

CHAPTER XIV.¹

THEORETICAL POLYGAMY—ITS HISTORY.

*Poetry of religious concubinage—Fanaticism and Sensualism—
Two extremes—Origin of Polygamy—The great revelation—
Its contradictions and absurdities—Mormon argument—Real origin—
Beginning of Polygamy—A prostitute for religion's sake—
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wife—Furore in consequence—The Expositor—Its destruction—
Death of the Smiths—Polygamy practiced secretly and denied openly—
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Temporary decline in Polygamy—Hostility of native Mormon girls—
Outside influence—Difference of opinion—It dies hard—
Spiritual wives—Mystery and abomination.*

THE occasional references hitherto in regard to "Pre-existence of the soul," "Sexual resurrection," "Progress in eternity" and "Generation of the gods," have prepared the reader somewhat for special consideration of polygamy; but it is necessary also to look into its earthly history, and the reasons urged for its origin and continuance. And in these reasons we are surprised to find how captivating a veil of religious fancy may be thrown over an institution naturally and inherently vile. Gross forms of religious error seem almost invariably to lead to sensuality, to some singular perversion of the marriage relation or the sexual instinct; probably because the same constitution of mind and temperament which gives rise to the one, powerfully predisposes toward the other. The fanatic is of logical necessity either an ascetic or a sensualist; healthy moderation is foreign alike to his speculative faith and social practice. He either gives full rein to his baser propensities under the specious name of "Christian liberty," or with a little more conscientiousness, swings to the opposite extreme and forbids those innocent gratifications prompted by nature and

¹ Original chapter page numbers: 332-353.

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permitted by God. Of the former class are the Mormons, Noyseites of Oneida, the Antinomians, and the followers of St. John of Leyden; of the latter the Shakers, Harmonists, monks and nuns, and a score of orders of celibate priests.

The Mormons are particular to declare that they never would have practical polygamy, except in accordance with an express revelation from God; and though they occasionally defend it on various physiological and scriptural grounds, they always fall back upon the express command. This revelation is said to have been given at Nauvoo, Illinois, July 12, 1843. It was first published in the *Deseret News Extra*, of September 14, 1852, and next in the April number, 1853, of the *Millennial Star*, Liverpool, England; and is contained at full length in Burton's "City of the Saints," and many other publications. It is too long and discursive to quote entire, and I sectionize it for convenient reference.

1. The revelation opens with this remarkable statement, the Lord represented as speaking:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired at my hand to know 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 and will answer thee as touching this matter,"² etc.

It will not escape notice, that as here stated Joseph had asked the Lord about the matter. We cannot but wonder whether it would have been revealed at all, without this preliminary questioning. Many good Mormons think it would not, and Mormon ladies frequently express a pious regret that the Prophet ever asked about it! The section concludes by denouncing damnation upon all who reject the new gospel.

2. This section states that, "All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations or expectations that are not made and entered into, and sealed by

² *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1-2.

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the Holy Spirit of promise of him who is anointed,”³ are void in eternity, and only good for this world.

It sets forth also with great verbosity of language, that “God’s house, is a house of order.”⁴

3. The same principle is applied to the marriage covenant, stating that all who are not married “and sealed according to the new and everlasting covenant,”⁵ are married for this world only, and shall not be entitled to their respective partners in eternity, but shall continue “angels only, and not gods, kept as ministers to those who are worthy of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”⁶

4. Description of the future glory of those who keep the new covenant: “Then shall they be gods because they have no end; there they shall 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*.”⁷

5. To such are forgiven all manner of crimes, except murder, “wherein they shed innocent blood,”⁸ and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Apostasy, be it noted, is the worst form of the latter sin.

6. This section explains the cases of Abraham and other ancient polygamists at great length, concluding by citing David as an example of how men lose their “exaltation” by abusing their privileges: “In none of these things did he sin against me, save in the case of Uriah and his wife, and, therefore, he hath fallen from his exaltation and received his position; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord.”⁹

³ Ibid., 7.

⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹ Ibid., 39.

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7. Great power is conferred upon Joseph Smith to regulate all such celestial marriages, punish for adultery, and take away the wives of the guilty and give them to good men.¹⁰

8. This section gives very full and explicit instructions to Emma Smith, wife of Joseph, how to conduct herself under the new dispensation; that she “receive all those that *have been given* unto my servant Joseph, who are virtuous and pure before me,”¹¹ and threatening her with destruction if she do not.¹²

9. The revelation changes abruptly and gives Joseph Smith full directions how to manage his property; particular[ly] “let not my servant Joseph *put his property out of his hands*, lest an enemy come and destroy him,”¹³ and threatening severely all who injure him.¹⁴

The reader familiar with the old Revised Statutes of Illinois, would be surprised to find the Lord talking so much like a Justice of the Peace.

10. The revelation comes, at last, to the gist of the matter and grants plurality of wives, in these words:

“And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood: If any man espouse a virgin and desires 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 that belongeth unto him and to none else; and if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery for they belong to him and are given unto him; therefore is he justified. They are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world; and for their exaltation in the eternal

¹⁰ Ibid., 44.

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

¹² Ibid., 54.

¹³ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴ Ibid., 60.

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worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified.”¹⁵

ii. Heavy punishment is threatened to all women who refuse, without good cause, to give their husbands second wives;¹⁶ concluding as follows: “And now, as pertaining unto this law, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will reveal more unto you hereafter; therefore, let this suffice for the present. Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen.”¹⁷

Such is the revelation. Space fails me to note all its contradictions and absurdities. One, however, is worthy of special remark. In the eighth section Emma Smith is commanded to receive lovingly “all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph.” The past tense is used. Thus the first revelation authorizing polygamy implies that Joseph had already practiced it.¹⁸ Stranger still, polygamy is expressly forbidden by the “Book of Mormon.”

In the third book and second chapter of that work, the angel messenger is represented as saying to the Nephites: “But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For this people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things that were written concerning David and Solomon, his son. They, truly, had many wives and concubines which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord,¹⁹ wherefore, hearken unto the word of the Lord, for there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife, and concubines he

¹⁵ Ibid., 61-63.

¹⁶ Ibid., 64.

¹⁷ Ibid., 66.

¹⁸ At the time of Joseph’s revelation on 12 July 1843, he had entered into secret unions with at least *twenty-nine* women. In the same month, Desdemona Wadsworth Fullmer was added to his circle of wives. Joseph Smith Jr. married no fewer than *thirty-three* women after Emma, starting in 1833 with sixteen-year-old Fanny Alger (Joseph was then *twenty-seven*) and concluding on 2 November 1843, with Fanny Young—one of Brigham Young’s older sisters. While scholars largely concur with the conclusion of *thirty-four* wives, some acknowledge that the actual number could be double, if not more.

¹⁹ *Book of Mormon*, Jacob 2:23-24.

shall have none, for I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women."²⁰

It has exhausted all the ingenuity of Mormon writers to reconcile this passage with the new revelation, but they succeed in doing so sufficiently to satisfy their consciences. The Mormon history relates that when the full force of the new covenant was perceived the Prophet was filled with astonishment and dread. All the traditions of his early education were overthrown, and yet he felt that it was the work of the Lord. In vain he sought to be released from the burden of communicating the new doctrine to the world, and at length obtained permission to keep it secret, as yet, from all but the Twelve Apostles, and a few other leading men. As the hour approached when he was to meet them in council, horror and fear of what might be the result overcame him, and he hastily mounted his horse and fled from the city. But a mighty angel met him on the road, stood in the way with a drawn sword, and with awful voice and offended mien bade him return.

These pretended forebodings were fully justified by the event, for, in spite of the secrecy [*sic*] maintained, the matter was soon bruited abroad, and there was fearful commotion in "Zion." Old Mormons have told me that when they first heard it they were horror-stricken at the thought, and for years after could not believe the report.

When the matter was first broached in secret council, William Law, First Counselor to Joseph Smith, stood up and denounced it as from the devil, and added: "If any man preaches that doctrine in my family, I will take his life." This Law had a young and beautiful wife, for whom Joseph was already intriguing, and his final success with her and attempt to get her divorced from her husband, caused the latter to apostatize, and had no small share in bringing on the difficulties which resulted in Joseph's death.

As might be expected, the men were the first converts Joseph and a few others began soon to act upon their new privileges. Joseph seems to have been pretty successful, and soon had half-a-dozen spiritual wives, though all was still kept secret. While soliciting ladies to become "sealed" to him, he made several unsus-

²⁰ Ibid., 2:27-28.

cessful attempts, which caused great scandal. In particular, his doings were published by Miss Martha H. Brotherton, who immediately withdrew from the Church; also by Miss Eliza Rigdon, daughter of Sidney Rigdon, Mrs. Foster, and Mrs. Sarah Pratt, first wife of Orson Pratt.

