Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited

NAUVOO IN MORMON HISTORY

EDITED BY

Roger D. Launius and John E. Hallwas

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Mormon Polygamy: Belief and Practice in Nauvoo

KATHRYN M. DAYNES

> And when I saw a funeral, I felt to envy the corpse its situation, and to regret that I was not in the coffin.
>
> —Brigham Young

> It made my flesh crawl.
>
> —John Taylor

> [It] had a similar effect to a sudden shock of a small earthquake.
>
> —Helen Mar Whitney

Such were the reactions of three Latter-day Saints when introduced to plural marriage. Despite their initial feelings, however, these Saints not only entered into plural marriage during Joseph Smith's lifetime but also became three of its most outspoken advocates. How could people in Nauvoo, whose traditions and feelings were puritanical and monogamous, eventually accept and practice plural marriage?[1] What social functions did it serve?

The answer can, in part, be found in the theory that new ideologies are produced and, more important, accepted in societies undergoing severe stresses and strains. Relationships between people may be seen as an exchange, and a person will invest in the relationship as much as the outcome seems worth. The certainty of the outcome, however, varies from one relationship to another. The more uncertain the outcome of an exchange relationship, the more likely that relationship will include moral obligations—socially legitimated definitions of individual or col-

lective responsibility. As such, they stabilize relationships by making outcomes more predictable. Moreover, the less predictable the outcome of a relationship, the greater the likelihood that social exchange will be sustained by various symbols, including rituals. In short, the outcome of relationships is made more certain by moral obligations and rituals which are a part of a belief system—the ideology—that maintains cohesion within a group. During times of severe environmental changes, however, the moral duties of the past may prove impossible, unnecessary, or inadequate to the new situation; the opportunity is thus provided for a community to accept new beliefs.[2]

The Saints experienced such "severe environmental changes" during the apostasies of 1837–39, the forced abandonment of Kirtland, and the expulsion from Missouri. These crises demonstrated the inadequacy of the moral obligations and rituals within the group to maintain cohesion and thus created the climate in which plural marriage became acceptable. The social problems caused by disloyalty among church leaders are directly linked to the social solutions provided by accepting new family forms with their accompanying covenants.[3]

New ideologies tend to be produced for either the most impersonal of relationships or the most personal; they tend to deal with the state or with the family.[4] During his lifetime, Joseph Smith developed ideologies relating to both. The purpose of this essay, however, is to analyze the conditions that made acceptance of plural marriage possible as well as the social functions it served, not to explore how the new family beliefs developed or why plural marriage was chosen. (Jan Shipps has persuasively dealt with the latter question.) In Kirtland, Mormons began living through "a latter-day recapitulation of the ancient Patriarchal Age," so, not surprisingly, the new family pattern embedded in the developing theology was the plural marriage practiced by the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[5] Moreover, the new family beliefs were connected to the developing temple rituals, which were initiated in the Kirtland Temple.[6]

The theological continuity between Kirtland and Nauvoo is evident, but the apostasy of many church leaders and the subsequent persecution created a social disjuncture between the two periods. Between 10 to 15 percent of the members in Kirtland alone withdrew from the church from November 1837 to June 1838.[7] More significant, however, was the apostasy of half of the top leadership before the Saints' expulsion from Missouri in 1839.[8] Of the First Presidency, Oliver Cowdery and Frederick G. Williams were no longer in the church. Five of the Twelve Apostles were excommunicated, one was dropped from the Quorum, and one was saved from being disfellowshipped only by a

timely reconciliation with the prophet. Of the presidents of Seventy, three of seven were excommunicated. Moreover, all three witnesses to the Book of Mormon left the church. So did three of the six still living eight witnesses; the three who remained were Joseph Smith's father and two brothers.[9] Although some of these men returned to fellowship in the church, apostasy and dissension rent the highest levels of leadership, and, with the exception of Joseph Smith's own family, those who had been instrumental in bringing forth the Book of Mormon left in the crises of 1837 and 1838.

