

Chapter 29

The Knowledge and Practice of Plural Marriage Expand

The teachings of plural marriage expanded slowly, despite the need for secrecy, as more Latter-day Saints learned both directly and indirectly of the revelation and the new and challenging principle it articulated. In 1904, John Wycliffe Rigdon, son of Sidney Rigdon, was asked: “Was Polygamy taught and practiced [by] Joseph Smith at Nauvoo[?].” His answer: “I say yes, but it was not taught openly[,] it was done secretly. It was commenced some time the latter part of the year of 1842. That is, it was talked about and in 1843 and 1844. It was the common talk of the members of the church.”¹ Modern writer John E. Thompson concluded his examination of Nauvoo plural marriage by asserting: “In spite of [the] aura of secrecy, the gentiles knew that the Mormon Church was honey-combed with polygamy during the Nauvoo period.”² However, my own research indicates that these assessments overstate the actual spread of the doctrine at that time.

Practicing Polygamists

In 1854, John Taylor recalled the early days of plural marriage in Nauvoo: “The doctrine was first introduced of men having more wives than one. It was a thing new to the whole of us yet it was a thing that was substantiated by scripture and made manifest also by revelation and it only needed men to have the spirit of God or woman to know and to understand the principles that Joseph communicated unto them.”³

From the first plural marriage in Nauvoo in April of 1841, until June of 1844, research compiled from several sources identifies twenty-nine men, besides Joseph Smith, who were sealed to fifty plural wives.⁴ These twenty-nine were Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, Vinson Knight, Willard Richards,

1. John W. Rigdon, letter to “Arthur Willing, Elder,” February 20, 1904, 6–7.

2. John E. Thompson, “History of Plural Marriage in the Mormon Church,” 36.

3. John Taylor, “Sermon in Honor of the Martyrdom,” June 27, 1854. Terminal punctuation and initial capitals added.

4. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*: “... but we called it celestial marriage,” Appendix B; Gary James Bergera, “Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841–1844,” 1–74.

William D. Huntington, Orson Hyde, Lorenzo D. Young, Joseph Bates Noble, William Clayton, Benjamin F. Johnson, James Adams, Parley P. Pratt, William Felshaw, Hyrum Smith, John Smith, John Taylor, Isaac Morley, William Henry Sagers, Edwin D. Woolley, Theodore Turley, Erastus Snow, William Smith, Ezra T. Benson, Joseph W. Coolidge, Howard Egan, Joseph A. Kelting, John E. Page, Lyman Wight, and Reynolds Cahoon. (See Table 29.1.)

George D. Smith in a 1994 article reflecting immense research listed twelve other men as also being polygamously married prior to Joseph Smith's death, but my own investigation has not confirmed their participation prior to June 1844: Jonathan Holmes (December 1, 1842), Thomas Bullock (January 23, 1843), Orson Pratt (March 10, 1843), James Bird (May 5, 1843), Amasa M. Lyman (July 1843), Benjamin Mitchell (October 10, 1843), John Bair (October 19, 1843), Henry L. Cook (November 5, 1843), John D. Lee (April 19, 1844), and Dominicus Carter (June 2, 1844).⁵ George Smith also identifies Thomas Bateman as plurally married to Elizabeth Ravencroft (March 23, 1843).⁶

As discussed in Chapter 17, George D. Smith also lists Zebedee Coltrin as a polygamist during Joseph Smith's lifetime, but the date of Coltrin's marriage to Mary Mott that George Smith uses is clearly in error.⁷ In addition, George Smith gives July 20, 1843, as the date of a plural sealing between George Miller and Julia Ann Chapman;⁸ I am unable to corroborate this sealing either. Also poorly documented is a plural marriage performed in New York between Ebenezer C. Richardson and Polly Ann Childs in November 1843.⁹ The couple's first child was not born until 1848.¹⁰ All of these sealings were accomplished in secrecy, at least as much as could be maintained under the circumstances, hence precise accuracy may not be possible.

Danel Bachman wrote: "In the security of Nauvoo, and with the imperative of a divine command, Joseph Smith attempted to introduce the new doctrine of plural marriage among his associates and followers. He did so

5. George D. Smith, "Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46: A Preliminary Demographic Report," 1-72.

6. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 576; he cites as his source Lyndon W. Cook, comp., *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages, 1839-1845*, 103, which in turn cites the "Nauvoo Marriage Record." However, this record does not contain plural marriages, since they were secret. Beyond this single reference, I have been unable to verify that Bateman was married to Ravencroft or was married plurally during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Andrew Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:591, speaks of him only as a monogamist.

7. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 585.

8. *Ibid.*, 608.

9. George D. Smith, "Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46," 57; George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 616.

10. Alfred Bosworth Richardson was born February 8, 1848. WWW.FamilySearch.com, accessed June 10, 2012.

TABLE 29.1
 PLURAL MARRIAGES PERFORMED PRIOR TO JOSEPH SMITH'S DEATH

Name	Year	Date of first plural sealing	Total Plural Wives	
1. Heber C. Kimball	1842	early	1	
2. Brigham Young		June 14	4	
3. Vinson Knight		pre-July 31	1	
4. Willard Richards	1843	January 18	3	
5. William D. Huntington		February 5	1	
6. Orson Hyde		February	2	
7. Lorenzo Dow Young		March 9	1	
8. Joseph Bates Noble		April 5	2	
9. William Clayton		April 27	1	
10. Benjamin F. Johnson		May 17	1	
11. James Adams		July 11	1	
12. Parley P. Pratt		July 24	1	
13. William Felshaw		July 28	1	
14. Hyrum Smith		August 11	4	
15. John Smith		August 13	2	
16. John Taylor		December 12	4	
17. Isaac Morley		December 19	2	
18. William Henry Sagers		December	1	
19. Edwin D. Woolley		?	2	
20. Theodore Turley	1844	January	3	
21. Erastus Snow		April 2	1	
22. William Smith		April-May	1	
23. Ezra T. Benson		April 27	1	
24. Joseph W. Coolidge		?		1
25. Howard Egan				1
26. Joseph A. Kelting				2
27. John E. Page				1
28. Lyman Wight				3
29. Reynolds Cahoon				1
		Total	50	

primarily through private and personal interviews.”¹¹ The surviving accounts, which by definition, consist primarily of those who had faith that the doctrine was inspired, bear out this generalization. On October 23, 1843, Brigham Young wrote in his journal: “With Elder H. C. Kimball and George A. Smith, I visited the Prophet Joseph, who was glad to see us. . . . He taught us many principles illustrating the doctrine of celestial marriage, concerning which God had given him a revelation.”¹²

Samuel W. Richards (b. 1824), nephew of Willard Richards, remembered: “I heard him [Joseph Smith] teach it [plural marriage] privately to quite a number at different times,—that is, in the aggregate, to quite a number, but not to many at a time. And I never did hear him preach it or teach it in what could be called a public manner.”¹³ Other witnesses left recollections similar to those of Joseph Kingsbury who recounted: “Joseph Smith taught me the principle of polygamy. He gave me to understand it with his own mouth that he had married wives more than one. Now in conversation with him, he told me that.”¹⁴

Navooans Nathan Tanner and Joseph Kelting recalled the Prophet’s teachings in the “spring of 1844.” Tanner’s affidavit reads: “In the Spring of 1844 at Montrose, Lee County, Iowa, he heard President Joseph Smith while in conversation with himself, Harrison Sagers, [blank] Daniels and others, teach the doctrine of Celestial Marriage or plurality of wives. And subsequently he heard the Prophet teach the doctrine publicly from the stand in Nauvoo,¹⁵ in a manner that he perfectly understood, not only that the Prophet believed it, but that it was in force at that time.”¹⁶ In 1894, Kelting recalled his meeting with the Prophet:

For some time previous to the death of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, I lived at Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois. I acted for some years as agent for Bishop \George/ Miller, and was also a deputy sheriff

11. Danel Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith,” 176.

12. Elden J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844*, 154. See also *Journal History*, October 23, 1843, in Richard E. Turley Jr., ed., *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 2, disk #1.

13. Samuel W. Richards, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 572, question 129.

14. Joseph Kingsbury, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 178, question 18.

15. As discussed in Chapter 24, there is no contemporaneous record of Joseph Smith teaching plural marriage publicly, but several individuals later made the claim that he did, perhaps in 1841 and a second time in July 1843.