Great was the fury among the Saints at these revelations, and every epithet a vile fancy could suggest was heaped upon these ladies, for what were styled "their perjured lies to injure the Prophet." One of them was forced to sign a written retraction; another, discarded and denounced by her Mormon parents, died of a broken heart. Miss Brotherton escaped and returned to Boston, while Foster, Higbee, and a few others, whose families had been insulted, apostatized. For awhile the dissolution of the Church seemed imminent, but the mingled boldness and hypocrisy [*sic*] of the Prophet restored something like order, and polygamy was indignantly denounced and repudiated.

At this place in our narrative, having given the Mormon account, it may be well to give the real origin of polygamy. In the Mormon archives are a set of phrenological charts, of the various Mormon leaders at Nauvoo, taken by a prominent professor. In the chart of Joseph Smith's head, in a scale running from one to twelve, "amativeness," or sexual passion, is recorded at *eleven*; while that of Bennett, his "right hand man," is set down at "*ten—very full!*" In the propensity which these are held to indicate, was the real origin of polygamy. A prominent Mormon says that Joseph Smith informed him that, as early as 1832, he had preliminary revelations upon the subject; and it is a notorious fact, that almost from the first, the Prophet had used his powers of fascination to triumph over the virtue of his female devotees, and had anticipated polygamy in accordance with revelation, by unauthorized promiscuous intercourse. His intrigues with various women had involved the rising sect in constant trouble at Kirtland and in Missouri; and by the sworn testimony of the best men who seceded from the Mormons in Missouri, the Prophet had already established a sort of polygamy.

Shortly after the settlement of Nauvoo also, Sidney Rigdon had advanced his "spiritual wife" doctrine, which regular Mormons now denounce as the great mystery of abominations, "sent

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by the devil to bring dishonor upon the true order of celestial marriage." Rigdon's theory of "Spiritual wifery," as reported by old Mormons, was as follows:

In the pre-existent state souls are mated, male and female, as it is divinely intended they shall fill the marriage relation in this life; or, in more poetic phrase, "marriages are made in heaven." But in the general jumble of contradictions and cross-purposes attending man in this state, many mistakes have been made in this matter; A. has got the woman first intended for B., the latter has got C's true mate, and thus on, utterly defeating the counsel of the *gods* in the pre-marriage of the spirits. But the time had come for all this to be set right, and though they might not put aside their present wives, which would throw society somewhat out of gear, yet Smith might in addition, exercise the privileges of husband toward Brown's wife and *vice versa*. This seems to have been merely the Mormon version of modern "free-loveism," and from recent evidence it is quite probable it also was practiced to some extent in Nauvoo, thus making polygamy equally free to men and women; but it is quite different, in theory at least, from the present "spiritual wifeism" of the Mormons, as will presently appear.

But Rigdon's doctrines were both varying and dangerous, and he lacked the faculty of concealment; so he was soon condemned, and his doctrines with him.

As the first open hints of the new doctrine, in the autumn of 1843, excited so much contention, and as the indignation of the people of Illinois was justly feared, orders were given to all the traveling elders to persistently deny the doctrine. On the first of February, 1844, the *Times and Seasons*, church paper at Nauvoo, contained the following:

"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 Hyrum Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the County of Lapeer, and 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

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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 the Church.'"²¹

The Gentiles appear not to have been well enough posted on the subject to pay much heed to the "Notice," but it excited no little commotion among the Mormons, who had heard or received reports from others of the doctrine; and on the day appointed a large number of the disaffected, and a few resident Gentiles, were present. Hyrum Smith arose and stated that "great reports had been bruited about of schism in Zion, and, no doubt, many were present, hoping to witness dissension; but all such hopes were vain, the Lord had healed all backslidings, there would be no charges made, and the day would be spent in prayer and other exercises;" and spent it was accordingly. Six weeks afterwards, Hyrum found it necessary to write as follows:

"NAUVOO, March 15, 1844.