In the wake of this crisis of disloyalty by prominent leaders and the consequent increased persecution of the Saints, the new family beliefs—including plural marriage—created stronger moral obligations among leaders of the church. In some cases, plural marriages created family ties among church leaders, with the strong moral responsibilities that attend familial relationships; in all cases, entering plural marriage was a sign of loyalty to Joseph Smith. Plural marriages were solemnized by a religious ritual involving covenants that bound the families together for eternity, thus emphasizing even more strongly the moral obligations to each other.

Despite the persecution and continuing threats the Saints suffered through the Kirtland period, attempts to introduce plural marriage then were relatively unsuccessful. A belief circulated among some Saints that plural marriage was a correct principle and would be practiced in the church at some future time.[10] Though the belief soured the minds of some, little evidence exists indicating that the belief alone had much impact on the community. Rumors of sexual misconduct did abound, but these did not start the fires of apostasy. Instead, the major objection of dissenters during the late 1830s was "a concentration of authority at the top and authority's increasing control of every aspect of life." Marvin Hill has cogently argued that those who left the church in this period "wanted a more open society, closer to the values and traditions of evangelical Protestantism" than appeared to be the case as the church became more involved in economic and political activities.[11]

This apostasy and the subsequent persecution created a climate conducive to the Saints' accepting plural marriage in two ways. First, those leaders who preferred a more open society were no longer in the church. The contrast between the dissenters and those who entered plural marriage may readily be seen in their approach to marriage. On August 17, 1835, W. W. Phelps presented an article on marriage written by Oliver Cowdery stipulating that "all marriages in the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints, should be solemnized in a public meeting, or feast, prepared for that purpose."[12] Not only did this article mandate public

marriages, but it was also accepted by the church at large through a vote taken at the conference. In presenting this, two future dissenters indicated they preferred religious rituals to be open and policy-making to be democratic. In contrast, high-level leaders in Nauvoo introduced plural marriage to an elite group only, and marriages were always performed out of public view. The society that fostered plural marriage was closed and hierarchical.

Second, having experienced the misery the expulsion from Missouri caused, church leaders who had gone through those trials knew firsthand the results of apostasy. Moreover, those who had endured the considerable suffering and monetary losses of those years had made a large personal investment in the success of the church; hence, their past sacrifices provided an additional reason to continue accepting Joseph Smith's leadership.

Joseph Smith's concern with loyalty, or lack of it, is shown in a letter written to the Saints from Liberty Jail on March 25, 1839. "We have learned by sad experience," he wrote, "that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion."[13]

Soon after his escape from Missouri on July 2, 1839, he preached a sermon in which he admonished, "Let the Twelve be humble & not be exalted & beware of pride & not seek to excell one above another but act for each others good. . . . Why will not man learn Wisdom by precept & example at this late age of the world & not be oblieged to learn every thing we know by sad experiance. . . . See to it that you do not betray heaven, that you do not betray Jesus Christ, that you do not betray your Brethren, & that you do not betray the revelations of God . . . but whatever you do do not betray your Friend."[14] This theme of loyalty and union among the Saints continued to be included in Joseph Smith's sermons, especially when threats to the church or the prophet were intensified.

Others were also concerned with loyalty. In a letter to his daughter in the summer of 1843, Apostle Heber C. Kimball cautioned:

> Let us seek to be true to our integrity, wherever we shall make vows or *covenants* with other. . . . You have some experience, and you see others walking through trouble and sorrow, because those who have *covenanted* to be their friends have betrayed them; for instance, look and see what the Prophet has to pass through. This comes upon him because of the treachery of some who have *promised* to be his friends and the friends of God. We should have no trouble if it were not for such persons. They make league with our enemies, Judas like. Oh, God, save me and my posterity from treachery.[15]

The emphasis on covenants binding people together is clear. That the promises had not always been kept showed how uncertain relationships were. The past crises, as well as the continuing threats to Joseph Smith and the church, produced a climate in which loyalty and the possibility of betrayal were of immediate and vital importance. This created a need for even more binding covenants and rituals.

