visited the Prophet at Kirtland, to investigate the Gospel. At their request Joseph, in the name of Jesus Christ, had healed Mrs. Johnson's lame arm, and as a result the Johnsons and others had joined the Church.

Shortly after moving to Hiram, Joseph decided that Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer should take to Missouri the revelations and commandments received thus far, and there publish them as the Book of Commandments. Before continuing with revision of the Bible, therefore, the Prophet devoted his time to preparing the revelations for Cowdery and Whitmer to take. Meanwhile, he had appointed Newel K. Whitney as the Church's second bishop, to preside over temporal affairs at Kirtland.

It was at this time, or earlier, that Joseph received the "Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, including the Plurality of Wives." The Prophet did not commit this revelation to writing until July 12, 1843, in Nauvoo, at which time several verses were added, covering developments in connection with the original. With the exception of his vision of God the Father and the Son, and his visitations from the Angel Moroni and other heavenly messengers, no revelation or belief played a more important role in the life of Joseph Smith, nor in the course of Church history, than this on celestial or patriarchal marriage, with its two-fold doctrine of the eternity of the marriage covenant and the plurality of wives. Others' misunderstanding of it, abuse of it, rejection of it, or prejudice against it, was the cause of more apostasy from and persecution of the Church, and of Joseph Smith particularly, than any other doctrine he ever taught or lived. It figured prominently in the downfall of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, several members of the Quorum of Twelve, including John Johnson's two sons, Luke and Lyman, and other Church leaders; it was a key cause of Joseph and those faithful to him being driven out of Kirtland; of the Saints being driven from Nauvoo to the Rocky Mountains; of a federal army being sent to Utah to exterminate the Mormons; and it was the chief factor in the murder of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum in 1844. All of these difficulties arising in connection with it are indicative of the fact that traditions, customs and mores exert a strong hold upon the human mind — a foible of man's nature that Smith had to contend with all his life.

Beyond the persecution and other difficulties stemming from it, the doctrine also played a significant role in Joseph's personal life, for upon receipt of the revelation he felt authorized to enter plural marriage, as part of the restoration of all of God's laws pertinent to the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times, of which he claimed to be the prophet. He thus proceeded to marry many other women besides Emma. Exactly when he first began living plural marriage is not known, or at least not generally so. But it was probably in the early or mid-1830s. That, so far as is known, he never fathered any children by his wives other than Emma is puzzling to students of his life, but might be regarded as a reflection of his concern for his wives' feelings and welfare as well as for the safety of the Church generally, because due to the extreme prejudice existing against the doctrine, it had to be kept as confidential as possible, and even public denials of it
made. It was the hope of the Prophet and his wives that as soon as the Saints became established in the Far West, they could more fully live the principle, free from persecution. The assurance of an eternal union helped sustain them through these difficult years.

One of the first persons to whom Joseph confided the doctrine — and who proved unworthy of his confidence, as so many did — was twenty-year-old Lyman Johnson. Orson Pratt, in a statement endorsed also by Joseph F. Smith, reported that, “Lyman Johnson, who was very familiar with Joseph at this early date, Joseph living at his father’s house, and who was also very intimate with me, we having traveled on several missions together, told me himself that Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle. Joseph declared to Lyman that God had revealed it to him, but that the time had not come to teach or practice it in the Church, but that the time would come.” Several other Church leaders have also borne testimony that the doctrine was revealed to Joseph “as early as 1831.” There is indisputable evidence that the revelation making known this marriage law was given to the Prophet as early as 1831,” states B. H. Roberts, a general authority and Assistant Church Historian. “In that year, and thence intermittently up to 1833, the Prophet was engaged in a revision of the English Bible text under the inspiration of God. . . As he began his revision with the Old Testament, he would be dealing with the age of the Patriarchs in 1831. He was doubtless struck with the favor in which the Lord held the several Bible Patriarchs of that period, notwithstanding they had a plurality of wives. What more natural than that he should inquire of the Lord at that time, when his mind must have been impressed with the fact — Why, O Lord, didst Thou justify Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as also Moses, David, and Solomon, in the matter of their having many wives and concubines (see opening paragraph of the Revelation)? In answer to that inquiry came the revelation, though not then committed to writing.”

Obviously one or more of those persons to whom the Prophet confided the doctrine in the early 1830’s betrayed his confidence, for the rumor soon began circulating that the Mormons were polygamists. On August 17, 1835, William W. Phelps presented to a meeting of the priesthood an article on marriage, which was then adopted for inclusion in the Book of Commandments, and for many years was published in the Doctrine and Covenants. The article states, in part, “Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.” And in 1838, in a series of questions asked and answered by the Prophet in the Church newspaper, the Elders’ Journal, at Far West, Missouri, one question is, “Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?” and the answer, “No, not at the same time.” Plural marriage still had not been revealed openly to the Church as such, but these evidences indicate there had been talk of it, as do several private letters, journals and other documents of the period.

