

Chapter 1

The Martha Brotherton Case

When Dr. John C. Bennett departed from Nauvoo in July of 1842, he left behind several young supporters who were a part of his promiscuous “clique” with whom he had practiced spiritual wifery. In order to make himself appear innocent, he mentioned in his writings some of the women in the clique, saying that they were virtuous and that Joseph had unsuccessfully tried to get them to be his plural wives. As Elder Robert D. Foster, a physician and prominent businessman from Nauvoo, explained, Bennett “tried to father all his own iniquity upon Joseph Smith” (*The Wasp* 1 [September 24, 1842]: 2). Joseph was careful not to publish the names of those who were in the spiritual wifery clique if it could be avoided, in order to protect them if they should repent—but Foster listed some of them after Bennett made malicious charges in the press and in his lectures. Apostle William Smith published Foster’s list in the *Wasp*. Foster wrote, “These are the ladies to whom he refers his hearers to substantiate his assertions: Mrs. [Emmeline] White, Mrs. [Sarah] Pratt, [Margaret and Matilda Nyman] Niemans, [Sarah] Miller, [Martha] Brotherton, and others” (ibid.).

The public to this day believes Dr. Bennett’s stories that Joseph tried to have these and other women become plural wives. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the story of each one to discover the truth. The case of Martha Brotherton should be treated first because hers was the first to receive public notoriety.

Martha’s case was widely publicized in newspapers throughout the United States, England, and France, for Dr. Bennett wrote articles and letters giving his version of her story. He also saw that a notarized letter from her to him was distributed to

many editors. As a result, her case was treated in two Church papers: the *Times and Seasons* published at Nauvoo and the *Millennial Star* printed at Manchester and Liverpool, England. Apostle William Smith, editor of the Nauvoo *Wasp*, a secular newspaper, published much about her case. When Dr. Bennett wrote his book, *The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, he included Martha's notarized letter in it. Bennett also delivered lectures in New York City, Boston, and other cities, in which he told his version of Martha's case in order to damage Joseph's character and defend his own tarnished reputation.

Bennett apparently was very attracted to Martha, for he wrote, "Miss Brotherton is a very good-looking, amiable, and accomplished English lady, of highly respectable parentage, cultivated intellect, and spotless moral character" (Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 236).

Martha, an eighteen-year-old member of the Church, came from Manchester, England, with her father, Thomas Brotherton, her mother, two sisters (Elizabeth and Mary), and Mary's husband, John McIlwrick. In November 1841 they and over two hundred other Saints disembarked from a steamboat at Warsaw, Illinois, twenty miles south of Nauvoo. They settled at Warren, a community of Saints one mile south of Warsaw. On December 7, 1841, Thomas Brotherton wrote a letter to England in which he told of their safe arrival. He stated:

"We are 20 miles from Nauvoo. We arrived here on the 25th of Nov. . . . The company was met here by the Elders from Nauvoo to inform the party that Nauvoo was thronging with people, and that this is a prosperous, healthful place, and is intended for one stake of the church. I instantly took a house on a rising of ground, within 20 yards of the Mississippi; but great numbers of the people are gone to Nauvoo. John and Mary went off there yesterday. I have not been there yet

"I think of visiting Nauvoo next week to see the place and friends." (*Millennial Star* 2 [February 1842]: 156)

On March 30, 1842, William Clayton, an Englishman who

worked as a clerk and recorder in the Church office located in Joseph's Red Brick Store, wrote that "the B_____ton [Brotherton] family came [to Nauvoo]. . . . After remaining a short time here, they went back to Warsaw" (ibid., 3 [August 1842]: 75).

It is not known whether Martha returned to Warsaw at that time or stayed at Nauvoo. She later stated that she visited with Mary and John at Nauvoo. It would have been logical for Martha to have remained there for she knew some English Saints at Nauvoo, as well as those apostles who had been missionaries to England. They included Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Hyde, and John Taylor. Martha also knew William Clayton who was from England. And Martha made new acquaintances, among whom was Dr. Bennett, Nauvoo's popular mayor and at that time a temporary member of the First Presidency. Martha could have met Dr. Bennett at the Church offices at the Red Brick Store where Bennett helped transact Church and city business.

