

The New Companion Revelation: Evidence of Spiritual Wifery in the First British Mission

Jeremy W. Hoop

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In his mission journal, Joseph Fielding records one of the longest and most astonishing entries on the evening of Thursday, September 2, 1841, just weeks prior to leaving his missionary labors in Preston and Manchester, England.¹ He pens striking details of a “Certain Principle manifested” in Manchester and Preston of which he had learned only “a short time ago.”

Born in 1797,² Fielding was raised 160 miles to the south in Bedfordshire. At the age of thirty-five he emigrated to Upper Canada.³ About three years later, he encountered Mormon missionaries, and joined their church, being baptized by Parley Pratt in May, 1836. The following year he was called to serve a mission in Preston and Manchester with mission president Heber Kimball. He was ordained an elder by President Kimball and appointed his successor when Kimball returned to America in April of 1838.⁴ Fielding served in that capacity until Brigham Young took his post in July, 1840. After that, Fielding continued to serve as a missionary under President Young and later under Parley Pratt. Fielding’s journal reveals that he was a devoted missionary who deeply loved the people he ministered to and the men with whom he served. His September 1841 journal entry reveals just how shaken he was to learn of things that had been going on right under his nose, involving some of those people he loved so dearly.

*Links in this paper are live at journalofmormonpolygamy.org.

¹Joseph Fielding Journal, Book 4, February-October 1841 (hereafter JFJ-4), Sep. 2, 1841, 72-77, MS 1567, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT (hereafter CHL), *LINK*. For all for five volumes see *LINK*.

²Salt Lake City Cemetery, Salt Lake City, UT, Cemetery Records, 1847–1976, vol. A, 68, microfilm 1,299,167, U.S. and Canada Records Collection, FHL; “Died,” *Deseret News* 13, no. 26 (Mar 23, 1864): 8, *LINK*.

³Mercy F. Thompson autobiographical sketch, 1880, MS 4580, CHL, *LINK*.

⁴“Letter from Joseph Fielding,” *LDS Millennial Star* 2, no. 4 (Aug. 1841): 51, *LINK*; “Died,” *Deseret News* 13, no. 26 (Mar. 23, 1864): 8, *LINK*.

Over the previous weeks, and only “by degrees,” Fielding became aware of a “select little company” amongst the Saints in Manchester who had been “much afraid of [him] knowing of these things.” He learned that this group “looked upon themselves as better than the rest, they met together as a choice band where they obtained manifestations which it was not lawful to tell to the common Saints nor even to [him], though at that time presiding.”⁵

The manifestations of this covert group of Manchester Mormons, which were guarded with strict secrecy, pertained to what Fielding calls “the new Companion Revelation.”⁶

Fielding does not record who had received this revelation, nor does he give specific details about its contents. However, he does explain that the revelation opened these saints to “many strange Visions” that came mostly through women. These “Prophetes[s]es,”⁷ as he calls them, through “dreams” and “prophecying[s]” were able to have it “shewn them . . . who should be Companions in another world, that they would not be united as they are now. . . .”⁸ Apparently, these women had visions through dreams. From these they

⁵JFJ-4, 73, *LINK*. This tells us the time frame of the events Fielding is describing. Fielding presided as mission president until July of 1840, so the events he is describing happened before that time, most likely occurring between late 1839 and July 1840, as will be shown hereafter.

⁶JFJ-4, 74, *LINK*. Both Brian C. Hales and Rebecca Bartholemew treat Joseph Fielding’s Sep. 2, 1841 journal entry briefly. Hales cites it only as an example of a “spurious revelation authorizing sexual transgression among investigators which they were quick to suppress.” He uses the entry to briefly illustrate the “cultural and religious resistance of the environment into which Joseph Smith was commanded to introduce plural marriage.” (Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy, Vol. 1: History* (Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 230–231.) Bartholemew connects Fielding’s mention of “dreams and visions” received by “Prophetes[s]es” to other reports, by Woodruff and others, of women who exhibited “charismatic gifts” and other displays of “spiritualism.” She also connects the entry to some sort of “spiritual wifery” which grew out of “spiritualist episodes” in Preston (Rebecca Bartholemew, *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* (Signature Books, 1995), 92, 93, 98). Neither Hales nor Bartholemew treat the nature of the formal revelation Fielding calls “the Companion Revelation,” the apparent oaths of secrecy, the connection to Parley Pratt, and other corroborating evidence in the record. Other important works on the British mission—James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men With a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837–1841* (Deseret Book, 2009); Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp, eds., *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain* (University of Utah Press, 1989); and V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987)—don’t mention Fielding’s recording of the Companion Revelation.

⁷Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (Vintage Books, 2017), 40–44. Ulrich has shown that British women converts to early Mormonism frequently experienced dreams, visions, and engaged in prophecy. Such spiritual expressions were not uncommon and often encouraged. What makes Joseph Fielding’s diary entry of Sep. 2, 1841 novel is that these women were receiving “strange visions:” manifestations about new spiritual companionships, issuing judgments and curses, and doing so as part of a secretive oath-bound group.

⁸JFJ-4, 73, *LINK*. Fielding’s somewhat ambiguous phrase about “Companions in another world” could be interpreted as referring to relationships that exist only in the afterlife or from a premortal existence. In this reading, the Manchester saints would have received visions of spiritual companionships unrelated to

could declare prophecies that allowed married people to believe they were meant to be with spiritual companions other than their spouses:

Others have prophesied, (Females) of things pertaining to the Elders, one, that an Elder's wife would die and he should be married to another certain Person, and the Elder for want of experience more I think, than the want of honesty really thought it was true or from the Lord. . . I felt much grieved for the Sis, who was to die, a faithful Sister, these kind of Prophetes[s]es would also say.⁹

The sister who declared this prophecy had received it through a dream. Fielding notes that he “often” cautioned this sister:

. . . to be careful about her dreams and told her if her eye were not single her dreams would be mixed with error. I also endeavoured to show the elders that the Priesthood was to govern and not be led by Females dreams on prophecyns or by any one else.¹⁰

Fielding tried to persuade some that the “[Companion Revelation] was not of God and if one of the Twelve should sanction it, I should still reject it.”¹¹ Soon after he learned of it, he saw Elder Parley P. Pratt in Manchester “and asked him if it were of God.” Parley's answer was “no.” But then, in a curious twist, Fielding adds “it had been the same in Manchester while a certain Female from Preston was living there, *some one had been marked out for him* [Parley P. Pratt].”¹² He doesn't elaborate further on the new “companion” who was chosen for the apostle.

Apparently, these manifestations caused a fair amount of animosity. The “Prophetes[s]es” asserted power to pass judgment on some of the saints, declaring they “would see who would stand and who would not. I told them there was no decree against any one, all might stand, and it was the will of God that all should overcome.”¹³ These “Prophetes[s]es” would also pronounce curses upon their fellow saints and one sister even pronounced a curse on Fielding.

Fielding then mentions that the behavior of the Manchester saints was not merely confined to spiritual manifestations. He writes, “Another thing I will mention here[,] there had

their current earthly marriages, suggesting those marriages would not persist in the hereafter. However, this paper will demonstrate clear evidence that the visions, dreams, and prophecies “shewn” to these saints referred to new companionships in this life—specifically, that married individuals were encouraged to seek extramarital spiritual partners in the here and now.

⁹JFJ-4, 74, *LINK*.

¹⁰JFJ-4, 75, *LINK*.

¹¹JFJ-4, 74, *LINK*.

¹²JFJ-4, 74 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹³JFJ-4, 74, *LINK*.

[been] *A too great familiarity between the Brethren and Sisters in this Land.*"¹⁴ We are not told the exact nature or level of the familiarity between the male and female saints in Manchester, only that Fielding felt guilty that he too had participated.¹⁵ He expresses relief that he had not indulged beyond familiarity: "I feel myself to be weak but the Lord has preserved me at least from action and sin, to God be all the Praise, yea I am very thankful that I have been thus preserved."¹⁶

Fielding explains that when the Apostles had returned in 1840 "they checked this Evil" although he is not explicit who "they" referred to.¹⁷ But, it is equally likely, perhaps more so, that he meant "the Brethren and Sisters in this Land" were the ones who censored their own behavior upon the arrival of the Twelve. He then writes: "yet some who came from America, went far beyond anything we had ever done or sanctioned . . ." ¹⁸ Whoever those Americans were, the behavior went from the "evil" of "too great familiarity" to much worse. Then, Fielding recounts this tragic news: ". . . while I was in Manchester last week, I was informed that a Sister was in a state of Pregnancy by an E[lde]r who persuaded her it mattered not how familiar they were with one another, so [long as] they did not actually commit Adultery or Fornication." The couple tempted fate, went to bed together, were overcome, and a pregnancy resulted.¹⁹

Fielding's description suggests that for these seducible saints, "being familiar" may have implied a license to engage in romantic physical interactions—actions they believed were proper so long as they stopped just short of adultery or fornication. Nonetheless, the "familiarity" between this couple ultimately led to an unintended pregnancy after the elder persuaded the sister "there was no harm" in their behavior because "E C had often slept with Sis P". This "E[lde]r C," Fielding explains, had been influenced by some of the American brethren's behavior "so much so" that he had gone to "Bed with different women and endeavored to persuade them it was *no harm*."²⁰ Fielding does not divulge the full

¹⁴JFJ-4, 76 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹⁵It is important to note that Fielding's participation in being "too familiar" with women does not appear to be connected to the Companion Revelation, because he was unaware of its existence at the time. Fielding seems to have gotten swept up in what others were doing. It was not until long after he had ceased his familiarity with women that he learned of the Companion Revelation.

¹⁶JFJ-4, 77, *LINK*.

¹⁷JFJ-4, 76, *LINK*.

¹⁸British Mission information, Church History Biographical Database, *LINK*.

¹⁹JFJ-4, 76, *LINK*.

²⁰Fielding does not say Elder C was American, although it is possible he was. The phrase he used was "yet some who came from America, went far beyond anything we had ever done or sanctioned, so much so that E C went into Bed with different women and endeavored to persuade them it was no harm." Whether Elder C was American, British or another nationality is not clear. What Fielding makes clear is that Elder C's behavior with women was influenced by men from America.

identity of Elder C, so the reader is left to try and deduce which of the elders in Manchester he was referencing.

Finally, Fielding mentions one more elder's behavior: "It seems also that E[lder] T has been cut off from the church since he returned to America *for the like Sin*."²¹ Fielding concludes with this lament, "what do their wives think of such things?"²²

While Fielding wrote about the Companion Revelation and the immoral behavior of Manchester Mormons in the same entry, he isn't expressly clear if the two were connected.²³ Fielding's imprecise wording leaves the reader to try to ascertain if they were connected or not. It is possible that he was recounting two unconnected activities: a clandestine group of Manchester saints who received manifestations about new spiritual companions and another group of Manchester Mormons who were behaving immorally. It appears more likely, however, given what he writes about Elder C and Elder T, that he believed the doctrine in the Companion Revelation fostered an environment in Manchester where familiarity turned into greater sexual sins. As will be shown, other evidence indicates that the sexual behavior and the Companion Revelation were indeed connected.

The implications of Fielding's September 2, 1841 journal entry are profound. If sufficient evidence of spiritual wifery among the Mormons in England can be identified, then it would indicate polygamous activity, unconnected to Joseph Smith, occurring well outside the standard LDS polygamy narrative's timeline.²⁴ Moreover, if that evidence can be linked to

²¹JFJ-4, 76, *LINK*.

²²JFJ-4, 77, *LINK*.

²³Between the mention of the Companion Revelation activity and the immoral behavior of some Manchester saints, Fielding only writes: "Another thing I will mention here there had [been] A too great familiarity between brethren and sisters in this land." This could imply the immoral behavior was connected to the Companion Revelation or that it was another problem in Manchester in addition to the Companion Revelation. This paper examines other evidence that provides the necessary clarity.

²⁴See footnotes 32, 96, and 219 of this paper for discussions indicating that Joseph Smith was not involved in polygamous activity that took place in England. No evidence has emerged suggesting Joseph Smith received a revelation comparable to the so-called "Companion Revelation," nor that he authorized plural marriage practices abroad. Although later recollections occasionally assert that Smith received, but did not record, a revelation on plural marriage prior to Nauvoo, no contemporaneous documentation substantiates such claims. The prevailing narrative relies heavily on retrospective testimonies marked by significant chronological inconsistency. For example, in 1852 and 1859, Orson Pratt placed the revelation in 1843 (Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* (hereafter *JD*), Aug. 29, 1852, 1:64, *LINK*; *JD* Jul. 24, 1859, 6:362, *LINK*), while in 1887, Eliza R. Snow said it was as early as 1837 (Eliza R. Snow, quoted in J. J. J., "Two Prophets' Widows: A Visit to the Relics of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* 13, no. 85 (Aug. 18, 1887): 6, *LINK*); W.W. Phelps suggested both that it was received in 1835 during the Book of Abraham translation (T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (D. Appleton and Company, 1873) 182, footnote, *LINK*), and, in another account, claimed a formal revelation in 1831, which he reproduced from memory in 1861 (Revelation, Jul. 17, 1831, MS 4583, CHL, *LINK*). Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner cited 1834 in statements made between 1902 and 1905, (Mary Elizabeth Rollins

known early Nauvoo polygamists, then perhaps we have the beginnings of a new origin story for early Mormon polygamy.

The Companion Revelation & Spiritual Wifery²⁵

Fielding's extensive September 2, 1841 journal entry reveals a startling fact: a documented form of promiscuous spiritual wifery, distinct, predating and unconnected to John Bennett's Nauvoo "spiritual wife system."²⁶ It appears that the British Mission spiritual wifery practice was unique compared to other forms, such as John Bennett's, or that of the Society of Free Brethren and Sisters, also known as the Cochranites.