But there is also a good possibility that Smith had expressed himself on this topic even earlier than 1831: He had claimed several lengthy interviews with the Angel Moroni before the Church was organized, in which he was given guidance as to the Latter-day Dispensation, and also several revelations from God prior to 1831. He married Emma January 18, 1827. And in May, 1844, just a month before his death, in a Sabbath sermon at Nauvoo, he said, “I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives.” Certainly this is no proof of his having been concerned with plural marriage at that early a date, but it does indicate the possibility of such.

This revelation on marriage proclaims the doctrine that it is possible for the family to continue as such throughout the eternities, on condition of a worthy life in mortality, including compliance with the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. Marriage need not end at death, but rather, the husband and wife, father, mother and children can again be united in the same relationship in life after death. In obedience to eternal law, a worthy man and woman can progress in the Celestial Kingdom to eventual godhood and godliness, creating worlds of their own, in the ever expanding universe and Kingdom of God. Again, it is the provocative doctrine of eternalism: As man is, God once was; As God is, man may become.

Plural marriage, explained the Prophet, is the patriarchal order of marriage lived by God and others who reign in the Celestial Kingdom; therefore, both the eternity of the marriage covenant and the plurality of wives are contained in the revelation, which includes the following passages: “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines, Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. . . .

“If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them — Ye shall

1 DHC, V, xxxi.
2 DHC, V, xxix-xxx.
3 DHC, VI, 410.
come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths — then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

"God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law. . . . Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law; as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods. David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me. . . ."

"I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things. Ask what ye will, and it shall be given unto you according to my word. And as ye have asked concerning adultery, verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed. If she be not in the new and everlasting covenant, and she be with another man, she has committed adultery. And if her husband be with another woman, and he was under a vow, he hath broken his vow and hath committed adultery. And if she hath not committed adultery, but is innocent and hath not broken her vow, and she knoweth it, and I reveal it unto you, my servant Joseph, then shall you have power, by the power of my Holy Priesthood, to take her and give her unto him that hath not committed adultery but hath been faithful; for he shall be made ruler over many. . . ."

"And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood — if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that which belongeth unto him and to no one else. And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfill the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified. . . ."

Personal worthiness, moral purity, and obedience to the will of God were conditions emphasized in the doctrine. Eternal progress, eternal love and marital union, biblical precedence, free agency for a man to marry the women he loves and for each woman to marry the man of her choice — these and other points of the doctrine were argued in its favor. There was no opposition involved, and this fact alone, said its defenders, should have precluded criticism of it. Those entering plural marriage insisted that there is no more reason that those who wish to live this marriage law should be denied the right, than those who are opposed to it should be compelled to live it, for either is an infringement upon free agency, upon personal freedom and the natural rights of man.

Although Joseph Smith exercised his right to live plural marriage, and to teach it to selected associates, he also recognized the dangers involved, stemming from prejudice against it, and the difficulty in trying to win understanding and acceptance of it. Of all the trials of his life, not excepting the persecutions, the greatest was probably the frustration he experienced time and again in attempting to get his followers and others to overcome their prejudices and traditions and accept new teachings. He said that many in the Church would apostatize, and some of his associates sitting on the stand by him would kill him, if he taught all that he knew — and this they did even with what teachings he did give to them, particularly the doctrine of plural marriage. From at least 1831 until his death, he put out several feelers on it, to see how the Church members would respond, to see whether there was any hope of their accepting it. And each time the reaction was negative. In Nauvoo in 1841, for instance, Smith preached a sermon “on the restoration of all things,” in which it was hinted that the patriarchal or plural order of marriage, as practiced by the ancients, would some day again be established. The excitement created by the bare suggestion was such that Joseph deemed it wisdom, in the afternoon, to modify his statement by saying that possibly the Spirit had made the time seem nearer than it really was, when such things would be restored."

Such prejudice made the Prophet so reluctant to teach the doctrine to others and have them live it that, according to his confidants, the Lord sent an angel with a flaming sword to him to command that he proceed with it:

1 Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132.
2 Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, p. 338. Whitney was an LDS apostle.
"A grand and glorious principle had been revealed, and for years had slumbered in the breast of God's Prophet. . . An angel with a flaming sword descended from the courts of glory and, confronting the Prophet, commanded him in the name of the Lord to establish the principle so long concealed from the knowledge of the Saints and of the world. That principle was the law of celestial or plural marriage! Well knew the youthful Prophet the danger of his task. Well knew he the peril and penalty of disobedience. Fearing God, not man, he bowed to the inevitable, and laid his life — ay, was it not so? — upon the altar of duty and devotion." 6