Martha was one of those unfortunate women whom Bennett chose to tell his "plausible tale"—that Joseph had received a polygamous revelation and that it was proper to practice spiritual wifery. Martha soon became a part of Bennett's clique, and began spreading rumors in which she accused Joseph of sanctioning a plurality of wives. She also stated that Brigham had tried to persuade her to become his plural wife. Word spread that she had been locked in Joseph's office at the Red Brick Store for days. She declared that Joseph, Hyrum, and Heber C. Kimball had tried to influence her to accept Brigham's proposal. She told these stories in the Nauvoo area, and also sent them to England in letters. The letters caused such an uproar that some Saints left the Church in England and America. Apostle Parley P. Pratt and others in England wrote to Nauvoo to make Church officials aware of Martha's charges. Church officials on both sides of the Atlantic hurriedly published denials.

Joseph and Hyrum Denied Martha's Charges

Martha's claims spread rapidly. By the time the April 1842 Conference convened, Martha's stories had become so widespread that Joseph and Hyrum felt that it was necessary to make public statements against the rumors. Although their published reports are brief, they show that the two leaders were united in their fight against plural marriage. The Conference record states:

He [Hyrum Smith] then spoke in contradiction of a report in circulation about Elder [Heber C.] Kimball, B. [Brigham] Young, himself, and others of the Twelve, alledging that a sister [Martha Brotherton] had been shut in a room for several days, and that they had endeavored to induce her to believe in having two wives. (*Times and Seasons* 3 [April 15, 1842]: 763)

Pres't. J. [Joseph] Smith spoke upon the subject of the stories respecting Elder [Heber] Kimball and others, showing the folly and inconsistency of spending any time in conversing about such stories or hearkening to them, for there is no person that is acquainted with our principles would believe such lies, except [Thomas] Sharp the editor of the "Warsaw Signal." (*ibid.*)

Joseph was greatly disturbed that his name was being used to teach and spread polygamy. He issued frequent statements that he was innocent. He branded as lies those charges that he was guilty, and referred often to the monogamous marriage law in the Doctrine and Covenants. Yet, those who were secret advocates of the doctrine of a plurality of wives continued to use his name to carry out their wicked practices, which helped to destroy the Prophet's good name and his effectiveness as a leader.

On April 10, the Sunday after the Conference, Joseph preached in the Grove near the Temple to thousands of Saints in another attempt to clear his name, and that of the Church, from any connection with polygamy. Joseph's sermon, which came just days after his denunciation of Martha's claims before the

Conference, shows that he was doing all in his power to convince the Saints and the public that he was innocent of the charges of plural marriage, and that he had no patience with those who were using his name to carry on their iniquity. The LDS Church history reports Joseph's sermon with one sentence:

I preached in the Grove, and pronounced a curse upon all adulterers, and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons, *and those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs.* (LDS *History of the Church* 4:587; italics added)

**Apostle Parley P. Pratt
Published that Polygamy
Would Never Exist in the Church**

The contents of the letters which Martha Brotherton wrote to Saints in England brought a quick response from Apostle Parley P. Pratt, missionary to England and editor of the Church paper, the *Millennial Star*. He answered Martha's charges by publishing that the principle of polygamy never had and never would exist in the Church. Pratt wrote:

Apostacy.—The spirit of apostacy has been quite prevalent of late, principally among those who have emigrated from England to America. . . .

Among the most conspicuous of these apostates, we would notice a young female who emigrated from Manchester in September last [1841], and who, after conducting herself in a manner unworthy the character of one professing godliness, at length conceived the plan of gaining friendship and extraordinary notoriety with the world, or rather with the enemies of truth, by striking a blow at the character of some of its worthiest champions. She well knew that this would be received as a sweet morsel by her old friends, the Methodists, and other enemies of the Saints. She accordingly selected president J. [Joseph] Smith, and elder B. [Brigham] Young for her victims, and wrote to England that these men had been trying to seduce her, by making her believe that God had given a revelation that men might have two wives; by these disreputable means she thought to overthrow the Saints here, or at least to bring a storm of persecution on them, and prevent

others from joining them; but in this thing she was completely deceived by Satan. . . .