These covenants, including those of marriage, were inextricably connected to the new temple rituals introduced in Nauvoo. In speaking about these rites, Heber C. Kimball stated, "It is not for us to reproach the Lord's anointed, nor to speak evil of him; all have covenanted not to do it."[16] On another occasion, he said, "Do [this people] hold their covenants sacred, those they made when they received their endowments, when they covenanted not to speak evil of one another, nor of the Lord's anointed, nor of those that lead them."[17] Because the apostasy of so many church leaders had made loyalty uncertain, moral obligations to the community were explicitly stated in the developing rituals, made binding by solemn oaths, and impressed upon the minds of those participating by symbolic penalties.[18] The covenants that bound families together and in turn linked them to Joseph Smith, who had the sole power to administer the sealing ordinances, strengthened the moral obligations among leaders of the church. Within the multiplicity of meanings in these religious rituals was the important social function of building a loyal community.

The act of accepting plural marriage was itself a dramatic sign of loyalty to the community's leader because entering plural marriage caused considerable anguish. Several conflicting pressures that made the decision difficult are illuminated by using a theory developed to explain how belief is related to behavior. Formulated by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, this theory states that belief and behavior are related but not directly.[19] Attitudes and subjective norms mediate between belief and practice. A person may have a positive or a negative attitude toward any given belief depending on what one believes the outcome of the behavior will be. Whether or not a person engages in a behavior also depends on what one *believes* those significant others want him or her to do. Significant others, such as family and peers, may in fact desire the person to do something different from what he or she believes they want. It is, however, what the person believes about their wishes and motivation to comply with those wishes that influence the eventual decision. One's behavior, then, depends on the relative importance that is given to beliefs about outcome of the behavior and beliefs about what significant others want the person to do.

In Nauvoo, those taught about plural marriage were asked to accept

the belief that this type of marriage was necessary to achieve the highest glory in heaven and that they should therefore enter into it. In every recorded case, the initial attitude toward entering plural marriage was negative. Moreover, most of those told to enter into plural marriage had every reason to believe that those significant in their lives would not want them to do so. Men could expect their wives to oppose it, and plural wives could expect suspicion or scorn from those unaware of the new doctrine.

On the positive side, however, were the scriptural arguments: God had "proclaimed against adultery, fornication, and divorce, but never against plurality of wives; and in all cases where his [servants were] faithful—he blessed them for it."[20] More persuasive was the doctrine that "except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. . . . In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood."[21] In the 1840s many Saints believed that "this order of the priesthood" meant not only marrying one's spouse for eternity but also entering into plural marriage. To lose the greatest celestial glory when they had invested so many sacrifices in their eternal salvation would have been a bitter blow. "No earthly inducement could be held forth to the women who entered this order," wrote one plural wife. "It was to be a life-sacrifice for the sake of an everlasting glory and exaltation."[22] Moreover, one of the people most significant in their lives wanted them to enter plural marriage. The proposition for many was simply this: if they believed Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, they would take this step. Accepting plural marriage thus became a test of loyalty to the prophet.[23]

This general pattern is illustrated by the accounts left of two individuals who entered plural marriage during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Heber C. Kimball's daughter recorded her father's introduction to that doctrine:

> Father was heard many a time to say that he had shed bushels of tears over this ORDER, the order of "Celestial or plural marriage." . . . When [Joseph Smith] told my father to take a second wife, he requested him to keep it a secret and not divulge it even to my mother, for fear that she would not receive the principle. Father realized the situation fully, and the love and reverence he felt for the Prophet was so great that he would rather have laid down his own life than have betrayed him. This was the greatest test of his faith he had ever experienced. . . . The Prophet told him the third time before he obeyed the command. This shows that the trial must have been extraordinary, for he was a

> man who from the first had yielded implicit obedience to every requirement of the Prophet. . . . [Having entered plural marriage without his wife's knowledge] so worked upon his mind that his anxious and haggard looks betrayed him daily and hourly . . . he would wring his hands and weep, beseeching the Lord with his whole soul to be merciful and reveal to his wife the cause of his great sorrow, for he himself could not break his vow of secrecy.[24]

The difficulty Kimball had in accepting plural marriage is evident. The greatest trial, however, was in being asked to choose between the two most important people in his life: his wife and Joseph Smith. Although the struggle was great, he demonstrated that his loyalty to the prophet took precedence over other loyalties.