*"To the Brethren of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,
living on China Creek, in Hancock County, Greeting:*

"Whereas, Brother Richard Hewett has called on me to-day, to know my views concerning some doctrines that are preached in your place, and states to me that some of your Elders say, that a man, *having a certain priesthood*, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches *false doctrine*, for there is no such doctrine taught here, neither is there any such thing practiced here; and any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine, is culpable, and will stand a chance to be brought before the High Council, and lose his license and membership also; therefore he had better beware what he is about."²²

²¹ *Times and Seasons*, Vol. V, No. 3 (Nauvoo, IL: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1 February 1844), 423.

²² *Times and Seasons*, Vol. V, No. 6 (Nauvoo, IL: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 15 March 1844), 474.

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This letter will also be found in the 5th volume of the *Times and Seasons*, page 474. But affairs had gone too far; a powerful schism broke out in the bosom of the Church, and William Law, Dr. Foster, Chauncey L. Higbee, Francis M. Higbee, and a number of other apostates commenced preaching openly against the Prophet, and established at Nauvoo a paper called the *Expositor*, devoted to making war upon the new system. But they only issued one number, which contained sixteen affidavits, mostly from ladies, setting forth the licentious actions of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Joseph was at that time not only Prophet, Priest, and Revelator, but also Mayor of the City and Major-General of the Nauvoo Legion. Such a daring publication in the stronghold of his power was not to be tolerated. So he hastily convened the City Council, who, at his suggestion, declared the *Expositor* a "public nuisance," and ordered that it be "at once abated." The City Marshal and his *posse* forthwith attacked the office and abated it in the literal meaning of that word, and in the Mormon fashion, by breaking the press and scattering the type. The publishers fled for their lives, and, proceeding to Carthage, the county-seat of Hancock County, procured warrants against several Mormons, under the State law of Illinois, determined to test the legality of such extensive jurisdiction by the Council. Both the Smiths were finally arrested and murdered in jail, as more fully related elsewhere.

After their death the policy of concealment was continued. In July, 1845, Parley P. Pratt, in the *Millennial Star*, Mormon publication at Liverpool, England, denounced "spiritual wifery" as a "doctrine of devils and seducing spirits; but another name for whoredom, wicked and unlawful connection, and every kind of corruption, confusion and abomination;"²³ and in the following year the General Conference of Europe denounced both the doctrine and practice in the strongest terms. In May, 1848, the *Millennial Star* called for the vengeance of heaven on all the liars who charged "such odious practices as spiritual wifeism and polygism" upon the Church; ending with the following:

²³ By 15 October 1844, Parley P. Pratt was married to *five* women, all living at the time.

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“In all ages of the Church truth has been turned into a lie, and the grace of God converted into lasciviousness, by men who have sought to make ‘a gain of godliness,’ and feed their lusts on the credulity of the righteous and unsuspecting. * * * Next to the long-hackneyed and bug-a-boo whisperings of polygism is another abomination that sometimes shows its serpentine crests, which we shall call sexual resurrectionism. * * * * The doctrines of corrupt spirits are always in close affinity with each other, whether they consist in spiritual wifeism, sexual resurrection, gross lasciviousness, or the unavoidable separation of husbands and wives, or the communism of property.”²⁴

In July, 1850, Elder John Taylor held a discussion at Boulogne, France, with three English clergymen. They quoted from the anti-Mormon works then just published by J.C. Bennett²⁵ and J.B. Bowes, which charged polygamy as a practice of the Church;²⁶ to which Taylor made the following reply: “We are accused here of polygamy, and actions the most indelicate, obscene and disgusting, such that none but a corrupt heart could have contrived. These things are too outrageous to admit of belief. Therefore, leaving the sisters of the ‘white veil’ and the ‘black veil,’ and all the other veils with those gentlemen to dispose of, together with their authors, as they think best, I shall content myself by reading our views of chastity and marriage from a work published by us, containing some of the articles of our faith.”²⁷ He then read from the “*Doctrines and Covenants*,” which was adopted in full conference the year after Smith’s death, the following:

“4. * * * Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been re-proached with the *crime* of fornication and polygamy; we declare

²⁴ *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, Vol. X, No. 9 (Liverpool, England: Orson Spencer, 1 May 1848), 137-138.

²⁵ John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints* (Boston, MA: Leland & Whiting, 1842).

²⁶ During this July 1850 discussion, John Taylor was in a polygamous marriage with his second wife, Mary Ann Oakley, whom he wed in 1847 as his first union of this nature. Subsequently, Taylor entered into marriages with at least *eight* women and went into hiding due to his involvement in polygamy. He presided over the church in exile for a duration of two and a half years.