16. Nathan Tanner, Affidavit, August 28, 1869, in Joseph F. Smith, *Affidavit Books*, 1:76. Tanner stated that Joseph taught the doctrine “from the stand.” See also Chapter 24.

in Hancock County. ~~Wh~~ I heard rumors of to the effect that Joseph Smith was practicing polygamy; the matter frequently being repeated, especially by ~~the~~ Wm and Wilson Law and the Higbees. Calling at the house of the prophet one day, early in the spring of 1844, on some business or other not now remembered, the prophet invited me into a room up stairs in his house, called the Mansion. After \we/ entered the room he locked it \the door,/ and then asked me if I had heard the rumors connecting him with polygamy. I told him I had. He then began a defense of the doctrine by referring to the Old Testament. I told him I did not want to hear that as I could read it for my self. He claimed to be a prophet—I believed him to be prophet—and I wanted to know what he had to say about it. He expressed some doubts as to how I might receive it, and wanted to know what stand I would take if I should not believe what he had to say about it. I then pledged him my word that whether I believed his revelation or not I would not betray him. He then informed me that he had received a revelation ~~a revelation~~ from God which taught the correctness of the doctrine of a plurality of wives, and commanding him to obey it. He ~~then~~ acknowledged to having married several wives. I told him that was all right. He then said he would like a further pledge from me that I would not betray him. I asked him if he wanted me to ~~ex~~ accept the principle by marrying a plural wife. He answered yes. A short time after this I married two wives in that order of marriage.¹⁷

In 1903, Kelting, who was then ninety-three, provided another recollection of the incident:

Joseph A. Kelting, being first duly sworn, says, I was born October 13th, 1811, at Philadelphia—P.A., and my present residence is Colton, San Bernardino County, California.

I first knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet, in Ohio. I once called upon him afterwards at his residence in Nauvoo, Illinois, and told him I wanted a private interview. We walked up stairs together. His wife, Emma, was down stairs, and he did not wish her to hear what we were going to talk about.

We went into the front room, and he locked the door. I told him it was mooted about that he was teaching plural marriage, and asked him the question, "Are you mooting plural marriage?" [To moot is "to bring up for discussion."]

His answer was, "[I] cannot answer you, as you are both a lawyer and sheriff of Hancock County, and it might militate against you as an officer as well as against us."

17. Joseph A. Kelting, "Statement, March 1, 1894," in Joseph F. Smith, *Affidavits*, Ms 3423, fd. 2; see also Joseph A. Kelting, "Statement," *Juvenile Instructor* 29 (May 1, 1894): 289–90.

I said, "Joseph, whatever you tell me as your friend is safe; I came here to find this out, and I assure you upon the *square* (and we were both Masons) it shall never injure you in any shape."

"I did moot plural marriage," said the Prophet.

"Did you have a revelation to teach this?" I asked.

"I did," he answered.

"Have you more than one wife sealed to you by this authority," I asked.

"I have," said he."¹⁸

Mary Ann Covington (Sheffield Smith Stratton West) was sealed to William Smith in the spring of 1844. She remembered:

I went to live at Orson Hyde's and soon after that time Joseph Smith wished to have an interview with me at Orson Hyde's. He had the interview with me, and then asked me if I had ever heard of a man's having more wives than one, and I said I had not. He then told me that he had received a revelation from God that man could have more wives than one, and that men were now being married in plural marriage. He told me soon after that his brother William wished to marry me as a wife in plural marriage if I felt willing to consent to it. . . . He said that there was power on earth to seal wives in plural marriages.¹⁹

Another Nauvoo Latter-day Saint, Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, the sister of Mary Fielding Smith and the widow of Robert B. Thompson, one of Joseph's clerks, reminisced: "On the 11th of August, 1843, I was called by direct revelation to enter into a state of plural marriage with Hyrum Smith, the Patriarch. This subject when first communicated to me, tried me to the very core. All my former traditions and every natural feeling of my heart rose in opposition to this principle, but, I was convinced that it was appointed by Him who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind."²⁰ She added more details in an 1883 letter to Joseph Smith III:

18. Kelting, Affidavit, September 11, 1903.

19. Mary Ann West, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pp. 495-96, 504, questions 13, 272. According to her testimony, this was the only time she discussed plural marriage with the Prophet. See *ibid.*, p. 503, questions 264-65. George D. Smith records the date of the sealing as "< Fall 1843" (*Nauvoo Polygamy*, 623) but Gary Bergera lists "April-May 1844": "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841-1844," 68. At the time, Apostle William Smith was stationed in the East, making periodic visits to Nauvoo during which the marriage could have occurred. According to D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 594, the couple separated in 1845.

20. Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, Letter to "The oldest living female descendant of Robert Taylor, son of Mary Jane Taylor, grandson of Mercy Fielding Thompson," December 20, 1880.

Now I will begin at once and tell you my own experience. My beloved Husband R. B. Thompson your Father's private Secretary to the end of his Mortal life Died August 27th 1841 (I presume you will remember him) nearly Two years after his Death your Father told me he had appeared to him several times telling him that he did not wish me to live such a lonely life and [told] him to request your Uncle Hyrum to have me sealed to him for time he communicated this [to] his Wife (my Sister) who \by request/ opened the subject to me. when every thing within me rose in *opposition* to such a step. but when your Father called and explained the subject to me I dared not refuse to obey the council lest peradventure I should be found fighting against God and especially when he told me the last time my Husband appeared to him he came with such power that it made him tremble he then went enquired of the Lord what he should do; the answer was go and do as my servant hath required he took an opportunity of communicating this to your Uncle Hyrum who told me that the Holy Spirit rested upon him from the Crown of his Head to the soles of his Feet. The time was appointed with the consent of all parties your Father seald me to your Uncle Hyrum for time in Sisters Room with a covenant to deliver me up in the Morning of the Resurection to Robert Blashel Thompson with whatever off[spring] should be re[?] of that union, at the same time counciling your Uncle to build a Room for me and have me move over as soon as convenient which he did and I remaind there as Wife the same as my Sister to the day of his Death All this I am ready to testify to.²¹

In 1892, Mercy related additional details as she was deposed in the Temple Lot Case:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught me that principle himself, both publicly and domestically, or privately,—that is, in the domestic circles, and I knew it was being worked. I knew it of my own knowledge,—both taught and practiced. . . . I really saw and heard ceremonies to that effect to prove that I know it was practiced, or must I state that I was told plainly and positively by friends, and those who knew positively what they were talking about, and knew all the circumstances . . . The Prophet himself told me it was a true principle, and was taught in the bible,—in the old bible, and I believed it of course, because I could read it for myself in the Bible and see that it was practiced in those days, and the Lord approved of it and sanctioned it, and I believed it was right of course, and believed what the Prophet taught me, and he taught me that. . . . He was the one that introduced it to me, and he was the one that taught that principle of plural marriage to me first, and I heard him teach it to others. He taught it to me I know, and he must to others, for my sister was the first one that came to me and spoke to me about being sealed to Hyrum Smith . . .

21. Mercy R. Thompson, Letter to Joseph Smith III, September 5, 1885; emphasis hers.

There was a communication between the eternal world and this, and I should never have been sealed to anybody,—if I had not obeyed the command of the Lord, when the Lord sent it through an angel to his prophet Joseph Smith,—and sent my own husband or a message from him in the eternal world to me through the prophet, and to his brother Hyrum that he should take me, and my little child, that is the word that my dead husband sent from the eternal world to brother Hyrum that he should take charge of me and my little child and keep us in this world and on the day of resurrection to deliver us up safely to my husband. Now, that was the message from my husband to the prophet, or to brother Hyrum through the prophet, commanding Hyrum to take me to live with my sister with my little child, and he did not act on it quick enough, and so he came the second time,—or he went and enquired of the Lord,—and the Lord spoke to him through the angel, and when he inquired of the Lord the voice told him to go and do, as his servant required him to do and that was the time that he went to Hyrum and told him what he had been ordered to do, and then he sent my sister over to break the word to me. . . . He [Joseph Smith] said that the angel was sent straight from the Lord with the message from my husband in the eternal world making this request.²²

Joseph Smith was not always successful in his matchmaking attempts. In 1908, Hyrum Belnap asked his aunt, Almira Knight Hanscom (b. 1827), daughter of Martha McBride Knight and Nauvoo Bishop Vinson Knight, if she had ever received a proposal to be a plural wife of Hyrum Smith:

She looked startled and answered, “Yes and No.” She said, “One day mother and I were in the front room and Joseph Smith came walking down the street and turned in at our gate. I had a hunch and as he entered the front door I went out the back and remained until he left. When I returned my Mother told me that Joseph had come at the request of his brother, Hyrum, to ask me to be his wife. And also asked Mother to ask me, seeing I wasn’t in. So when my mother said, [“]Almira what do you say about it?” I said, “No.”²³

Almira refused, even though, she says, “Emeline and Harriet Partridge” attempted to persuade her.²⁴ She soon left the church and married S. B.