A realization of the frustration and harassment that Joseph suffered in this matter is essential to an understanding of his life and the course of Church history. He gave voice to the dilemma he had experienced for years when he said, "They accuse me of polygamy, and of being a false Prophet, and many other things. . . But I am no false Prophet; I am no impostor; I have had no dark revelations; I have had no revelations from the devil; I made no revelation: I have got nothing up myself. The same God that has thus far dictated me and directed me and strengthened me in this work, gave me this revelation and commandment on celestial and plural marriage, and the same God commanded me to obey it. He said to me that unless I accepted it and introduced it, and practiced it, I, together with my people, would be damned and cut off from this time henceforth. And they say if I do so, they will kill me. O, what shall I do? If I do not practice it, I shall be damned with my people. If I do teach it, and practice it, and urge it, they say they will kill me. And I know they will. But we have got to observe it. It is an eternal principle and was given by way of commandment and not way of instruction." 7

Fortunately for Joseph's peace of mind there were some men and women willing to accept the principle. A great majority of those women whom he invited to become his wives readily accepted, having faith in him as a prophet of God and believing in the worth of the doctrine. His wives included the following twenty-eight, according to a Church-compiled list: Emma Hale, Louisa Beaman, Fanny Alger, Lucinda Harris, Zina D. and Precindia Huntington, Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Ann Whitney, Desdemona Fullmer, Helen Mar Kimball, Eliza and Emily Partridge, Lucy Walker, Almera Johnson, Melissa Lott, Fanny Young, Hannah Ellis, Maria and Sarah Lawrence, Flora Ann Woodworth, Ruth Vose, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Olive Frost, Rhoda Richards, Sylvia Sessions, Maria Winchester, Elvira A. Cowles, and Sarah M. Cleveland. 8 There were probably several others. They ranged in age from teenagers to elderly women. In the eternal scheme of things, explained the Prophet, age is meaningless, for in the Celestial Kingdom all inhabitants achieve perfection.

6 Ibid., pp. 331-332.
7 Contributor, Volume 5:259.
8 Church Historical Record, Volume 6:233. Compiled by Andrew Jenson, Assistant LDS Church Historian, in 1887. Additional wives have been named by other reliable writers.

Typical of the sentiments expressed by various of his wives were those of Helen Mar Kimball, a daughter of Heber C. Kimball: "It is the plan of the Almighty to make of His noble daughters queens instead of serfs, that woman may reign in the sphere for which she was created. The celestial order of marriage was introduced for this purpose, and God commanded His servants to enter into that holy order preparatory to the day, which is at our doors, when noble and virtuous women, now blinded by prejudice and priestcraft, will be glad to unite themselves to men equally noble and pure." 9

Acceptance of the doctrine was not easy for all of his wives, although it apparently was for most. Lucy Walker says that, "When the Prophet Joseph Smith mentioned the principle of plural marriage to me I felt indignant, and so expressed myself to him, because my feelings and education were averse to anything of that nature. But he assured me that this doctrine had been revealed to him of the Lord, and that I was entitled to receive a testimony of its divine origin for myself. He counseled me to pray to the Lord, which I did, and thereupon received from Him a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truthfulness and divinity of plural marriage, which testimony has abideed with me ever since." 10

Interestingly, with but few exceptions those who accepted the doctrine and lived plural marriage when Joseph taught it to them were men and women of proven integrity and accomplishment, such as Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and Emma Hale, Eliza R. Snow and Zina Huntington (the first three presidents of the LDS Relief Society), while, again with but few exceptions, those who rejected it were the men and women who proved false to the Church, such as Sidney Rigdon, William Law, William Marks, Nancy Rigdon, Martha Brotherton, Jane Law, etal. Among those who learned of Joseph's living or teaching the doctrine and who became most vindictive against him and the Church were men ultimately excommunicated for adultery: Warren Parrish, his scribe at Kirtland; William E. McLellin, one of the original members of the LDS Quorum of Twelve Apostles; Dr. John C. Bennett mayor of Nauvoo; Dr. Robert D. Foster, Wilson Law, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, etal.

Along with their work of revising the Bible, Joseph and Rigdon spent considerable time in short missionary journeys to various towns in northern Ohio, and in conducting conferences of the Church. At one of these, in Amherst, on January 25, 1832, Joseph was sustained and ordained as President of the High Priesthood, equivalent to being President of the Church. This was the first he had sought or received official recognition as such.

Shortly after their return to Hiram from the Amherst conference, on February 16, Joseph and Rigdon, while revising the Gospel of St. John,
first place to last, and may have been a contributing factor to the bitterness he later manifested. All members were in their 20's or 30's. The two Pratts were brothers and the two Johnsons were brothers, and Hyde was a brother-in-law to the Johnsons. Marsh was later officially designated as president of the Quorum. Since this original organization, seniority in the LDS Quorum of Twelve has been determined according to length of continuous membership in it, rather than by age. And the senior member of the Quorum becomes president of the Church upon the death of his predecessor.

