

More on Nauvoo Plural Wives

Another young woman who lived in the home of Emma and Joseph Smith in 1842 was Lucy Walker. Lucy recalled when Joseph spoke to her about becoming a wife:

In the year 1842 President Joseph Smith Sought an interview with me, and said: "I have a message for you. I have been com[m]anded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman." My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me. He asked me if I believed him to be a Prophet of God. "Most assuredly I do I replied."

Smith explained to her that the principle of plural or celestial marriage was to be restored and "it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house. and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end." Smith said, "If you will pray sincerely for light and understanding in relation thereto, you shall receive a testimony of the correctness of this principle." Joseph seeing her sorrow told Lucy, "I have no f[l]attering words to offer. it is a command of God to you. I will give you untill tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you." Lucy prayed for guidance, as her mother Lydia was deceased, and her father was not in Nauvoo.

Lucy Walker expressed to Smith her desire to find out if God approved of this course. Joseph promised her that she would receive a testimony. She prayed again when her room "became filled with a holy influence," and she received an irresistible testimony of the truth of plural marriage. Lucy recalled that morning:

As I descended the stairs, Pres. Smith opened the door below, took me by the hand and said: "Thank God, you have the testimony. I too, have prayed." He led me to a chair, placed his hands upon my head, and blessed me with every blessing my heart could possibly desire. On the first day of May, 1843, I consented to become the wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith. and was Sealed to him for time and all eternity, at his own house by Elder Wm Clayton, on whom he confer[r]ed that authority.¹

Lucy's father, John Walker, was at the time on a church mission, so Joseph asked her twenty-two-years-old brother William for consent to marry Lucy. William Walker replied that it

¹ "A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Life & Labors of Lucy Walker Kimball Smith," CHL. The account with a few words different is in Rodney Wilson Walker and Noel Stevenson, comp., *The Second Edition of Ancestry and Descendants of John Walker 1794-1869* ([Salt Lake City:] John Walker Family Organization, 1985), 17-19.

was her choice and he had no objection.² Lucy was seventeen years old at the time she was sealed to Joseph Smith by William Clayton.

Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of Vilate and Heber C. Kimball, was fourteen years old when Joseph Smith approached her. Helen told how her father, Apostle Kimball, in the summer of 1843, asked her if she would believe him "that it was right for married men to take other wives." Her "first impulse was anger, for I thought he had only said it to test my virtue, as I had heard that tales of this kind had been published by such characters as the Higbees, Foster and Bennett, but which I supposed were without any foundation." Helen continued:

I replied to him, short and emphatically, No, I wouldn't! I had always been taught to believe it a heinous crime, improper and unnatural, and I indignantly resented it. This was the first time that I ever openly manifested anger towards him; but I was somewhat surprised at his countenance, as he seemed rather pleased than otherwise. Then he commenced talking seriously and reasoned and explained the principle, and why it was again to be established upon the earth, etc., but did not tell me then that anyone had yet practiced it, but left me to reflect upon it for the next twenty-four hours, during which time I was filled with various and conflicting ideas.³

Heber had "a great desire to be connected with the Prophet," and asked Helen if she would be sealed to Joseph Smith. The next day Joseph Smith came to the Kimball home, and they heard Smith teach and explain the principle of celestial marriage to them. Helen believed because of the testimony of her father and Joseph. She thought that was sufficient. Smith said to her: "If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household & all of your kindred." Joseph then asked Vilate if she would be willing to have Helen sealed to him she replied, "If Helen is willing I have nothing more to say."⁴

Helen Kimball's sealing to Joseph Smith was a spiritual one unlike other wives who had sexual relations with the prophet. She wrote: "At that time spiritual wife was the title by which every woman who entered into this order [of marriage] was called, for it was taught and practiced as a spiritual order and not a temporal one . . . The Prophet Joseph revealed the plural order to but few of the honest and pure in heart, who accepted it in the true spirit in which it was taught, as a celestial law that would eventually redeem and exalt the human family. He charged them not to divulge it, as he was harassed by day and by night by his enemies, and on their secrecy [secrecy] depended his life."⁵

² *The Life Incidents and Travels of Elder William Holmes Walker, and His Association with Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (Bountiful, Utah: John Walker Family Organization, printed by Horizon Publishers, 3rd ed., 1975), 22.