Women, on being commanded to enter plural marriage, experienced anguish similar to men's. Having plural marriage proposed to them in terms of loyalty to the prophet, they also struggled with various conflicting pressures, as Lucy Walker's autobiographical account illustrates. "In the year of 1842," she wrote,

> President Joseph Smith sought an interview with me, and said: "I have a message for you. I have been commanded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman." My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me. He asked me if I believed him to be a prophet of God. "Most assuredly I do," I replied. He fully explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage. Said this principle was again to be restored for the benefit of the human family. That it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house, and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end. . . . If you will pray sincerely for light and understanding in relation thereto, you shall receive a testimony of the correctness of this principle. I thought I prayed sincerely, but was so unwilling to consider the matter favorably that I fear I did not ask in faith for light. . . . I was tempted and tortured beyond endurance until life was not desirable. Oh that the grave would kindly receive me. . . . Father, [she prayed] I am only a child in years and experience. No mother to counsel; no father near to tell me what to do in this trying hour. Oh, let this bitter cup pass. . . .
>
> The Prophet discerned my sorrow. He saw how unhappy I was, and sought an opportunity of again speaking to me on this subject. . . . "I have no flattering words to offer. It is a command of God to you. I will give you until to-morrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you." . . .
>
> I felt at this moment that I was called to place myself upon the altar a living sacrifice—perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and

incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions. . . . Said I, "The same God who has sent this message is the Being I have worshipped from my early childhood and He must manifest His will to me." He walked across the room, returned and stood before me with the most beautiful expression of countenance, and said: "God Almighty bless you. You shall have a manifestation of the will of God concerning you. . . . It shall be that joy and peace that you never knew."

Oh, how earnestly I prayed for these words to be fulfilled. It was near dawn after another sleepless night when my room was lighted up by a heavenly influence. . . . My soul was filled with a calm, sweet peace that "I never knew." Supreme happiness took possession of me, and I received a powerful and irresistable testimony of the truth of plural marriage. . . . As I descended the stairs, Pres. Smith opened the door below, took me by the hand and said: "Thank God, you have the testimony, I too, have prayed." He led me to a chair, placed his hands upon my head, and blessed me with every blessing my heart could possibly desire.[25]

This account reveals several factors that influenced Lucy Walker's decision to enter plural marriage. When first told that she had been commanded by God to become a plural wife, her attitude was decidedly negative. She was "unwilling to consider the matter favorably" and felt her youthful companions would treat her with contempt if she became a plural wife. There were, however, positive inducements. That the outcome "would prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house" might have had some appeal. More important, however, was the knowledge that one of the most important people in her life, the Prophet Joseph Smith, wanted her to take this step. She not only lived in his household and received sustenance at his table but also believed he was the mouthpiece through whom God spoke. She and her family had already sacrificed and suffered by following Joseph Smith. Lucy's father had been shot at the Haun's Mill massacre, and the entire family experienced privation during the Saints' expulsion from Missouri, then sickness and death in Nauvoo. By 1843 Lucy Walker had invested her life in the belief that the church was indeed restored to earth by God and that Joseph Smith was his prophet. The crux of the argument was whether she believed Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. If she believed he was, she would prove her loyalty by obeying the commandment that he said had come from God. Framing the question in terms of loyalty was, of course, a risk. A favorable response, however, would not only prove her loyalty but also increase her commitment to Joseph Smith's prophetic leadership. Entering plural marriage was a sacrifice—one mechanism that increases commitment. "The more it 'costs' a person to do something,

the more 'valuable' he will consider it, in order to justify the psychic 'expense.'"[26] Unquestionably the "costs" and psychic "expense" of entering plural marriage were great; hence, the commitment to Joseph Smith's leadership by taking that step would be commensurately increased.