It must be assumed that the three witnesses chose as wisely as they were able in their selection of these twelve, yet in several cases their choices proved somewhat disappointing. In fact, ten of the twelve at one time or another opposed the Prophet— all but Young and Kimball. However, Patten, Hyde and the two Pratts were but briefly disaffected and proved stalwarts in the faith, Patten and Parley Pratt dying as martyrs to the cause. Although they apostatized, Luke Johnson and Marsh eventually came back into the Church, after the Prophet's death. Four — Boynton, Lyman Johnson, McLellin and Smith — died outside the Church.

Brigham Young's older brother, Joseph, was chosen as one of the seven presidents of the Quorum of Seventy. Brigham and Joseph had just prior to the meeting been promised by the Prophet that they would be called to these offices. Within a few years Marsh had apostatized and Patten had been killed by mobs, thus elevating Brigham to presidency of the Twelve and eventually to presidency of the Church.

A month following organization of these two key quorums, the Prophet, upon request of the Twelve, besought the Lord and received a revelation on priesthood, in which the brethren were given a clearer concept of their duties and opportunities. There would be two overall priesthoods in the Church, the Melchizedek or greater, including the offices of High Priest, Seventy and Elder, and the Aaronic, Levitical or lesser priesthood, an appendage to the greater and including the offices of Priest, Teacher and Deacon. Eventually these latter three offices came to be filled largely by boys from twelve to twenty-one years of age and by older men not yet prepared for advancement to the greater priesthood. The revelation concluded with the stern admonition that "he that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand." 1 Armed with this new revelation, the Twelve embarked upon a mission to the eastern states.

One of the Prophet's most interesting literary productions, adopted as scripture by the Church long after his death, is the Book of Abraham. On July 3, 1835, a young Irishman named Michael H. Chandler, who had recently moved to Philadelphia, came to Kirtland exhibiting four mummies and some rolls of papyrus containing ancient hieroglyphics. These he had inherited from an uncle, one Antonio Lebolo (today spelled Sebolo), a French explorer who had obtained them from one of the catacombs in Egypt, near the place where once stood the renowned city of Thebes. Someone at the custom house in Philadelphia had told Mr. Chandler that Joseph Smith of Kirtland, Ohio, could translate the hieroglyphics for him, and so after exhibiting them for a time in Philadelphia he brought them out to Joseph, and at the Prophet's suggestion some of the Saints raised the necessary money and purchased the mummies and rolls of papyrus from Chandler. The one roll, Joseph found, contained a record of old Father Abraham. It makes a tremendous contribution to the literature of religion, science and history, teaching of pre-mortal life, the principle of fore-ordination, the LDS doctrine regarding the Negro, and gives an advanced view of astronomy, harmonious with today's modern cosmology, suggesting that the universe is in a constant state of change and expansion and that there are innumerable worlds on which life might exist. The other roll contained data on Abraham's great-grandson, Joseph, who was sold into Egypt by the other sons of Jacob. Apparently, and unfortunately, the Prophet never completed his translation of this roll. Only brief excerpts of it have ever been published. Eventually the mummies and papyri were destroyed in the great Chicago fire, or so it is supposed.

Joseph was anxious to have the various revelations published in one volume. Such a publication, known as the Book of Commandments, had been underway when the Missouri mobs destroyed the press at Independence, in 1833. Now in August, 1835, a special conference of the Church was called to ratify a Book of Doctrine and Covenants, containing revelations given to date, plus some lectures on faith and two articles by some of the Church leaders, one on "Government and Laws in General," the other on "Marriage." These latter, however, were not binding on the Church in the same sense as were the revelations. Joseph was in Michigan on a mission at the time and may not even have seen the latter. The marriage article, in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting, sustains monogamous marriage and denies any LDS practice of plural marriage. Joseph was not yet ready to publicly acknowledge this doctrine, even though he had spoken of it in confidence to a few close friends.

One of these was Lyman R. Sherman (whom the Prophet later chose to be an apostle, to replace Orson Hyde who had briefly apostatized, but Sherman died before he could be ordained to the office). Benjamin F. Johnson, another close friend to Joseph and a brother-in-law to Sherman, says, "In 1835, at Kirtland, I learned from my sister's husband, Lyman R. Sherman, who was close to the Prophet, and received it from him, 'that the ancient order of Plural Marriage was again to be practiced by the Church.' This, at the time, did not impress my mind deeply, although there lived then with his family [the Prophet's] a neighbor's daughter, Fannie Alger, a very nice and comely young woman . . . toward whom not only myself, but everyone, seemed partial, for the amiability of her character; and it was whispered even then that Joseph loved her." Johnson, a Church patriarch at the time of writing, put his finger on the beginning of Oliver Cowdery's