²⁷ John Taylor, *Three Nights’ Public Discussion* (Liverpool, England: John Taylor, 1850), 8.

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that we believe that one man should have *one* wife; and one woman *but* one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”²⁸

The italics are my own. As a specimen of Mormon reasoning, it may here be added, they now insist that in the above clause “one wife” really meant of course “one or more;” that the adverbative “but” was added in case of the woman to cut off any such free rendering in her case, and that the clause was so worded “to specially deceive the Gentiles and yet tell the exact truth.” They further add that, “under certain circumstances the Lord allows His priesthood to lie in order to save His people;²⁹ it would not do to give strong meat to little children; they must first be fed with milk, and when they get stronger they can have meat: so with the truth, they must be taught it little at a time.”³⁰

The foreign Mormons were thus kept in perfect ignorance of the matter, and were highly indignant when the charge was made; still, as it was practiced, reports of it were constantly made and generally believed throughout the United States.

Brigham Young soon became head of the Church, and took for his second wife Lucy [Ann] Decker Seely,³¹ who had previously been divorced from Doctor Seely. Not long after, at their winter quarters near Council Bluffs, Iowa,³² he married Harriet [Elizabeth] Cook,³³ whose son, Oscar Young, is the first child in polygamy. He is now a young man of twenty-two or three, bright, active and intelligent, and a great favorite with his Gentile friends,

²⁸ *Doctrine and Covenants* - 1835 edition, Section CI:4 “MARRIAGE” (Kirtland, OH: F.G. Williams & co., 1835), 251.

²⁹ The act of *Lying for the Lord*, while not explicitly endorsed, has been practiced since the early days of Mormonism. This concept may have originated from the misunderstanding that Abraham was instructed to deceive by claiming Sarah was his sister. There is no scriptural support for the idea that God has ever commanded someone to lie. While Abraham’s deception served a purpose, it was his own action, not a directive from heaven.

³⁰ The *Milk/Meat* scenario comes from St. Paul. See 1 Corinthians 3:2.

³¹ Married 14 June 1842. She was 20, he was 41.

³² Initially, Harriet stayed behind in Nauvoo, IL. She joined Brigham at *Winter Quarters* in 1847.

³³ Brigham Young married Harriet Elizabeth Cook when she was 19, and he was 42. He also married Augusta Adams on the same date—2 November 1843.

though a little to be dreaded sometimes on account of his savage temper when angry.

This marriage was followed by those of Clara [Clarissa Caroline] Decker,³⁴ Clara [Clarissa Ross] Chase,³⁵ Lucy Bigelow,³⁶ Harriet [Martha] Bowker³⁷ and Harriet Barney.³⁸ Mary Ann Angell Young, the original wife of Brigham, still lives in a house of her own, just back of the Lion house. She had five children—Brigham, Joseph, John, Alice and Luna; all are married and living in Salt Lake City. Brigham was at first a widower and the two daughters of his first wife, now middle-aged ladies, are both married and living in Utah. A few years after leaving Nauvoo, Brigham married Emmeline Free,³⁹ who was for many years his favorite wife, and often styled among Gentiles, “the Light of the Harem.” She was finally discarded, some six years ago, for [Harriet] Amelia Folsom, his youngest wife and present favorite.⁴⁰ It is, of course, impossible to tell with exactness the number of his wives, but those best informed place them at twenty-three actual wives, and fifty-one spiritual.⁴¹ Miss Eliza Roxy Snow, the Mormon poetess, is one of his spiritual wives, or “proxy” women, and is married to him by proxy for Joseph Smith, of whom she claims to have been the first spiritual wife.

³⁴ Married 8 May 1844. She was 15, he was 42.

³⁵ Married 10 September 1844. She was 30, he was 43.

³⁶ Married 20 March 1847. She was 16, he was 45.

³⁷ Married 21 January 1846. She was 23, he was 44.

³⁸ Married 14 March 1856. She was 25, he was 54.

³⁹ Married 30 April 1845. She was 18, he was 43.