³ "Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (August 1, 1882):39-40, emphasis omitted.

⁴ Helen Mar Kimball Whitney Autobiography, March 30, 1881, CHL, as cited in Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History*, 482-86.

⁵ Whitney, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph*, 15-16.

PLURAL WIVES, 1842-1844

<i>Name</i>	<i>Plural Wives</i>	<i>Sealing Date</i>	<i>By Whom</i>
Heber C. Kimball	Sarah Peak Noon	circa Jan. 1842	Joseph Smith
Brigham Young	Lucy Decker Seeley	June 14, 1842	Joseph Smith
	Augusta Adams Cobb	Nov. 2, 1843	Joseph Smith
	Harriet E. Cook	Nov. 2, 1843	Joseph Smith
	Clarissa Decker	May 8, 1844	Willard Richards
Orson Hyde	Martha R. Browett	Feb. /Mar. 1843	Joseph Smith
	Mary Ann Price	April 1843	Joseph Smith
Joseph B. Noble	Sarah B. Alley	April 5, 1843	Joseph Smith
	Mary Ann Washburn	1843	unknown
William Clayton	Margaret Moon	April 27, 1843	Joseph Smith
William Smith	Mary A. C. Sheffield	circa April 1843	Brigham Young
Willard Richards	Susannah Liptrot	June 12, 1843	Joseph Smith
James Adams	Roxena Repshire	July 11, 1843	Joseph Smith
Parley P. Pratt	Elizabeth Brotherton	July 24, 1843	Hyrum Smith
Hyrum Smith	Mercy F. Thompson	Aug. 11, 1843	Joseph Smith
	Catherine Phillips	Aug. 1843	Joseph Smith
	Mary Aikens Smith	Aug. 13, 1843	Joseph Smith
John Taylor	Elizabeth Kaighin	Dec. 12, 1843	unknown
	Jane Ballantyne	Feb. 25, 1844	unknown
Isaac Morley	Leonora S. Leavitt	1843	unknown
Erastus Snow	Minerva White	circa March 1844	Hyrum Smith
Ezra T. Benson	Adeline B. Andrus	April 27, 1844	Hyrum Smith
Howard Egan	Catherine Clawson	1844	Hyrum Smith

As indicated in Chapter 25, Emma Smith gave permission for the Partridge sisters to be Joseph Smith's plural wives. Emma was not really enthusiastic about sharing her husband with other women. It was probably for this reason that Joseph did not bring this issue to Emma until May 1843. It was risky business having some of their closest friends being secretly associated in spiritual marriage. For Joseph to perform the pretended marriage of Sarah Ann Whitney and Joseph C. Kingsbury in April 1843 shows how desperate he was in keeping this sealing in confidence.

As the Nauvoo Relief Society president, Emma had followed church procedures relating to the regulation of marriage. She opposed any attempt to alter the commonly accepted norm of marriage in Christian fellowship. Whether she suspected that an authorized system of plural marriage was going on under Joseph Smith's direction is not known. The secretary in the Relief Society, Eliza R. Snow had been sealed to Smith in celestial marriage since June 1842.

Another individual who was a close associate of Joseph Smith was William Clayton. Clayton had been clerking for President Joseph Smith since February 1842, and he was invited into the new order of marriage. William kept a detailed journal and was taught this doctrine in March 1843 by Brigham Young. Ruth Moon and William Clayton had been married since 1836. But on April 27, 1843 Clayton had Ruth's sister Margaret Moon sealed to himself as a plural wife by Joseph Smith. In his journal William Clayton recorded his family's experiences and

struggles as he tried to practice the principle of plural marriage. The journal records the ups and down in his priesthood sealing to Margaret Moon.