Lucy Walker's negative attitude toward and fears about plural marriage indicate she intended initially to refuse. What brought plural marriage into the realm of possibility were her belief in Joseph Smith as a prophet and the question plural marriage posed about her loyalty to him. In the end, her internal conflict was resolved by a manifestation of "sweet peace," which, being predicted by Joseph Smith, augmented her faith in his prophetic role. It is unclear whether the "joy and peace" she felt were the same as the "testimony of the truth of plural marriage," but the importance of that manifestation and the prophet's influence are shown by her being sealed to Joseph Smith on May 1, 1843.[27]

Numerous other accounts could be similarly analyzed to show how loyalty to Joseph Smith's leadership was a crucial element in accepting plural marriage. When teaching Mary Rollins Lightner about plural marriage, Joseph Smith asked her if she "was going to be a *traitor.*"[28] To Emily Partridge, he said, "Emily if you will not *betray* me, I will tell you something for your benefit."[29] Emily's sister, Eliza, testified that plural marriage "was truly a great trial for me but I had the most implicit confidence in him as a Prophet of the Lord and could not but believe his words and as a matter of course accept of the privileg of being sealed to him as a wife for time and all eternity."[30] John Taylor recalled that Joseph Smith stopped him one day in Nauvoo and said to him, "Those things that have been spoken of must be fulfilled, and if they are not entered into right away, the keys will be turned." Taylor felt that he could not treat lightly the things of God, so he promised to enter plural marriage as soon as he could.[31] Despite the exposé style of her 1842 account, Martha Brotherton confirms this emphasis on loyalty. When she was first approached about plural marriage, an apostle asked if she was willing to do all that the prophet required. Later, according to her account, Joseph Smith tried to persuade her that plural marriage "is lawful and right before God—I know it is. . . . don't you believe in me?"[32]

Loyalty versus betrayal, accepting Joseph Smith as the mouthpiece of God or rejecting his prophetic role—these themes implicitly or explicitly run through account after account. The reasons given for entering plural marriage at Nauvoo do not fit into the four categories one prominent family historian lists as motivations for marriage.[33] First, these were not marriages of convenience arranged for economic or political reasons. One instance may appear at first to fit this category, for Helen Mar Kimball did enter into a plural marriage with Joseph Smith because her

father wanted to be connected with that family. The benefits from such a marriage, however, were otherworldly because she took the step to ensure her "eternal salvation & exaltation and that of [her] father's household."[34] Second, sexual attraction is inadequate as a satisfactory explanation. For example, when Heber C. Kimball believed he would be called upon to enter plural marriage, he considered the two elderly Sisters Pitkin because he thought marriage to them would cause his wife the least unhappiness. Instead, Joseph Smith counseled him to marry Sarah Noon, the mother of two daughters whose husband had deserted her.[35] Third, these accounts of entering into plural marriage contain little mention of romantic love. On the contrary, Joseph Smith in the example quoted above told Lucy Walker he had no flattering words to offer. When she consented to be sealed to him, he laid his hands on her head and blessed her, a decidedly unromantic response. Nor were Lucy's words, actions, and feelings any more romantic.[36] Fourth, plural marriages were not contracted because of prospective companionship between bride and groom. Such a relationship might have developed after the marriage, but the Nauvoo accounts give no hint that this was a motivating factor. On the contrary, men like Joseph Smith and Heber C. Kimball demonstrated in both word and deed that the companionship with their first wives was the most important.

According to the accounts of those directly involved, then, plural marriage during Joseph Smith's lifetime was a product not of lust or romantic love but of loyalty—loyalty cemented by sacrifice and sacred covenants that bound families together under solemn moral obligations. Significantly, all were bound to Joseph Smith, for it was through him that the commandments came requiring the sacrifice, and only he had the authority to seal families for eternity.