⁴⁰ Married on 24 January 1863, at the age of 24, she entered into matrimony with Brigham Young, who was 61 years old. Prior to Beadle’s visit in 1868, Emmeline held the title of Brigham’s *youngest wife*, featuring a significant 37-year age difference between them. However, Emmeline’s status as the *youngest wife* did not persist. On 8 January 1868, Brigham Young married Mary Van Cott, introducing a more than four-decade age gap, as Brigham was 66, while Mary was 23. Notably, Mary was six years younger than Emmeline. Brigham’s ultimate *youngest bride* was Elizabeth Fairchild, whom he married when she was 13; he was 43.

⁴¹ Brigham Young is known to have eventually entered into matrimony with 56 different women. Additionally, there are approximately twelve more marriages that remain subjects of dispute.

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Meanwhile the Saints had become firmly fixed in Utah, where it seems that "Gentiles, their laws and mobs would annoy no more;" and the necessity for concealment no longer existed. So the doctrine was more and more openly discussed, and finally, on the 29th of August, 1852, it was publicly announced by Brigham Young in a meeting at Salt Lake City, where the revelation was for the first time publicly read and pronounced valid. The sermons in its favor, by Orson Pratt and Brigham Young, were first published, together with the revelation, in the *Deseret News, Extra*, of September 14th, 1852. From Young's address I extract the following:

"You heard Brother Pratt state, this morning, that a Revelation would be read this afternoon, which was given previous to Joseph's death. It contains a doctrine a small portion of the world is opposed to; but I can deliver a prophecy upon it. Though that doctrine has not been preached by the Elders, this people have believed in it for years.

"The original copy of this Revelation was burnt up. William Clayton was the man who wrote it from the mouth of the Prophet. In the meantime it was in Bishop Whitney's possession. He wished the privilege to copy it, which brother Joseph granted. Sister Emma (wife of Joseph Smith) burnt the original. The reason I mention this is, because that the people who did know of the Revelation, supposed it was not now in existence.

"The Revelation will be read to you. The principle spoken upon by Brother Pratt this morning, we believe in. Many others are of the same mind. They are not ignorant of what we are doing in our social capacity. They have cried out proclaim it; but it would not do a few years ago; everything must come in its time, as there is a time for all things, I am now ready to proclaim it.

"This Revelation has been in my possession for many years; and who has known it? None but those who should know it. I keep a patent lock on my desk, and there does not anything leak out that should not."⁴²

⁴² Brigham Young - 29 August 1852, *Journal of Discourses - Volume 6* (Liverpool, England: Asa Calkin, 1859), 281-282.

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The people of Utah were prepared for the announcement, but polygamy was too "strong doctrine" for Europe, and when first published there, in April, 1853, it seemed that even then it would destroy the foreign Church. In England, especially, the demoralization was fearful; hundreds after hundreds apostatized, whole churches and conferences dissolved; talented knaves in many instances, finding in this the excuse for going off without surrendering the money-bags which they held. The missions entirely disappeared in many parts of Europe, and even in America, thousands of new converts who had not gone to "Zion," turned away and joined the Josephites, Gladdenites, Strangites, and other sects of recusant Mormons.

The *Millennial Star* remained silent on the subject for weeks after publishing the revelation, coming out at length with a feeble defence of the system, from the pen of J. Jaques, a leading Mormon polemic. The fact was the people did not understand the new idea, they did not see the spiritual necessities for it; they had so far believed that Mormonism was simply an advance in Christianity, and could not feel that "in this the fullness of time, the ancient covenant was restored with all its privileges." But in Utah a great rush was made for new wives; old men traded for young girls, and the new order was hailed as the great crowning joy and privilege of believers. Polygamy continued extending until that period known as the "Reformation" in 1855-56, when the whole Church was re-baptized, and a new point of departure taken. Then the new practice seemed for awhile to reach a furious climax of unnatural and degrading obscenity. The duty and importance of polygamy were presented every Sunday; hundreds of girls of only twelve or thirteen years were forced or persuaded into its practice; and in numerous instances even younger girls were "sealed" to old reprobates, with an agreement on the part of the latter to wait until the girls were more mature and suited to act the part of wives. Hundreds of instances occurred which would be utterly incredible at present were they not fully proved by many authentic witnesses. Old men met openly in the streets and traded daughters, and whole families of girls were married to the same man. This was the period when polygamy reached its worst manifestation, and bad as it is now, gross as many of its

features still are, it was ten-fold worse then. Women of my acquaintance at Salt Lake City, who were children at the time, have told me of occurrences during that period which would indicate an almost incredible reign of lust and fanaticism. Divorce also became so common that these marriages scarcely amounted to more than promiscuous intercourse. I met one woman who had been divorced and re-married six times, and an old Mormon once pointed out to me a woman who had once been his wife, and had been divorced and re-married nine times. In numerous instances a young girl would be married to some prominent elder, with whom she would reside a few months, after which she would be divorced and married to another and again to another, "going the rounds," as the phrase was, of half a dozen priests.

