, in fact it does not. Women had the choice to accept these propositions or accept the consequences. If they refused, they might be criticized by their priesthood leaders, suffer the guilt of disobedience, or be condemned to a life outside the circle of elite members of the Church.

Perhaps the best evidence of essential choicelessness in Zina's life is the description of her marriage to Henry. Numerous versions of the story depict Henry and Zina's marriage as unhappy.⁷⁴ At age seventy-eight, Zina herself, in an interview de-

⁷² Kathleen Barry, *Susan B. Anthony* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 371.

⁷³ Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, *The Sacred and the Feminine: Toward a Theology of Housework* (New York: Seabury, 1982), 153.

⁷⁴ This approach was taken so frequently as to become the orthodox position, each mentioning the "unhappy" marriage. See Kate B. Carter, ed., "Zina Diantha Huntington Young," in "Brigham Young and His Wives," *Our Pioneer Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1971), 1:431-32; Andrew Jenson, "Zina Diantha Huntington Young," *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compendium of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901-30), 1:697; and Orson F. Whitney, "Zina Huntington Young," *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1892-1904), 4:6. The story is told in the same way for a female audience in "A Distinguished Woman," *Women's Exponent* 12 (1 December 1883): 99. For a critique of this view, see Jeffery O. Johnson, letter to the editor, this issue.

scribed her marriage as “unhappy.”⁷⁵ But the primary sources paint a more ambiguous story. Zina had no complaints about Henry, only conflicts presented to conventional domesticity by priesthood authority. Henry was obviously devoted to Zina, caring for her even in conditions that must have been excruciatingly painful. Yet even when Zina tells this story it reflected the establishment viewpoint. As feminist historian Catherine MacKinnon suggests, “What counts as truth is produced in the interest of those with power to shape reality.”⁷⁶ Why has the story been told this way? Did family members, Zina’s contemporaries, future generations, and even contemporary historians feel more comfortable with this complex series of marriages if Henry and Zina’s marriage was unhappy? It seems to provide a human justification for sacrificial faith; but from a social and political perspective, given the anomie of Nauvoo, the decision rested on the centrality of Joseph Smith’s authority. In a way, the orthodox position is absolutely correct. Zina entered plural marriage because she chose to believe Joseph Smith.

A feminist interpretation of Nauvoo plural marriage sees that, although women were willing to restructure their lives along new and often radical lines, they believed Joseph Smith was expressing the will of God by recreating patriarchal precedents from the Bible. Mormon patriarchy reflected his attempt to redefine, reorder, and maintain social control through male priesthood. He did this by invoking the moral authority of revelation, priesthood power, and the principle of obedience. We must not underestimate the impact of Smith’s prologue of visions and angels in his private instructions to young women. If they believed, the logical consequence was their total submission to his judgment, his authority, and his power. If they did not believe him, there was no way for them to remain members of his church.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ John W. Wight, Interview with Zina D. H. Young, 1 October 1898, in “Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young,” *Saints Herald* 52 (11 July 1905): 28.

⁷⁶ Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence,” in *Contemporary Critical Theory*, edited by Dan Latimer (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1989), 611.

⁷⁷ Mark Carnes’s masterful work, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) provides exciting insights into

There are many approaches with which to examine the complex and challenging phenomenon of polygamy. From a feminist perspective, plural marriage and its foundation in Mormon patriarchy powerfully bonded Mormonism's elite. It helped define the boundaries of faith and assured women of their faithfulness by setting them an enormous loyalty test. When they chose to enter a patriarchal religious community, they did so because they believed that the gender system was organized around family-centered and woman-oriented values. The network of familial relationships created through plural marriage created a new and unique sense of community, of family and of self. According to anthropologist Rex Cooper, plural marriage emerged from a very real fear for survival. "In its earliest form," Cooper writes, it might be regarded as an attempt to maintain Mormon group identity and provide for Mormon salvation despite any eventuality."⁷⁸ While it generated conflict with the larger society, plural marriage simultaneously fortified the community of Saints against outside threats through a gender-based hierarchy that facilitated internal stability as well. Furthermore, Zina saw herself not as a passive reflection of her husband's priesthood power but as a participant in the

the widespread involvement of men in secret societies. Tens of thousands of American men, suggests Carnes, entered Masonic lodges and other secret societies because of status anxiety, stimulated by the rapid change of the industrial revolution, which changed familial relations and the roles women played in the home and in society. Men felt they had lost control over their homes. Involvement in secret rituals expressed the effort to control a space and to regain status in the shifting gender relationships of the nineteenth century. Carnes quotes one prominent Odd Fellow who candidly acknowledged their intent: "The simple truth is this: Women is not entitled to and seeks not a place among us. Our institution was originally intended and formed exclusively for men and the various modifications it has undergone have not adapted it to the other sex" (88). Although it is not the focus of this particular study, status anxiety caused by changes in gender relationships could be yet another reason for Joseph's preoccupation with the secret ceremonies and tests of loyalties embodied in temple ceremonies in Nauvoo. Despite the fact that women were, after a time, given a role in temple ceremonies, their secondary position does not jeopardize the hierarchal patriarchal order. See also Carmon Hardy's detailed discussion of the complex reinforcement of male preeminence and polygamy in this issue.

⁷⁸ Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers*, 137.

Lord's work.

Whatever forces were at play, Zina chose to enter plural marriage, feeling she had been inspired to do so. Her choice defined the limits of the rest of her adult life. Ironically, because Zina was a generous, energetic, spirited woman, it expanded rather than contracted her options and placed her at the center of the community. Nevertheless, the final myth we perpetuate with the story of Zina's marriages is that early Mormonism, in the words of Thomas O'Dea, "came very close to accepting the equality of women with men."⁷⁹ On the contrary, in defining priesthood by gender, Joseph Smith closed the door on potential equality. Women like Zina, who emerge as leaders in nineteenth-century Utah and exert such a profound influence on the lives of women, proved themselves in Nauvoo, accepting and shaping themselves to the ultimate female role as defined by patriarchy. They were obedient, compliant, and willingly subordinate. Ironically, their empowerment in Utah emerged from their willingness in Nauvoo to deny power.

⁷⁹ Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 249.