Obviously, not everyone to whom it was introduced willingly entered plural marriage. Sidney Rigdon and William Marks were two notable leaders who rejected it. Both had experienced the crises of 1837–39, however, and neither opposed Joseph Smith's leadership. In contrast, John C. Bennett had not experienced crises in the church or made sacrifices that would have given him a stake in the church's success. His apostasy and subsequent defamation of Joseph Smith and the church in general created no small storm, but the church successfully weathered it. In fact, as long as plural marriage was a commandment for only some individuals rather than the norm among church leaders, it generally did serve to strengthen the bonds of loyalty to Joseph Smith.

A turning point came when Hyrum Smith read the revelation on plural marriage to the high council on August 12, 1843. Heretofore, Joseph Smith had carefully selected those to whom he introduced plu-

ral marriage. He had taught them individually and put plural marriage into a theological context that emphasized the eternal nature of families and the added heavenly glory it would bring. Joseph Smith regarded "everything acording to the circumstances of the case, and every person according to their intrinsic worth."[37] Hyrum Smith, however, was more legalistic. Once he was finally converted to plural marriage, he thought the doctrine was so plain that he could "convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity or heavenly origin."[38] His faith in revelations given through Joseph Smith was implicit, although he seemed to feel they had more authority when written. At his behest the controversial revelation was put on paper, though it was not intended for circulation in the church.

Nevertheless, the authority of the written word was such that Hyrum Smith used the revelation to teach Saints the doctrine. Rumors about the principle led to questions at a high council meeting. Instead of casting plural marriage in terms of loyalty to the prophet, Hyrum Smith returned home to get the revelation so he could read it to the group. After the reading, he said, "Now, you that believe this revelation and go forth and obey the same shall be saved, and you that reject it shall be damned."[39] What had been binding heretofore on only certain individuals was rapidly transformed into the norm for the leadership of the church, making it necessary for leaders to take a stand one way or the other.

In writing of this time, William Marks, president of the stake in Nauvoo, stated, "I saw and heard of many things that was practiced, and taught that I did not believe to be of God; but I continued to do and teach such principles as were plainly revealed, as the law of the church.... Therefore when the doctrine of polygamy *was introduced into the church as a principle of exaltation,* I took a decided stand against it; which stand rendered me quite unpopular with many of the leading ones of the church."[40] Marks thus believed presenting the revelation to the high council introduced the principle of plural marriage as a church doctrine. As such, he felt the need to take a stand. Although he opposed plural marriage, he remained loyal to the church and Joseph Smith. He had been a church leader during the apostasies in Kirtland and knew firsthand the difficulties apostasy could create. His loyal opposition was vindicated when Joseph Smith confessed shortly before his death that "he had done wrong" and desired Marks's help in putting down "this damnable heresy."[41]

Austin Cowles, who had also experienced the crises of the late 1830s but not as a church leader, reacted more precipitously. He indicated that "this revelation with other evidence, that the aforesaid heresies were

taught and practiced in the Church, determined me to leave the office of first counselor to the president of the Church at Nauvoo, inasmuch as I dared not teach or administer such laws."[42] Cowles had privately opposed plural marriage earlier,[43] but its presentation to an official body of the church gave it an aura of authority. He felt it was no longer a question of acquiescing to others' practicing it but rather his responsibility to teach and administer the new doctrine. He therefore resigned his office in the church and soon became associated with those opposed to Joseph Smith's leadership.