But, for the information of those who may be assailed by those foolish tales about the two wives, we would say that *no such principle ever existed among the Latter-day Saints*, and never will; this is well known to all who are acquainted with our books and actions, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; and also all our periodicals are very strict and explicit on that subject, indeed far more so than the bible. (*Millennial Star* 3 [August 1842]: 73–74; italics added)

Martha's Sister Declared that She Lied

Apostle Parley P. Pratt published a letter written by one of Martha's sisters, who wrote that Martha had lied:

“Nauvoo, April 20th, 1842.

“Dear___, We arrived here three weeks ago; I thought I would not write until I had seen the prophet, and attended the meetings in Nauvoo. I have now been at the meetings three sabbaths, and have had the pleasure of attending the conference which continued for three days; and I have had the pleasure of hearing brother Joseph speak [this was the conference where Joseph and Hyrum refuted the stories Martha circulated]. . . . I suppose, by this time, you will have heard that my parents and sister have apostatized. I know not what they have written to England, as they would not let me see their letters, but I can prove that my sister has told some of the greatest lies that ever were circulated. . . . My parents have turned their backs upon me, because I would not leave the Saints, and have told my elder sister not to own them until she abandoned “Mormonism”; but with all this she is unmoved, and is still contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints, for she and many other of the English Saints have proved that the statements made by my sister are falsehoods of the basest kind.” (ibid., 74)

Bennett Called on Martha to Make a Public Statement

When Dr. Bennett opened his public barrage in Carthage against Joseph in July 1842, he called (in one of his infamous six letters) for Martha and others to make public statements against the Prophet. Bennett published:

Now I call upon Miss Martha Brotherton, of Warsaw, to come out and tell boldly the base attempt on her virtue when in Nauvoo—how she was locked up—and the proposal that was made to her. I saw her taken into the accursed room, and now let her come out boldly and tell the corruptions of those holy men. The public requires it—justice and honor requires it. (*Sangamo Journal*, July 15, 1842)

Martha met Bennett in St. Louis as he was on his way to Jefferson City to persuade the Missouri authorities to indict Joseph for the attempted murder of ex-Governor Lilburn Boggs. At that time Martha (or Martha and Bennett together) produced the following lengthy affidavit, which the wicked doctor used in his attacks on Joseph and later published in his book.

Martha's Affidavit

“St. Louis, *Missouri*, July 13, A.D. 1842.

“General John C. Bennett:

“Dear Sir,—

“I left Warsaw a short time since for this city, and having been called upon by you, through the ‘*Sangamo Journal*,’ to come out and disclose to the world the facts of the case in relation to certain propositions made to me at Nauvoo, by some of the Mormon leaders, I now proceed to respond to the call, and discharge what I consider to be a duty devolving upon me as an innocent, but insulted and abused female. I had been at Nauvoo near three weeks, during which time my father’s family received frequent visits from Elders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, two of the Mormon Apostles; when, early one morning, they both came to my brother-in-law’s (John McIlwrick’s) house, at which place I then was on a visit, and particularly requested me to go and spend a few

days with them. I told them I could not at that time, as my brother-in-law was not at home; however, they urged me to go the next day, and spend one day with them. The day being fine, I accordingly went. When I arrived at the foot of the hill, Young and Kimball were standing conversing together. They both came to me, and, after several flattering compliments, Kimball wished me to go to his house first. I said it was immaterial to me, and accordingly went. We had not, however, gone many steps when Young suddenly stopped, and said he would go to that brother's, (pointing to a little log hut a few yards distant,) and tell him that you (speaking to Kimball) and brother Glover, or Grover, (I do not remember which,) will value his land. When he had gone, Kimball turned to me and said, 'Martha, I want you to say to my wife, when you go to my house, that you want to buy some things at Joseph's store, (Joseph Smith's,) and I will say I am going with you, to show you the way. You know you want to see the Prophet, and you will then have an opportunity.' I made no reply. Young again made his appearance, and the subject was dropped. We soon reached Kimball's house, where Young took his leave, saying, 'I shall see you again, Martha.' I remained at Kimball's near an hour, when Kimball, seeing that I would not tell the lies he wished me to, told them to his wife himself. He then went and whispered in her ear, and asked if that would please her. 'Yes,' said she, 'or I can go along with you and Martha.' 'No,' said he, 'I have some business to do, and I will call for you afterwards to go with me to the debate,' meaning the debate between yourself [Dr. Bennett] and Joseph. To this she consented. So Kimball and I went to the store together. As we were going along, he said, 'Sister Martha, are you willing to do all that the Prophet requires you to do?' I said I believed I was, thinking of course *he* would require nothing wrong. 'Then,' said he, 'are you ready to take counsel?' I answered in the affirmative, thinking of the great and glorious blessings that had been pronounced upon my head, if I adhered to the counsel of those placed over me in the Lord. 'Well,' said he, 'there are many things revealed in these last days that the world would laugh

