AN OVERVIEW OF THE INTRODUCTION OF ETERNAL MARRIAGE IN

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS:

1840-1843,

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Whenever the "Mormons" were mentioned, everyone in the United States in the last half of the nineteenth century immediately thought of "polygamy." A critical clergy and an offended people sought by all possible measures to rid itself of the stigma of being the only country in the western world considered civilized yet retaining the "twin relics of barbarism"--slavery and polygamy. By force, mainstream Victorian America relentlessly imposed its own values and view of morality onto the Utah Mormons. When in 1890, the Church's practice was officially abandoned, most of the people involved in its origins fifty years before were dead and the record they left was at best only a sketchy picture of the events surrounding the beginning of both eternal and plural marriage.

The beginning of Mormonism's peculiar marriage practice is hazy even today, since the not identical but interrelated types of marriage--eternal marriage and plural marriage--are (as we shall see) historically blurred. On the one hand, the eternal marriage doctrine of the Latter-day Saint church implies three different marriage ceremonies. The three types of marriages (or "sealings") between a male and a female done by church priesthood authority are as follows: (1) a sealing for life ("time") only; (2) a marriage for "eternity" only; and, (3) a marriage for both "time and eternity." On the other hand, the practice of plural marriage (technically called polygyny) is the marriage of a male to more than one living woman.

Joseph Smith, the first Mormon Prophet, who was responsible for the introduction of these practices in the church, left only one document detailing the interrelationships of both marriage forms. This document was a revelation written 12 July 1843, and explicates both doctrines under the heading of "celestial marriage." The revelation is now published as Section 132 of The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
In the ninety years since 1890, study and interest in this practice has continued, uncovering many important details of the involved story. It may seem strange, however, that not until 1975 did historians use long available tools to show that the revelation to Joseph Smith on "Celestial Marriage" was authentic. Daniel W. Bachman, in his "Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith" verified that the vintage of paper and the handwriting of the scribe as well as other associated documentation of the writing of that document meet the highest standards of source authentication employed by scholars. Hence historians like Richard D. Poll have concluded that it is historical fact "that Joseph Smith instituted the practices of plural and eternal marriage."  

In his study, (the most important study of this practice yet to appear), Bachman also discussed the more important questions of how and why the Prophet introduced the doctrine of plurality of wives. He concluded that Joseph Smith's motives for introducing such a radical order of marriage were due essentially to his "Old Testament biblicism and the exercise of his authority based on a perception of prophetic prerogatives." What Bachman meant by "prophetic prerogatives" was that Joseph Smith believed that he had power that transcended civil law. He did not feel it was absolutely necessary to have civil licenses or wait for divorce proceedings in order to perform new marriage ceremonies. In the Prophet's mind, these civil formalities paled into insignificance when compared to the pervasive power of the priesthood conferred upon him by angelic messengers.  

Joseph Smith was not an ignorant fanatic in maintaining such a concept. He recognized the need, in the interim, to be reconciled to the powers of the state. He made it abundantly clear to his followers that when Christ came in the Second Coming, the only laws in force would be the laws of the Kingdom of God.  

While it is common among present day Latter-day Saints to lump together the three concepts -- "priesthood prerogative" (or priesthood legitimacy), eternal marriage and plural marriage -- as the product of a single revelation to Joseph Smith in 1831, careful research has demonstrated that this is not so. In his analysis of D & C 132, Bachman has ably shown us that this document is composed of at least three revelations probably received at different times in response to separate questions Joseph Smith had in regard to marriage related issues. He has shown that these concepts did not develop in Joseph Smith's mind all at once. For example, when in 1835 Joseph Smith in Kirtland married Newel Knight and the undivorced Lydia Bailey, Bachman clearly demonstrates the Prophet justified himself in performing the ceremony on the basis of "priesthood prerogatives." Moreover, Bachman clearly shows that plural marriage was certainly revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831. However, when he argues that "Some Kirtlanders learned that marriage . . . would persist into eternity," the only direct, contemporary evidences he presents are two statements by W. W. Phelps. Neither statement by Phelps suggests that since the civil marriage ceremonies were only "until death do you part" that another marriage ceremony had to be performed before man and woman would be "one in the Lord throughout eternity." Phelps's statements seem to say that as long as a couple "continue faithful" they will be together forever. But a cornerstone of D&C 132 is the idea that even if a couple believe they will be together in eternity, unless an eternal marriage ceremony is performed their hopes are vain (D&C 132:18). More importantly there is no evidence presented that ties Joseph Smith with the eternal union concept taught by Phelps as Bachman implies. Moreover, there is no contemporary evidence
presented that during the Kirtland period plural marriage was conceived as here on earth creating eternal "thrones, principalities and dominions" that would exist in families headed by males in the hereafter.\textsuperscript{12} Plural marriage in Book of Mormon language was for the purpose of here on earth raising up seed unto the Lord (Jacob 2:50). A year after the Book of Mormon was published the purpose given for plural marriage again did not suggest that it would be practiced in the hereafter.\textsuperscript{13} And while it seems reasonable to assume that Joseph Smith was the source for any teaching in the church—including Phelps’s discussion of "eternal union"—it is still only an assumption (even in the most important study of these practices published to date) that eternal marriage was taught in Kirtland by the Prophet.