1 Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107.
and Warren Parrish’s downfall — Parrish was the Prophet’s secretary: “There was some trouble with Oliver Cowdery, and whisper said it was relating to a girl then living in his (the Prophet’s) family; and I was afterwards told by Warren Parrish, that he himself and Oliver Cowdery did know that Joseph had Fannie Alger as wife, for they were spied upon and found together.” Both Cowdery and Parrish began falling away from the Church shortly after this. “Without doubt in my mind,” says Johnson, “Fannie Alger was, at Kirtland, the Prophet’s first plural wife, in which, by right of his calling, he was justified of the Lord, while Oliver Cowdery, Jared Carter, Warren Parrish, or others, were not justified in their criticisms upon the doings of the Prophet, nor in their becoming a law unto themselves, through which, they lost the light of their calling and were left in darkness.” One of the charges against Cowdery when he was excommunicated was that he had insinuated that Joseph was guilty of adultery. Writing in 1838 to his brother Warren, another apostate, Oliver in speaking of an interview with Joseph said, “A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger’s was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deserted from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself.” Years later Cowdery told a Church audience that he rather than Joseph had been at fault.

While Cowdery, Parrish and others were disloyal to him at one time or another, Joseph was fortunate in having the support and loyalty of his parents, wife, and brothers and sisters. Of Hyrum, his older brother, he was especially fond, observing in his journal that, “I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved brother Hyrum, who possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ; and I love him with that love that is stronger than death, for I never had occasion to rebuke him, nor he me.”

But even in his family there was one unfortunate exception, for at the other extreme in temperament was William Smith, whose appointment to the Quorum of Twelve Joseph had urged upon the Three Witnesses. William was five years younger than Joseph and was even larger. Unlike the others, William was a man of quick temper and unruly passions. Although generally respectful of Joseph’s position as President of the Church, he was often extremely jealous of him and on several occasions severely criticised him in public. On the night of December 16, 1835, Joseph attended a debating school at William’s home. When the Prophet reproved him for interrupting another member of the Quorum of Twelve, William, in a rage, attacked Joseph, pinning his arms back before Joseph could finish taking off his coat for a fight. Two days later, under pressure from his brother Hyrum and members of the Quorum of Twelve, William wrote a letter of apology to Joseph, acknowledging his own bad temper, pleading poor health and asking to be released as one of the Apostles. Joseph, who had been physically injured and deeply hurt emotionally, wrote a lengthy letter of forgiveness to William, declining to accept his resignation as an Apostle, and urging him to gain self-control over his passions. “And if at any time you should consider me to be an impostor, for heaven’s sake leave me in the hands of God, and not think to take vengeance on me yourself,” concluded Joseph. “And now may God have mercy upon my father’s house; may God take away enmity from between me and thee; and may all blessings be restored, and the past be forgotten forever.”

Throughout the latter part of 1835 and the fore part of 1836 the Prophet devoted his efforts to the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants; to translation of the papyrus rolls, to completion of the Kirtland Temple, to further organization of the various quorums of the Church, and to participation in the School of the Prophets, which had employed a Hebrew scholar to teach languages and other subjects to the brethren.

The spring of 1836 was a joyous time in the Prophet’s life. The completed temple was dedicated on March 27, probably the most important occasion since organization of the Church six years earlier. Dedicatory services continued for a week to afford all Church members an opportunity to attend. William W. Phelps had composed the hymn, “The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning,” especially for this occasion. It was a time of Pentecost for the Latter-day Saints, many of whom testified that they saw and heard angels in attendance at the meetings, and some even reported that they saw the Saviour. During one of the meetings, residents of Kirtland not in attendance came running in excitement, having heard a strange sound and seen a bright light emanating from the temple as though it were afire.

On Sunday, April 3, while kneeling at the pulpit of the temple, with the curtains dropped between them and the congregation, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery reported having seen Jesus the Saviour standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, and hearing Him speak to them and accepting the temple, which had been built in His name. And this was followed in succession, they said, by visions of three biblical prophets: Moses, Elias of Abraham’s time, and Elijah, each committing to them keys of certain work to be performed in connection with the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. This included the gathering of Israel and vicarious temple work, such as baptism for the dead, in the belief that all persons who ever lived upon the earth must have such work done for them before they are eligible to progress in the Gospel program in post-mortem life.

In his dedicatory prayer the Prophet implored, “And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said. And that they may grow.