John Bennett's spiritual wife system, which began in Nauvoo shortly after the British version, was fairly rudimentary. It could be argued Bennett and company merely advanced a ruse to have "unlawful intercourse" with multiple female partners. They claimed no revelation in their seduction of the women.²⁷ Bennett and the men who followed him taught women "that any respectable female might indulge in sexual intercourse and there was no sin in it, provided the person so indulging keep the same to herself."²⁸ These men claimed that they had been "instructed by Joseph Smith and that there was no sin where there was no accuser."²⁹ In Bennett's system a woman could have many sexual partners. The common

Lightner reminiscences, circa 1905, MS 29376, CHL, *LINK*. Additional accounts locate the origin in 1831, including statements from Joseph B. Noble (Andrew Jenson, "Additional Testimony," *Historical Record* 6, no. 5 (May 1887): 232, *LINK*), Helen Mar Kimball Whitney (Helen Mar Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 53, *LINK*), and Joseph F. Smith (Joseph F. Smith, "Celestial Marriage: How and When the Revelation was Given," *Deseret News* 19, no. 151 (May 20, 1886): 2, col. 2, *LINK*). Brigham Young, in perhaps the most anachronistic assertion, made in 1872, and in contradiction to previous assertions he made, dated it to 1829 during the translation of the Book of Mormon (26 July 1872; Van Wagoner, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, vol. 5, Kindle ed., 830–31). Other posthumous claims regarding early polygamy revelations to Smith exist but fall outside the scope of this paper.

²⁵Early Mormon plural marriage was called the "spiritual wife doctrine," and the women involved were called "spiritual wives". Therefore, throughout this paper, references to the early Mormon practice of plural marriage, whether in England or Nauvoo, will be referred to as spiritual marriages, spiritual wives, or spiritual wifery. See Heber C. Kimball, Oct. 6, 1855, *JD* 3:125, *LINK*; Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural marriage, as taught by the prophet Joseph* (Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882): 15, CHL, *LINK*.

²⁶See Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, Mar. 16, 1844, 125; The Joseph Smith Papers (hereafter JSP), *LINK*.

²⁷John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Leland & Whiting, 1842), 242, *LINK*. Bennett later invoked an alleged revelation through Joseph Smith, but apparently not while he and his group were seducing women. See Testimony in High Council Cases May 1842, MS 24557, CHL, *LINK*.

²⁸Testimony of Margaret Nyman before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 21, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, *LINK*.

²⁹Testimony of Matilda Nyman before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 21, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, *LINK*.

refrain from the seducers was that “there was no harm in it” so long as the women kept it secret.³⁰

The similarities between Bennett’s spiritual wife system and the spiritual wifery of the Companion Revelation appear to be first, the insistence of there being “no harm” in going to bed together, as “Elder C” had urged with different women. Second, it appears that some women in Manchester may also have had license to have multiple sexual partners.³¹

The primary distinction between the two was that the Bennett group seduced women by their rhetoric, using Joseph Smith’s name³² to give their behavior legitimacy. The “choice band” in Manchester sought manifestations from heaven to sanction their companionships. Importantly, they did not claim Joseph Smith was the originator of their revelation or doctrine. Also, The Bennett group appear to have targeted mostly, if not exclusively, unmarried women.³³ The Manchester select company allowed married people to seek out other companions.

The followers of Jacob Cochran practiced a more complex form of spiritual wifery which shared some commonalities with Mormon Manchester spiritual wifery. Both systems required strict oaths of secrecy. Both dissolved former marriages and allowed for new “spiritual mates.” Both groups had “extraordinary dreams and visions.”³⁴ The Cochranites also practiced the ancient ritual of foot washing,³⁵ which some of the Manchester saints appear to have practiced as well.³⁶ Apostle Orson Hyde, who served a mission among the Cochranites, reports in his journal in 1832 what he learned of the Cochranites: “they had a wonderful lustful spirit, because they believe in a ‘Plurality of wives’ which they call spiritual wives, knowing them not after the flesh but after the spirit, but by the appearance they knew one another after the flesh.”³⁷ The Cochranites’ full spiritual wife practice “had not become general, and many

³⁰Testimony of Catherine Fuller \Warren/ before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 25, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#).

³¹This idea will be explored in examples in this paper and hereafter. See also footnote 202.

³²Joseph Smith denied very publicly and vehemently that he had ever taught or countenanced their or any such behavior. For only one example see Affidavits and Certificates, *Times and Seasons* broadsheet, Aug 31, 1842, facsimile prepared from a typescript by H. Michael Marquardt, [LINK](#).

³³Testimony of Sarah Miller before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 24, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#). She testified: “I did not believe it & had heard no such teaching from Joseph. . . but that it was wicked to commit adultery & Chauncy said that did not mean single women, but married women.”

³⁴Cochranism flourished in the eastern United States from about 1817 to the mid-1830s. Cochranism required a strict oath of secrecy upon penalty of eternal damnation. Ephraim Stinchfield, *Cochranism Delineated* (Hews & Goss, 1819), 4, 6, [LINK](#).

³⁵Joyce Butler, “Cochranism Delineated: A Twentieth-Century Study,” in Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden, eds., *Maine in the Early Republic, from Revolution to Statehood* (University Press of New England, 1988), 156, [LINK](#).

³⁶This practice will be discussed hereafter.

³⁷Orson Hyde Journal, No. 1, Feb.-Sep. 1832, Oct. 11, 1832, MS 1386, CHL, [LINK](#).

would deny that such things existed among them.”³⁸ With the Mormon Manchester company, it is possible that for some of them the relations were purely spiritual. However, for others it appears to also have progressed to knowing each other “after the flesh.”

Corroborating Evidence in the Historical Record

Evidence for a secretive “choice band,” manifestations, cursings, dreams, prophesying, talk of new marriage companions, too much familiarity, and going to bed together, exists. That evidence can be discovered by first focusing on the two furtively named elders in Fielding’s account: Elder T and Elder C.

The fact that Fielding doesn’t provide the offending elders’ full names is interesting to note. Throughout his journal he continuously documents conversations and interactions with named individuals, but in this entry he only mentions a “sister,” “a certain Person” or an “elder” here and there. The only name he writes specifically is P. [Parley] P. Pratt. He references two elders—E C and E T—and a Sis[ter] P. It appears that his reticence to fully name individuals may have been out of a desire to not disclose the sins of his friends and acquaintances to posterity who may in future read his journal. However, Fielding left enough clues for himself so he could later recall the details.

While it is possible that Fielding could have named an obscure elder with whom he had little interaction, it appears more likely that “E C” and “E T” were men he was well-acquainted with. Perhaps he felt shame being closely associated with people engaging in this behavior, or perhaps he wanted to protect their identities if others later were to read his words. Regardless of his reasons, Fielding doesn’t name these men fully. If the mysterious E[lder] C and E[lder] T can be discovered, perhaps they will lead to more evidence of spiritual wifery in the record.

“E T”: Elder Theodore Turley

Who is “E[lder] T”? In Fielding’s journal, besides the letters “E T,” there is another clue. His asking: “what do their wives think of such things” reveals that the elders are married men. This clue presents only two possibilities—only two married missionaries with last names beginning in “T” were serving during Kimball’s, Fielding’s, Young’s or Pratt’s tenures as mission president.³⁹ Elder John Taylor and Elder Theodore Turley.⁴⁰ Fielding

³⁸Stinchfield, *Cochranism Delineated*, 6.

³⁹When not serving as Mission President, Fielding served at various times as a missionary under Presidents Kimball, Young and Pratt.

⁴⁰British Mission information, Church History Biographical Database, *LINK*. There is also a missionary listed named Charles Taysom, but he was not married until 1842, after Fielding had left for America.

mentions both men frequently throughout his diary and no other elders with the last name beginning in “T” are named. While nothing publicly available to date in the historical record by fall of 1841 can implicate Taylor with “going to bed with different women” or even “too great familiarity,” there is substantial evidence pointing to Turley.

Turley served a year-long mission in his native England alongside Joseph Fielding and apostles Young, Kimball, Taylor, and Woodruff.⁴¹ Elder Turley prepared to return to America in the fall of 1840.⁴² It was on the voyage at sea and during the trek from New York to Nauvoo that Turley’s witnessed behavior caused a “stir in the church,”⁴³ and his subsequent High Council trial nearly cost him his church membership.

Turley, a Mormon elder holding the office of Seventy, was appointed to preside over roughly 200 saints. They embarked from Liverpool for New York City with him on September 8, 1840.⁴⁴ During the difficult passage in squalid conditions, Turley endeavored to encourage the saints in their physical and spiritual cleanliness.⁴⁵ A number of the sisters in their company had been “making very free” and “drinking wine” with some of the sailors and passengers. Turley tried “from time to time” to discourage their fraternization.⁴⁶

Thirty-nine-year-old Turley was husband of Frances Kimberly and father of nine children at this time.⁴⁷ After disembarking on October 12th in New York, the company traveled west, first to Kirtland, Ohio, and finally arrived in Nauvoo on November 25, 1840.⁴⁸ “Elder Turley ar[r]ived in Nauvoo about the 25th Nov with 109 Saints the Rest stop[p]ed in Kirtland.” Eleven saints who were on the journey with Turley reported what they had witnessed of his behavior with some of the women in the company.⁴⁹ These witnesses brought enough evidence

⁴¹JS Journal, 1839, 5, JSP, *LINK*. Theodore Turley reminiscence and journals, Sep. 1839-Jul. 1840, Typescript by Richard E. Turley, Jr., 5-7, MS 15603, CHL, *LINK*.

⁴²Saints by Sea: Latter-day Saint Immigration to America website, *LINK*. For biographical information on Theodore Turley, see Richard E. Turley, “Theodore Turley: A Biography” at Theodore Turley Family Organization website, *LINK*.

⁴³Joseph Smith to Vilate Murray Kimball, Mar. 2, 1841, MS 9670, CHL, *LINK*. In his letter to Vilate, Joseph Smith laments, “I am indeed sorry that any thing should have transpired which should have caused such a stir in the Church, and bro’t [brought] disgrace upon persons who are otherwise respectable.” Although he doesn’t name any parties involved, it appears that he is referencing the recent events involving Theodore Turley before the Nauvoo High Council.

⁴⁴Saints By Sea: Latter-day Saint Immigration to America website: *LINK*.

⁴⁵William Clayton Manchester Diary, 1840-42 (hereafter WCMD), Sep. 21, 1840, 72, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, *LINK*.

⁴⁶WCMD, Sep. 29, 1840, 75, *LINK*.

⁴⁷Theodore Turley Family Organization website, *LINK*.

⁴⁸Wilford Woodruff to George Albert Smith, Jan. 29, 1841, MS 1322, CHL, *LINK*.

⁴⁹Passengers on the *North America* (Sep. 8, 1840) included John and Jane Benbow, Thomas and Charlotte Jenkins, James Hill, Richard Slater, and John Parry Cope—all named in Turley’s charge. Others are uncertain: John Bisard may be John Bleazard; “Saly Cole” likely Sarah Cole. No Robert Tilor or Mary Ward appears. Passenger List at Saints by Sea website, *LINK*.

to prefer charges before the Nauvoo Stake High Council against Turley. The original charging document, filed January 26, 1841 by Benjamin L. Clapp and Nauvoo Legion Major William Niswanger, accuses Turley of “1...unch[r]istian conduct[t] While on the sea for romping and kissing the females and dancing 2 for Sleeping with two Wimin [women] Comeing up the Lake and on the road to Dixon ferry & till he ar[r]ived back.”⁵⁰ Apparently Turley’s bad behavior was not an errant moment, but was observed throughout the entire voyage on sea and land.

Touting his high office in the priesthood, Elder Turley was at first defiant of the charges. He warned the brethren that Brother Joseph would disregard anything they reported, as he shared the same spirit and priesthood authority. He implied that if they spoke to Joseph, he would not listen to them. But, after sufficient witness testimony was presented at the trial, “the charges were sustained. After which the President⁵¹ decided that the defendant [Turley], in order to retain his fellowship, should acknowledge, both before the Council, and also, to a public congregation, that he had acted unwisely, unjustly, imprudently, and unbecoming, and that he had set a bad example before his brethren and sisters.”⁵²

Though Turley finally “made a confession to the satisfaction of the Council and stated that he would rejoice in the opportunity of making the like confession before the publick,” he never acknowledged full sexual activity with the women. His “kissing and romping with the girls” and having been seen going to bed with two unidentified women⁵³ over a prolonged period was not enough for the council to feel confident in convicting the married man of adultery.⁵⁴ If Turley actually made a formal public confession, the record is not extant.

News of Turley’s actions made its way to England. On April 15, 1841, in Nauvoo, Mary Ann Young wrote to her husband Brigham Young who had not yet returned from his mission in Britain. Not mincing words, she expresses her dismay at recent events concerning Brigham’s friend, Theodore Turley. She writes that her “heart [had] been pained with the example” of some who journeyed from England, and that she “disapprove[d] of the fermilarityties that some are in faviour of in that country.” Of Turley, she mentions that “his appearance on the jo[u]rney . . . was very disgusting to many respectable people. He Repented and

⁵⁰Nauvoo Stake High Council papers, Oct. 1840–Nov. 1842, 8-10, LR 3102 23, CHL, *LINK*.

⁵¹It’s not certain if this refers to President Joseph Smith or Nauvoo Stake President William Marks.

⁵²Nauvoo Stake High Council Minutes, Mar. 8, 1840–May 20, 1842, 25-26, LR 3102 22, CHL, *LINK*.