My purpose in this essay is to overview the beginnings of eternal marriage in the Church in the 1840-1845 period. First, I will show that not only was eternal marriage not taught by the Prophet until the Nauvoo period, but I will present evidence that the first eternal marriage (which was not the first plural marriage) was performed during the Nauvoo period. Second, since the available documentation of the first eternal marriages do not demonstrate the concept, I will illustrate how Joseph Smith after the Twelve Apostles returned to Nauvoo in 1841 taught them the concepts of "prophetic prerogative" and eternal marriage. However, the unfolding of eternal marriage in this period had to be done in conjunction with plural marriage. So, though this is an essay on eternal marriage, I will show why plural marriage had to be the original vehicle for teaching eternal marriage. Simply put Joseph Smith's wife, Emma, and his brother, Hyrum, did not accept these concepts until May 1843. From that time until the Prophet's death a year later, eternal marriage survived separate from plural marriage. But it will be another study to detail the events of the last year of Joseph Smith's life and the parallel developments of eternal and plural marriage through that conclusive period.

I

Parley P. Pratt, who Benjamin F. Johnson called "a primary exponent of the Prophet's theology,"\textsuperscript{14} during the Kirtland period, said he had no hint of the concept of eternal marriage until Joseph Smith first taught it to him in Philadelphia in late 1839 or early 1840.\textsuperscript{15} Pratt later said,

In Philadelphia... I received from him the first idea of eternal family organization... [and] that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity.\textsuperscript{16}

Further evidence that eternal marriage was not taught until the Nauvoo period is the fact that Hyrum Smith, co-holder of the keys of the Presidency of the Church with his brother Joseph Smith (D&C 124:95), said in 1844 that he did not learn of eternal marriage until some time after the revelation on baptism for the dead was announced. This revelation was not announced until 15 August 1840, nine months after the Prophet taught apostle Parley Pratt the principle in Philadelphia. Joseph Smith's source for the authority to perform such marriages, according to Hyrum Smith, was the conferral of keys by the angels Elias and Elijah, who appeared to the Prophet in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 (D&C 110:12-16). As Hyrum reported (on 8 April 1844),

The Lord has given to Joseph the power to seal on earth and in heaven those who are found worthy; having the spirit of Elijah and Elias. [Joseph] has power to Seal with a Seal that shall never be broken, and it shall be in force in the world of the resurrection.\textsuperscript{17}

Thus, while it appears that in Kirtland the Prophet received what he believed was the authority to perform marriages of eternal duration, the cases of
Parley Pratt and Hyrum Smith—two men closer to Joseph Smith and higher in Church hierarchy than W. W. Phelps—clearly show that he did not teach these concepts to either these close associates or to the Church generally until they were safely transplanted to Nauvoo.

When eternal marriage was first beginning to be taught in the Nauvoo period, the two principles—eternal marriage and plural marriage—clearly divorced today, were inextricably mixed into one unfolding story. The reasons for this are clear. At least two years before, in Kirtland, Emma Smith refused to accept Joseph's first plural wife, Fanny Alger. In late 1840, the Twelve Apostles were away from Nauvoo on their mission to England. Sidney Rigdon, Joseph's first counselor in the First Presidency, found the doctrine of plurality repugnant. If we assume at this point that Hyrum Smith still had not accepted the principle, it is understandable then that Joseph Smith turned outside the structure of the general Church leadership in order to teach eternal marriage through plural marriage.18

The Prophet first broached the subject of eternal marriage when he taught plural marriage to his close friend Joseph B. Noble in the fall of 1840. Noble later said that "to convince [me] of the truth of [this] was no small matter. Joseph bore testimony that he had received a revelation on this principle [viz. plural marriage] in Kirtland, but the Lord told him 'not yet.' The Angel of the Lord came to him in Nauvoo and told him the time had come."19 Joseph Smith further said, "In revealing this to you I have placed my life in your hands, therefore do not in an evil hour betray me to my enemies." Joseph Smith knew from the beginning that the practice of plural marriage would have to be sub rosa. The appearance of angels, notwithstanding, Noble had to consider this step for a few months. But, in the early spring of 1841, he crossed over the Mississippi River from his Montrose home in Iowa Territory to Nauvoo to perform the first marriage for time and eternity in this dispensation. In the early evening on the eve of the eleventh anniversary of the Church, secluded under an elm tree, while the Prophet was promoted in the words of the ceremony, Joseph Bates Noble sealed his wife's sister, the twenty-six-year-old Louisa Beman, to the 35-year-old Joseph Smith. Her bridal gown and veil for this occasion were none other than a man's coat and hat. The innovation of that day would continue in such delicacy and privacy through the rest of the Saints' sojourn in Nauvoo, and until the Church first officially announced the practice to the public 29 August 1852.20

So while this was a plural marriage (and not the first one at that), it was the first marriage for time and eternity in Church history. In later years Joseph Noble would proudly refer to this as the first sealing performed, and apostles like Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Franklin D. Richards, Erastus Snow (brother-in-law to the bride), and Joseph F. Smith never contradicted his testimony in this regard.21

Implicit in the marriage ceremony between Joseph Smith and Louisa Beman was the question of priesthood legitimacy. Obviously the ceremony was not recorded in civic record books and thus the Prophet implied that his priesthood overshadowed the law of the land. But surviving records of this and other early eternal marriages are not explicit on the Prophet's synthesis of the concepts of legitimacy and eternal covenants. But the story of Joseph Smith's teaching of these concepts to the Twelve Apostles and others is amply clear on the question of priesthood prerogative and eternal marriage. II

A few months later, when the Apostles returned from their two year mission to England, they soon discovered that more had changed in their
absence than the name of the city from Commerce to Nauvoo. The Prophet began to test the Twelve and to teach them in an unusual manner the three important concepts of his marriage system. The test he devised would not only dramatically demonstrate the transcendence of priesthood power over civil customs, first discussed in Kirtland, but also show that only Joseph held the keys of the sealing power that was the basis of that authority. More importantly, perhaps, the test would establish clearly in their minds that only when a couple have made a covenant for eternity by that priesthood power would they have a legitimate and eternal claim on one another. At first Joseph Smith was content to unfold the concept to them without requiring commitment. Yet they accepted the concepts begrudgingly. John Taylor, the first of the Twelve to stand up for the Prophet, nevertheless later reflected, "What a bitter pill it was." When John Taylor met the Prophet in the somewhat appropriate setting—the Nauvoo graveyard—Joseph urged:

That principle has got to be complied with forthwith . . . [You] have not made [your] covenants that would reach unto eternity.