Clayton's journal contains private discussions with his own family, plus those of Joseph and Emma. The journal also records activities occurring in Nauvoo from Clayton's perspective. Because of its importance, the following extracts from his lengthy journal give us some insights into plural marriage at Nauvoo. Dates have been added in brackets. A number of journals were kept by William Clayton while living in Nauvoo. Since the handwritten journals at times contain more than one entry for the same date the term journal is used.⁶

[March 7, 1843] Er [Elder] B[righam]. Young called me on one side & said he wants to give me some instructions on the priesthood the first opportunity. He said the prophet had told him to do so & to give me a favor which I have long desired. For this again I feel grateful to God & his servant, and the desire of my heart is to do right and be saved.⁷

[April 24, 1843] sister Marg[are]t Moon went with me [to Carthage, Illinois] she is a lovely woman and desires to do right in all things and will submit to council with all her heart. Got back at dark conversed some with President.⁸

[April 27, 1843]. At the Temple A.M. went to prests. who rode with me to bro. H.C. Kimballs where sister Marg[are]t. Moon was sealed up by the priesthood, by the president - and M[arried] to me. . . . evening told Mother in law [Lydia Moon] concerning the priesthood.

In another Nauvoo journal Clayton recorded a shorter version for April 27: "At the Temple A.M. at 10 bro Kimballs was M[arried] to M. M. [Margaret Moon] . . . evening told Mother in law concerning the priesthood."

[May 1, 1843] May 1st. A.M. at the Temple. at 10. m[arried] J[oseph] to L.W. [Lucy Walker]⁹

[May 14, 1843] Walked out with Mt [Margaret] who promises to be true.

[May 23, 1843] Conversed with H C. K. [Heber C. Kimball] concerning a plot that is being laid to entrap the brethren of the secret priesthood by bro H[yrum Smith]. and others.

⁶ William Clayton, Journal, typed copy.

⁷ The favor probably relates to Sarah Crooks, a church member living in England whom Clayton liked.

⁸ Margaret Moon was engaged to Aaron Farr who was on a church mission. This presented a delicate situation as discussed under other dates in Clayton's journal.

⁹ In a letter William Clayton wrote, "I had the honor to seal one woman to Joseph under his direction." Clayton to Madison M. Scott, November 11, 1871, copy of letter in CHL.

[May 26, 1843] Prest. in meeting with the Twelve & Judge Adams. Hyrum [Smith] received the doctrine of priesthood.

[October 19, 1843] at 11 W[illiam]. Walker came & said Prest. J[oseph] wanted me to go to Macedonia I went immediately to see him & he requested me to go with him. I went home & got dinner & got ready he soon came up and we started out After we had got on the road he [Joseph] began to tell me that E[mma]. was turned quite friendly & kind. she had been anointed & he also had been a[nointed]. K[ing]. He said that it was her [Emma's] advice that I should keep M[argaret] at home and it was also his council. Says he just keep her [Margaret] at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging & probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you & set you ahead as good as ever.¹⁰

[February 18, 1844] About 12 A.M. M[argaret] began to be sick and continued to grow worse until 5 o'clock when she was delivered of a son. She did remarkably well for which I thank my heavenly father. Mother [in law Lydia Moon] attended her. I was at home all day. M[argaret] seems to do very well.¹¹

Ebenezer and Angeline Robinson stated: "In the fall of 1843 Hyrum Smith, brother of Joseph Smith came to our house in Nauvoo, Ill. and taught us the doctrine of polygamy. And I, the said Ebenezer Robinson, hereby further state that he gave me special instructions how I could manage the matter so as not to have it known to the public. He also told us that while he had heretofore opposed the doctrine, he was wrong, and his brother Joseph was right; referring to his teaching it."¹² Levi Richards recorded in his journal a sermon Hyrum Smith gave on Sunday, May 14, 1843:

Attended meeting at the Temple A.M. Hyrum Smith addressed the people – subjects from the Book of Mormon 2^d Chap. Jacob – remember that – the Book [of] Mormon was a mirror, & 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 & David having many wives [wives] & concubine[s] - 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

¹⁰ William Clayton's plural wife Margaret Moon was about five months pregnant at this time. Joseph Smith told Clayton about their second anointing that occurred three weeks earlier. This was recorded by Willard Richards: "anointed and ord[ained] to the highest and holiest order of the priesthood (and companion)." Joseph Smith, Journal, September 28, 1843.