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2 Unpublished letter by Benjamin Franklin Johnson to George S. Gibbs, 1903; similar statement in his book, My Life’s Review.
3 Letter is in Huntington Library, San Marino, California, and has been widely quoted out of context by anti-Mormon writers.
4 DHC, II, 338.
5 DHC, II, 343.
Dixon. Some forty miles from Dixon, a company of Legionnaires led by Colonel Markham intercepted the Prophet, Reynolds, Wilson and others with them, and escorted them to Nauvoo. Other contingents of the Legion joined them along the way. Joseph described it this way: "I was a prisoner in the hands of Reynolds, the agent of Missouri, and Wilson, his assistant. They were prisoners in the hands of Sheriff Campbell of Lee County, who had delivered the whole of us into the hands of Colonel Markham, guarded by my friends, so that none of us could escape." 18

Emma and the children, meanwhile, returned to Nauvoo in the family carriage, driven by her nephew, Lorenzo. What had begun as a pleasant family vacation had now become a frightful journey home, filled with anxiety for the safety and welfare of their husband and father. Gloomily, anxiously they waited, fearful that they might never see him alive again, knowing all too well that if Reynolds and Wilson succeeded in getting him into Missouri his life would be taken.

When news reached Nauvoo that Joseph had been rescued and was now approaching the city with the Legion, Emma, their children, Hyrum and others, hurried out to greet him, overjoyed at his deliverance. The Legion band struck up "Hail Columbia." Guns and cannon fired a salute as the Prophet entered Nauvoo triumphantly, amid the cheers of the Nauvoo residents, who lined the streets shouting happily as Joseph came riding in astride his favorite horse, "Charlie." The procession continued on to the Prophet's old two-story frame house. "My aged mother was at the door to embrace me," remembered Joseph, "with tears of joy rolling down her cheeks, and my children clung around me with feelings of enthusiastic enraptured pleasure." 19 His little son Fred inquired anxiously, "Pa, the Missourians won't take you away again, will they?"

As his friends crowded around him, Joseph climbed onto the fence in front of his house and waving his arm for silence declared, "I am out of the hands of the Missourians again, thank God. I thank you all for your kindness and love to me. I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." A half hour or so later Joseph and Emma served dinner to fifty guests, including Sheriff Campbell and others who had accompanied him down from Dixon. He set the surly would-be abductors, Reynolds and Wilson, at the head of the table as reluctant guests of honor. "They were served," said Joseph, "with the best that the table afforded, by my wife, whom they refused to allow me to see, when they so cruelly arrested and ill-treated me."

But late that afternoon, in a vigorous address to the citizens of Nauvoo, Joseph lashed out at the Missourians and others who continued to trample upon his rights:

"... I have dragged these men here by my hand, and I will do it again; but I swear I will not deal so mildly with them again, for the time has come when forbearance is no longer a virtue; and if you or I are again taken unlawfully, you are at liberty to give loose to blood and thunder. But be cool, be deliberate, be wise, act with almighty power, and when you pull, do it effectually — make a sweep-stakes for once! I wish the lawyer who says we have no powers in Nauvoo may be choked to death with his own words. Don't employ lawyers, or pay them money for their knowledge, for I have learned that they don't know anything. I know more than they all. . . . If Missouri will not stay her cruel hand in her unhallowed persecutions against us, I restrain you not any longer. I say in the name of Jesus Christ, by the authority of the holy priesthood, I this day turn the key that opens the heavens to restrain you no longer from this time forth. I will lead you to the battle; and if you are not afraid to die, and feel disposed to spill your blood in your own defense, you will not offend me. Be not the aggressor. . . . Because we worship Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, shall we longer bear these cruelties which have been heaped upon us for the last ten years in the face of heaven, and in open violation of the constitution and laws of these United States and of this state? God forbid! I will not bear it. If they take away my rights, I will fight for them manfully and righteously until I am used up. We have done nothing against the rights of others. . . . I swear, in the name of Almighty God, and with uplifted hands to heaven, I will spill my heart's blood in our defense. . . ." 20

Traveling by steamboats, a thousand non-Mormon visitors from St. Louis, Quincy and Burlington came to Nauvoo four days later for an Independence Day celebration. As main orator of the day the Prophet again reviewed the Saints' persecutions by the Missourians, told of their founding the city of Nauvoo and building up the Legion as a means of protection, reviewed the Mormons' role in state politics, and went into some detail on his recent encounter with Reynolds and Wilson. He recalled that Ford as a gubernatorial candidate "manifested a spirit in his speeches to give every man his rights; hence the members of the Church universally voted for Mr. Ford and he was elected governor. But he has issued writs against me the first time the Missourians made a demand for me, and this is the second one he has issued for me, which has caused me much trouble and expense." 21

Meanwhile, Reynolds, Wilson and other anti-Mormons were making strenuous efforts, both legal and illegal ones, to retake Joseph prisoner. They sought unsuccessfully to raise a mob to go against Nauvoo, and they petitioned Governor Ford to send the State Militia to rearrest the Mormon leader. Jacob Backenstos, the friendly and courageous non-Mormon sheriff of Hancock county, interceded in the Prophet's behalf with Ford, and the governor replied to Reynolds and Wilson that he would take no such action until he had opportunity to investigate fully the circumstances of their arrest of the Mormon leader and his subsequent escape from them. General Moses Wilson and a number of the mob-militia of western Missouri had been waiting near Jacksonville, Illinois, for several days, hopeful that the governor

18DHC, V, 459.
19DHC, V, 459.
20DHC, V, 465-473.
21DHC, V, 490.
would turn Joseph over to them to drag back into Missouri. But upon
Ford's refusal to act, they left for Missouri empty-handed.