You are . . . married to your wives only until Death.22

Only a test similar to Abraham offering up his son Isaac could move them from their lethargy.

Apparently sometime in late 1841, the Prophet went to the home of Heber C. Kimball one evening and said, "Brother Heber, I want you to give Vilate to me to be my wife," saying that the Lord desired this at my hands.23 Astonished, Kimball for three days and nights fasted from sleep, food and water, but not from prayers and tears. Finally on the evening of the third day, Heber, and the apparently unadvised Vilate, went to Joseph's, and there the sacrifice was offered. The Prophet wept like a child at their show of faith. After composing himself, he sealed Heber and Vilate for time and eternity.24

Similarly, Joseph Smith went to John Taylor's home and said to him, "Brother John: I want Leonora!" Taylor did not answer his Prophet. He turned quickly and spent the entire night pacing the floor. The next morning he went to Joseph's and said (in characteristically careful wording), "Brother Joseph, if God wants Leonora, He can have her!" Joseph responded, "Brother Taylor, I don't want your wife, I just wanted to know where you stood."25

Years later, Jedediah M. Grant, one of the First Presidency of the Church, commented on these trials imposed by Joseph Smith.

I would ask you if Jehovah has not in all ages tried His people by the power of Lucifer and his associates; and on the other hand, has He not tried them and proved them by His Prophets? Did the Lord actually want Abraham to kill Isaac? Did the Prophet Joseph want every man's wife he asked for? He did not, but in that thing was the grand thread of the Priesthood developed . . . A man who has got the Spirit of God, and the light of eternity in him has no trouble about such matters.26

Jedediah M. Grant practically said that Joseph Smith did indeed ask for and receive other men's wives as his own wives. In the case of Apostle Orson Hyde and his wife Harinda Nancy Johnson, the full sacrifice was required. In May of 1843, after Hyde's return from his mission to Jerusalem, Harinda became the eternal wife of Joseph Smith. She, nevertheless, was to remain with Orson for "time."27

When in July 1842, Orson Pratt failed Joseph's test because he (as he put it later) "[believed] a wicked source" rather than the Prophet, Joseph Smith temporarily stopped that type of trial. That same month, however, he started a new approach. The Prophet went to various parents in
Nauvoo who had marriageable daughters, tested and taught the parents these principles by requesting that they in turn teach their daughters eternal and plural marriage. With this show of faith, the parents were subsequently sealed in marriage for time and eternity. There are four cases in point.

Apparently the first set of parents the Prophet so approached were the long-time faithful members of the church, Bishop Newel K. Whitney and his wife Elizabeth Ann. A short time after receiving the instruction, they were seemingly wrapt in a [joint] heavenly vision," and their "faith made so perfect" they were willing to give their eldest daughter--the seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann--to Joseph Smith. Elizabeth Ann Whitney in her autobiography later said, "[Sarah Ann] was the first woman given in plural marriage with the consent of both parents."

On 27 July 1842, the day of the sealing, Joseph Smith received a revelation giving the precise wording of the marriage ceremony Newel K. Whitney was to pronounce between his daughter and the Prophet. The next month, the Prophet was in hiding to avoid arrest. But from Carlos Granger's home on 18 August 1842 Joseph Smith wrote a letter to "Dear and Beloved Brother and Sister Whitney and 4c" requesting the Whitney's to come and see me in the fore part of the night... one thing I want to see you for is to get the fulness of my blessing Sealed upon our heads."

Apparently the Whitenays' could not come that night. But three days later on 21 August 1842, they received the promised blessings. In their marriage sealing Newel and his wife were blessed, Whitney wrote a week later, with the assurance of "part in the first resurrection."

Similarly, Heber and Vilate Kimball--though they were already sealed--wished to form a closer relationship with Joseph Smith, and so in the spring of 1843, they gave their eldest daughter, Helen Mar, to be a wife of Joseph Smith. Cornelius P. and Perilla Lott discreetly recorded in their family Bible the marriage of their daughter, Melissa, to the Prophet on 20 September 1843, and that they too were that day sealed "for time and eternity."

Finally, even though Isaac and Lucy Morley failed to convert their daughter, Cordelia Calista, to plurality, yet because of their show of faith they were sealed for time and eternity.

In each of the cases of eternal marriage presented so far, the overtones of plural marriage are unmistakable. The first sealing for eternity was the plural marriage of Joseph Smith and Louisa Beaman. Each member of the Twelve Apostles that the Prophet tested took seriously the possibility that Joseph could claim his wife for eternity. Some parents in Nauvoo taught their daughters plural marriage, and by this show of faith secured the blessings of eternal marriage for themselves. Undoubtedly, Joseph Smith and those others who participated in these developments believed that William and Wilson Law overstated the situation and misrepresented the Prophet's rationale, they nevertheless must have recognized the pattern in the following profane poetry published in February 1844:

And 'tis so here, in this sad life--
Such ills you must endure--
Some priest or king, may claim your wife
Because that you are poor.
A revelation he may get--
Refuse it if you dare!
And you'll be damned perpetually.

By our good Lord the Mayor.
But if that you yield willingly,  
Your daughters and your wives,  
In spiritual marriage to our POPE,  
He'll bless you all your lives;  
He'll seal you up, be damned you can't,  
No matter what you do--  
If that you only stick to him,  
He swears HE'LL take you through.  