⁵³Possibly Manchester native Elizabeth Ravenscroft, who was on the voyage with Turley. When she arrived at Nauvoo she was taken in by Vilate Kimball and it is possible that she was taken in because of what had occurred with Turley. Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, Jan. 27, 1841, MS 12476, CHL, *LINK*; Joseph Smith to Vilate Murray Kimball, Mar. 2, 1841, *LINK*. Mary Clift is also possible. She was on the voyage and became Turley’s first plural wife in Nauvoo.

⁵⁴Joseph Smith seems to have been equivocal on Turley’s guilt as well. Joseph Smith to Vilate Murray Kimball, Mar. 2, 1841, JSP, *LINK*.

came back into the Church again they say he is very humble. . . I have not received \not/ much from Br Turley, yet he says he is willing to do eny thing he can”⁵⁵

It appears Joseph Fielding also received the report. The charges of Turley sleeping with two women were likely what Joseph Fielding references in his journal when he notes that “E[lder] T” was cut off from the church for a similar sin. All of this evidence provides sufficiently strong proof to conclude that Joseph Fielding was indeed referring to Theodore Turley in his journal.

It is important to mention that in Nauvoo Turley would take his first spiritual wife, Mary Clift, an immigrant from Herefordshire, England. She had journeyed with Turley from England to Nauvoo. Turley also married her two sisters, Eliza and Sarah Clift as spiritual wives.⁵⁶ Turley’s immoral behavior on the journey from England to America, his subsequent adoption of spiritual wifery in Nauvoo, and his choice of three English sisters suggest the possibility that he had been introduced to a spiritual wife doctrine during his mission in England.

“E C”: Elder Hiram Clark?

Identifying “E C” is difficult, as Fielding mentions several elders with last names starting with “C.” Of seven possible married candidates, five are unlikely. Thomas Henry Clark and Frederick Cooke are unmentioned by Fielding, while J. Clark, James Cayton, and Alfred Cordon are weak matches due to missing records or distant assignments.⁵⁷

One possible candidate is Hiram Clark, a forty-four-year-old married Elder from Vermont.⁵⁸ Clark served three missions to England between late 1839 and 1846.⁵⁹ On December 8, 1839, Clark arrived in the British Mission with two other American Elders.⁶⁰ He served a short time in Manchester starting in January 1840.

⁵⁵Mary Ann Angell Young to Brigham Young, Apr. 15, 1841, CR 1234 1, CHL, *LINK*.

⁵⁶Turley gave April 26, 1844, as the date of his plural marriage to Sarah Clift. It appears he married Mary on the same day. Theodore Turley Family Memorial, 1843-1847, 2, MS 7983, CHL, *LINK*. See Mary Ann Clements, “Theodore Turley’s Nauvoo Plural Marriages: A Collection of Clifts,” in Cheryl L. Bruno, ed., *Secret Covenants: New Insights on Early Mormon Polygamy* (Signature Books, 2024), 338.

⁵⁷British mission information, Church History Biographical Database, *LINK*.

⁵⁸“Clark, Hyrum,” Patriarchal Blessing Index, 1833–1963, microfilm 392,643, U.S. and Canada Record Collection, FHL. For details on Clark’s life and ministry, see Donald Robert Shaffer, “A Forgotten Missionary: Hiram Clark, Mormon Itinerant British Emigration Organizer and First President of the L.D.S. Hawaii Mission, 1795-1853,” Master’s thesis, California State University Fullerton, 1990.

⁵⁹“Hiram Clark,” Church History Biographical Database, *LINK*; “Extract from Elder Hiram Clark’s Journal, and Address to the Saints in the British Islands,” *Millennial Star* 4, no. 10 (Feb. 1844): 147–148, *LINK*; Shaffer, “A Forgotten Missionary,” 121-123.

⁶⁰Joseph Fielding Journal Book 2, Jul. 1838-Mar. 1840 (hereafter JFJ-2), 99, *LINK*. See also History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, Dec. 8, 1839, 1002, JSP, *LINK*.

Clark demonstrated a pattern of taking liberties with and acting inappropriately toward women. Clark left his first English mission and sailed home on March 4, 1841. On the voyage from Liverpool to New Orleans, Clark was “charged with behaving himself unseemingly to sister Marie Hardman & other females.”⁶¹ The extent of his bad behavior isn’t known, but it appears that it did not escalate to physical contact as he was not charged with any physical sexual behavior. At most, Clark was forward in an uninvited and inappropriate way with these women. A few days later he acknowledged publicly what he had done. Alexander Neibaur, a Dutch saint among the group, reports in his journal: “Elder H. Clark rose [and] said if there was any that felt offended at any thing that he had done or said he begged their forgiveness[;] many shed tears at his humility, his case was not put to a vote.”⁶²

It is important to note the difference between Clark’s behavior and that of Elder Theodore Turley. Turley’s actions were serious enough to have formal charges brought in the Nauvoo High Council and he was nearly excommunicated. Clark arrived in Nauvoo not long after Turley’s trial. At that time, Turley’s actions were still being discussed and written about in Nauvoo by Joseph Smith and other Nauvoo citizens. Given that no formal charges were brought against Clark in Nauvoo or elsewhere, it is reasonable to conclude that his behavior with the women was not as serious as Theodore Turley’s. Moreover, Clark served a second mission to England not long after returning to Nauvoo.⁶³

From June 1842 to March of 1844, Clark served as second counselor to British mission President Reuben Hedlock.⁶⁴ After completing this mission and returning home to Nauvoo, a rumor about Clark reached President Hedlock. On July 14, 1844, he wrote to Apostle Williard Richards and explained that he was having a good deal of trouble with “the *spiritual wife system*” (as people were calling it) among some of the branches in the church in England. Hedlock also reported that the secret practice of spiritual wifery was causing much confusion because both members and non-members alike had come to him saying they believed the leaders of the church upheld the doctrine. Some had cited Hiram Clark as an example: “they say that Brother Hiram Clark has made free with some of the sisters.”⁶⁵ Hedlock also wrote that there was a rumor that Clark used to “sleep with a certain sister” in Macclesfield when he was there, and “also in Manchester.”⁶⁶ He did not clarify whether it was the same sister

⁶¹Alexander Neibaur Journal, Mar. 5, 1841, 4, MS 1674, CHL, *LINK*.

⁶²Neibaur, 5, *LINK*.

⁶³History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, Jun. 14, 1842, 1340, *LINK*.

⁶⁴British Mission Manuscript History, 10 October, 1842, LR 1140 2, CHL, *LINK*. Hiram Clark was first appointed counselor to President Thomas Ward and when Ward was released and Hedlock was appointed mission president, arriving in September 1843, Clark remained as second counselor. Shaffer, “A Forgotten Missionary,” 114.

⁶⁵Reuben Hedlock to Willard Richards, Jul. 14, 1844, 1-2, MS 1490, CHL (emphasis added), *LINK*.

⁶⁶Hedlock to Richards, 2.

in both places (Macclesfield is a town about 40 miles south of Manchester), or more than one woman.

Hedlock writes that he couldn't confirm the truth of the rumor: "I know not the truth of these statements, neither do I believe \know/ that brother Clark is guilty of [the] crime, but the freedom that he has manifested has given rise to the reports."⁶⁷ No further corroboration of the reports was established and no ecclesiastical discipline was enacted against Clark over the rumor. Hedlock asked Richards to speak to Clark and "caution" him about his behavior so that in case Clark returned to England, he would be more careful and be able to restore the influence he had lost with the members there.⁶⁸ In August of 1844, the Apostles in Nauvoo requested Clark to return to England.⁶⁹ Clark did so, arriving in 1845, this time with his wife.⁷⁰ He served his third and final mission to England without incident or any accusations of sexual misconduct.

Clark's inappropriate behavior while in England makes him a potential candidate to be Fielding's Elder C. However, there are challenges in connecting him directly to the behavior Fielding described. First, during his first mission to England, there is no available evidence of sexual misconduct with women in England. There is only inappropriate and unwanted behavior that didn't arise to charges of physical contact, and only after he had left the mission field. Fielding does not mention anything negative regarding Clark during his first mission. There are no mentions of any kind of misbehavior in any letters between mission leaders. No condemning journal entries or reports exist from anyone during this time. There is not a personal journal from Clark extant to examine.

Also, Clark was only in Manchester and Preston briefly—most likely between four to eight weeks.⁷¹ Even during that brief time, he would leave each week to preach in nearby communities from twenty to sixty miles away and then return for short stays in Manchester.⁷² During one stretch of weeks in May and June of 1840, he appears to have been recovering

⁶⁷Hedlock to Richards, 2.

⁶⁸Hedlock to Richards, 2.

⁶⁹Shaffer, "A Forgotten Missionary," 121.

⁷⁰Shaffer, 121-123.

⁷¹Joseph Fielding's diary, William Clayton's Manchester diary and letters between Clayton and Willard Richards document Clark as being in Manchester less than eight weeks between January and July of 1840. The rest of the time he was serving in towns from 20 to 60 miles outside of Manchester. In between proselytizing trips to Staffordshire, Burslem, the Potteries (Stoke-on-Trent), Macclesfield, Stockport, and Peover, Clark returned briefly to Manchester. During 1840, he was in Manchester briefly for three mission conferences. (History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, Apr. 17, 1840, *LINK*; Jul. 6, 1840, *LINK*; Oct. 8, 1840, *LINK*.) Clayton's diary mentions him occasionally in Manchester between January and April 1840. (WCMD, Jan. 12, 18, 31, Feb. 3, 14, 20, 24, 28, 29, Mar. 5, 27, 31, Apr. 13, 17-19, and 22, 1840.)

⁷²William Clayton letters to Willard Richards, Jan. 21, 23, 28 & 30, 1840; Feb. 3, 11, 20 & 28, 1840, MS 1490, CHL, *LINK*.

from an extended illness.⁷³ Starting in July of 1840 he was called to Scotland and spent the rest of his mission in Scotland and the Isle of Man. Before he returned to America, it appears he was only briefly in Manchester once more for a mission conference in October of 1840.⁷⁴ From the record, he does not appear to have much contact or association with branch members in Manchester, especially when compared to other Elders such as Fielding or Clayton.⁷⁵

Clark's lack of time in Manchester is significant given that Fielding's knowledge about Elder C came from members of the church in Manchester. The pregnant sister Fielding mentioned was a church member in Manchester and the Elder that impregnated her had used Elder C as his excuse to have sexual relations with her. This suggests that Elder C's activities were with women in Manchester and it does not appear that Fielding was associating Elder C's behavior in locations outside of Manchester. The fact that Clark was only in Manchester for a short period of time makes it far less likely that he had time and opportunity to develop relationships such that he could go to bed with "different women" and sleep "often" with Sister P.

Given these challenges, concluding that Hiram Clark is Fielding's "Elder C" requires speculation based on Clark's inappropriate behavior with women on the voyage home from his mission, and an unsubstantiated rumor that came forward four years later. Given that he didn't receive any formal church discipline as a result of his behavior in England, we are left only to infer he was capable of the bad behavior in order to draw conclusions without any further evidence.⁷⁶ Clark would only be the most likely candidate for Fielding's Elder C if it weren't for another Elder for whom there is more contemporaneous and compelling evidence: Elder William Clayton.

"E C": Elder William Clayton?

Unlike Hiram Clark, William Clayton served extensively in Preston and Manchester for over two years and had a close working relationship with Joseph Fielding. In his journal, Fielding mentions Clark only a handful of times rather perfunctorily.⁷⁷ By contrast, Fielding

⁷³JFJ-3, Apr. 18, 1840, 10, *LINK*.

⁷⁴For Clark's itinerary and illness, see Hiram Clark, "Extract from Elder Hiram Clark's Journal," *Millennial Star* 4, no. 10 (Feb. 1844): 145-48, *LINK*.

⁷⁵Fielding and Clayton had both served in Preston and Manchester for over eighteen months by the time Clark arrived. Their journal and letters are filled with close interactions with Manchester branch members.

⁷⁶A decade later in Hawaii, Clark was disfellowshipped for "unbecoming liberties with the native females" and asking "foolish questions." While inappropriate, there were no charges or evidence of adultery. His later conduct reflects on his character but not on the events of 1840. James Keeler Journal, Feb. 22, 1851, 43-44, MS 1421, CHL, *LINK*; Addison Pratt Journal, April 4, 1851, 47, MS 8226, CHL, *LINK*.

⁷⁷Fielding only references Hiram Clark eight times in his journal.

writes of Clayton often and affectionately.⁷⁸ Significantly, Fielding often truncates Clayton's name to "Elder C." or "Bro. C."⁷⁹ As we will see, Elder William Clayton, a twenty four year-old factory clerk⁸⁰ from Penwortham near Preston, England,⁸¹ is clearly the best candidate.

Just weeks before leaving England for Nauvoo on April 20, 1838,⁸² president Heber C. Kimball ordained Joseph Fielding a high priest and to serve as the next president of the British Mission. At the same time, William Clayton was also ordained a high priest and as second counselor to Fielding in the presidency.⁸³ By mid-October 1838, Clayton was called to serve in Manchester.⁸⁴ Clayton left his pregnant wife, Ruth, and their young child to begin his labors.⁸⁵ It appears from Fielding's and Clayton's diaries that Clayton was a diligent missionary, and beloved by many. During his two-plus years of service, Clayton may deserve the credit for growing the Preston, Manchester branch more than anyone else.⁸⁶

Clayton left an extraordinarily detailed journal. It gives tremendous insight into Clayton as a man and missionary, and to the broader conditions and activities of the Manchester Mormons. His diminutive Manchester diary, or daybook,⁸⁷ is an important and often overlooked source related to Mormon history in England. Unlike his other "journals," the Manchester diary is unquestionably a true daily record. Written in a stream-of-consciousness style, it captures in-the-moment insights and reflections untouched by the passage of time or outside influence.⁸⁸ In his Manchester diary, Clayton records many curious things. His entries have

⁷⁸For Fielding's expressions of affection and love toward Clayton, see JFJ-2, Jan. 29, 1840, 110, *LINK*; Feb. 6, 1840, 114, *LINK*; JFJ-3, Apr. 4, 1840, 6, *LINK*; 23 May, 1840, 21, *LINK*.