and scoff at; but unto us is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.’ He further observed, ‘Martha, you must learn to hold your tongue, and it will be well with you. You will see Joseph, and very likely have some conversation with him, and he will tell you what you shall do.’ When we reached the building [Joseph’s store], he led me up some stairs to a small room, the door of which was locked, and on it the following inscription: ‘Positively no admittance.’ He observed, ‘Ah! brother Joseph must be sick, for, strange to say, he is not here. Come down into the tithing-office, Martha.’ He then left me in the tithing-office, and went out, I know not where. In this office were two men writing, one of whom, William Clayton, I had seen in England; the other I did not know. Young came in, and seated himself before me, and asked where Kimball was. I said he had gone out. He said it was all right. Soon after, Joseph came in, and spoke to one of the clerks, and then went up stairs, followed by Young. Immediately after, Kimball came in. ‘Now, Martha,’ said he, ‘the Prophet has come; come up stairs.’ I went, and we found Young and the Prophet alone. I was introduced to the Prophet by Young. Joseph offered me his seat, and, to my astonishment, the moment I was seated, Joseph and Kimball walked out of the room, and left me with Young, who arose, locked the door, closed the window, and drew the curtain. He then came and sat before me, and said, ‘This is our private room, Martha.’ ‘Indeed, sir,’ said I, ‘I must be highly honored to be permitted to enter it.’ He smiled, and then proceeded—‘Sister Martha, I want to ask you a few questions; will you answer them?’ ‘Yes sir,’ said I. ‘And will you promise not to mention them to any one?’ ‘If it is your desire, sir,’ said I, ‘I will not.’ ‘And you will not think any the worse of me for it, will you Martha?’ said he. ‘No, sir’ I replied. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘what are your feelings towards me?’ I replied, ‘My feelings are just the same towards you that they ever were, sir.’ ‘But, to come to the point more closely,’ said he, ‘have not you an affection for me, that, were it lawful and right, you could accept of me for your husband and companion?’ My feelings at that moment were indescribable. God only knows them. What, thought

I, are these men, that I thought almost perfection itself, *deceivers*? and is all my fancied happiness but a dream? 'Twas even so; but my next thought was, which is the best way for me to act at this time? If I say *no*, they may do as they think proper; and to say *yes*, I never would. So I considered it best to ask for time to think and pray about it. I therefore said, 'If it was lawful and right, perhaps I might; but you know, sir, it is not.' 'Well, but,' said he, 'brother Joseph has had a revelation from God that it is lawful and right for a man to have two wives; for as it was in the days of Abraham, so it shall be in these last days, and whoever is the first that is willing to take up the cross will receive the greatest blessings; and if you will accept of me, I will take you straight to the celestial kingdom; and if you will have me in this world, I will have you in that which is to come, and brother Joseph will marry us here today, and you can go home this evening, and your parents will not know any thing about it.' 'Sir,' said I, 'I should not like to do any thing of the kind without the permission of my parents.' 'Well, but,' said he, 'you are of age, are you not?' 'No, sir,' said I, 'I shall not be until the 24th of May.' 'Well,' said he, 'that does not make any difference. You will be of age before they know, and you need not fear. If you will take my counsel, it will be well with you, for I know it to be right before God, and if there is any sin in it, I will answer for it. But brother Joseph wishes to have some talk with you on the subject—he will explain things—will you hear him?' 'I do not mind,' said I. 'Well, but I want you to say something,' said he. 'I want time to think about it,' said I. 'Well,' said he, 'I will have a kiss, any how[?], and then rose, and said he would bring Joseph. He then unlocked the door, and took the key, and locked me up alone. He was absent about ten minutes, and then returned with Joseph. 'Well,' said Young, 'sister Martha would be willing if she knew it was lawful and right before God.' 'Well, Martha,' said Joseph, 'it is lawful and right before God—I *know* it is. Look here, sis; don't you believe in me?' I did not answer. 'Well, Martha,' said Joseph, 'just go ahead, and do as Brigham wants you to—he is the best man in the world, except me.' 'O!' said Brigham, 'then you