This is the secret doctrine taught  
By Joe and the red men--  
Although in public they deny--  
But then 'tis all a sham.  

Seen from today's perspective, plural marriage was the midwife for the birth of the concept of eternal marriage that could and later would stand alone.

It is no wonder, then, that when the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in 1849 reflected upon these Nauvoo times, they summarized the trauma as "the perplexities which Joseph experienced in introducing the Covenant of Abraham."  

III

No doubt the most perplexing thing to Joseph Smith during the first two years of the active practice of plural marriage in the Church was the fact that neither his wife Emma, nor his brother Hyrum were converts to the principle. Never had Emma in those twenty-four months given Joseph a wife in plural marriage. Never had Hyrum stepped forward to assist in teaching or performing the ordinances of eternal and plural marriage. While, as we shall see, the month of May 1845 would change this yet it appears that a year before, the Prophet hoped that both Emma and Hyrum would accept these principles.

In the spring of 1842, Joseph Smith apparently hoped that Emma and Hyrum would accept the principles of eternal marriage. For on 4 May 1842, Joseph introduced the endowment ordinances (which include covenants that are the basis of eternal marriage) to his brother Hyrum, and eight others. 38 Regarding the relationship between the endowment and eternal marriage it was said in the Nauvoo Temple, "We want the man to remember that he has covenanted [in the endowment] to keep the law of God, and the woman to obey her husband." 39 For at least a month before Hyrum received these ordinances in 1842, Joseph Smith taught that women would receive these blessings also. 40 Emma, the "Elect Lady," recently installed as the President of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, was to take the lead in administering the washing and anointing blessings for the women of the Church. But in 1842 she was still unwilling to accept the command of the Lord to her husband that he practice plural marriage, Joseph recognized that she could not, in good conscience, take upon herself these endowment covenants. Characteristically, Joseph was not going to force her. And since he was apparently unwilling that one of his plural wives displace Emma in this role of administering the initial ordinance of the endowment, Joseph had to wait until Emma accepted plural marriage.

A year later, sometime in May of 1843, Emma finally acquiesced to the principle of plural marriage. "I will give you two wives if you will let me choose them," she said. 42

But nothing in this story is simple. As might be guessed, she unwittingly chose Joseph's brides of two months, Emily and Eliza Partridge. Sensing no need to hurt her further, Emily and Eliza dutifully let Emma teach them the principles. 43 The 60 year-old Sangamon County Probate Judge, James Adams,
one of the nine men to whom the endowment was given the year before, was
selected to perform the ceremony. However, Adams did not arrive from his
Springfield home until 21 May 1843.44 Two days later Willard Richards en-
tered in Joseph Smith's diary the vague reference: "At home, in conversation
with Judge Adams, and others."45 Only the Prophet, Emma, Emily, Eliza and
James Adams were present for the sealing that took place at the Prophet's
home.46

It must have been a great relief to Joseph Smith when Emma accepted
these principles. There was only one other obstacle preventing him from
administering marriage for time and eternity to those endowed the year before:
Hyrum Smith's lack of acceptance of eternal marriage. To Hyrum Smith, eternal
marriage also meant that he had to accept the principle of plural marriage.

As Hyrum himself explained in a discourse he gave 8 April 1844,

I married me a wife and I am the only man who has any right
to her. We had five children; the covenant was made for our
lives. She (Jerusha Barden was his first wife who died 13 October
1837) fell into the grave before God showed us this order. God
has shown me that the covenant is dead; and had no more force,
neither could I have her in the resurrection, but we should be as
the Angels: it troubled me.

Brother Joseph said.--You can have her sealed to you upon the
same principle as you can be baptized for the dead.

And here is the significant question Hyrum Smith asked.

I enquired, What can I do for my second wife?

He replied, You can also make a covenant with her for eternity and
have her sealed to you by the authority of the Priesthood.

I named the subject to my present wife, and she said "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."

Hyrum concluded his address by asking the conference of Elders, "Will you
believe this?" (Loud shouts of awe.) Every great and good principle should
be taught to the Saints, but some must not be taught to the world, until they
are prepared for them.47

It is clear, however, that Hyrum was being gracious to himself since he
could not tell all the details of his conversion without speaking too plainly
about plural marriage. Years later, however, Brigham Young told of Hyrum's
conversion. The setting he described was most interesting:

Right north of the Masonic Hall in Nauvoo the ground was not
fenced . . . There were some rails laid along to fence up some
lots. Hyrum saw me and said, "Brother Brigham, I want to talk to
you." We went together and sat upon those rails that were piled up.
He commenced by saying, "I have a question to ask you. In the first
place I say unto you, that I do know that you and the twelve know
some things that I do not know. I can understand this by the
motions, and talk, and doings of Joseph, and I know there is some-
thing or other, which I do not understand, that is revealed to the
Twelve. Is this so?" I replied "I do not know anything about
what you know, but I know what I know. Then he said,"I have
mistrusted for a long time that Joseph has received a revelation
that a man should have more than one wife, and he has hinted as much
to me, but I would not bear it."
We had heard him say hard things. I recollect in one counsel where Joseph undertook to teach the brethren and sisters, William Law was there, and William and Hyrum and a few others were against Joseph. William Law made this expression, "If an angel from heaven was to reveal to me that a man should have more than one wife, if it were in my power I would kill him." That was pretty hard, but Joseph had to submit for it. The brethren were not prepared to receive the doctrine. Brother Kimball and others were in that counsel. Hyrum agreed with him--and they preached and talked and had meeting--and [sic] Joseph had meeting in his house time after time, and month after month every Sunday evening. Joseph was worn out with it, ...  