⁷⁹Fielding mentions Clayton 68 times—far more than Clark. While mention frequency isn't definitive, it's a useful starting point. For examples of Fielding abbreviating Clayton to "Elder C." or "Bro. C." see JFJ-1, Apr. 10-20, 1838, 63, *LINK*; JFJ-2, Aug. 14, 1839, 73, *LINK*; Oct. 27, 1839, 85, *LINK*; Jan. 29, 1840, 110, *LINK* (distinguishes "Elder C." from Hyrum Clark); Feb. 7, 1840, 114, *LINK*. Fielding never truncates Clark's name to Elder C. or Bro. C., but always writes his last name in full.

⁸⁰"Death of Elder William Clayton," *Deseret Evening News* 13, no. 11 (Dec. 4, 1879): 3, *LINK*.

⁸¹Preston, in Lancashire, England was an industrial town of around 50,000 residents in 1840.

⁸²British Mission information, Church History Biographical Database, *LINK*; Heber C. Kimball was set apart as the first mission president in England on June 4, 1837. He opened the first branch of the church in Preston, England in August of 1837. He continued serving as president until his departure for America in April of 1838.

⁸³History, 1838–1856, volume B-1, Apr. 1, 1838, 786, JSP, *LINK*.

⁸⁴History, 1838–1856, volume B-1, Oct. 19, 1838, 837, JSP, *LINK*. Manchester, Lancashire England was an industrial city 35 miles southeast of Preston. In 1840, its population was between 250,000 and 300,000.

⁸⁵James B. Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear, The Story of William Clayton* (Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 9-10.

⁸⁶Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 10.

⁸⁷Clayton's Manchester daybook (WCMD) is smaller than a 3X5 card, and is written in very small handwriting, in pencil on both sides of the page. *LINK*.

⁸⁸Clayton's Nauvoo journals, unlike his raw Manchester diary, are polished and resemble the Council of Fifty record in style and format. Nearly identical in appearance, they were likely created for official use and were used by Church historians by October 1845. Unlike his England diary, these writings were meant for

astounding resemblance to details mentioned in Joseph Fielding’s diary entry of September 2, 1841 when Fielding recounted what he had learned about spiritual wifery happening among the Mormons in Manchester.

Clayton & the “New Companion Revelation”

“Too Great Familiarity”

In his February 12th, 1840 journal entry, Clayton writes: “My mother came this A M to say that she thought my wife was dissatisfied on account of my being from home & it was hard for Moon’s [his in-laws] to keep her & children.”⁸⁹ Ruth and her family struggled in her husband’s absence, but that did not deter the elder in his missionary work. His preoccupation was so intense, that he rarely mentioned his wife, Ruth, and never by name. From January through September 1840 until Clayton and his family departed England, Clayton documented a total of ten letters that he sent to her and a handful she sent in return.⁹⁰ However, his diary is filled with many intimate details of interactions with local women. Although Clayton did conduct daily missionary activity, arguably the majority of his time was spent fraternizing with females.

This fact is borne out first by the sheer amount of time Clayton spent alone with women, many of whom were eligible bachelorettes. He passed virtually every day, from morning until night, in the company of one or more women. Clayton ate nearly every meal, from morning breakfast to late night supper, with one or more women.⁹¹ He was constantly accompanied by one or more females on walks to and from ministerial appointments. He was almost never accompanied by a male companion during these visits. Among the many women he spent time with were Elizabeth Crooks, Margaret Jones, Elizabeth Dewsnup, Elizabeth Battersby, Alice and Jane Hardman, Ann Booth and her daughter Sarah Ann, Mary Aspen, Betsy Poole, Sarah Perkins, Elizabeth Prince, and a number of others. He spent by far the most time with Rebecca Partington and Sarah Crooks. Except for the brief trips Clayton took outside of Manchester—during the months of February through the end of May, when he began his preparations to leave for America—Clayton was in the company of Sarah and Rebecca nearly

future readers. The full Nauvoo journals remain unreleased as of July 2025.

⁸⁹WCMD, Feb. 12, 1840, 22, *LINK*.

⁹⁰Ten of Clayton’s letters to his wife, and six he received from her are mentioned in his diary. In comparison, Clayton notes 19-20 letters to various other women throughout the diary.

⁹¹See analysis of English historical mealtimes at Lynne Olver, The Food Timeline website, *LINK*. Understanding Victorian mealtimes clarifies Clayton’s journal. Breakfast was around 9 a.m., dinner in the afternoon or early evening, and supper between 9 p.m. and midnight. Water, cacao, or tea were common breaks. Clayton used abbreviations like B at Hs (breakfast at Hardman’s), D at Millers, S with S&R (supper with Sarah and Rebecca), “took W with E Perkins” (water), and C with Sands (cocoa or coffee).

every day. Fraternization between that many women and a married missionary,⁹² even if it were purely platonic, could certainly be considered “too great familiarity.”

However, it is in the substance of these interactions, not merely the frequency of their mention, where this familiarity is clearly demonstrated.

“Select Little Company;” “Choice Band”

Fielding mentioned a “select little company” or “choice band” that met clandestinely and thought themselves above the common saints. They kept their “revelations” under an apparent strict oath of secrecy. This little company appears to have taught and believed a form of spiritual wifery. The account suggests that the majority of the “choice band” were females, creating a conveniently imbalanced ratio.

In his own writings, Clayton describes many meetings at which two or more participants, mostly female, were present with him. One or two other men are mentioned on rare occasions. His meetings with women occurred most frequently at the Hardman boarding house and at Thomas Miller’s where the women were present around meal times. He also met at William Miller’s and possibly a few other locations where mostly females were present.⁹³ These meetings appear to have been more social in nature rather than ecclesiastical visits or gatherings. Quite often, grievances were aired and jealousies expressed, leaving the reader to wonder what could have caused such constant strife amongst these women.

⁹²Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780–1880* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 280, *LINK*; Shona Parker, *How the Victorians Lived, “The Expectations of Courtship”* (Pen & Sword Books, Ltd, 2024), 28 online Kindle edition; Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* (Touchstone, 1993), 54–56, Kindle edition; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (University of California Press, 1995), 105–107, *LINK*. Even in working-class and dissenting religious communities of early Victorian England, it was considered improper—even scandalous—for a married man to spend time alone with women who were not his wife. The cultural shift toward respectability and sexual restraint is reflected in Perkin’s observation that by 1850, the English had become one of the world’s most “inhibited” and “priggish” societies. Parker explains that even betrothed couples were not allowed to be alone together, and working-class girls were taught to avoid any situation that could suggest impropriety. Pool’s summary of nineteenth-century etiquette makes clear that unchaperoned contact between men and women was highly restricted and that even casual public interactions were tightly governed. Clark’s research into Methodist and Baptist congregations reveals that such standards were upheld in church culture enforced through ecclesiastical discipline, with men and women frequently expelled for fornication or perceived impropriety, demonstrating that while the ideals were often broken, they remained binding and deeply internalized.

⁹³WCMD. Clayton notes meals or visits at homes of several women, many likely single: the Sands’ (brother and sister), Elizabeth Battersby, Elizabeth Prince (group visit), Sarah Perkins (he sleeps there Feb. 25, often sees her at Millers), Ann Booth (meets women there), Elizabeth Dewsnup (occasional visits), and Margaret Jones (seen often, not at her home).

Women also frequently gave Clayton money and fruit as gifts.⁹⁴ For example, on January 13th, he took supper at Thomas Miller's. While there he was met by Sarah Crooks, Rebecca Partington, Sarah Perkins, and Betsy Crooks. Sarah Crooks was "grieved" at Sarah Perkins for "being hurt over some little thing." During his visit, several of the sisters gave him twenty shillings to buy new pants. On the 25th he had supper at Hardmans' with "several of the sisters." On the 5th of February, Clayton was again at the Hardmans' with "many of the sis[ters]" who gave him money and fruit. He discussed relationship troubles with one of the women. On February 22nd, Clayton was at Thomas Miller's again for supper. He was joined by Susan Miller, Betsy Crooks, and Margaret Jones. Susan was upset at something and Betsy was "low" because she had "given way to her temper." These types of entries are frequent throughout the diary.⁹⁵ As far as the record portrays, Clayton was ardently fixated on women other than his wife, who is virtually absent from his diary.

Many Strange Visions

In late 1841, Fielding wrote of women who had "many strange Visions" and dreams.⁹⁶ They prophesied judgments such as this: "one, that an elder's wife would die and he should be married to another certain Person."⁹⁷ Appearing to corroborate Fielding, on the 19th of January, 1840, Clayton writes: "There has been several dreams in the church concerning my wife during the last 10 days . . ." Five women related dreams to Clayton that have a similar resonance to what Fielding recorded in the Fall of 1841. Clayton records that Betsy Dewsnup and Margaret Jones both had the same dream in which they "saw [Clayton] at Hardmans with one child in great trouble & the child was crying for bread."⁹⁸ In the women's dreams, Clayton asked the women to get the child something to eat while he went somewhere else. Catherine Beates told Clayton of a dream she had that day. She dreamt that Clayton was "stripped and in the greatest trouble. *my wife was either dead or near to dying* & I had one child with me."⁹⁹ On the 23rd of January, Clayton writes that "Sister Mary Hardman has dreamed about seeing my wife with her hair down upon her back all in disorder—she seemed

⁹⁴WCMD. Clayton documents at least 160 instances of receiving gifts in his diary. Of those, about 130 were from women. While it was not unusual for Mormon missionaries, who went without purse or scrip, to receive gifts and financial support from church members, Clayton receiving over eighty percent of his support from women is notable.

⁹⁵There are far too many to list for the purposes of this paper, however, see WCMD entries for Jan. 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, Feb. 5, May 30.

⁹⁶Compare Joseph Smith's 1841 condemnation of Scottish Irvingite prophetesses with these English prophetesses. Joseph Smith, Jr., "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 11 (Apr. 1, 1842): 746-47, [LINK](#).

⁹⁷JFJ-4, 74, [LINK](#).

⁹⁸WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5, [LINK](#).

⁹⁹WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

in distress and was come to Manchester to seek me but I was gone to Burslem—no children with her.”¹⁰⁰

Fielding additionally mentions that, “some who came from America, went far beyond [engaging in the familiarity that] we had ever done or sanctioned so much so that Elder C went in to bed with different women.”¹⁰¹ Evidently, some of the American missionaries had a measurable influence on the Manchester saints and especially on Elder C. The American brethren that William Clayton mentions in his journal at this time were Elders Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards and Hiram Clark.¹⁰² Clayton reports that these men had an influence on his friend Sarah Crooks, so much that she told him that she “dreamed that one of the American brethren was talking & *joking me [Clayton] about having a second wife* & Sarah joked &c so she thought I had then a second wife.”¹⁰³

Sarah Crooks’ dream exemplifies Fielding’s report of American brethren having an effect on Manchester Mormons as they did on Elder C. The dreams of Betsy Dewsnup, Margaret Jones, Catherine Beates, Mary Hardman and Sarah Crooks regarding Clayton’s marriage and family are remarkable corroboration of Fielding’s account of Manchester women having strange visions and dreams.

Clayton himself had evocative dreams where he was an eligible bachelor with many desirable potential mates. He records: “I dreamt I was in the middle of a garden full of ripe fruit & after bringing some home was going again & my wife ran up a hill befor[e] me & vanished out of my sight[.] Another night I dreamed that I was at Hodsons Penwortham amongst ripe gooseberrys as above I felt like a single or unmarried person.”¹⁰⁴ Here Clayton dreamt of feeling like an unmarried man in the midst of ripe fruit, a well known literary symbol for sexual temptation.¹⁰⁵ He later recorded other highly symbolic dreams that carried equally portentous messages.¹⁰⁶

In September, 1841, Fielding wrote of a woman that “had once pronounced a curse or Woe upon me” and “Prophetes[s]es” that had prophesied “who would stand and who would

¹⁰⁰WCMD, Jan. 23, 1840, 8, *LINK*.

¹⁰¹JFD-4, 76, *LINK*.

¹⁰²Elders Orson Pratt, George A. Smith and other Americans were in England at the time, but Clayton doesn’t mention them at this time so it appears the American Elders Clayton is alluding to are Woodruff, Richards and Clark.

¹⁰³WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹⁰⁴WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5, *LINK*.

¹⁰⁵One well-known example of this is Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market* (London and Cambridge, Macmillan and Co., 1862), *LINK*.