Perhaps even more vexing to the Prophet at this time was the growing
trouble he was having from within the Church, chiefly over the question of
plural marriage. Although he had been careful to limit its practice to a few
carefully chosen, worthy men and women, he had not been successful in
controlling knowledge of its practice. Dr. Bennett's flagrant charges of
debauchery in Nauvoo, his wildly distorted and fabricated accounts of sexual
relations there, not only stirred up rumors unlimited, but made the introduc-
tion of plural marriage into the Church far more difficult than it otherwise
would have been.

Emma had accepted the doctrine of plural marriage, as she had Joseph's
other teachings, having faith in the divinity of his calling as a prophet. She
had given her consent to his marrying other women, and had stood as a
witness at some of these marriages. But ill health, adverse circumstances
and the persuasions of apostates had caused Emma to become discontent
with the doctrine, feeling that she was being wronged by her husband. Thus
Emma suffered a torment of mind, and Joseph had no peace in his own home.
Hyrum, always solicitous of his brother's welfare, sought to remedy the
situation. William Clayton, the Prophet's secretary, reports that, "On the
morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the
office in the upper story of the brick store, on the bank of the Mississippi
river. They were talking on the subject of plural marriage. Hyrum said to
Joseph, 'If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take it
and read it to Emma, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you
will hereafter have peace.' Joseph smiled and remarked, 'You do not know
Emma as well as I do.' Hyrum repeated his opinion, and further remarked,
'The doctrine is so plain, I can convince any reasonable man or woman of
its truth, purity and heavenly origin,' or words to that effect. Joseph then
said, 'Well, I will write the revelation and we will see.' He then requested
me to get paper and prepare to write. Hyrum very urgently requested Joseph
to write the revelation by means of the Urim and Thummim, but Joseph in
reply said he did not need to, for he knew the revelation perfectly from
beginning to end.

"Joseph and Hyrum then sat down and Joseph commenced to dictate
the revelation on celestial marriage, and I wrote it, sentence by sentence, as
he dictated. After the whole was written, Joseph asked me to read it through,
slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct. He then
remarked that there was much more that he could write on the same subject,
but what was written was sufficient for the present.

"Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. Joseph remained
with me in the office until Hyrum returned. When he came back, Joseph
asked him how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that he had never received
a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of
resentment and anger.

"Joseph quietly remarked, 'I told you you did not know Emma as well
as I did.' Joseph then put the revelation in his pocket, and they both left
the office. . . . Two or three days after the revelation was written Joseph
related to me and several others that Emma had so teased and urgently
entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of
her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy
it and she had done so, but he had consented to her wish in this matter to
pacify her, realizing that he knew the revelation perfectly, and could rewrite
it at any time if necessary." 22 Meanwhile, prior to Joseph's giving it to
Emma, Bishop Newel K. Whitney with Joseph's consent had instructed
Joseph C. Kingsbury to make a copy of it, which was carefully compared
to the original for accuracy, and preserved for Church use, later being pub-
lished in the Doctrine and Covenants and some editions of the Pearl of Great
Price.

To the original revelation as received by the Prophet in 1831 were
added several verses at the time it was dictated, including the admonition to
Emma to accept the Prophet's other wives:

"And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been
given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me. . . .
For I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; and I give unto
my servant Joseph that he shall be made ruler over many things; for he hath
been faithful over a few things. . . . And I command mine handmaid,
Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else.
. . . But if she will not abide this commandment, then shall my servant
Joseph do all things for her, even as he hath said; and I will bless him and
multiply him and give unto him an hundred-fold in this world, of fathers
and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children,
and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds. And again, verily I say,
let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph his trespasses; and then shall
she be forgiven her trespasses, wherein she has trespassed against me; and
I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart
to rejoice." 23

Soon after Hyrum's unsuccessful interview with Emma, a copy of the
revelation was read to the Nauvoo Stake Presidency and High Council, by
Hyrum. Two years earlier the Twelve Apostles had been taught the doctrine.
Now the Prophet felt it was time for the local authorities to receive it. But
while the Quorum of Twelve had accepted it well, the stake presidency and
high council became sorely divided over the doctrine, some members accepting
it and others rejecting it. The stake president, William Marks, had serious
misgivings about it, as did his first counselor, Austin Cowles. Eventually
they both apostatized over the issue, Cowles before the Prophet's death and
Marks afterward. Marks' second counselor, Charles C. Rich, accepted the
doctrine, remained loyal to the Prophet, and later became a member of the
Council of Twelve Apostles, under Brigham Young.