I recollect one Sunday evening Joseph came to my house at dusk, and said "I want you to go to my house and preach." I told him that I loved to go to meeting, but did not want to go to his house. I knew what was going on. I knew that Hyrum and William Marks, and William Law would be there to operate against the prophet Joseph; and therefore I told Joseph I would rather not go to his house. Finally, he said to me, "Brother Brigham, if you do not go with me, I will not go home to my house to-night." 48

We do have a record of Hyrum Smith preaching against plural marriage. In fact this discourse given by Hyrum may have been the last one he ever gave against the principle. It was delivered 14 May 1845, and was heard by Levi Richards:

Attended meeting at the Temple A.M. Hyrum Smith addressed the people--subjects from the Book of Mormon 2d Chap--Jacob--remember that--the Book of Mormon was a mirror, & [sic] key to the Bible--spoke of persecution as being one of the means of salvation--when persecution ceased oft to forget the first commandment--said there were many that had a great deal to say about the ancient order of things as Solomon and David having many wives & concubines--but its an abomination in the sight of God--if an angel from heaven should come & preach such doctrine would be sure to see his cloven foot & cloud of blackness over his head--though his garments might shine as white as snow--a man might have one wife--conclavines he should have none--observed that the idea was that this was given to Jacob for a perpetual principle--said, --"I would say that in consequence of the prosperity of some they look down with contempt on their neighbors--partially to same class making their dress to correspond &c, ought to be looked upon with [sic] indignity by all the noble minded in the Church of God." 49

Returning now to Brigham Young's account of Hyrum's conversion:

[Hyrum] said to me, "I am convinced that there is something that has not been told me. I said to him, "Brother Hyrum, Joseph would tell you every thing the Lord reveals to him, if he could." I must confess I felt a little sarcastic towards Hyrum, although he was just as honest as an Angel, and as full of integrity as the Gods; but he had not that ability which Joseph possessed to see and understand men as they were. I took advantage of this, and I said to him, "Brother Hyrum, I will tell you about this thing which you do not know if you will awake with an uplifted hand, before God, that you will never say another word against Joseph and his doings, and the doctrines he is preaching to the people." He replied, "I will do it with all my heart; and he stood upon his feet, saying, "I want to know the truth and to be saved." And he made a covenant there, never
again to bring forward one argument or use any influence against Joseph's doings. Joseph had many wives sealed to him. I told Hyrum the whole story, and he bowed to it and wept like a child, and said God be praised. He went to Joseph and told him what he had learned, and renewed his covenant with Joseph, and they went heart and hand together while they lived, and they were together when they died. 50

The sealing of Emily and Eliza Partridge on 15 May 1843 was, like twenty-three sealings to Joseph Smith before this--without Hyrum Smith's knowledge or assistance. Three days later, however, Joseph Smith convened the council he had given the endowment to the year before. This was very significant. Except for a few prayer circles held, the group had not met in the interim. 51 At 5 p.m. they met "in council in [the] upper room [of Joseph's home] receiving [from the Prophet] instruction on the priesthood, the new and everlasting covenant &c. &c. Adjourned to Sunday P.M. 6." 52 On the cold and cloudy Sunday following (18 May), "the adjourned council met in the upper Room [and] attended to ordinances." 53 The ordinances specifically "attended to" were identified in Joseph's diary in shorthand as follows:

Joseph & J. Adams 6/18

The council dismissed until 9 o'clock the next day, when they met again "pursuant to adjournment" and the other males of the endowment council (except Heber C. Kimball) received ordinances specified in the same shorthand: 54

9 A.M. met pursuant to adjournment

What "ordinances were attended to?" What actually occurred? The shorthand notes provide the key.

In the time of Joseph Smith, the shorthand most widely used was invented in 1786 by the English phonographist, Samuel Taylor. 55 His shorthand was the most influential the world had ever seen. For example, unlike previous shorthand, its use was extended to non-English languages. It was the first of the three great shorthandst--Taylor, Pitman and Gregg--to find worldwide use.

Once it is known that these shorthand entries are Taylor shorthand, it is unmistakable that the two symbols (OV0) stand for asm, clearly meaning "were married." Therefore the meeting on the twenty-sixth of May was clearly a meeting on the "new and everlasting covenant of marriage," to prepare the brethren who had received the endowment the year before, to be sealed to their wives for time and eternity. According to his own testimony, William Law never knew from Joseph Smith that plural marriage was a practice of the Church until D&C 132 was recorded--seven weeks after the 26 May meeting. 56 Since William Law was present at this meeting, the discussion regarding the new and everlasting covenant of marriage apparently did not digress to the subject of plural marriage. 57 So before the meeting was adjourned the men were instructed by Joseph Smith to bring their first wife with them to the meeting on Sunday the 28th so they could be sealed for time and eternity. (Apparently it was at the meeting of the 26th when Joseph Smith said to William Law that William would have to wait before he and Jane...
grievances the Saints endured in Missouri the year before. See Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 Volumes (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1949, 2nd ed., revised) 4: 47-49, 75-77. (Hereafter referred to as DC; followed by volume and page number.) It is noteworthy that one person, Mathew L. Davis, recorded a discourse of the Prophet for 5 February 1840 where Joseph Smith spoke at length on the eternity of the soul of man and "that everything which had a beginning must have an end." DC 4: 79. Bound for Nauvoo, Joseph left Washington D.C. sometime near 6 February 1840. We could have had more detail, but as Joseph Smith said: "I depended on Dr. Foster to keep my daily journal during this journey, but he has failed me." DC 4: 49.