¹⁰⁶On February 3rd he recorded: “have dreamed that I was going to baptize my father where the water was very muddy & soon as we got into to it it arose almost to our heads & I could not baptize him—I also dreamed that a raging fever was making desolation in the town.” WCMD, Feb. 3, 1840, 18, *LINK*.

not.”¹⁰⁷ On March 6, 1840, Clayton’s account of another woman’s dream and prophesying is uncanny in its resemblance:

She also saw in a dream . . . 12 small children dressed in white—one of them was bro[ther] Richards child. she knew it. it came down & sat on his shoulder & bending down looked in his face. the scene closed—she says bro[ther] R[ichards]. will not live long—he is expecting a many things but in some he will be disap[p]ointed. she says she foresaw all that has taken place concerning Arthur Smith. & she prophecies bad concerning sis Mary Wytch &c.¹⁰⁸

The woman’s dream and prophecy are striking. Not only did she pronounce a sort of curse on Willard Richards, but she prophesied concerning Arthur Smith and Mary Wych. Arthur Smith was about to be married to Betsy Holden, a married woman. Betsy’s husband was a soldier who had left for India around four years prior and Betsy had not heard from him for about three or four years.¹⁰⁹ There was no evidence that he was dead or had divorced her. Arthur Smith claimed to have had a vision that “began the union” with Betsy.¹¹⁰ Arthur and Betsy married.¹¹¹ Arthur’s vision and this woman who “foresaw” what happened with Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden is further confirmation of the Companion Revelation. Mary Wych is often referred to as Mary Powell in Clayton and Fielding’s journals. She was a widow who was in a relationship with a much younger man, John Wych. They were living together in the same house and were in a romantic, possibly sexual relationship. Mary married John on January 28, 1840 and adopted the last name of Wych by the time of this March 6 dream entry.¹¹²

It is important to note that this sister’s strange visions and prophecies concerning Arthur Smith and Mary Wych are significant because they show that the Companion Revelation was not merely about identifying companions in a future or premortal life. Fielding’s phrase was, “it was shewn them who should be companions in another world.” On its own, this could be read as the Manchester saints receiving revelations about companions they would have after death or before birth. However, the March 6th entry makes clear that this Manchester woman was receiving manifestations and prophesying about relationships in the here and now. Arthur Smith reportedly had a vision of his new companion, who was already a married woman, and another woman received a manifestation confirming their companionship. The

¹⁰⁷JFD-4, 75, *LINK*.

¹⁰⁸WCMD, Mar. 6, 1840, 35, *LINK*.

¹⁰⁹JFJ-2, Jan. 14, 1840, 103, *LINK*; see also WCMD, Jan. 31, 1840, 16, *LINK*.

¹¹⁰WCMD, Jan. 31, 1840, 16, *LINK*.

¹¹¹WCMD, Feb. 5, 1840, 19, *LINK*.

¹¹²JFJ-2, Jan. 14, 1840, 103, *LINK*; WCMD, Jan. 3, 1840, 2, *LINK*; Jan. 28, 1840, 12, *LINK*; Jan. 29, 1840, 13, *LINK*; Jan. 31, 1840, 13, *LINK*.

same woman also prophesied ill concerning Mary Wych, who had been living with a man before marrying him.

These remarkable entries from Clayton's diary clearly show women receiving "many strange Visions" related to the distress and possible dissolution of Clayton's marriage and family. Clayton's record details stark examples of "Prophetes[s]es" prophesying judgements and curses. Sarah Crooks' and Clayton's dreams even alluded to the possibility of his having a new companion. All of this is in stark alignment with Fielding's account.

Perhaps one of the most arresting instances in the diary that resonates strongly with elements of the "new Companion Revelation" is found in what Clayton relates about his friends, Susan and Thomas Miller. On the 19th of February, 1840, Clayton ate "B[reakfast] at H[ardman]'s." He saw Betsy Poole, who told him that Susan Miller was "jealous" of her husband, Thomas. Betsy reported to William:

[Thomas] wants [Susan] out of the way. if she was to die he would be married again in 3 months &c—Thomas wanted to know *who he would be married to* &c—she would not tell him—he says he will not go to his work untill she does tell him & she says she will not—T[homas] is very much troubled &c—Thomas has practised kissing all in the house before he goes to bed &c¹¹³

This entry is startling in its similarity to Fielding's report of a sister who dreamt that "an Elder's wife would die and he should be married to another certain Person."¹¹⁴ Fielding records that it was mostly females who received the manifestations of "who should be Companions in another world."¹¹⁵ Likewise, in Clayton's account, it was Susan, not her husband Thomas, who learned who his companion should be. Clayton indicates that during this time, Thomas made a practice of kissing whatever women were in the house at the time. Clearly, this would be right in line with Fielding's description of "too great familiarity between brethren and sisters in [Manchester]."¹¹⁶

In the following days, Clayton describes the effect this manifestation had on Thomas and Susan Miller. On February 21st, he ate supper at their home, where Sarah Crooks was present. Susan was so "troubled with jealousy" that she wept and told Clayton she had "heard that Th[oma]s had intended to buy Sarah Isherwood a new cloak." The next day, after another visit to the Millers for supper with several sisters, Clayton notes that Susan was still "grieved."¹¹⁷

¹¹³WCMD, Feb. 19, 1840, 25 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹¹⁴JFJ-4, 74, *LINK*.

¹¹⁵JFJ-4, 73, *LINK*.

¹¹⁶At the time, Sarah Crooks and Rebecca Partington were likely living with the Millers and among the women Thomas kissed. On March 14, they moved to the Hardmans', becoming Clayton's housemates. WCMD, Jan. 14, 21, 22, 29, Feb. 22, 27, Mar. 3, 6, 7, 14.

¹¹⁷WCMD, Feb. 21, 1840, p, 39, *LINK*.

Two days later, Clayton again spent the day at the Miller home, where several sisters were also present. He learned that Thomas had “struck” Susan that morning, though he quickly “repented” and “desired that they both might begin anew.”¹¹⁸ Susan forgave him. Later that day, an argument broke out among the sisters. Margaret Jones was “grieved” with Betsy Crooks and said she wanted to leave the Millers, prompting an outburst from Betsy. Clayton records:

Betsy Crooks is grieved at them all—she says they use her unkindly, call her a hypocrite &c—says she has made up her mind to leave the church. I feel to weep over her. There seems to be a spirit of contention amongst them.¹¹⁹

Sometime during this visit, Clayton “advised the saints to give up the practice of kissing.”¹²⁰ Perhaps he recognized that Thomas and others engaging in the practice had helped stir the “spirit of contention” he witnessed that day.

An observation should be made about Clayton’s reference to this “practice of kissing.” Clayton’s biographer James B. Allen offers this interpretation: “The Manchester Saints, as well as some other English members, had another intriguing custom. They took seriously Paul’s suggestion to the Romans that they ‘salute one another with a holy kiss,’¹²¹ and often did so as they gathered for meetings.”¹²² Allen appears to base this conclusion on George A. Smith’s 1847 memoir, in which Smith recalls: “It appears that some of the Elders who have been raised up in England had taught that, ‘There was no harm in greeting each other with a holy kiss,’ and that some of those who had labored in Manchester, had set an example of this kind.”¹²³

Allen’s claim—that the Manchester Saints sincerely followed the New Testament admonition—overlooks key contextual evidence. While it is possible that some elders initially encouraged the practice, the way it developed in Manchester was unlike the “holy kiss” practiced by other nineteenth-century Christian sects. Among Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren groups, the kiss was a solemn ritual, apparently performed exclusively man-to-man or woman-to-woman, often in association with foot washing, and always with an air of reverence and restraint.¹²⁴ The Manchester practice was something else entirely.

¹¹⁸WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 28, *LINK*.

¹¹⁹WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 28, *LINK*.

¹²⁰WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 28, *LINK*.

¹²¹Romans 16:16. Joseph Smith made a noteworthy change to this passage. His inspired translation reads: “Salute one another with a *holy salutation*.” New Testament Revision 2, 126 (second numbering), JSP, *LINK*.

¹²²Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 16-17.

¹²³George A. Smith Autobiography and Journals, Apr. 18, 1840, MS 17190, Transcript by Historian’s Office staff, CHL, *LINK*.

¹²⁴Among 19th-century Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren groups, the Holy Kiss was a solemn,

On April 18, 1840, George A. Smith arrived in Manchester and visited the Hardman boarding house. He was greeted by a group of “about twenty sisters, many of them young and handsome.” One young woman—“a little beauty,” as Smith puts it—approached him at the urging of the others and said demurely, “Brother Smith, we want a kiss of you.” Smith writes that all eyes were fixed on him, “flashing like stars on a clear night.” Deeply embarrassed, he “had to summon some resolution to tell her that kissing was no part of [his] mission to England.” The sisters’ “countenances fell,” and from that moment, though Smith was a bachelor, he was regarded “as no lady’s man.”¹²⁵

Just a few months later, on July 7, a church council was held at the *Millennial Star* office in Manchester. Elder Parley Pratt presided over the meeting which included Mission President Joseph Fielding, Willard Richards, Brigham Young, and other elders and officers. The “practice of kissing which had become common in Manchester” was formally addressed. The council did not view it as a holy ritual. Brigham Young spoke of “the evil of it” and asked Fielding “with whom it had begun.” Fielding replied that he believed it had started with the women of Manchester. The council resolved that no one should be condemned, but “it was shewn that the practice was best set aside, or it would lead to evil.”¹²⁶

Clearly, the Manchester saints’ kissing practice—possibly initiated by the sisters—was not understood as a sacred rite. It appears instead to have been part of what Fielding describes elsewhere as “too great familiarity between brethren and sisters in this land.” The practice that Clayton warned against was most likely connected to his friend Thomas Miller’s behavior, specifically his kissing “all [the women] in the house before [bedtime].” That casual intimacy seems to have contributed to Susan Miller’s jealousy and grief—especially when coupled with Thomas’s demand of Susan to disclose the identity of his “new companion.”

Susan’s forgiveness of Thomas after he struck her proved short-lived. Three days later, on February 27, Clayton returned to the Millers and found Susan ready to leave Thomas and “break up house,” saying she “could not bear it.” She was “weary” of having “to[o] much work.”¹²⁷ Perhaps so. We don’t know whether she ever followed through. But Thomas’s desire to know who his new companion should be apparently did not subside. He would eventu-

gender-segregated ritual symbolizing Christian love, often performed during the love feast alongside foot washing and communion. Rooted in scripture (e.g., Romans 16:16) and characterized by restraint and propriety, the practice distinguished itself from secular greetings and continues today in some communities. Nearly all documented Christian sects strictly limited such rituals to same-gender participants. Tony Walsh, Jeff Bach, & Sam Funkhouser, “Old German Baptist Brethren: Plain but Different, Part 1,” *The Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* 3, no. 2 (2023): 48-70, *LINK*; Michael Philip Penn, “A Brief History of the Christian Ritual Kiss,” Church Life Journal website, *LINK*; “Holy Kiss,” Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Encyclopedia website, *LINK*. The only notable exception was a brief 1844 outbreak among “spiritualizers” within the Millerite Adventist movement (see footnote 137).

¹²⁵G. A. Smith Autobiography, Apr. 18, 1840, *LINK*.

¹²⁶JFJ-3, Jul. 7, 1840, 37-38, *LINK*.

¹²⁷WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 42-43, *LINK*.

ally take a second companion—or spiritual wife—named Elizabeth Thompson.¹²⁸ Clayton’s account of Thomas and Susan Miller not only provides compelling corroboration of the Companion Revelation but also demonstrates its destructive effects.

On February 28, 1840, Clayton wrote to Elder Willard Richards about what had happened. He reports: “T[homas] Miller & wife are about to break up house again. . . . the poor girls will again be left without a home. I only feel to[o] much for them.”¹²⁹ Clayton was clearly affected by the Millers’ deteriorating relationship.

Just prior to his mention of the Miller’s troubles, in the same letter, Clayton reveals a private struggle of his own. He shares with Richards that he was “*perplexed with a temptation which I have been so much troubled with of late would to God from it. it is like a sword piercing my very soul. It will teach me to bear with the weaknesses of my brethren & sisters.*”¹³⁰ Clayton doesn’t elaborate on the temptation in the letter to Richards, but he does do so in his diary.

The previous evening, Clayton was with Sarah Crooks and Rebecca Partington at the Hardman’s where all three were living at the time.¹³¹ Clayton told the women about Susan Miller’s plans to leave her husband. Clayton then records this startling admission:

R[ebecca] seemed much troubled & Sarah appeared rather tempted to get married. I felt to sorrow on this account. I don’t want Sara[h] to be married—I was much troubled & tempted on her account & felt to pray that the Lord would preserve me from impure affections . . . I certai[n]ly feel my love towards her to increase but shall strive against it[.] I feel to[o] much to covet her & afraid lest her troubles should cause her to get married. The Lord keep me pure & preserve me from doing wrong.¹³²

The “sword piercing his soul” was Clayton’s temptation toward Sarah Crooks.

When considering whether “Elder C” is William Clayton, it is important to recognize what his own words reveal about him. Much later, in 1874, Clayton signed a sworn affidavit in which he references Sarah. Regarding his relationship with her he claims that there was

¹²⁸Manchester Branch Historical Record Book, May 19, 1848, cited by Jan G. Harris, “Mormons in Victorian England,” (1987), BYU Scholars Archive, Theses and Dissertations, 4767, 76, *LINK*. “On May 19, 1848, Thomas Miller was called before the [Manchester Branch] council and was charged with having taught the ‘two wife system’. Miller denied it and claimed he had only one wife. The council had evidence against Miller and asked Miller to make a commitment to give up the company of Elizabeth Thompson who was not his wife. Miller refused and was excommunicated.”

¹²⁹William Clayton to Willard Richards, Feb. 28, 1840, 2, MS 1490, CHL, *LINK*.

¹³⁰Clayton to Richards, Feb. 28, 1840 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹³¹Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 23. Sarah and Rebecca appear to have moved into the Hardmans’ boarding house sometime in late January or early February 1840.

¹³²WCMD, Feb. 27, 1840, 31, *LINK*.

*“nothing farther than an attachment such as a brother and sister in the church might rightfully entertain for each other.”*¹³³ Clayton’s February 27 entry suggests that his later-sworn statement in his affidavit is less than truthful. The remainder of his journal demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that his relationship with Sarah was far more than an innocent attachment.

By this point in the investigation of Fielding’s “Elder C,” there is already strong indication that he is in reality William Clayton. Clayton’s documentation of “too great familiarity” is frequent. His numerous mentions of “strange visions” and dreams received mostly by women and related to his wife and family are stunning. His own dreams of being a single man tempted by “fruit” other than his wife are telling. Clayton’s account of his friends Thomas and Susan Miller’s conflict over Susan knowing who her husband’s new companion would be is compelling. And Clayton’s admission of his love and temptation for Sarah Crooks reveals just how overly familiar he had become with her. All of this is unmistakably in line with Fielding’s description of the “Companion Revelation” and his description of “Elder C.” To fully draw the conclusion, however, it is important to closely examine Clayton’s relationships with the women in Manchester, and especially with Sarah Crooks.