are as good.’ ‘Yes,’ said Joseph. ‘Well,’ said Young, ‘we believe Joseph to be a Prophet. I have known him near eight years, and always found him the same.[.]’ ‘Yes,’ said Joseph, ‘and I know that this is lawful and right before God, and if there is any sin in it, I will answer for it before God; and I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose on earth is loosed in heaven, and if you will accept of Brigham, you shall be blessed—God shall bless you, and my blessing shall rest upon you; and if you will be led by him, you will do well; for I know Brigham will take care of you, and if he don’t do his duty to you, come to me, and I will make him; and if you do not like it in a month or two, come to me, and I will make you free again; and if he turns you off, I will take you on.’ ‘Sir,’ said I, rather warmly, ‘it will be too late to think in a month or two after. I want time to think first.’ ‘Well, but,’ said he, ‘the old proverb is, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained;” and it would be the greatest blessing that was ever bestowed upon you.’ ‘Yes,’ said Young, ‘and you will never have reason to repent it—that is, if I do not turn from righteousness, and that I trust I never shall; for I believe God, who has kept me so long, will continue to keep me faithful. Did you ever see me act in any way wrong in England, Martha?’ ‘No, sir,’ said I. ‘No,’ said he; ‘neither can any one else lay any thing to my charge.’ ‘Well, then,’ said Joseph, ‘what are you afraid of, sis? Come, let me do the business for you.’ ‘Sir,’ said I, ‘do let me have a little time to think about it, and I will promise not to mention it to any one.’ ‘Well, but look here,’ said he; ‘you know a fellow will never be damned for doing the best he knows how.’ ‘Well, then,’ said I, ‘the best way I know of, is to go home and think and pray about it.’ ‘Well,’ said Young, ‘I shall leave it with brother Joseph, whether it would be best for you to have time or not.’ ‘Well,’ said Joseph, ‘I see no harm in her having time to think, if she will not fall into temptation.’ ‘O, sir,’ said I, ‘there is no fear of my falling into temptation.’ ‘Well, but,’ said Brigham, ‘you must promise me you will never mention it to any one.’ ‘I do promise it,’ said I. ‘Well,’ said Joseph, ‘you must promise me

the same.' I promised him the same. 'Upon your honor,' said he, 'you will not tell[']'. 'No, sir, I will lose my life first,' said I. 'Well, that will do,' said he; 'that is the principle we go upon. I think I can trust you, Martha,' said he. 'Yes,' said I, 'I think you ought.' Joseph said, 'She looks as if she could keep a secret.' I then rose to go, when Joseph commenced to beg of me again. He said it was the best opportunity they might have for months, for the room was often engaged. I, however, had determined what to do. 'Well,' said Young, 'I will see you tomorrow. I am going to preach at the school-house, opposite your house. I have never preached there yet; you will be there, I suppose.' 'Yes,' said I.—The next day being Sunday, I sat down, instead of going to meeting, and wrote the conversation, and gave it to my sister, who was not a little surprised; but she said it would be best to go to meeting in the afternoon. We went, and Young administered the sacrament. After it was over, I was passing out, and Young stopped me, saying, 'Wait, Martha, I am coming.' I said, 'I cannot; my sister is waiting for me.' He then threw his coat over his shoulders, and followed me out, and whispered, 'Have you made up your mind, Martha?' 'Not exactly, sir,' said I; and we parted. I shall proceed to a justice of the peace; and make oath to the truth of these statements, and you are at liberty to make what use of them you may think best.

"Yours, respectfully,

"Martha H. Brotherton.

"Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 13th day of July, A.D. 1842.

"Du Bouffay Fremon,

"*Justice of the Peace for St.*

Louis County."

(John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 236–240)

Martha's notarized letter was published widely. It first appeared in the *St. Louis American Bulletin* on July 16, 1842. Soon it was published across America and in Europe. The publication of Martha's affidavit had the effect upon the public which Bennett sought. Many were convinced by it that Joseph

was practicing deception—that he was secretly claiming to have received a polygamous revelation and was practicing plural marriage, while denying it openly. (Later the LDS Church leaders were to teach that this was true—they used Bennett’s “plausible tale” as a means of bringing polygamy into their church.)

Bennett’s publishing of Martha’s affidavit caused such a clamor that the editors of the Church papers and the Nauvoo *Wasp* soon mounted a strong defense against it. Editor William Smith of the *Wasp* made these significant statements in his support of Joseph and monogamy:

There has been a great cry against the Mormons on account of what J. C. Bennett trumped up to screen his own disgraced character from ruin and infamy. (*Wasp* 1 [October 15, 1842]: 2)

While . . . calamity follows calamity in all the world . . . John C. Bennett, the pimp and file leader of such mean harlots as Martha H. Brotherton . . . may flourish with impunity! (*ibid.*, [August 27, 1842]: 2)

For the rule of marriage among the Mormons, see the *Times and Seasons* of Oct. 1, 1842. (*ibid.*, [October 8, 1842]: 2)

(This was a reference to the “Marriage” law found in Section 101 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which Joseph reprinted twice that summer in the *Times and Seasons* to prove that monogamy was the only law of marriage in the Church.)

Editor William Smith continued:

We have two presses in Nauvoo [the *Times and Seasons* and the *Wasp*], and it has yet to be shown that either of them has spread falsehood or held back the truth. (*Wasp* 1 [October 22, 1842]: 2)

Joseph Published against Martha and Others

Polygamy problems occurred so rapidly in the spring and

summer of 1842 that Joseph could not successfully combat them. In an effort to counteract Bennett's "awful disclosures" (as they were called in the *Sangamo Journal*), Joseph had thousands of copies of a two-sided broadside published August 31, 1842, at Nauvoo. It was entitled *Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters*. It was filled with documents certifying Joseph's innocence and the guilt of Bennett and his clique. When Joseph called for volunteers to go forth "to declare the truth" by distributing the broadside throughout the land, three hundred and eighty elders came forward to fulfill that mission (George Q. Cannon, *The Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 410).

The letter signed by Elizabeth Brotherton and Mary and John McIlwrick, as well as the affidavits by Brigham Young and the Kimballs, were among those printed in the broadside. They are as follows:

McIlwrick's Affidavit

John wrote:

I do know that the sister of my wife, Martha Brotherton, is a deliberate liar, and also a wilful inventor of lies; and that she has also to my certain knowledge at sundry times, circulated lies of a base kind, concerning those whom she knew to be innocent of what she alleged against them. She has also stooped to many actions which would be degrading to persons of common decency. . . .

And I further state that I am acquainted with Gen. Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young, and Elder Heber C. Kimball, having had the privilege of being intimate with the latter gentleman for several months in England. And I believe them to be men who lead holy and virtuous lives, and men who exhibit a philanthropic spirit to all the human family without respect of persons: and I also know for a truth that the forenamed Martha Brotherton has wickedly endeavored to injure the character of these gentlemen; and besides myself can testify that the statements which she has reported in different places are quite contrary to those she related here.

John McIlwrick.

We Elizabeth Brotherton, and Mary McIlwrick, sisters of the said Martha Brotherton, concur in the above sentiments.

Elizabeth Brotherton.

Mary [Brotherton] McIlwrick.

Sworn to, and subscribed, before me, this 27th day of August S. F. 1842. E. Robinson, Justice of Peace, for Hancock Co. Ill.

Affidavit of Brigham Young

Nauvoo, Aug. 25, 1842.

I do hereby testify that the affidavit of Miss Martha Brotherton that is going the rounds in the politics and religious papers, is a base falsehood, with regard to any private intercourse or unlawful conduct or conversation with me.

Brigham Young.