16 Discourse of Hyrum Smith, 8 April 1844 in the Miscellaneous Minutes, Collection, Church Archives, m.<n> Also available in "Manuscript History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--Book El", p. 1987, Microfilm of holograph, Church Archives.

17 For Emma's rejection of Fanny Alger, see Letter of William E. McNeill to Joseph Smith III, begun July 1872, finished 8 September 1872, Library-Archives, The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri, and John H. Besse to Editor, dated 28 September 1875 in Salt Lake Tribune (6 October 1875). Regarding the Twelve Apostles, see T. Edgar Lyon, "Nauvoo and the Council of the Twelve," F. Mark McKinney, Alma R. Blair, Paul M. Edwards, ed. (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1973), pp. 171-76. Regarding Hyrum Smith's early reaction to plural marriage, see loose sheet signed Affidavit of Gideon Carter, 27 February 1893, pp. 4-5, Church Archives vault; Lorenzo Snow deposition in "United States Circuit Court (8th Circuit) Testimony, 1892", questions 325-350, carbon copy of original deposition in Church Archives (hereafter referred to as Circuit Court Testimony, 1892); and, "Remarks ... by President Brigham Young ... Oct. 8th, 1866," original manuscript, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives. See also F. Mark McKinney, The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer 1795-1876 (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1971), pp. 115-20.

18 St. George Stake General Meeting Minutes, 25 December 1880, Church Archives.


20 This description is based on information from the following sources: Joseph F. Smith, "10 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage," Book 1, p. 38; Joseph B. Noble talk of 11 June 1883 at the Centerville Stake Conference reported under date given in "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Church Archives; Franklin D. Richards 22 January 1869 loose sheet journal entry, Franklin D. Richards Papers, Box 1 folder 7, Church Archives; Wilford Woodruff Journal, 22 January 1869, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives; Patriarchal Blessing Index File, Church Archives, entries under Louisa Benham, Artinesia Benham Snow, Joseph Bates Noble and Ernestine Snow; Deposition of Joseph B. Noble in Circuit Court Testimony, 1892; Andrew Jenson, The Historical Record 6 (Salt Lake City: published by the author, 1887), p. 223; and, Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2nd ed., revised, 1970), p. 405; Joseph B. Noble talk given on 23 December 1880, St. George Stake General Meeting Minutes, Church Archives.

21 "Minutes of Meetings Held in Provo City," under date of 17 November 1867 (Film 979.2/239/Y, V. 2) Microfilm Reading Room, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

22 "Minutes of a meeting of the First Presidency, Apostles & Pres of stakes held at Pres Taylor's office S L City Oct 14, 1882," L. John Nuttall Collection, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter referred to as BYU Special Collections).


24 Ibid.


27 Smith, "40 Affidavits," Book 1, p. 15.

28 Milennial Star 40 (16 December 1878): 785.


30 Two copies of the 27 July 1842 revelation (written in the same hand) were donated by Nevel K. Whitney's grandson, Orson F. Whitney, 1 April 1912 to Joseph F. Smith and were at that time placed in the Church Historian's Office. They are presently on file in the Church Archives vault. Orson F. Whitney, when making this donation retained the original "for the reason that it contains other matters (not mentioned in the copy) of interest to the Whitney family." Apparently some time later the original also was donated and retained in the Church Historian's Office, but is now not part of its files. See Letterpress copy of Orson F. Whitney to Joseph F. Smith, 1 April 1912, Orson F. Whitney Papers, BYU Special Collections. Kenneth W. Godfrey in his "Causes of Mormon-Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, 1839-1846" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1967), describes the manuscript of the revelation different from the presently retained copies, though the text is the same. Apparently the copy Godfrey saw was the original.

31 Joseph Smith Papers, microfilm of original letter, Church Archives.

32 See note 21.
could be sealed. For even though William and Jane were both in town they did not attend the meetings of the 28th and 29th of May. For these reasons and the fact that Joseph Smith said he never taught plural marriage in a meeting of the endowment council, a very strong case—though a fairly technical one—can be made that on 28 May 1843, Joseph and Emma Smith as well as James and Harriet Adams were sealed for time and all eternity. On the next day, 29 May 1843, four other sets of sealings took place. First, Hyrum Smith, Jerusha Barden and Mary Fielding Smith were sealed for time and eternity. Mary acted proxy for the deceased Jerusha. Second, Brigham Young, Miriam Works, and Mary Ann Angell were sealed for time and eternity by Hyrum Smith. Mary Ann acted proxy for Miriam, who was dead. Third, Willard and Jennetta Richards were sealed. Lastly, Mercy Rachel Fielding was sealed to her deceased husband, Robert B. Thompson.

As evidenced by her partial acceptance of plural marriage ("I'll give you two wives, if"). Emma never, throughout the remainder of the Prophet's life, fully accepted the doctrine. 28 May 1843 was, nevertheless, a day of faith and happiness: faith on the part of Emma, happiness to Joseph. His happiness though was not just for Emma's faith but also because of his brother Hyrum's faith. While Hyrum would learn much about these principles by experience and error, as Brigham Young put it succinctly, after this time "they went heart and hand together while they lived, and they were together when they died."