William, Sarah, & Different Women

Clayton first mentions Sarah Crooks on January 13, 1840. It is not clear when their relationship began. A journal from Clayton prior to January 1840, is not extant. He had been serving as a missionary for over eighteen months by this point. Yet, by February 27, he was discernibly in love with her. Although, for a moment, he desired to curb his covetous desires for her, that desire apparently was short-lived.

The two spent increasingly more time together at various hours of the day and night. Clayton was in Manchester the majority of each month from February through May.¹³⁴ And whenever he was there, his time with Sarah steadily increased until he spent nearly every day with her. Over those months, they shared many intimate conversations and moments together. They took long walks, wrote letters and handed them to each other, and talked long into the night after supper. Oftentimes Sarah would accompany Clayton to ministerial appointments. It was not unusual for Clayton to be alone with her. Sometimes they were accompanied by her best friend, Rebecca. As all three lived at Hardman’s, it was convenient for a late-night conversation after supper to continue into breakfast the next morning.¹³⁵

¹³³William Clayton Affidavit, Feb. 16, 1874, MS 3423, CHL (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹³⁴Clayton traveled outside of Manchester a total of 8 days in February, 6 days in March, 4 days in April, 8 days in May, and 5 days in June.

¹³⁵For a few examples see WCMD, Mar. 14-15, 1840, 40, *LINK*; Mar. 30-31, 1840, 45, *LINK*; Apr. 18-19, 1840, 45, *LINK*; Apr. 26-27, 1840, 53-54, *LINK*; Apr. 29-30, 1840, 54-55, *LINK*.

Aside from being with Sarah virtually every day that he was in Manchester from the end of March to the end of May, Clayton records interactions with Sarah, Rebecca, and other women that are quite revealing. After an evening of preaching on March 30, four women accompanied Clayton on the four-mile walk home from Prestwich to Manchester. Clayton's feet were very sore when he arrived home to find Sarah there. She gave him a pint of warm porter. Clayton then describes something quite unexpected and puzzling—Sarah washed Clayton's feet.¹³⁶

Even in today's morally permissive climate, a young woman washing a married man's feet while alone together in either one's apartment might raise eyebrows. At the very least, it would likely elicit a conversation about healthy and appropriate boundaries from concerned family, friends, and especially the man's wife. But in the burgeoning Victorian era, displays of physical intimacy such as this were undoubtedly seen as a serious breach of decorum. Even if only symbolic or ritualistic, such a display would still be an inappropriate level of familiarity between the sexes. Even among the working class in Manchester, where social norms could be somewhat less rigid, any such act would most assuredly put Sarah's reputation at tremendous risk, whether it was innocent or not. Clayton's involvement would likely have been seen as a serious betrayal of his marriage. And this was only the first of eight occasions when Sarah would wash Clayton's feet.¹³⁷

On April 1, 1840, Clayton returned to the Hardmans' where Mother Elizabeth Hardman and Sarah Crooks were waiting for him. Clayton and Sarah ate a late supper together and afterwards she again washed his feet. She told him about a dream she had the previous night: "she thought a man brought a young man before her & said he was to be her companion." Apparently, Sarah had her own manifestation regarding a new companion for herself, similar to what Susan Miller had learned regarding her husband, Thomas. Clayton tried to persuade

¹³⁶WCMD, Mar. 30, 1840, 45, *LINK*.

¹³⁷Though foot-washing was practiced among certain 19th-century Christian sects—such as the Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren—it was uniformly conducted in gender-segregated settings with great solemnity and decorum. Mixed-gender (or "promiscuous") foot washing was virtually unknown in Christian tradition prior to 1840. A rare and short-lived exception emerged following the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, when a radical splinter group of "spiritualizers" within the Millerite Adventist movement began practicing mixed-gender foot washing and holy kissing as supposed signs of spiritual purity, eventually introducing concepts of spiritual wifery. These practices were swiftly condemned by leading Millerites—including William Miller and Joshua V. Himes—at the Albany Conference of 1845 and decisively rejected by the broader movement. George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 253-56, *LINK*; George R. Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010), 215-16, *LINK*. It should be noted that Clayton's reference to Sarah washing his feet eight times (and Betsy Poole on one occasion) was well outside the norms of Christian and LDS theology of his day. This marks a significant development in Mormon practice and will be shown has ties to spiritual wifery. This subject will be treated more thoroughly hereafter. See footnote 236 of this paper.

her that her dream was not true. Sarah “was troubled & thought in her own mind, she would not be in a hurry.” Immediately after the journal entry where Clayton relates Sarah’s dream, five lines have been redacted with dark pencil.¹³⁸

April 3 began with breakfast at the Hardman’s. Clayton spent the afternoon at “D[inner] & Coffee” at Sister Booth’s and was joined by a number of sisters. He learned of trouble between Sister Ann Booth and her husband Robert “going from house to house-abusing his wife and idling &c.” After receiving gifts from Sister Booth and her daughter Sarah Ann, Betsy and Christiana Crooks, and Sister Mary Aspen, Clayton returned home to have supper with Sarah Crooks.¹³⁹

On the evening of April 6 after preaching, Clayton returned home by eleven o’clock to have supper with Sarah and Rebecca. They gave him a pint of porter. Afterward, Sarah again washed his feet. Apparently, all the time they were spending together did not go unnoticed by others. On April 7, after Clayton, Sarah, and Rebecca ate dinner, Clayton had a private conversation with Sarah. She told him that “it seems that the saints generally appear to envy her and feel a little jealous for some cause which they will not make known.” Perhaps Sarah and Clayton did not know why the saints were envious of Sarah, but it seems most likely that it was due to the special attention their beloved elder was giving to her. Clayton notes that even Rebecca “seemed very much grieved at [Sarah] but I think she is mending of it.” The jealousy may even have touched Sarah’s best friend, but the reader is left puzzled; for after the mention of Rebecca being upset with Sarah, twenty-one lines are penciled over in dark lead, making the underlying text illegible.¹⁴⁰

After Clayton returned home from an evening of preaching on April 8, 1840, Sarah was waiting with some egg milk for him at eleven o’clock p.m. After spending some time together, Clayton records, “*she washed my feet & I then went to bed.*”¹⁴¹ Clayton was again alone with Sarah on the night of April 18, after returning home from a conference in Preston. She gave him a pint of porter and told him of a curious conversation she had that day with sister Cathy Beates.¹⁴² Apparently, Cathy had a manifestation and felt to warn Sarah that “great trouble was coming upon her and she must keep herse[l]f single for she would scarce have an in[ch] of ground to stand upon.” Sarah was so deeply upset by Cathy’s prophecy that

¹³⁸WCMD, Apr. 1, 1840, 46 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹³⁹WCMD, Apr. 3, 1840, 46, *LINK*.

¹⁴⁰WCMD, Apr. 7, 1840, 47, *LINK*.

¹⁴¹WCMD, Apr. 8, 1840, 48-49 (emphasis added), *LINK*.

¹⁴²Catherine Beates, known in Manchester as “The Prophetess,” freely pronounced prophecies, judgments, and curses, though her predictions were not always reliable. On October 15, 1840, Wilford Woodruff recorded a conversation with her in which she prophesied that Joseph Smith and his counselors were en route to England and would arrive soon. They never made the journey. Wilford Woodruff Journal, Oct. 11, 1840; Oct. 15, 1840, *LINK*.

the next morning she wept “much on account of what sis[ter] Catherine said to her.”¹⁴³ It appears Sarah was yearning for a companion and sister Beates’ prophecy upset her greatly.¹⁴⁴ Despite being so troubled, Sarah kindly attended to Clayton who had a splitting headache.¹⁴⁵

Clayton went to Elizabeth Prince’s to take cocoa on April 25 after attending to some business in the morning. Sarah’s sister, Elizabeth Crooks, was also there and was “very full of trouble.” She’d had a “good deal of conversation with Mary Darrah.” Apparently, Mary Darrah had “many objections against the work” and also objected to “contradictions” in the Bible regarding “Jacob & David having more wives.” Curiously, Clayton then writes: “I reasoned with her & she was satisfied & said she would have been baptized had it not been late.” It appears that Mary Darrah’s concerns reveal that part of the “work” of the elders in Manchester was teaching regarding biblical polygamy. Clayton was able to “reason with her” until her concerns regarding polygamy were satisfied.¹⁴⁶

Sarah and Clayton had an intimate conversation over breakfast on the morning of April 27, 1840. Sarah shared an experience she had as a younger schoolgirl with a young man named George Buchanan who she used “to keep company with.” She confided in Clayton that her relationship with George had caused “some report[s] about her” that had been “spread abroad.” Clayton’s account reveals that Sarah continued to feel troubled over this matter. After Clayton’s recording of this conversation the next ten lines on the page are penciled over.¹⁴⁷ The following night before retiring to bed, Sarah again washed Clayton’s feet.¹⁴⁸ Clayton began his day on April 29 as usual at breakfast with Sarah. After a day of ministering and preaching, Clayton returned home at 11:30 p.m. to find Sarah waiting. She once again washed his feet and gave him supper.¹⁴⁹ On her birthday, April 30, Clayton makes a special note: “spent much of the day with Sarah and took water with her. . . . Sarah’s Birthday—23 [years old].” By the end of April, their relationship and level of intimacy had grown considerably.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³WCMD, Apr. 18-19, 1840, 51, *LINK*.

¹⁴⁴Catherine Beates also issued a prophecy about Clayton. On February 29th, Beates prophesied that Clayton would have relationship troubles: “similar circumstance to pass through” as Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden. See WCMD, Feb. 29, 1840, 33, *LINK*.

¹⁴⁵WCMD, Apr. 18-19, 1840, 51, *LINK*.

¹⁴⁶WCMD, Apr. 25, 1840, 53, *LINK*. This entry raises important questions. Why would Clayton and other elders be teaching about and resolving concerns regarding “David and Solomon having more wives?” Given that this was occurring at least a year and a half before such teachings began to roll out in Nauvoo, where did these missionaries get the idea that this was appropriate to teach? These and other related questions will be explored hereafter. See footnote 236 of this paper.

¹⁴⁷WCMD, Apr. 27, 1840, 54, *LINK*.

¹⁴⁸WCMD, Apr. 28, 1840, 54, *LINK*.

¹⁴⁹WCMD, Apr. 29, 1840, 55, *LINK*.

¹⁵⁰WCMD, Apr. 30, 1840, 55, *LINK*.

On the evening of May 1, 1840, Clayton learned that “sis[ter] Sands was took very dangerously ill through miscarriage[;] she has been growing careless—had hardness against me & was giving way to the world—she says she will be better.”¹⁵¹ It seems strange that Clayton would report this sister’s anger at the same time as he reports news of her miscarriage. Given the likelihood that Elder Clayton is the “Elder C” described by Fielding, the one who went to bed with different women,¹⁵² Sister Sand’s anger towards Clayton is potentially more understandable. It is possible that Clayton had some hand in her state of pregnancy, either by his encouragement of her behavior or perhaps even by his own interaction with her. Under the Companion Revelation, married men and women could have new companions outside their current marriages.¹⁵³ Under this license, Sister Sands might well have considered herself free to have a new companion. Finally, the phrase Clayton uses that “she has been growing careless” is intriguing. Was she careless merely with her health in a state of pregnancy? Or did her carelessness lead to becoming pregnant? Precise answers are not available, but the questions are warranted.

On May 2, Clayton “spent much of the evening upstairs with S[arah] & R[ebecca],” noting with tenderness that before they ate supper together, Sarah had repaired his clothes and “shewed much kindness.” His reference to spending the evening “upstairs” with his female friends is significant. In working-class Victorian homes, the upstairs rooms were private bedroom spaces.¹⁵⁴ That Clayton, Sarah, and Rebecca were alone together in such a setting is noteworthy. It would have been highly improper for a married man to be alone with women—not his wife—in a bedroom. In fact, it appears that nearly all of Clayton’s late-night interactions with Sarah and Rebecca after supper at the Hardmans’ place, including the intimate occasions when Sarah washed Clayton’s feet, took place upstairs in the bedroom area.

Clayton and Sarah were together daily for the next week. On May 6, she washed his feet before bed. On the morning of May 9, Sarah confided in him about previous troubles she had and “the liberty” with which people, most likely men, had “taken with her beforetime

¹⁵¹WCMD, May 1, 1840, 55, *LINK*.

¹⁵²Recall that Fielding said Elder C’s behavior influenced another elder to tell a sister in Manchester that there was no harm in going to bed together. That sister became pregnant by that elder.

¹⁵³For example: the aforementioned cases of Thomas and Susan Miller and Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden.

¹⁵⁴A Manchester boarding home like the Hardman’s would most likely have been a typical row home, or a “two-up two-down” home. In these homes, the first floor typically consisted of a living area and a kitchen. The second floor most often had two bedrooms. In some homes there was an attic area and a cellar. For descriptions of Victorian era housing in Manchester see “Victorian Homes,” The National Archives website, *LINK*; Peter Van der Heyden, “Housing,” The Industrial Revolution in England was not all bad website, *LINK*; “Life in 19th-century slums: Victorian London’s homes from hell,” BBC History Magazine website, *LINK*.

& how she suffered by it.” From May 10 to 13, he left Manchester. When he returned, Sarah was again waiting for him.