¹¹ The son born to William and Margaret was named Daniel Adebert (or Adelbert). Their son died six months later on August 27, 1844.

¹² Affidavit of Ebenezer and Angeline E. Robinson, December 29, 1873, copy in CCLA. See also *Biographical and Historical Record of Ringold and Decatur Counties, Iowa* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1887), 543-44.

snow – a <man> might have one wife – Concubines he should have none – observed, that, the idea was that this was given to Jacob for a perpetual principle.¹³

The year previous, Hyrum had written an address on behalf of the First Presidency to Parley P. Pratt, the elders of the church in England and Europe, and to the saints. It emphasized the topic of gathering to Nauvoo and that families should not be broken up. In the words of Hyrum:

And we also forbid that a woman leave her husband because he is an unbeliever. We also forbid that a man shall leave his wife because she is an unbeliever. If he be a bad man (i.e. the unbeliever) there is a law to remedy that evil. And if she be a bad woman, there is a law to remedy that evil. And if the law divorce them, then they are at liberty; otherwise they are bound as long as they two shall live, and it is not our prerogative to go beyond this; if we do it, it will be at the expense of our reputation.¹⁴

Twelve days after Hyrum Smith's public discourse, and opposition to the doctrine of men having many wives and concubines, he was converted and received the principle as doctrine. The following are excerpts from Joseph Smith's journal kept by Willard Richards who recorded meetings of the Holy Order of the Holy Priesthood. The entries include notations, made in Taylor shorthand, regarding the sacred ordinance of sealing, with the meaning noted in brackets:

[May 26, 1843] 5 P.M. J[oseph]. and Hiram. & Judge Adams & Bishop Whitney. B. Young. H. C. Kimball. W[illard]. Richards & Wm Law, in council in upper room, receiving instructions on the priesthood. the new and everlasting covenant. &c. &c. adjourned to Sunday P.M. 5

[May 28, 1843] 5 P.M. - adjourned council met in the upper Room. Atten[d]ed to ordinances and counselled . . . Joseph - & J. Adams [Taylor shorthand meaning: were married]¹⁵

[June 12, 1843] . . . [Taylor shorthand meaning: married to Rhoda Richards and Willard Richards married to Susan Liptrot]¹⁶

¹³ Levi Richards, Journal, May 14, 1843, CHL.

¹⁴ "Address from the First Presidency," *Millennial Star* 3 (November 1842):115. The document concluded: "Written by Hyrum Smith, patriarch, by the order of Joseph Smith, president over the whole church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

¹⁵ Taylor shorthand "wr mrd" meant were married. This appears to be the date when Emma and Joseph Smith and also Harriet and James Adams were sealed as husband and wife for time and all eternity.

¹⁶ This entry means that on June 12, 1843, Joseph Smith was married to Rhoda Richards, a sister, of Willard Richards, and Willard was married to Susannah Lee Liptrot.

Joseph Smith preached on May 21 the doctrine of eternal marriage in a public setting. In his sermon, he indicated that many people think that a prophet "must be a great deal better than any body else." But Joseph told them, "I don[']t want you to think I am righteous, for I am not very righteous." Continuing he said: "we have no claim in our eternal comfort, in relation to Eternal things unless our actions, & contracts & all things tend to this end."¹⁷

In July, Joseph Smith continued to teach about the covenant of eternal marriage. William Clayton wrote, "He [Smith] showed that a man must enter into an everlasting covenant with his wife in this world or he will have no claim on her in the next. He said that he could not reveal the fulness of these things untill the Temple is completed."¹⁸ Willard Richards wrote in Joseph Smith's journal:

Wednesday July 12 Received a Revelation in the office in presence of Hyrum & Wm Clayton.