Summary

Not Joseph alone, but Joseph and Emma were essential in the unfolding of the temple ordinances to the men and women of their day. The Prophet appears to have patiently waited for her show of faith in plural marriage before proceeding with higher temple ordinances that were designed not just for men, but had to involve the wives of the men who received the endowment the year before. With Joseph and Emma's sealing as man and wife for time and eternity, they assumed together their role as "President" and "Matron" of temple ordinances for the "dispensation of the fulness of times." What other woman in the dispensation would be able to claim that her washing and anointing came from her husband? Only Emma. The source of all endowments in the dispensation would be Joseph, and for all women, Emma. The Prophet's vision of what the ordinances of Latter-day Saint temples would be has grown to be one of the most significant spiritual forces in the lives of modern members of the Church. To faithful Saints throughout the world, these ordinances are considered the most sacred and precious promises that can be offered in life. But the birth of the eternal marriage concept in the Church was a difficult one. At first it was tied directly to the difficult-to-accept doctrine of plural marriage. Plurality was a pre-condition to but not a visible part of membership in the endowment "council." And in the Nauvoo Temple, and from then on, such a criterion was effectively shown to be merely a transitory test and a teaching technique to bring understanding to the leading men and their wives who had to assume the Prophet's role if he was murdered. Without question, had Joseph not been in death veiled from his unfulfilled vision—the Nauvoo Temple—then Heber C. Kimball would have said of Joseph and Emma a year before the temple's completion what he said of their successors in this office:

Preserve our President and his wife [---Brigham and Mary Ann Young with your prayers---] for we must receive our endowments through them . . . [and] in order, everyone in and at his time, as it comes through the channel commencing at the head.
Maybe Latter-day Saints ministering in the temple will not only see the male and female officiators present before them in the services, but will gratefully think of them as if they were respectively, Joseph and Emma.


3Bachman, "Eternal Marriage," p. 32.

4Utah Stake Historical Record, 1877-1888, 4 March 1883 meeting, Library--Archives, The Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter referred to as Church Archives.

5D&C 38:20-22; 58:22.


7Ibid., pp. 30-31.

8Ibid., pp. 25-28.

9Ibid., pp. 28-29. Bachman quotes a reminiscence letter of Benjamin F. Johnson written in 1903, where Johnson states that the "Prophet taught us that dominion and power in the great future would be commensurate with the number of wives, children and friends" that we inherit here; however, Bachman asserts that this is "a good summary of Mormon marriage doctrine as he [Benjamin Johnson] understood it in Kirtland." There are two reasons that I have for disagreeing with Bachman's assertion that this quotation is in reference to Mormon doctrine during the Kirtland era. First, Johnson in this letter does not state that he is describing the Kirtland understanding of this doctrine. More importantly is the fact that Johnson in this same 1903 letter (and in other places) states he never learned plural marriage from Joseph Smith until 1 April 1843. Thus Johnson could only be describing the Nauvoo understanding of this principle.

10Bachman, "Eternal Marriage," p. 28.

11Ibid., pp. 28-29.

12See note 9.


15The Prophet was in Philadelphia between 21 and 30 December 1838 and again 9 through 31 January 1840, leaving both times to return to Washington D.C. for business with the national leaders hoping to obtain redress for the
The family Bible is on file in the Church Archives. Cornelius P. and Feramilla Lott both received the highest ordinances on 4 February 1844 (see Diaries of Joseph Smith and Wilford Woodruff for this date).

"Cordelia Morley Cox's Book," autobiographical sketch, BYU Special Collections. She states, "After Joseph Smith [sic] death I was visited by some of his most intimate friends who new [sic] his request & explained to me this religion [viz. plural marriage] counseling me to except [sic] his wishes for he now was gone & could do no more for himself. I excepted [sic] Joseph Smith [sic] desire," and she was sealed to Frederick Cox for time and to Joseph Smith for eternity on 27 January 1846 in the Nauvoo Temple. The Morley's received the highest ordinances on 26 February 1844 (see Diaries of Joseph Smith and Wilford Woodruff). This case of Cordelia's sealing to Joseph Smith only after the martyrdom shows the weakness of Fawn Brodie's argument for several wives of Joseph Smith based merely on the Nauvoo Temple Records (so "An Echo of My History," p. 457). Bachman has pointed to this weakness, as have others, and has been appropriately cautious in "Plural Marriage," pp. 109-112.

"Buckeys's Lamentation for the Want of More Wives," Mormon Message (7 February 1844): 1. Italics in original; the footnote to "Red Tape" was "[Brigham]. [Young]. O[Y] [son]. [H]yde."

"Record of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," p. 40, Church Archives.

My use of the terms "endowment 'council'," and "endowment group" throughout the paper refer to the specific company of men and women Joseph Smith gave the endowment to during his lifetime. The "endowment" referred to is a series of instructions, covenants, "key words, signs and tokens" by which a faithful Mormon can achieve full salvation with God in eternity. Joseph Smith first fully introduced this "ancient order of things" 4 May 1842. Today, Latter-day Saints consider the endowment teachings fundamental to their temple ritual and the basis of meaning for their concept of eternal marriage. For further information regarding this endowment "council" established by Smith, see D. Michael Quinn, "Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles," Brigham Young University Studies 19 (Fall 1978): 82-96.


On 30 March 1842, Joseph Smith said to the Relief Society that "he was going to make of this [Relief] society a kingdom of priests as in Knocks's days-as in Paul's day... that the society should move according to the ancient priesthood." When this passage was prepared for publication, the 1840s compilers of the manuscript of the History of the Church changed the word society to church (Joseph Smith Papers, Box 4 Folder 4, Church Archives). This change obscured the important fact that these minutes demonstrate that more than a month before Joseph Smith administered the endowment ordinances in their fullest for the first time (on 4 May 1842, see note 38) that Joseph Smith intended that women would receive ordinances promising them that they would be queens and priestesses in eternity. Moreover, on 28 April 1842 six days before the endowment was first given, the Prophet spoke to the Relief Society saying they "would come in possession of the privileges, blessings and gifts of the priesthood... such as healing the sick [and] casting out devils." He taught in this discourse that armed with the "keys of the kingdom" one could "detect every thing false." Three days later, he identified the "keys of the kingdom" as "certain signs and words... [to be] revealed... [in] the Temple." Clearly then, Joseph Smith, when he said he was going to give women the "keys of the kingdom" intended even before he first gave the endowments that women would receive these ordinances also. See Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, The Words of Joseph Smith--The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), pp. 110, 114-120, 137, 159-143.