Late in the day on May 17, Clayton had “some conversation with Alice [Hardman’s] cousin, Jane Hardman: “she is a very nice young woman and does not seem to object to anything.”¹⁵⁵ Over the next few days, he continued sharing porter, eating supper, and visiting with Sarah, Rebecca, and other young ladies. On the evening of Tuesday, May 19, after Clayton and Sarah ate supper alone together, she poured him a pint of porter. Then after washing his feet, they “sat together till 2 o’ c[lock]” in the morning.¹⁵⁶

After spending the day with Rebecca on May 20, 1840, Clayton learned that Alice and Hannah Hardman had “tarried until near 11” with Brother Pratt. About six weeks earlier, these two had been with Clayton until 2 a.m., and a week later, Clayton “used great liberty towards Alice Hardman.”¹⁵⁷ He didn’t elaborate further.

Using “great liberty” is an odd admission. Clayton could have meant he used “frankness of speech” with Alice on some subject, and that what he told her was purely within the bounds of decorum. However, there is another possibility. In Victorian England, the phrase “to take liberties” with someone generally referred to behaving in a way that was overly familiar, presumptuous, or disrespectful of social norms or personal boundaries. The phrase often carried connotations of impropriety.¹⁵⁸ In this context, the liberty he used with Alice may have been romantic, sexual in nature, or some other display of “too great familiarity.”

After the entry where Clayton wrote about Alice and Hannah meeting with Pratt at his apartment, nineteen lines are penciled over on the May 20, 1840 entry, making most of the lines illegible. But underneath the pencil the names Alice and Rebecca appear.¹⁵⁹ We do not know what information elicited the redaction, but it appears possible it was in reference to Pratt’s late-night meeting with Alice and Hannah, and about Clayton’s relationship with Alice.

It is unclear as to whether Parley was aware of or participated in any way in the Companion Revelation. But Fielding’s journal does mention that “some one [a new companion] had been marked out for him [Parley Pratt].”¹⁶⁰ It is also not clear why Clayton and Pratt

¹⁵⁵WCMD, May 17, 1840, 59, *LINK*. Clayton’s terse description of his conversation with Jane raises the question: what did he discuss with her that she did *not* object to? Given that Clayton would pursue Jane as a plural wife within a few years, it is reasonable to ask whether this reference hints at Clayton possibly approaching her in a “companion” or spiritual wife sense.

¹⁵⁶WCMD, May 19, 1840, 59, *LINK*.

¹⁵⁷WCMD, Mar. 8, 1840, 37, *LINK*.

¹⁵⁸“Liberties,” at The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language website, *LINK*. See, for example, Victoria Bates, “‘Under Cross-Examination She Fainted’: Sexual Crime and Swooning in the Victorian Courtroom,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 21, no. 4 (Dec. 1, 2016): 461, *LINK*.

¹⁵⁹WCMD, May 20, 1840, 60, *LINK*.

¹⁶⁰JFJ-4, Sep. 2, 1841, 74, *LINK*.

were meeting with the two young Hardman sisters late at night or why Clayton took liberties with Alice. The only certain thing is that Alice later became Clayton's second plural wife.¹⁶¹ Parley Pratt became a prominent Nauvoo polygamist. He married his first plural wife, Elizabeth Brotherton, three years after Clayton's journal entry, after meeting her family in Manchester, her birthplace.¹⁶²

On May 21, Clayton traveled to Preston and returned home on May 27. After a couple of ministerial appointments on the 28th, Clayton returned to Hardmans' to find Brigham Young and Heber Kimball there. They visited for a while and "sung some." Then, Kimball and Young "spake to each other in tongues."¹⁶³ After eating supper with Sarah and Rebecca, Kimball went to Elizabeth Prince's to stay the night. The next day at the Hardmans' place, Clayton was with Sarah, Rebecca, and other sisters. He recorded that he "read the vision to some of the sisters—felt it good." Afterward he had supper with Sarah and Rebecca.¹⁶⁴

Clayton's wording here is unusual. He typically recorded sermons with clear citations, but here, he cryptically notes "the vision" without a proselytizing context. If it were a scriptural vision, he likely would have cited chapter and verse, as he usually did. He might have been referring to Joseph Smith's 1832 vision of the three degrees of glory, often called "The Vision,"¹⁶⁵ but as a new convert, Clayton may not have known this, and he never references Joseph's revelations in his preaching—only the Bible.¹⁶⁶

He read "the vision" to a group of sisters at the Hardman house, where he met with women but did not preach. This suggests he deliberately left just enough detail for himself while obscuring it from others, raising the possibility that he was reading the very Companion Revelation Fielding later learned about.

Things began to change for Sarah and Clayton in June 1840. It is unclear why, but they saw each other only seven times that month. During the last part of June, Clayton traveled to his hometown.¹⁶⁷ After a mission conference in Manchester in the first week of July,

¹⁶¹William Clayton Nauvoo Journal (hereafter WCNJ), Sep. 13, 1844, cited in George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 149, *LINK*. "[September 13, 1844. Friday.] . . . At 3 went to see Alice Hardman who is sick and was united in the E[ternal] C[ovenant]."

¹⁶²"Autobiography of Elizabeth B. Pratt," *Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 12 (Dec. 1, 1890): 94-95, *LINK*. Parley married Elizabeth Brotherton in July of 1843. Pratt was involved in a moral scandal in 1837, perhaps with Joseph Fielding's sister Mary Fielding. See Mary Fielding to Mercy F. Thompson, June 1837, 1-2, MS 2779, CHL, *LINK*.

¹⁶³WCMD, May 29, 1840, 61, *LINK*.

¹⁶⁴WCMD, May 30, 1840, 62, *LINK*.

¹⁶⁵"The Vision," Revelation Book 2, 1, JSP, *LINK*.

¹⁶⁶For examples, see WCMD on the dates of Jan. 12, 1840, 3, *LINK*; and Jan. 26, 1840, 11, *LINK*.

¹⁶⁷WCMD, June 19, 1840, 64, *LINK*.

Clayton's focus appears to have shifted. He soon began preparing to take his family to America. He saw Sarah only once in July and twice in September before his departure.¹⁶⁸

Clayton's own words and actions reveal an unmistakable intimacy between him and Sarah Crooks. His record reflects a pattern of inappropriate familiarity with women who were not his wife. This strengthens the case that Clayton was Fielding's "Elder C." But perhaps the most telling—and troubling—aspect of Clayton's diary is what is missing. The context of those omissions may offer the strongest confirmation and correlation to Fielding's account.

Penciled Over

Thirteen pages of Clayton's daily entries contain portions that have been heavily penciled over. Most of those pages have large portions that are redacted.¹⁶⁹ Though Clayton could have done this himself later, it was more likely someone else. Perhaps a family member made the redactions much later. The important question is why? What was there to hide? The readable portions of Clayton's journal are already extremely revealing. He records interactions and interludes that he, as a married man, had with other women. He talks of new companionships. He records dreams and visions of feeling like a bachelor, tempted by ripe fruit, separate from his wife, and even of his wife dying. He expresses his love and soul piercing temptation for Sarah Crooks. He documents intimate situations he was in with women late at night, many times having them wash his feet and serve him alcohol. What, then, would be so scandalous that it would need to be covered up?

There are some clues as to the nature of the content. On page 12, eight lines are penciled over in thick dark lead. Then, he writes, "Sarah & Rebecca brought Cocoa to the room for me" immediately after the scribbles.¹⁷⁰ On page 26 for the entry of February 19, 1840, Clayton records: "Came home & found Sarah Crooks here & Christiana who was sick. we prayed with her. Sarah with the other—" Three lines are etched out after that.¹⁷¹ Page 32 for February 28 reads: "Sarah Perkins gave me a pint of Porter & some Raisins—Sarah Crooks

¹⁶⁸WCMD, July 23, 1840, 66, *LINK*; WCMD, Sep. 5-6, 1840, 69, *LINK*.

¹⁶⁹Clayton's later 1853 mission diary also contains missing pages from the period of a scandal that led to his abrupt dismissal from his second mission to England—just three months after his arrival. A Manchester resident apparently accused him of "making covenants with women" and immoral behavior. William Clayton Diary, Vol. 3, Jan 8-Mar 2 1853, MS 1406, CHL, *LINK*; Clayton to Thomas Bullock, Feb. 5, 1853, MS 2794, CHL, *LINK*; Clayton to Young, Nov. 17, 1856, Brigham Young Papers, as quoted in Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 303 footnote 44; S. W. Richards, "Notice," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 6 (Feb 5, 1853), 96, *Link*; S. W. Richards, "Notice," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 9 (Feb. 26, 1853): 144, *LINK*, "Elders Correspondence," *Deseret News* 3, no. 16 (Jul. 10, 1853): 3, *LINK*. For a discussion of this incident, see Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 279-299.

¹⁷⁰WCMD, Jan. 26, 1840, 12, *LINK*.

¹⁷¹WCMD, Feb. 19, 1840, 26, *LINK*.

gave me 1/ [one shilling]—I objected but she would make me have it—Rebecca went a little on the way with me.” Then a line is scratched out.¹⁷² Page 35 for March 6, 1840 records that Clayton “went to sister Cathy Beates to D[inner].” Then sixteen lines are penciled over. Under the etchings you can clearly make out Sarah Crooks’ name.¹⁷³ What follows next is the previously mentioned prophesying and the dream about Willard Richards dying. It appears Sarah may be the one who had dreamt and prophesied.

On page 44 for March 29, after breakfast with Sarah and Rebecca, Clayton “went to Stockport—S[ara] & R[ebecca] went with me to . . . ,” and four lines are scratched out obscuring what comes next. Sarah’s name is visible beneath the redactions.¹⁷⁴ Clayton then writes of a Robert Crooks who was about to be confirmed in the church. It is not certain what Robert’s relation was to Sarah. Clayton next refers to a conversation he and Robert had: “he seem[s] very humble & comfortable with Sarah. [H]e has had a deal of hard feelings against her but all seems to be gone- After all I feel to have little hopes that he will hold out to the end. I believe he will again turn against us & be cut off &c-” On the next page, seventeen lines are redacted.¹⁷⁵

On April 1, 1840, page 46, Clayton records being with Sarah Crooks. After washing Clayton’s feet, Sarah shared the dream she had of a new companion. The next five lines are etched out.¹⁷⁶ On page 48, April 7, after “D[inner] with S[arah] & R[ebecca]” Clayton records his conversation with Sarah where she told him about the saints envying her. The following twenty-one lines are scratched out. The phrase “I told her” appears at the end of the redactions, after which he dined with Sarah.¹⁷⁷

In the April 27 entry on page 54 appears the aforementioned lengthy conversation with Sarah that Clayton records about a young man she used “to keep company with,” George Buchanan. After this intimate conversation, ten lines are scratched out. Underneath the redactions, the names Betsy Crooks and Sarah Crooks are visible.¹⁷⁸

On May 6, page 56, Sarah washed Clayton’s feet at the end of the day. The next morning they ate breakfast together. He ended the next day having supper with Sarah and Rebecca. Two lines are then redacted.¹⁷⁹ On page 60, May 20, Clayton began the day with breakfast with Rebecca. He saw her again later for cocoa. He mentions that Alice and Hannah Hardman “went to bro Pratts & tarried till near 11.” Then, nineteen lines are

¹⁷²WCMD, Feb. 28, 1840, 32, *LINK*.

¹⁷³WCMD, Mar. 6, 1840, 35, *LINK*.

¹⁷⁴WCMD, Mar. 29, 1840, 44, *LINK*.

¹⁷⁵WCMD, Mar. 29, 1840, 45, *LINK*.

¹⁷⁶WCMD, Apr. 1, 1840, 46, *LINK*.

¹⁷⁷WCMD, Apr. 7, 1840, 48, *LINK*.

¹⁷⁸WCMD, Apr. 27, 1840, 54, *LINK*.

¹⁷⁹WCMD, May 6, 1840, 56, *LINK*.

scratched out. Underneath those pencil scratches, the names Alice, Rebecca, and Sarah can be read clearly. The phrase “she would never love” is discernible.¹⁸⁰

The purpose of detailing these entries is to highlight what should now be evident: every redaction is directly tied to Clayton’s interactions with women. Immediately before and after almost every redaction, Clayton is with Sarah or Rebecca or discussing them or other women. Under many of the redactions, Sarah’s, Rebecca’s, Alice’s, and Betsy’s names are visible. The potentially shocking details may never be made known.¹⁸¹ Yet one thing is for certain: something about Clayton and the Manchester women has been purposefully covered up.

Concluding Clayton as “Elder C”

By this point, the similarities between Fielding’s description of the Companion Revelation and Clayton’s Manchester diary (January–June 1840) are striking. Fielding describes visions, dreams, and secret meetings where a “choice band” of mostly women received “divine” manifestations, visions and dreams regarding spiritual companions—events Clayton records in detail, including cases involving Susan and Thomas Miller, Sarah and Betsy Crooks,¹⁸² and others.¹⁸³

Clayton’s diary also reveals his deep feelings for Sarah Crooks, including intimate foot-washing rituals and redactions on thirteen pages related to his interactions with women. His behavior, particularly his “too great familiarity” with Sarah Crooks, suggests both motive and opportunity for sexual relationships outside his marriage.

He even records sleeping at women’s homes. On February 25, 1840, he went to Sarah Perkins’ to sleep—unusual, given his residency at the Hardman boarding house. On June 13, Clayton records a curious entry regarding one of Sarah Crooks’ sisters: “about 2 o clock this A M Eliz[abe]th Crooks began in her sleep to sing in tongues. [S]he spoke and sung in about 7 languages occupying about 2 hours.”¹⁸⁴ It was typical for Clayton to record his conversations and identify who reported information to him. Had he learned about Eliza Crooks singing in

¹⁸⁰WCMD, May 20, 1840, 60, *LINK*.