Affidavit of H. C. Kimball

Heber C. Kimball, who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith that the affidavit of Miss Martha Brotherton, which has been published in sundry newspapers is false and without foundation in truth, and further this deponent saith not.

Heber C. Kimball

Affidavit of Vilate Kimball

Personally came before me, Ebenezer Robinson, a Justice of the Peace, in and for the county aforesaid, Mrs. Vilate Kimball, wife of Heber C. Kimball who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith that the conversation said to have taken place between her and her husband in presence of Martha Brotherton is false: that nothing of the kind as stated in the affidavit of the 13th July 1842, made by the said Martha Brotherton at St. Louis, ever occurred, but is a base fabrication, and further this deponent saith not.

Vilate Kimball.

Robert D. Foster Defended Joseph's Character

Within a few weeks Dr. Bennett traveled to the East and began lecturing to large crowds in Boston, New York City, and other places, making what he called an expose' of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. Dr. Robert D. Foster (who is mentioned in the revelation of 1841—see RLDS DC 107:34 and LDS DC 124:115–118) attended some of the lectures. There he heard Dr. Bennett extol the virtues of some of the very women whom Bennett had seduced. Bennett also accused Joseph Smith of trying to take those same women as plural wives. Foster wrote letters for publication in the *Wasp* in which he exonerated Joseph and branded Bennett's stories as lies. As previously noted, Foster listed some of the women whom Bennett had seduced, including *Martha Brotherton*. On September 1, 1842, Foster wrote from New York City:

I found out where he [Bennett] was to lecture again, and last evening repaired thither with my wife, and paid 25 cents to hear Mormonism, with all its absurdities exposed. . . . I listened to all his cursed lies, and when he had got through . . . I got up . . . I told Bennett he was a liar and was worse than many now in the penitentiary. . . . He said I was the Surgeon General of the [Nauvoo] Legion;—Yes I told them I . . . was a Mormon, and was proud of it, and he was a whoremonger and blasphemer, and I was ashamed to acknowledge that I ever knew him. He is to deliver a lecture to gentlemen only on Friday evening, too infamous and obscene for ladies; he says this will be a full exposition of secret wife and Jo Smithism. . . . I shall show the people here how he has lied and tried to father all his own iniquity upon Joseph Smith. (*Wasp* 1 [September 24, 1842]: 2)

On September 27 Dr. Foster wrote another letter for publication in the *Wasp* in which he penned the following:

I challenge Bennett or any other man or woman to show a more exemplary man beneath the sun, or cite to any time or place when he [Joseph] has violated the laws of his country,

or when he has taught, either publicly or privately, by precept or example, any thing repugnant to the laws of the Holy Bible, or worthy of bonds or death. It can't be done; it is too well known that he stamps with indignation and contempt every species of vice—if it had not been so Bennett would have been with us yet. . . . Alas, none but the seduced join the seducer; those only who have been arraigned before a just tribunal for the same unhallowed conduct can be found to give countenance to any of his black hearted lies, and they, too, detest him for his seduction, these are the ladies to whom he refers his hearers to substantiate his assertions. Mrs. White, Mrs. Pratt, Niemans, Miller, Brotherton, and others. Those that belong to the church have had to bear the shame of close investigation as to their adulteries, and have been dealt with according to church order, in such case made and provided, in the Book of Covenants, (Sec. 91 and Sec. 13, page 122, and the Holy Bible, Book of Mormon &c.). (ibid., [October 15, 1842]: 2)

Martha's Story of Being Imprisoned Is Absurd

It is important to determine who was telling the truth in the controversy outlined above. Were Bennett and Martha telling the truth when they declared that Joseph was sponsoring polygamy, or were they lying to cover their own sins? Was Joseph teaching polygamy secretly and at the same time denying it openly? If so, he was a false prophet and a “Mormon demi-god” as Bennett declared.

There are some internal evidences in the above story about Martha Brotherton that help determine who was telling the truth.

The records show that Martha changed her story. As Hyrum reported to the Conference, at first she had told that she was locked in a room for days. But since that was such a ridiculous, unbelievable story, she changed it in her St. Louis affidavit to read that Brigham locked her in Joseph's office for only “about ten minutes.”

