Old Fashioned Adultery

By Mark Hines, M.A.

In Edmund Spenser's classic Middle English allegory *Fairie Queen*, Lust was one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Six of the Seven Deadly Sins rode on animals. Satan, walking at the head of the parade, was guilty of pride, the worst sin. Lust rode on a goat. The Greek word "tragedy" literally means "goat's song," and human tragedy itself is directly related to sexual lust. Only by being a Christian and by having the Holy Spirit infuse one, can the ends of lust be conquered.

The exact number of women whom Mormonism founder Joe Smith copulated while being married to Emma, his only legal wife under USA law, is unknown. In 1887, assistant LDS historian Andrew Jenson made a list of 27 women who were "sealed" to Joe Smith (Historical Record, vol. 6, page 233). Mormon author John J. Stewart put the number "three to four dozen or more" (Brigham Young and His Wives, 1961, pp. 30-31). Fawn Brodie put the number at 48 (Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946, pp. 434-65). Former BYU professor D. Michael Quinn put it at 46, and George D. Smith put it at 43 (Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).

The youngest girl whom Smith "married" and copulated was fourteen-year-old Helen Mar Kimball (Ibid., p. 487). As with most of the other women, Smith hid his adultery with her from Emma.

Lavina Fielding Anderson, editor of the *Journal of Mormon History*, wrote, "I was shocked and disgusted to discover that Joseph Smith married a fourteen-year-old girl, fully consummated that marriage, and concealed it from Emma. My image of a "prophet" did not accommodate this kind of behavior. I could not begin to find holy motives for such behavior" ("The Garden God Hath Planted: Explorations Toward a Maturing Faith," *Sunstone*, October 1990, pp. 26-27).

With his "church" flunkies, Joe Smith freely talked about his stable of women, and he ranked them according to the sexual pleasure they gave him. William Law, who was a Second Counselor to the LDS "church," recalled a conversation in which Smith discussed a particular woman who had given him the best sex.

"Joseph was very free in his talk about his women. He told me one day of a certain girl and remarked, that she had given him more pleasure than any girl he had ever enjoyed. I told him it was horrible to talk like this" ("Interview with William Law. March 30, 1887," *Daily Tribune*: Salt Lake City, July 31, 1887).

Lewdness was nothing new to Smith, as he had had a long history of being lewd. All of the following quotations are taken from Richard C. Evans book *Forty Years in the Mormon Church-Why I Left It!* (Toronto, Canada, 1920):

Dr. McIntyre, family physician of the Smiths in Manchester, N. Y., declared that the house of Joseph Smith, Sen., was a perfect brothel.

Eza Pierce, Samantha Payne and other school-mates of the Smiths testify that Smith was lewd, and so were the family.

Levi Lewis testifies that while Smith was pretending to translate the plates, he tried to
seduce Eliza Winters, declaring that adultery was no sin.

Eli Johnson led a mob against Smith for being intimate with his sister, Marinda, who afterwards married Orson Hyde. Brigham Young twitted Hyde with this fact, and Hyde put away his wife.

Fanny Brewer testifies that Smith had serious trouble in Kirtland arising from his seducing an orphan girl.

Mr. Moreton told his daughter and her husband that Emma Smith detected Joseph in adultery with a girl by the name of Knight, and that Joseph confessed the crime to the officers of the church.

In his book, Todd Compton notes that a full one-third of the women Smith "married" were already married to other men when Smith married them:

"A common misconception concerning Joseph Smith's polyandry is that he participated in only one or two such unusual unions. In fact, fully one-third of his plural wives, eleven of them, were married civilly to other men when he married them. If one superimposes a chronological perspective, one sees that of Smith's first twelve wives, nine were polyandrous (Compton, pp. 15-16).

A full one-third of the women Smith copulated were other men's wives. Soft-headed people can term it "celestial marriage," or the "Blessings of Jacob," but it is really just old fashioned adultery and fornication.