22. Mercy Rachel Thompson, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 238–40, 263–64, questions 23–31, 512, 522.

23. Almira Knight Hanscom, Statement, 1908, in Della Belnap, ed., “Autobiography of Hyrum Belnap,” p. 20 (of Hyrum Belnap; p. 55 of larger compilation).

24. *Ibid.* The two women referred to are probably Emily Dow Partridge (b. 1824) and Harriet Partridge (b. 1822), both daughters of Edward Partridge and Lydia Clisbee Partridge. However, Harriet died in 1840 so Almira probably meant Eliza Partridge (b. 1820), since both Emily and Eliza were in Nauvoo and were plural wives of Joseph Smith.

Stoddard, a bitter anti-Mormon. Later she divorced him and married George Hanscom, living out the rest of her life in Akron, Ohio.²⁵ In 1908, Almira, then eighty-five, signed a document that read:

I (Almira K. Hanscom) know that Spiritual marriage, as it was called, was taught by Joseph and Hyrum Smith, when in Nauvoo before they were killed that this Spiritual marriage allowed men to have more than one wife at the same time. I also know, that Emeline and Harritt Page came to me and said this was a hard trial, that they (girls) tried to convince me

I also heard at this time that Joseph Smith (the Prophet as he was called) and his wife Emma quarled about this principle.²⁶

Aroet L. Hale, who turned sixteen in 1844, left a report describing how the Prophet promoted plural marriage for very practical family-related reasons:

Another incident that occurred in my hearing that I never shall forget: The Prophet Joseph was at our house at Nauvoo on a visit. Uncle Henry Harriman, wife, & others was there. In the evening Joseph was talking on the Order of Celestial Marriage. All at once he turned towards Uncle Henry Harriman: Says he, Brother Henry, your wife Clarisa is barren & will never have any children. You must take another wife. Without posterity your name will be lost. You are of the seed of Joseph, & the only one of the Harriman family that is of that lineage & the only one that will join the Church. The Prophet commanded Uncle Henry to rise up and take heed to this command that he had made of him. He then turned to Aunt Clarisa. Says he, Clarisa, if you will assist Henry in doing as I have commanded, the God of Heaven will bless you and you share these blessings in common with your husband.²⁷

Henry was sealed to Eliza Elizabeth Jones polygamously on January 16, 1846, in Nauvoo and together they had ten children.

Phoebe Carter Woodruff, Apostle Wilford Woodruff's first wife, reported that spiritual convictions persuaded her to participate:

When the principles of polygamy was first taught I thought it the most wicked thing I ever heard of; consequently I ~~supp~~ opposed it to the best of my ability, until I became sick and wretched. As soon, however, as I became convinced that it originated as a revelation from God through Joseph, and knowing him to be a prophet, I wrestled with my Heavenly Father in fervent prayers—, to be guided aright at that all important moment of my life. The answer came. Peace was given to my mind. I knew it was the will of

25. Almira Knight Hascom, Letter to Martha McBride Knight, n.d. [1880s], wrote: "I am no Mormon and much less a polygamist." See also Brent J. Belnap, "Life Story of Martha McBride Knight Smith Kimball."

26. Almira Knight Hanscom, Affidavit, July 24, 1908.

27. Aroet L. Hale, "Reminiscence," (ca. 1882) 28–29; spelling and punctuation standardized. See also Aroet L. Hale, "Journal," 8–9.

God; and from that time to the present I have sought to faithfully honor the patriarchal law. Of Joseph, my testimony is that he was one of the greatest prophets the Lord ever called; that he lived for the redemption of mankind, and died a martyr for the truth.²⁸

Another narrative of an unnamed couple in Nauvoo but written in first person states:

We each began having revelations from Heaven night after night, saying that we must go back to the customs of the patriarchs with regard to marriage. The whole thing was so repugnant to us both that for some time we could not receive it. The revelations, however, became clearer and more emphatic, and at last my wife ventured to communicate to me what the Lord had declared to her. This led to a comparison of experiences all around, and we found the same revelation had come to many; and hence it was received and acted upon as the unmistakable will of Heaven.²⁹

An additional record is that of Sarah Studeviant Leavitt, who joined the Church in 1837 in Kirtland, Ohio:

My mind was carried away from the earth and I had a view of the order of the celestial kingdom. I saw that it [plural marriage] was the order there and oh, how beautiful. I was filled with love and joy that was unspeakable. I waked my husband and told him of the views I had and that the ordinance was from the Lord, but it would damn thousands. It was too sacred for fools to handle, for they would use it to gratify their lustful desires.³⁰

Twenty-seven-year-old Charles Lambert arrived in Nauvoo from England on January 13, 1844. In the 1880s, he remembered his immediate frustration: "Nauvoo was the worst place for a single man I ever lived in. I went and got me a house and lot in case I should find someone to share with me my lot."³¹ It might be assumed that Lambert's complaints, regarding the paucity of women at that time, was due to the underground practice of plural marriage. However, an examination of the numbers of Nauvoo polygamists at that time suggests otherwise. Joseph Smith had been sealed to more than twenty single women, but several of them were much older than Charles and the total number of plural wives married to all other polygamists together was

28. Phebe Carter Woodruff, "Autobiographic Sketch of Phebe W. Woodruff, Salt Lake City, 1880," 3.

29. John C. Kimball, *Christian Register*, quoted in *Anti-Polygamy Standard* 2, no. 6 (September 1881): 44.

30. Sarah Studeviant Leavitt, "History of Sarah Studeviant Leavitt," 23. See also Richard N. Skousen and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brother Joseph: Seer of a New Dispensation*, 2:847.

31. Charles Lambert, "Autobiography [ca. 1885]," 11.

fewer than thirty. Hence, in Nauvoo, a town of perhaps 8,000–10,000 people, the elimination of a few dozen eligible young women, probably would not account for Charles's aggravation. In addition, because plural marriage was kept so secret, a single man would hardly know whether or not a woman he encountered was a plural wife.

Not all sealings during that time were polygamous. An undercurrent of eternal monogamous marriages was also flowing among the Saints. Benjamin F. Johnson recalled that in 1843 the Prophet visited him at his home in Ramus, Illinois: "In the evening he [Joseph Smith] called me and my wife to come and sit down, for he wished to marry us according to the Law of the Lord. I thought it a joke, and said I should not marry my wife again, unless she courted *me*, for I did it all the first time. He chided my levity, told me he was in earnest and so it proved, for we stood up and were sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise."³²

Lorenzo Brown (b. 1823) was baptized in 1838 and soon afterwards experienced the gift of tongues. His family moved to Nauvoo in 1839.³³ He remembered that on March 24, 1844, he and his first wife, Frances Crosby, "were married by President Joseph Smith for time and eternity (a thing [then] uncommon)."³⁴ Rhoda Ann Marvin Fullmer (b. 1813) joined the Church with her husband, David Fullmer, in 1836. David, a member of the Nauvoo Stake High Council on August 12, 1843, heard Hyrum Smith read the revelation on eternal and plural marriage. Rhoda remembered: "In the fall of 1843 my husband, having heard that good men could have wives sealed to them for time and eternity, asked the Prophet Joseph for the privilege of having me sealed to him. The Prophet granted the request and sent his brother, Hyrum to our house to attend to it and Brother Hyrum Smith sealed me to my husband in our house for time and all eternity."³⁵

As quoted in Chapter 8, in January 1844, Jacob Scott who was converted in 1837 in Toronto, Canada, through the preaching of Isaac Russell, wrote to his daughter, Mary Scott Warnock, then living in Ontario. He explained that "many members" had been sealed to both living and deceased spouses:

Many members of the Church have already availed themselves of this privilege [of sealing], & have been married to their deceased partners; & in some cases where a Man has been married to 2 or three wives, and they are dead he has been married to them all; in the Order in which he was married to them while living & also widows have been married to their dead husbands. . . . & I intend to be married to the wife of my youth before I go

32. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 96.

33. Davis Bitton, *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies*, 43.

34. Lorenzo Brown, *Journal*, 1: 9–10.

35. Rhoda Ann Marvin Fullmer, "Reminiscences," MS 128.

to Ireland, I would be unspeakably glad to have you all here to witness our Second Nuptials.³⁶

Sometimes the first wife would encourage her husband to marry additional wives. Bathsheba W. Smith, the wife of Apostle George A. Smith, related:

Being thoroughly convinced, as well as my husband, that the doctrine of Plurality of wives was from God; and having a fixed determination to attain to Celestial glory, I felt to embrace the whole Gospel, and that it was for my husband's exaltation that he should obey the Revelation on Celestial Marriage, that he might attain to Kingdoms, thrones, Principalities and powers, firmly believing that I should participate with him in all his blessings, glory and honor.