It would have been impossible for Martha to have been imprisoned in any room in the Red Brick Store without it being

detected. In fact, she could not have gone up and down the stairs and from room to room without being observed by many. The store was a small, two-story building, and Joseph's office was only about ten feet square. Since dozens of people came to the store daily, her calls for help would have been heard. Martha had but one witness—John Bennett, who asserted in the *Sangamo Journal* for July 15, 1842, "She was locked up . . . I saw her taken into the accursed room."

If Martha's story had been true, there would have been many witnesses, because Joseph's store was the hub of activity in Nauvoo. People came to the store to buy everything from food to footwear. The store building also housed the headquarters for the Church and the city. There the people paid their tithing and taxes, and conducted banking and real estate business. The store was alive with people by day and by night, for it was also in constant use as a civic and religious center. A writer for the *Wasp* described the crowded condition which he always found when he went to Joseph's store:

Whenever I go into General Smith's store and find a dozen or more loungers, or loafers, or, to use a more familiar phrase, *lazy set of fellows* lopping and lolling on the counter; or filling up the entrance into the Recorder's office . . . (*Wasp* 1 [June 4, 1842]: 2)

With so many people in the building, it would have been impossible for Martha to have been imprisoned. No wonder John McIlwrick said "the statements which she has reported in different places [such as Nauvoo and Warsaw] are quite contrary to those reported here [in Martha's affidavit]." Also, Martha's sister testified in her April 20 letter, "I can prove that my sister has told some of the greatest lies that ever were circulated."

Brigham Was Sealed to Martha Brotherton

In an effort to prove that Joseph was a polygamist, pro-polygamists point out that Brigham later had Martha Brotherton sealed to him as one of his wives for eternity. In Utah on August 1, 1870, after Martha's death, Brigham Young was sealed

by proxy to her (see Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 231). Perhaps Brigham *did* propose plural marriage to Martha as she claimed. To add to this possibility is the fact that Brigham began practicing polygamy in Nauvoo that spring by secretly marrying Lucy Ann Decker Seeley on June 15, 1842 (John J. Stewart, *Brigham Young and His Wives: And the True Story of Plural Marriage*, 85). This was only two months after Joseph and Hyrum publicly denounced Martha's claim. (It should also be recalled that Brigham had insisted upon going alone when he went on a mission among the polygamous Cochranites in Maine, and that he had "manifestations" about polygamy while he was in England.)

Perhaps Heber C. Kimball tried to get Martha to marry Brigham as she claimed in her affidavit, for Heber also married a plural wife in 1842—an English immigrant named Sarah Peak Noon who gave birth to his son in December 1842 or January 1843 (Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball—Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer*, 97, 311).

Even if Brigham and Heber tried to get Martha to become Brigham's plural wife, it does not prove that Martha was telling the truth about Joseph. Without a doubt Bennett, out of revenge, would have added the part about Joseph, or would have influenced Martha to have done so.

Conclusion

Those who believe the LDS Church's teachings about polygamy, think that since men close to the Prophet practiced polygamy secretly while denying it publicly, that Joseph did likewise. They make him guilty by association. It has never occurred to many that Joseph was telling the truth without reservation, and that he was not a liar when he denied being a polygamist nor having had a polygamous revelation. It will be seen in later chapters that Brigham Young and his close relatives and friends were the ones who brought polygamy into the Church as a doctrine, in spite of Joseph's strong efforts to keep it out. Through the years of 1842 to 1844, Joseph not only had to fight Bennett's brand of polygamy, but also the growing polygamous practices of another group led by Brigham and Heber.

The final proof of whether Joseph was innocent or guilty of polygamy, however, lies in the end result of the matter. If Joseph practiced polygamy there would have been children by polygamous wives (for the only purpose of polygamy, supposedly, was for the man to have more children than one wife could produce). Brigham fathered fifty-six children and Heber sixty-five. But Joseph did not father a single child by any of the twenty-seven or so women whom Mormon writers and historians claim were his plural wives! No, not one! And his wife, Emma Hale Smith, was giving birth regularly to his children and was with child at his death. Hyrum Smith also had no children by plural wives.

The truth is, Joseph Smith was not a polygamist!