The sex with Adam Lightner's wife, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, must have been especially pleasurable. Smith said that all of the devils in hell couldn't keep him from her. Mrs. Lightner wrote:

"Joseph said I was his before I came here and he said all the Devils in Hell should never get me from him. I was sealed to him in the Masonic Hall, over the old brick store by Brigham Young in February 1842 and then again in the Nauvoo Temple by Heber C. Kimball ..." (Affidavit of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, as quoted in No Man Knows My History, p. 444).

Smith and Emily Partridge copulated, as Todd Compton notes,

"Emily Partridge Young said she 'roomed' with Joseph the night following her marriage to him, and said that she had 'carnal intercourse' with him."

"Other early witnesses also affirmed this. Benjamin Johnson wrote: 'On the 15th of May ... the Prophet again Came and at my house [house] occupied [sic] the Same Room & Bed with my sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Later [late?] Bishop Partridge as his wife.' According to Joseph Bates Noble, Smith told him he had spent a night with Louisa Beaman ... many of Joseph's wives affirmed that they were married to him for eternity and time, with sexuality included." (Compton, pp. 12-14)

The following excerpt is from a letter Joe Smith wrote when he wanted to arrange a tryst with Newel K. Whitney's daughter Sarah Ann, whom Smith had secretly "married." It reveals Smith's cloak-and-dagger approach to his extramarital affairs:
"... the only thing to be careful of; is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety. ... Only be careful to escape observation, as much as possible, I know it is a heroic undertaking; but so much the greater friendship, and the more Joy, when I see you I will tell you all my plans, I cannot write them on paper, burn this letter as soon as you read it; keep all locked up in your breasts, my life depends upon it. ... I close my letter, I think emma wont come tonight if she dont dont fail to come to night, I subscribe myself your most obedient, and affectionate, companion, and friend. Joseph Smith." (Compton, p. 350)

In History of the Saints, John C. Bennett, who was a mayor of Nauvoo, related Joe Smith's attempt to have sexual intercourse with Sarah M. Pratt, the wife of Orson Pratt, professor of mathematics at the University of the City of Nauvoo:

"Well," said he, 'I shall approach her, for there is no harm in it if she submits to be cloistered, and if her husband should never find it out; and if she should expose me, as she did Bishop Knight, I will blast her character; so there is no material risk for so desirable a person." (John C. Bennett, History of the Saints, 1842, pp. 226-234).

Smith was ready to "blast" her character and lie about her if she told anybody. After Smith visited her on a pretext and propositioned her with his "Blessings of Jacob" line, she told her husband, who was one of the original twelve Mormon apostles. When Orson Pratt complained about Joe Smith's sexual advances on his wife, Smith had Orson Pratt excommunicated August 20, 1842 (Robert Bruce Flanders, Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965, pp. 269-70).

On another occasion, when Smith had offered Bennett $500 to procure Nancy Rigdon, Bennett turned Smith down. Smith then cornered Nancy in a room, pulled his "Blessings of Jacob" routine, and told her that she would still be free to marry other men after their copulation. When Smith tried to force himself on her and kiss her, she threatened to scream.

According to William Law, John C. Bennett and others, Smith used flunkies who were willing to lie and defame any woman who had morals and who rebuffed Smith's invitation to fornication. Immediately after Nancy rebuffed Smith on June 28, 1842, Smith had a character named Stephen Markham swear to an affidavit lying about seeing Nancy engaged immorally with a man. Smith wanted to lie and defame her character, just as he told Bennett he would "blast" Mrs. Pratt's character. Sidney Rigdon, John F. Olney, Carlos Gove, General W. Robinson and Henry Marks then signed certificates attesting to Nancy's high moral character (Bennett).

After Smith had tried to debauch Nancy and had sent a flunky to lie about her character, her father, Sidney Rigdon, had a falling out with Smith. Although he was a first counselor to Smith's "church," Rigdon denounced Smith. Sidney Rigdon wrote:

"The leaders of the church were monsters in human form; that Joseph was cut off for his transgression, that Joseph Smith departed from the living God, and like David and Solomon he contracted a whoring spirit and that the Lord smote him off from the earth" (Evans, p. 91).