The majority of women who were sealed to Joseph Smith had the ordinance performed before this revelation on marriage was dictated to William Clayton. The July 12, 1843, revelation was not the first instruction for Smith to take other wives. As mentioned by Joseph Smith to Joseph B. Noble and others, an angel gave the commandment to take plural wives. The written revelation was given over a year after John C. Bennett's exposé of Joseph Smith's spiritual wife system. Some of the text deals with taking virgins for wives. There is no mention of how the marriage covenant applied to married or widowed women who were probably not virgins.

As quoted, Willard Richards recorded that William Clayton was present with Hyrum and Joseph Smith when the revelation was received. Clayton wrote in his personal journal:

This A.M. I wrote a Revelation - consisting of 10 pages on the order of the Priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives & concubines &c. After it was wrote Prests Joseph & Hyrum presented it and read it to E[mma]. who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious. J[oseph]. told me to Deed all the unincumbered lots to E[mma]. & the children He appears much troubled about E[mma].¹⁹

Joseph C. Kingsbury mentioned that shortly afterwards he "wrote the Revelation on C[e]lestial or plural marriage from the mouth of Bishop Newel K. Whitney as he read from the original, which was in his possession."²⁰ It was the Kingsbury copy that was preserved after the

¹⁷ Joseph Smith, Journal, kept by Willard Richards, May 21, 1843. See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 204-205.

¹⁸ William Clayton, Journal, July 16, 1843.

¹⁹ William Clayton, Journal, July 12, 1843.

²⁰ Affidavit of Joseph C. Kingsbury, March 7, 1870, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Book 2:18, CHL. This copy of the revelation was read in Salt Lake City on August 29, 1852. It was added to the 1876 edition of the LDS D&C (section 132) and the 1878 edition of the Pearl of Great Price (PGP). The document was not included in the 1902 revision of the PGP, but has continued to appear as D&C 132.

original was destroyed by either Emma or Joseph. The revelation gives Joseph Smith's role as the one who holds the keys to the eternity of the marriage covenant. The revelation commenced:

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 doctrin[e] of their having many wives and concubines: Behold and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.²¹

The revelation then goes into the basic law of the priesthood. Whoever enters into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage are told that they must obey the law or be damned. If the marriage is not by one who holds priesthood keys, it would not be in force after death. But those sealed by proper authority, if faithful, can in the resurrection obtain their exaltation and be Gods.

Joseph is told that Abraham has received his exaltation (Godhood) and sits upon his throne. Smith holds the keys and power of the priesthood and can seal on earth and it would be eternally bound in the heavens. He can remit or retain sins of individuals and it would be recognized in heaven. Now Joseph received the ultimate blessing:

For Verily, I seal upon you, your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the Kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your Father.²²

Emma was told to forgive her husband his trespasses and she would be forgiven hers. Smith imparted these words of warning concerning Satan:

Let not my Servant Joseph put his property out of his hands, lest an enemy come and distroy him, for Satan seeketh to distroy; For I am the Lord thy God, and he is my Servent; and behold! and lo, I am with him as I was with Abraham, thy Father, even unto his exaltation and glory.²³

Joseph indicated that when anyone having the keys of the priesthood does anything in and by God's name, law, or word he will not commit sin but will be justified. The revelation mentions being espoused to virgins. Evidently referring to Emma, since Smith holds the priesthood keys, the revelation said:

if any man have a wife who holds the Keys of this power, & he teaches unto her the Law of my priesthood as pertaining to these things, then Shall She believe & administer unto him; or She Shall be distroy [destroyed], Saith the Lord your God.²⁴

²¹ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 323; LDS D&C 132:1-2.

²² Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 327; LDS D&C 132:49.

²³ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 327-28; LDS D&C 132:57.

²⁴ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 328; LDS D&C 132:64.