Accordingly within the last year, like Sarah of old, I had given to my husband five wives good virtuous, honorable young women. [T]his gave them all homes, with us; Being proud of my husband and loving him very much, knowing him to be a man of God and believing he would not love them less because he loved me more, I had joy in having a testimony that what I had done was acceptable to my Father in Heaven.³⁷

By 1844, children were being born to some of the plural wives. When asked in 1880, "Was there a place appointed in Iowa, 12 or 18 miles from Nauvoo to send female victims to hid[e] polygamous births?" Ebenezer Robinson cautiously responded: "We were told that there was a place, a few miles out of Nauvoo, in Illinois, where females were sent for that purpose."³⁸ Additional evidence corroborating the existence of such a "place" has not been located. The first baby born from a sealed polygamous marriage was, according to my research, Adelbert Kimball, son of Heber C. Kimball and Sarah Peak Kimball, born in late 1842 or early 1843. He lived less than a year.³⁹ Sarah stayed with the Kimballs during her confinement. The second child of a polygamous couple appears to have been George Omner Noble, born on February 2, 1844, to Joseph Bates Noble and Sarah Alley Noble.⁴⁰ It seems unlikely that a residence

36. Jacob Scott, Letter to Mary Warnock, (Trafalgar, U.C.), January, 5, 1844. Many of these details are found in the first twenty-one verses of the revelation on celestial marriage dictated July 12, 1843, now LDS Doctrine and Covenants 132. Whether Jacob Scott was aware of the remaining teachings found in the revelation is unknown.

37. Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith, *Autobiography, 1875–1906*, 12. See also Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom*, 320–21; Augusta Joyce Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret: A Book of Biographical Sketches to Accompany the Picture Bearing the Same Title*, 42.

38. Ebenezer Robinson, Letter to Jason W. Briggs, January 28, 1880.

39. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer*, 311.

40. AncestralFile. See also "First Child Born in Mormon Polygamy," loose typescript, 13, Stanley S. Ivins Collection.

for pregnant wives would have been needed during the Prophet's lifetime, since few plural pregnancies occurred prior to his death.⁴¹

Joseph Smith Authorizes Other Priesthood Leaders to Teach about Plural Marriage

The Prophet authorized select priesthood leaders and members to discreetly teach Church members regarding this newly restored marital directive. Lyman O. Littlefield learned of plural marriage during this period, but not from Joseph Smith:

I know it [plural marriage] was taught and practiced secretly, and was not given to the whole church as a principle according to the best of my knowledge in the days of Joseph. . . . I was taught that doctrine or principle, and conversed upon it with different parties, but I never was taught that doctrine from Joseph Smith himself, personally, but the doctrine was talked of between myself, and a great many other parties, and always with the understanding that had its origin, with Joseph Smith, the Prophet, himself.⁴²

Samuel W. Richards remembered that his uncle, Willard Richards, taught him concerning plural marriage at Nauvoo. In 1892 when he was sixty-eight, Samuel estimated that, at some point, probably early 1844, "all the leading quorums of the Church" were aware of the principle, "but it was not generally taught or published or preached . . . to the church as a body before his [Joseph Smith's] death."⁴³

Brigham Young was apparently singled out as a trusted confidant by the Prophet to teach selected individuals. After the Prophet introduced the topic to Joseph A. Kelting, Kelting recalled that he "referred me to Brigham Young if I wanted any more on this subject, Brigham seeming to be the man he trusted most with this matter, and was putting him to the front."⁴⁴ While Church authorities generally tried to keep plural marriage a secret, one account shows that Brigham answered sincere questions frankly. For example, on July 9, 1843, the apostle recorded:

[I, Brigham Young] left St. Louis at half-past 9 a.m., for Cincinnati, on the steamer Lancet, and had conversation with various gentlemen who

41. Possibly the third child born in polygamy was Josephine Lyon, daughter of Joseph Smith and Sylvia Lyon, on February 8, 1844. See Brian C. Hales, "The Joseph Smith—Sylvia Sessions Plural Sealing: Polyandry or Polygyny?" 41–57.

42. Lyman O. Littlefield, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pp. 148–49, 155, questions 17–19, 134.

43. Samuel W. Richards, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, p. 572, question 116.

44. Joseph Kelting, Affidavit, September 11, 1903.