While he was copulating with married women, he was publicly lying about it and hypocritically kicking others out of his "church" for doing the same thing that he was doing. The Bible says that all liars will go to hell (Revelation 21:8), yet lying was a small matter to Smith. According to the Bible, an unrepentant adulator will also go to hell. (Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 6:32, 7:16-22; Jeremiah 7:9, 23:14, 29:23; Ezekiel 16:38; Hosea 4:2; Matthew 5:27-32, 15:19, 19:9, 19:17-18; Mark 7:21, 10:11-12,

In the Mormon publication *Times and Seasons*, Joe Smith and his brother gave notice of kicking Hiram Brown out of the "church" for preaching polygamy:

"THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1844.

NOTICE.

As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan.

"This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges."

"JOSEPH SMITH,
HYRUM SMITH,
Presidents of said Church."

Smith's periodical *Times and Seasons* made another denial: "We are charged with advocating a plurality of wives, and common property. Now this is as false as the many other ridiculous charges which are brought against us . . . we do what others do not, practice what we preach" (vol. 4, p. 143).

The Mormon periodical *Millennial Star* also denied polygamy: "But, for the information of those who may be assailed by those foolish tales about two wives, we would say that no such principle ever existed among the Latter-day Saints, and never will . . . the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; and also all our periodicals are very strict on that subject, indeed far more so than the bible" (vol. 3, p. 74).

The following appeared in the May 1, 1845 *Times and Seasons* (vol. 6, p. 894):

"Sidney Rigdon, I see by the papers, has made an exposition of Mormonism, charging Joseph Smith and the Mormons with polygamy, &c. . . . As to the charge of polygamy, I will quote from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which is the subscribed faith of the church and is strictly enforced. . . . 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 but one wife, and one woman but one husband. . . ."

The *Millennial Star* (vol. 12, pp. 29-30, c) categorically denied Smith's involvement in polygamy:

"12th Lie--Joseph Smith taught a system of polygamy.

"12th Refutation.--The Revelations given through Joseph Smith, state the following. . . . 'We believe that one man should have one wife.' *Doctrine and Covenants*, page 331."

Although he was "sealed" to dozens of women and was copulating with numerous married women, Joe Smith wrote,

"What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all
perjurers" (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 411).

Austin Cowles, a former First Counselor to the LDS Church, and William Law, a former Second Counselor, had had enough. They confronted Smith with his heresy, adultery, and fornication. They gave him a chance to come clean, but he rebuffed them out of pride. The two top Mormon counselors then wrote in the *Nauvoo Expositor* on June 7, 1844:

"... but our petitions were treated with contempt; and in many cases the petitioner spurned from their presence, and particularly by Joseph, who would state that if he had sinned, and was guilty of the charges we would charge him with, he would not make acknowledgment, but would rather be damned; for it would detract from his dignity, and would consequently ruin and prove the overthrow of the Church. We would ask him on the other hand, if the overthrow of the Church was that inevitable, to which he often replied that we would all go to Hell together and convert it into a heaven, by casting the Devil out; and says he, Hell is by no means the place this world of fools suppose it to be, but on the contrary, it is quite an agreeable place:" (*Nauvoo Expositor* vol. 1, No. 1, Nauvoo, IL June 7, 1844)

Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, the youngest girl whom Smith copulated when Emma wasn't looking, independently corroborated Smith's belief that he could "turn the devils" out of hell and make hell a desirable place to live. In her autobiography, she recalled Joe Smith's words,

"He [Joe Smith] said: "Let me be resurrected with the Saints, whether I ascend to heaven or descend to hell, we will turn the devils out of doors and make a heaven out of it. Where this people are, there is good society. What do we care where we are, if the society be good?" (Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Autobiography*, c. 1839-1846)."