My reasons for this assertion are as follows: Willard Richards in his diary for 3 October 1845 records: "Prest young & me to S & C & " in time & all Endow. - about 5 P.M." Using Taylor's shorthand, this transcribes as follows ([y] stands for vowel): "Prest young and me to S[v][y][r][v]. Logos[y][r]h[t] time & all Endow about S.P.M." This clearly reads that President Brigham Young married Willard Richards and Sarah Longstroth for time and all eternity. No other shorthand would ever have given such a uniquely Mormon transcription. The symbol (Δ) used in the 3 October 1845 entry is also used in both the 28 and 29 May 1845 meetings and clearly means the word "married." Therefore ΩΣ(Δ) transcribes "were married."

Next notice (in reverse order) the names given in the two entries in Joseph Smith's diary. Beginning with the entry of 29 May, Joseph Smith and James Adams are not involved in additional marriage ceremonies that day and therefore did not receive plural wives during that meeting. Heber C. Kimball and Joseph Whitney (as shown in this paper) had much earlier been sealed to their first wives and were only witnesses to the proceedings of both days (a remarkable coincidence if plural marriages were involved). The only woman mentioned in either day's entry, Mercy R. Thompson was unquestionably married to someone on this day. However, according to her own account, she was not sealed to Hyrum Smith as his first plural wife until 11 August 1843 (Mercy R. Thompson "Centennial" Statement, Church Archives). If she was relying on memory alone for her date of the sealing, it might be possible that she was mistaken. But it is not as likely that she would forget that it was in the room of her sister (Hyrum's wife) in the Hyrum Smith home where the plural sealing took place (Circuit Court Testimony, 1927; Mercy R. Thompson deposition, Church Archives). However, Brigham Young's diary confirms that the 28 and 29 May 1845 meetings took place in Joseph Smith's "Old Homestead" and not Hyrum Smith's home. Willard Richards' first plural wife, Susannah Liptrot, was not sealed to him until 12 June 1843 (shorthand transcription of entries in both the Joseph Smith and Willard Richards diaries for date given, Church Archives). Brigham Young, according to Joseph Smith's statement to George A. Smith (letter of George A. Smith to Joseph Smith III, 9 October 1869, Church Archives), by the beginning of May 1844 had three plural wives. The dates of those sealings are known: 14 June 1842 (Lucy Decker) and 2 November 1843 (Harriet Cook and Augusta Adams). Therefore each person involved in the activities of 29 May 1843 were being sealed to their living and dead "non-plural" spouses. Continuing to take the names in reverse order, let us now consider the marriages performed on 28 May 1843. The only plural wife ever sealed to James Adams on the temple and other records (Rosina R. Adams) was sealed to him on 11 July 1843. Finally, Joseph Smith claimed that he never taught the doctrine of plural marriage in a meeting of the "Highest [sic] among in the Church in private" (i.e. the endowment council) ("Nauvoo City Council Minutes," 10 June 1843, p. 26, Church Archives). That he taught the "anoint" of the concepts outside these meetings is undeniable; however, he apparently decided early on not to teach plural marriage in endowment council meetings (which the 28/29 May 1843 meetings were) so he could have such a rhetorical "denial" when pressed closely about the practice of plural marriage in the Church. There can be no question then that on 28 May 1843 was the sealing date of Joseph and Emma Smith. No women are mentioned in these entries
(except for Mercy Thompson who was the only one being sealed only to a dead spouse) because they were not as yet members of the endowment council and were being sealed, like all other women before this, without having received the endowment ordinances. However, these were the first women to receive these ordinances in connection with a meeting of the endowment council and this therefore signifies the first time that such ordinances were attended to in an endowment council meeting. These reasons taken together place beyond reasonable doubt that the sealings, as I have stated them, took place on 28/29 May 1843. Unless otherwise noted, biographical data is based on entries given in the History of the Church. Joseph Smith (born 21 December 1805) and Emma Hale (10 July 1802) were married 18 January 1827. James Adams (21 January 1785) and Harriet Denton (31 January 1787) were married about 1809; John Carroll Power, History of the Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois “Centennial Record.” (Springfield: Edwin A. Wilson & Co., 1876), p. 70. Brigham Young (1 June 1801) and Miriam Wilks (7 June 1821) were married 8 October 1824, and she died 8 September 1832. Brigham Young and Mary Ann Angle (8 June 1803) were married 11 March 1834. Hyrum Smith (9 February 1800) and Jerusha Barden (15 February 1805) were married 2 November 1826. She died 13 October 1837. Hyrum Smith and Mary Fielding (21 July 1801) were married 24 December 1837; Pearson H. Corbett, Hyrum Smith—Patriarch, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971), pp. 39, 164. Willard Richards (24 June 1804) and Jennetta Richards (21 August 1817) were married 22 September 1838; Joseph Fielding Diary, 22 September 1838, Vol. 2, p. 18, Church Archives. Robert Blashel Thompson (1 October 1811) and Mercy Rachel Fielding (15 June 1807) were married 4 June 1837. He died 27 August 1841. She remained a widow until sealed to Hyrum Smith 11 August 1842; Smith “40 Affidavits” Book 1, p. 56. The Historical Record 6 (1887): 229. It is reasonable to assume that Hyrum Smith stood proxy for Robert B. Thompson inasmuch as Hyrum’s wife, Mary Fielding, was Mercy’s sister, and Mercy was sealed to Hyrum three months later.