22 Originally published in Deseret Evening News, May 20, 1886; republished in DHC,
V, xxxii-xxxiii

23 Doctrine and Covenants, 132:52-56.
No public announcement nor acknowledgment of the doctrine was yet made. But once the revelation was put into writing, it was inevitable that discussion of the practice would greatly increase—especially as much as some of the brethren to whom it had been presented were opposed to it. These included the Prophet’s two counselors, Sidney Rigdon and William Law. His enemies were quick to exploit it. Joseph alluded to this in a sermon the following Sunday, July 16, declaring that a man’s foes are those of his own household. “The same spirit that crucified Jesus is in the breast of some who profess to be Saints in Nauvoo. I have secret enemies in the city intermingling with the Saints.” While preaching the eternity of the marriage covenant, he refrained from any reference to the plural aspect of the doctrine, explaining that, “On account of the unbelief of the people, I cannot reveal the fullness of these things at present.” William Clayton further observes that, “After the revelation on celestial marriage was written Joseph continued his instructions privately, on the doctrine, to myself and others, and during the last year of his life we were scarcely ever together, alone, but he was talking on the subject, and explaining that doctrine, and principles connected with it. He appeared to enjoy great liberty and freedom in his teachings, and also to find great relief in having a few to whom he could unbosom his feelings on that great and glorious subject. From him I learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on the earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fullness of exaltation in celestial glory.”

In the summer of 1843 the Prophet lost through death two men for whom he had an especially high regard: in June, Judge Elias Higbee died, grieved at the waywardness of his sons, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, who were soon plotting Joseph’s destruction; and in August, his dear friend, Judge James Adams of Springfield died.

In recent weeks the Prophet had made repeated allusions to there being enemies within the city, and to there being a Brutus and a Judas. Naturally there was much speculation as to who these enemies were, who the Brutus was and who the Judas was. The Fosters and Higbees and Augustine Spencer and Joseph Jackson and a few others were easy bets. But other names were being whispered around more frequently. It was an open secret by now that plural marriage was being lived and taught and that some of the brethren were disgruntled with the doctrine. Rumors had it that William Law, the Prophet’s second counselor, might be the Judas, and others thought it might be William Marks, the stake president.

But the Prophet momentarily put an end to speculation by publicly accusing Sidney Rigdon of betrayal. To a shocked audience gathered for Sabbath services August 13, Joseph angrily declared, “We have had certain traitors in this city, who have been writing falsehoods to Missouri; and there is a certain man in this city who has made a covenant to betray and give me up to the Missourians, and that, too, before Governor Carlin commenced his persecutions. That man is no other than Sidney Rigdon. This testimony I have from gentlemen from abroad, whose names I do not wish to give. I most solemnly proclaim the withdrawal of my fellowship from this man, on condition that the foregoing be true; and let the Saints proclaim it abroad, that he may no longer be acknowledged as my counselor; and all who feel to sanction my proceedings and views will manifest it by uplifted hands.”

A sea of outraged hands went up in a unanimous vote that Rigdon be disfellowshipped and his license demanded.

Rigdon denied Joseph’s charges, however, and the case was argued before a special conference of the Church two months later. The Prophet insisted that Rigdon had been of no worth to him as a counselor since their escape from Missouri in 1839 and proposed that he be formally released, expressing an “entire lack of confidence in his integrity and steadfastness.” But Rigdon pleaded for mercy, and Presidents Hyrum Smith, William Law and others also pleaded his case. On motion of President William Marks and seconded by Hyrum, the conference voted to sustain President Rigdon in his position as first counselor. It was probably the first and only time that the Church members voted contrary to the expressed wish of their youthful leader.

Joseph then arose and declared, “I have thrown him off my shoulders, and you have again put him on me. You may carry him, but I will not!”

As Joseph walked from the stand that day he probably felt as alone as he ever had in his life. Through all his adversities of persecutions, apostasies, betrayals, poverty, slander, etc., he always felt that he had the backing of a majority of the Church membership. But now he had lost the vote on a crucial, and in a way, a very personal, issue. Still he felt that he had the assurance of being sustained by a greater power. As he had told the people a short time before, “To become a joint heir of the heirship of the Son, one must put away all his false traditions. I prophesy and bear record... that all the combined powers of earth and hell shall not and cannot ever overthor or overcome this boy, for I have a promise from the eternal God. If I have sinned, I have sinned outwardly; but surely I have contemplated the things of God... If a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life, he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned.”

This, Joseph felt, was the critical difference between himself and Rigdon, Law, Marks and others who could not fully accept his teachings. The upward road to godhood was not an easy one, he mused, but it was the only one worth traveling.

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26 DHC, V, 531-532.
27 DHC, VI, 48-50.
28 DHC, V, 554-555.