The revelation also produced a crisis for William Law, counselor in the First Presidency, when Hyrum Smith loaned him a copy of it. Impressing him most forcefully about the document was that it "authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come. It said this was the *law*—and commanded Joseph to enter into the *law*.—And also that he should administer to others."[44]

William Law also regarded the revelation as making plural marriage the norm for the church leadership. Like many others to whom plural marriage was presented, he struggled between his negative attitude toward it and his loyalty to Joseph Smith. He and his wife, he later recalled, "were just turned upside down by it; we did not know what to do."[45] Even before this, however, Law had found himself in conflict with the prophet over political and economic matters.[46] Many of his associates shared his economic interests, which conflicted with those of Joseph Smith.[47] Moreover, Law had not experienced firsthand the 1837–39 crises in the church, having gathered with the Saints only in Nauvoo.[48] In the end, Law resolved his struggle by rejecting Joseph Smith's leadership. He wrote, "Fearful and terrible, yet most distressing have been the scenes through which we have past, during the last few months. . . . Had it not been for the goodness of God, surely we had been lost, overwhelmed, swallowed down in the vortex of iniquity, through our religious zeal we harkened to the teachings of man, more than to the written word of God."[49] This description of his struggle is similar to that of others asked to accept plural marriage. In the end, he chose those associates with whom he shared economic interests, but the struggle had been great, and his reaction against the prophet was commensurate with the suffering that struggle had caused him. "My heart was burning," he recalled years later; "I wanted to tread upon the viper."[50] He had not conspired to take Joseph Smith's life, but his actions began the series of events that led to the prophet's death.

The covenants of loyalty were not enough. Joseph and Hyrum Smith were killed in Carthage by a militia turned mob, and the community of Saints became divided. One group continued these covenants and rituals,

3. The interpretation presented in this essay differs from Foster's in that it views changes in the traditional family, the fluidity of Jacksonian society, and the context of escalating tension and increasing separateness of the Mormons in Nauvoo (see Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 3–20, 130–43) to be necessary but not sufficient causes for the acceptance of plural marriage by Mormon society. These factors were all present in Kirtland and Missouri, but introducing plural marriage there was relatively unsuccessful. The argument in this essay presumes social institutions serve social purposes. For the intellectual and theological development of plural marriage, see Danel W. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 19–32; and Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 10–18, 125–147.

4. Wuthnow, "Comparative Ideology," 123.

5. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 61.

6. Richard P. Howard, "The Changing RLDS Response to Mormon Polygamy: A Preliminary Analysis," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3 (1983): 19–21, 24, correctly connects plural marriage to the temple rituals, but these began in Kirtland. See Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982), 169.

7. Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 328.

8. Based on biographical profiles of the General Authorities listed in D. Michael Quinn, "Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy, 1832–1932: A Prosopographical Study" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1973), 248–91.

9. Ibid., 248–87; Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 14, 42–43, 104–107, 109–11, 156, 256, 276; Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 146–50, 166–78, 266, 294–95; Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 168.

10. Franklin D. Richards to Joseph F. Smith, July 5, 1881, Archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS Archives), quoted in Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith," 89; *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool, England) 40 (December 16, 1878): 788; Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1976), 38; Oliver H. Olney, *The Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed* (Hancock County, Ill.: n.p., 1843), 5.

11. Marvin S. Hill, "Cultural Crisis in the Mormon Kingdom: A Reconsideration of the Causes of Kirtland Dissent," *Church History* 49 (September 1980): 291, 296. That plural marriage was a factor in the apostasy is argued

by Max H. Parkin, "The Nature and Cause of Internal and External Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio Between 1830 and 1838" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), 162–74, 348; and Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith," 77–90. Bachman calls this "the First Hierarchical Split over Plural Marriage," but his purpose is to detail evidence about plural marriage in Kirtland, not to assess its importance among the range of factors causing the apostasy. Parkin lists plural marriage as one factor in the conflict at Kirtland, but, in fact, it appears to be relatively unimportant in relation to the other social, economic, and political factors he recounts. Foster accepts, though tentatively, that plural marriage was a cause of the apostasy (*Religion and Sexuality*, 138, 302).

12. *Book of Doctrine and Covenants* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1970), sect. 111:1. See also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1902–12; 6 vols., a seventh volume was published in 1932; reprinted by Deseret Book, 1976, and reissued in paperback in 1978), 2:243–47. See also Cook, *Revelations of Prophet Joseph Smith*, 295, 348–49, 359–60.

13. Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:299–300.

14. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 7–8.

15. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (August 1, 1882): 40 (emphasis added).

16. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (August 1, 1883): 34.

17. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, England: F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854–86), 4:46. For similar statements, also see ibid., 3:269 and 6:124.

18. Increase M'Gee Van Dusen, *A Dialogue between Adam and Eve, the Lord and the Devil* (Albany, N.Y.: n.p., 1847), 13. See also John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857), 97.

19. This theory is succinctly described in Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 4–91. It is detailed in Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975). Ajzen and Fishbein developed the theory to predict behavior patterns. In this essay, it is used only to provide categories useful in analysis.

20. George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, Letter Book, No. 6, 1891, LDS Archives, quoted in Raymond T. Bailey, "Emma Hale, Wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952), 86.

21. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:391–92.

22. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes in Nauvoo after the Martyrdom of the Prophet and Patriarch," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (March 1, 1883): 146.

23. The theory of reasoned action used here assumes people make rational choices within the framework of their own beliefs. This interpretation thus differs from Foster, who writes, "A feeling of intense comradeship, egalitarianism, and exhilaration is experienced as a sense of direct personal contact replaces the institutional constraints that normally separate individuals. Men and women become *malleable, capable of being molded* by their leaders" (*Religion and Sexuality,* 166 [emphasis added]).

24. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 10 (October 15, 1881): 74.

25. Quoted in Lyman O. Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints* (Logan, Utah: Utah Journal, 1888), 46–48. Most of this account is reprinted in Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet,* rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 477–79.

26. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 76.

27. Littlefield, *Reminiscences,* 48.

28. Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Address delivered at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, typescript, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Papers, Archives and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (emphasis added).

29. Emily Dow Partridge Young, Diary, photocopy of typescript, 124, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library (emphasis added).

30. Eliza M. Partridge Lyman, "Life and Journal of Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman," ca 1874, photocopy of original, 78, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

31. *Journal of Discourses,* 24:231.

32. *Sangamo Journal,* July 22, 1842, quoted in Charles Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914), 75, 77.

33. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 271–72.

34. Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, Statement, March 30, 1881, holograph, LDS Archives.

35. Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," 74. Foster has cogently argued the inadequacy of sexual motivation as an explanation for introducing polygamy (*Religion and Sexuality,* 126).

36. The possible exception is Eliza R. Snow. Having become converted to the principle of plural marriage before she was asked to enter into it herself and having never before married, she was effusive in her praise of the man to whom she was sealed in plural marriage (Eliza R. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, printed in Spencer J. Palmer, "Eliza R. Snow's 'Sketch of My Life': Reminiscences of One of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 [Autumn 1971]: 125–30).

37. Brigham Young, Address, October 8, 1866, LDS Archives, quoted in Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances," 58.
38. Andrew Jenson, comp., *Historical Record* 6 (February 1887): 225.
39. Ibid., 227.
40. William Marks, "Epistle of Wm. Marks," *Zion's Harbinger, and Baneemy's Organ* 3 (July 1853): 53 (emphasis added).
41. Ibid.
42. *Expositor* (Nauvoo, Illinois), June 7, 1844, 2.
43. Ebenezer Robinson, "Items of Personal History of the Editor," *The Return* (Davis City, Iowa) 3 (February 1891): 29.
44. *Expositor,* June 7, 1844, 2.
45. "Dr. Wyl and Dr. Wm. Law," *Salt Lake Daily Tribune,* July 31, 1887.
46. Lyndon W. Cook, "William Law, Nauvoo Dissenter," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22 (Winter 1982): 58–62.
47. Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 188–89.
48. Cook, "William Law," 48–49.
49. William Law, Diary, January 1, 1844, quoted in Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances," 130.
50. "Dr. Wyl and Dr. Wm. Law."
51. Alma R. Blair, "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Moderate Mormons," in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History,* ed. F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1973), 207–30.