A general demoralization seemed to seize upon the community; vulgarity of language, both in public address and private speech, became so common that thousands of Mormons were themselves disgusted, and a reaction set in against such excesses. It would seem that Brigham also became alarmed at the tendency, and, as he had been greatly annoyed by applications for divorce, commenced exacting a heavy fee for the service. The period of comparative starvation which followed, during the winters of 1856-7, may have had something to do with checking the prevailing tendency, but certain it is, there has been no such general license since.

The entrance of Johnston's army, too, indirectly produced a great effect; stage and mail lines were fully established; Utah was brought into much closer relations with the rest of the world, a considerable Gentile influence began to manifest itself, sources of information were multiplied and polygamy began to be unpopular with the young women of Utah. In this regard, then, Mormon history may be divided into three periods:

I. The monogamic period: from its origin till 1843, during which time all their publications and sermons were opposed to polygamy in their tone.

II. The transition period: from 1843 till 1852, when polygamy was secretly taught and extended, but openly denied and condemned.

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III. The polygamic period: from 1852 to the present, in all which time polygamy has been avowed and defended as an essential part of Mormon religion. The third period might properly again be divided into an era of rise and one of decline; for it is evident that polygamy culminated in all its worst features as early as 1856, since which time it has been slowly on the decline, and even without Government interference would hardly have endured much more than another generation. In these last statements I am aware that I differ from some whose evidence carries the weight of authority, particularly Judges Drake and Titus, and other United States officials who have lately testified before the Congressional Committee on Territories. Nevertheless, such is my conclusion from a mass of evidence given by persons both in and out of the Mormon Church, and from a careful examination of the records. That polygamy has declined in the last five years is quite certain, from causes both within and without the Church; it is now almost impossible to induce a young girl brought up in Salt Lake City, or the northern settlements, to enter that condition, and the instances of plural marriage are confined almost entirely to young women just brought from Europe.

Of their theology as it relates to polygamy, but little need be added. It is so thoroughly grafted into and interwoven with their whole system, that at no point can one be touched without attacking the other. Polygamy is not, as recusant Mormons assert, a mere addition by Brigham Young to the original faith; it is a necessary and logical outgrowth of the system. If Mormonism be true, then polygamy is right; for "pre-existence of the soul," "progression of the gods," and all other peculiarities of the system, depend by a thousand combinations and inter-relations upon the plurality system. A man's or woman's glory in eternity, is to depend upon the size of the family; for a woman to remain childless is a sin and calamity, and she cannot secure "exaltation," as the wife of a Gentile or an apostate; her husband's rank in eternity must greatly depend upon the number of his wives, and she will share in that glory whatever it is. All this points unerringly to polygamy. Hence, also, the last feature of this complex and unnatural relationship, known as "spiritual wives," which is to be understood as follows: Any woman, having an earthly husband of

whose final exaltation she is in doubt, may be "sealed for eternity" to some prominent Mormon, who will raise her and make her part of his final kingdom. In theory this gives the spiritual husband no marital rights, but, as stated by Elder John Hyde, the noted apostate, "it may well be doubted whether the woman who can prefer another man for her pseudo-eternal husband, has not fallen low enough to sin in *deed*, as well as thought, against her earthly husband."

By "marriage for the dead," living women are sealed to dead men, and *vice versa*, some one "standing proxy" for the deceased. Thus, a widow and widower may each prefer their first partners "for eternity," but like each other well enough "for time;" in which case they are first sealed to each other "for time," then each, by proxy for the departed "for eternity," thus requiring three separate ceremonies to settle the temporal and eternal relations of all parties, who may in turn be divorced from either by Brigham Young and the Probate Courts. So a man may have a wife "for time," who belongs to some man already dead "for eternity," in which case all the children will belong to the latter in eternity, the living man merely "raising up seed unto his dead brother." To such lengths of vain imaginings may a credulous people be led by artful impostors.