As indicated this revelation gives justification for plural wives by referring to the Old Testament, where it states that some men had wives and concubines in ancient times. It provides little information on how this priesthood law was to be practiced in current society. It appears that the revelation was given for the benefit of Emma Smith and maybe even Hyrum Smith. The next month Hyrum read the revelation to the Nauvoo High Council. It was probably on August 12 when this occurred, though the minutes do not record that a revelation was read or discussed at the meeting. The brief minutes of the Nauvoo High Council state:

August 12th 1843 Council met according to adjt [adjournment] at H. Smith's office No business before the Council. Teaching by Prest Hiram Smith & William Marks. Adjtd till next Saturday at 2 o'clock P.M. Hosea Stout, Clerk.²⁵

Hosea Stout explained, in an 1883 letter to Joseph F. Smith that he was at the meeting and, "At that very time I had another appoint[ment] to meet, and was excused by the council, supposing it [the revelation] would be filed there and come into my hands as clerk, I could then peruse it at my leasure. When I returned the Council had adjourned, and your father [Hyrum Smith] had gone, taking the revelation with him. But I saw several of the counsellors, who informed me as to the purport of the revelation which corresponded to what is published and now in the book of Doctrine and Covenants."²⁶

Of those in attendance it is understood that two members of the stake presidency, William Marks and Austin A. Cowles, did not accept the revelation. Evidently referring to this meeting, Franklin D. Richards wrote:

Hiram [Hyrum Smith] said before the High council that no prophet ever did transgress but was directed by the impulse of the spirit involuntarily Also The Law that a man shall take his brothers wife and raise up seed unto him as it was in israel must be again established.²⁷

Because plural or celestial marriage was secretly practiced and against Illinois state law, the practice was denied. This would create mixed signals for regular church members who did not know the teachings of priesthood leaders. Willard Richards recorded that on October 15 Joseph Smith mentioned in a discourse, "stop this spinning [of] street yarn and talking about spiritual wives."²⁸ Hyrum Smith, who had been performing sealings of plural marriages since his conversion to the principle, spoke to the elders at conference on April 8, 1844, about reports from abroad:

almost every man runs to here [Nauvoo] to enquire if things are true how many sp [spiritual] wives a man may have – I know nothing abt. [about] it . . . I am authd [authorized] to tell you from henceforth that any man who comes in c [and] tell

²⁵ Minutes of the Nauvoo High Council, August 12, 1843, typed copy, original in CHL.

²⁶ Hosea Stout to Joseph F. Smith, July 24, 1883, CHL. The July 12, 1843 revelation appeared in the 1876 edition of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants.

²⁷ Franklin D. Richards Notebook with "Words of the Prophets / Scriptural Items" on the title page, CHL.

²⁸ Joseph Smith, Journal, October 15, 1843. See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 257.

any such dn [damn] fool doctrine to come in – to take away his license. none but a fool teaches such stuff.

Hyrum continued his discourse:

I wish the El [Elders] of Israel to understand it is lawful for a man to marry a wife But it is unlawful to have more. c [and] God has not comd [commanded] any one to have more – c [and] if any of you dare to presume to do any such thing it will spoil your fun for you will never preach the gospel.

Then Hyrum told about his own experience as his first wife Jerusha died on October 13, 1837 and he then married Mary Fielding. Hyrum discussed the doctrine of sealing for eternity:

I married me a wife c [and] was the only one who had any write [right] to her – till we had 5 chd. [children] the covt. [covenant] was made for our lives – she fell in the grave bef[ore] God shewed us his will God has shewn me the covt. [covenant] is dead c [and] had no more force neither could I have her in the resn. [resurrection] but we shod [should] be as the angels – it troubled me. Bro Jsh [Joseph said] you can be sealed to her upon the same prin[ciple] as you can be bap[tized] for the dead what can I do for mine 2nd wife[?] – you can make a cov. [covenant] with her for etern[ity] c [and] sealed to her – c [and] she sd [said] I will act as proxy for the one that is dead and I will be seal[e]d to you for eternity – if there is any man that has no sense c [and] will make any story of such a fact – his name shall be pubd. [published] – it is a doctrine not to be taught to the world.²⁹

Joseph's wife Emma did not have a full knowledge of the involvement of her husband in all matters pertaining to the principle of celestial marriage. She was changeable on this priesthood ordinance. This is understandable since there had been public denials to both those inside and outside the church. It is not known if Emma knew about Joseph's practice of having married and widowed women sealed to him. Furthermore, whether she knew which women were married to Joseph prior to May 1843 is not known. Emma and Joseph received their second anointing in September 1843, so she would have received her endowment by that date.

In the period 1846-47, Emma mentioned to a few saints about giving her consent for Joseph to have plural wives, including two sets of sisters. Women who were biological sisters were known as sister wives. Lucy Walker Kimball wrote about Emma giving consent at the time of the sealing of the Partridge and Lawrence sisters to her husband:

I can also state that Emma Smith was present and did consent to Eliza and Emily Partridge, also Maria and Sarah Lawrence being sealed to her husband. This I had from the Prophet's own mouth; also the testimony of her own niece, Hyrum

²⁹ Minutes of Conference held at Nauvoo on April 8, 1844, Thomas Bullock, clerk, CHL. Willard Richards wrote, "a large collection of Elders assembled at the stand address[ed] by patriarch Hyrum Smith on Spiritual wife system – The first one we heard refuting such stories." Joseph Smith, Journal, April 8, 1844.

Smith's eldest daughter, (my brother Lorin's wife), as well as that of the young ladies named themselves, with whom I was on most intimate terms, and was glad that they too, had accepted that order of marriage.³⁰

Emma left Nauvoo and resided in Fulton City for a short time.³¹ Lovina Smith Walker, who was the daughter of Hyrum Smith, said she talked with Emma at that location. Lovina was nineteen years old at the time she was at Fulton City and affirmed, "While I was living with Aunt Emma Smith, in Fulton City, Fulton Co. Illinois, in the year 1846, that She told me that She, Emma Smith was present and witnessed the marrying or Sealing of Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge[,] Maria Lawrence, and Sarah Lawrence to her husband, Joseph Smith, and that She gave her consent [consent] thereto."³²

Other associates also said that Emma knew plural marriage (polygamy) was practiced by Joseph. James Whitehead told about activities that occurred in Nauvoo. Alexander Hale Smith wrote in his journal about an 1864 visit: "Went to see Old Bro Whitehead stayed all night with him he gave me some useful information told me some things that I did not know and can not understand."³³ Ten years later in 1874, William W. Blair recorded in his journal that he also talked to James Whitehead who confirmed that Smith practiced polygamy and Emma put the hand of new wives in Joseph's hand.³⁴

In 1848 Joseph Smith III indicated to his cousin John Smith that he did not believe his father or Uncle Hyrum upheld or practiced spiritual wifery and other institutions. In his letter Joseph III wrote, "I do not now nor shall I ever countenance such iniquity so help me heaven."³⁵ Even though he heard from acquaintances of Joseph Smith that plural marriage was practiced at Nauvoo, he maintained this stance throughout his life. When Joseph Smith III did interview his mother in February 1879 (over thirty years after she talked to Lovina Smith) the questions on polygamy were carefully asked to Emma, and she gave negative responses.³⁶

³⁰ A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Life and Labor of Lucy Walker Kimball Smith, CHL. See Walker and Stevenson, *The Second Edition of Ancestry and Descendants of John Walker 1794-1869*, 19.

³¹ Buddy Youngreen wrote, "Emma left with her children for Fulton City, Whiteside County, Illinois, on 12 September 1846 . . . she and her family returned posthaste to Nauvoo by land, arriving 19 February 1847." *Reflections of Emma* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1982), 119n63.

³² Certificate of Lovina [Smith] Walker, June 16, 1869, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Book 4:30, CHL.

³³ Alexander Hale Smith, Journal, May 14, 1864, CCLA.

³⁴ William W. Blair, Journal, June 17, 1874, CCLA.

³⁵ Joseph Smith III to John Smith, March 21, 1848, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

³⁶ See "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *The Saints Herald* 26 (October 1, 1879):290. For the struggles of David Hyrum Smith, another son of Joseph Smith, born in November 1844, see Valeen Tippetts Avery, *From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 176-77.