¹⁸¹The author hopes that technology will make it possible to see under the redactions, that this work will be done, and that it will be made publicly available.

¹⁸²Clayton had a conversation with Sarah Crooks’ sister Betsy Crooks about a companion she desired. He wrote: “I told B[etsy] Crooks that she should have her companion again- she is a loving young woman & desires to do right- I feel to love her much . . .” WCMD, Apr. 19, 1840, 52, *LINK*.

¹⁸³Clayton frequently mentions many women—Alice and Jane Hardman, Elizabeth Prince, Betsy Poole, the Crooks sisters, Sister Sands, Mary Aspen, Catherine Beates, and Margaret Jones—who may have been part of the “choice band.” Others in the Manchester Branch also exhibited behavior aligning with Fielding’s account. See “The Spiritual Wife System” section of this paper.

¹⁸⁴WCMD, Feb. 5, 1840, 19, *LINK*.

tongues from someone else, he likely would have noted the source. The fact that he describes the striking event in detail while omitting any such reference strongly suggests that he was in the room with her at 2 a.m. and personally observed the singing, which lasted over two hours. Given his many accounts of late-night conversations with women that extended into the morning at breakfast, it is not only possible, but likely, that Clayton witnessed the event himself.

When Fielding mentions “E[lder] C had often slept with Sis[ter] P and [said] there was no harm in it,” he could be referring to several women Clayton mentioned often, including Sarah Perkins, Eliza Prince (whom Clayton frequently visited), Betsy Poole (who washed his feet), or Rebecca Partington (who lived with Clayton at the Hardman’s and spent the most alone time with him). Given Clayton’s interactions with these women, the possibility that he was sexually involved with one of them cannot be dismissed.

All of this strongly suggests that Fielding’s “E[lder] C” is indeed William Clayton, and that Clayton was the one “going into bed with different women.” This evidence provides a new understanding of who William Clayton was as a young man, husband, father, and missionary. Indeed, this evidence helps us understand Clayton as one who would find himself at the center of similar activities emerging just years later in Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo.

From Manchester to Nauvoo

In September 1840, Clayton emigrated to America. A number of the women he knew well in Manchester also emigrated to Nauvoo. Understanding what he writes about later interactions with these same women is critical to assessing the significance of the information presented in this paper.

In early 1843, over a year after his arrival in Nauvoo, Clayton began in earnest to take spiritual wives. His initial pursuits were focused almost exclusively on women he associated with on his Manchester mission. In February 1843, Clayton wrote to Sarah Crooks and sent her money for passage to America.¹⁸⁵ He had an “interview with Alice Hardman” on April 9.¹⁸⁶ On April 19, he met with Sister Ann Booth from Manchester. On April 22 and 23, Clayton “conversed with Marg[are]t Moon,” his wife Ruth’s sister from his hometown of Preston, about “the priesthood.”¹⁸⁷ On April 30, Ann Booth informed Clayton that her daughter, Sarah Ann “would obey her instructions.”¹⁸⁸ “Mary Aspen from England” met

¹⁸⁵WCNJ, May 31, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107, *LINK*: “. . . This A.M. Sarah Crooks arrived at Nauvoo. She received word that I sent to Brother [Hiram?] Clark on Feb[ruar]y 12th, and started immediately. She has been prospered & blest on her journey.” For a more thorough explanation of this reference, see footnote 218 of this paper.

¹⁸⁶WCNJ, Apr. 9, 1843, James Allen typescript.

¹⁸⁷WCNJ, Apr. 22, 1843, James Allen typescript.

¹⁸⁸WCNJ, Apr. 30, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 99, *LINK*.

with Clayton on May 11, 1843.¹⁸⁹ On May 13, Jane Hardman, Alice's cousin, met with Clayton at his house.¹⁹⁰ By May 31, when Sarah Crooks arrived in Nauvoo, Clayton had already been "sealed" to Margaret Moon in a spiritual marriage, and she was pregnant with his baby.¹⁹¹ In addition to Margaret, Clayton pursued all of these women as spiritual wives with alacrity over the next year and a half.

After obtaining permission from Heber Kimball,¹⁹² Clayton successfully added Alice Hardman as a spiritual wife on September 13, 1844.¹⁹³ Strangely, Alice also married Austin Sturgess civilly on November 3, 1844.¹⁹⁴ It's not certain how long she was married to Sturgess, but Alice continued to have contact with Clayton over the next few years. Alice eventually rejoined Clayton's family and had four children with him.

On October 19, Clayton had a telling dream:

. . . was married to Brother [Alpheus] Cutlers youngest daughter and she seemed as happy as an angel and I felt full of joy and peace. I thought I had received Miss Cutler in addition to those I had already got. When I awoke I felt disappointed and felt to pray in my heart O God if it be thy will *give me that woman for a companion* and my soul shall praise thee but thy will be done and not mine.¹⁹⁵

Clayton's dream is highly reminiscent of the Companion Revelation which declared that it was "shewn them who should be Companions."¹⁹⁶ It appears that the influence of the Companion Revelation followed Clayton years after his exposure to it in Manchester.

The following evening, Clayton went to Ann Booth's home. They talked privately at length. She told Clayton that her daughter, Sarah Ann, was unhappy and wanted to meet with Clayton. Sarah Ann had married Johnathan Needham one year earlier.¹⁹⁷ Ann further informed him that another woman, Jane Chanock, was "perfectly unhappy" and wanted to be "loosed" from her marriage so Clayton could "take her" as a wife. This was not all. Ann related to Clayton that Mary Aspen was ready to "unite to [Clayton] as her savior"

¹⁸⁹WCNJ, May 11, 1843, James Allen typescript.

¹⁹⁰WCNJ, May 13, 1843, James Allen typescript.

¹⁹¹Sarah Crooks arrived in Nauvoo on May 31, 1843 (WCNJ, May 31, 1843). Margaret gave birth to their son Adelman February 18, 1843. The most probable dates of conception are May 26-May 30, 1843. Sarah was apparently considering Clayton's proposal up until at least June 3-13, 1843. William also attempted to take Lydia Moon as a spiritual wife. She was the sister of his wives Margaret and Ruth. Though he tried for a number of years to marry Lydia, she ultimately refused.

¹⁹²WCNJ, Sep. 6, 1843, James Allen typescript.

¹⁹³WCNJ, Sep. 13, 1844, James Allen typescript.

¹⁹⁴Nauvoo City Recorder, Marriage Record, 26, MS 3444, CHL, *LINK*.

¹⁹⁵WCNJ, Oct. 19, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 150 (emphasis added).

¹⁹⁶JFJ-4, 73, *LINK*.

¹⁹⁷WCNJ, Oct. 16, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 122. See also Nauvoo City Recorder, 15: *LINK*.

and spiritual husband.¹⁹⁸ Finally, Ann indicated she also wanted out of her marriage to her husband Robert and to be united to Clayton. Clayton indicates: “she [Ann] shall not risk her salvation in Roberts hands & wants me to interfere.”¹⁹⁹

Clayton’s conversation with Ann Booth hearkens to the Companion Revelation’s teaching that marriages would not be “united as they are now.”²⁰⁰ The fact that these women were so quick to abandon their then-current marriages with wishes to unite with Clayton as their new companion shows these women had fully accepted this teaching. This strong evidence indicates that perhaps they had learned this doctrine years earlier in Manchester and were already prepared to practice it.

Though none of those women (Ann & Sarah Ann Booth, Jane Chanock, and Mary Aspen) ultimately became his wives, Clayton did add someone else as a spiritual wife. Jane Hardman was five months pregnant with a child by her husband William Whitehead, an immigrant from Manchester.²⁰¹ While still married to Whitehead, Jane married Clayton as a spiritual wife. On November 20, 1844, Clayton met with Jane Hardman at Brigham Young’s house. “Pres[iden]t. Young blessed her with the blessings of the ever lasting covenant and she was sealed up to eternal life and to W[illiam]. C[layton]. for time and for all eternity.”²⁰² Jane gave birth to another boy in mid-July, 1847, but the baby did not live long after birth. Tragically, on July 23, Jane also died.²⁰³

Just three days after arriving in Nauvoo, Sarah Crooks appeared willing to “comply with her privilege” and become Clayton’s spiritual wife.²⁰⁴ A month earlier, Clayton had taken Margaret Moon as a new spiritual wife, and Margaret was already carrying his child. On June 3, 1843, Clayton took his new wife Margaret with Sarah Crooks to tour the “Steam Boat of Iowa”.²⁰⁵ That evening, Clayton had a conversation with Sarah and her friend from

¹⁹⁸WCNJ, Oct. 19, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 150. Clayton spoke to Heber Kimball about Mary Aspen on October 31, 1844 (WCNJ, Oct. 31, 1843, James Allen typescript). He continued to pursue her as a spiritual wife for some time, but they never married. Interestingly, Parley Pratt also pursued Mary Aspen as a spiritual wife. (Pratt had already taken Elizabeth Brotherton, a Manchester native, as a spiritual wife on July 24, 1843.) On August 20th, 1843, Clayton recorded that Pratt made proposals to Mary Aspen, through his wife Mary Ann. Mary Aspen was “dissatisfied” and did not accept (WCNJ, Aug. 20, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 118). Mary Aspen eventually married William Rust on November 12, 1845 (Nauvoo City Recorder, 29, *LINK*).

¹⁹⁹WCNJ, Oct. 19, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 150.

²⁰⁰JFJ-4, 73, *LINK*.

²⁰¹Nauvoo City Recorder, 21, *LINK*.

²⁰²WCNJ, Nov. 20, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 151.

²⁰³Jane died in Oquawka, Illinois approx. 40 miles north of Nauvoo on July 23, 1847 (“Jane Hardman,” BYU Center for Family History and Genealogy, *LINK*). It appears that Jane Hardman and William Clayton never lived together as husband and wife.

²⁰⁴WCNJ, Jun. 2, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107. “This evening I talked with Sarah again and she appears willing to comply with her privilege.”

²⁰⁵WCNJ, June 3, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107.

Manchester, Elizabeth Brotherton.²⁰⁶ On June 12, Sarah went to visit Thomas Miller who had immigrated from Manchester as well. The next morning, Clayton saw Sarah, and she gave him a letter.²⁰⁷ It appears that after this, Sarah turned away from Clayton. Clayton's record is silent as to why.²⁰⁸ On August 16, 1843—just over two and a half months after her arrival in Nauvoo—she married William Cook.²⁰⁹ On April 18, 1844, Clayton records an unpleasant visit from Sarah, writing that she had a “wicked spirit in her & will be cursed if she do not repent.”²¹⁰

On June 28, 1844, the day after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Clayton penned the longest entry of his journaling career. He detailed the murders of the Smith brothers and, when listing the names of those involved, inexplicably includes: “W[illia]m Cook & Sarah his wife formerly Sarah Crooks of Manchester England.”²¹¹ Willard Richards writes this exact phrase into the official history of the Church, immortalizing Clayton's claim.²¹² Clayton's journal entry is the only source known that ties his former love to the murders of the Smiths.²¹³ Perhaps this is Clayton's attempt to get back at Sarah. He may have tried to rid his heart of her, but could not. On September 5, 1844, Clayton writes: “Last night I had a dream which gives me to understand that Sarah Cook is laying a snare for me, to destroy me.”²¹⁴

A few weeks later, he had a private conversation with Heber Kimball about Sarah Crooks after both men visited Alice Hardman. Just seven days earlier Clayton had taken Alice as a spiritual wife with Kimball's permission. After the visit, Clayton confided in Kimball—apparently, Sarah Crooks was still on his mind. Clayton recounts “that [Kimball said] all the Twelve were my very warmest friends and he will help me to accomplish all my desires inasmuch as they are right. He says I shall yet have S[arah]. C[rooks].”²¹⁵ Kimball's

²⁰⁶WCNJ, June 3, 1843, James Allen typescript.

²⁰⁷WCNJ, June 13, 1843, James Allen typescript.

²⁰⁸After being “ready to comply with her privilege,” meaning Sarah was ready to become Clayton's plural wife, Sarah changed her mind. Perhaps she discovered that Margaret was pregnant. We can only surmise.

²⁰⁹Nauvoo City Recorder, 14, *LINK*. Crooks arrived in Nauvoo on May 31, 1843 (WCNJ, May 31, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107). Margaret gave birth to Adelson on Feb. 18, 1843, suggesting conception around May 26–30. Sarah considered Clayton's proposal until at least June 3–13. He also sought to marry Lydia Moon, sister to Margaret and Ruth, but she ultimately refused despite years of effort.

²¹⁰WCNJ, Apr. 18, 1844, James Allen typescript.

²¹¹WCNJ, Jun 28, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 136.

²¹²History, 1838–1856, volume F-1, June 29, 1844, JSP, *LINK*.

²¹³This entry is the likely source for the official church history. It closely follows Clayton's journal, with Willard Richards' notes cited—most likely drawn directly from Clayton's journal, which had been given to Church historians and used frequently. History, 1838–1856, volume F-1, June 29, 1844, 239, JSP, *LINK*, see also footnote 476, *LINK*; History Draft [21 June–8 Aug 1844], 5, JSP, *LINK*.

²¹⁴WCNJ, Sep. 5, 1844, James Allen typescript.

²¹⁵WCNJ, Sep. 20, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 149.

promise to Clayton would not be fulfilled. Sarah remained married to William Cook and never did “comply with her privilege” to become Clayton’s companion.

These combined events demonstrate an undeniable relationship between Clayton’s behavior with women in Manchester and his efforts to make many of the same women his spiritual wives in Nauvoo. Understanding this correlation helps bring clarity to the many bewildering things Clayton records the rest of his life about his practice of spiritual wifery. For example, Clayton writes in his journal on March 7, 1843, that he was instructed by Brigham Young on the principles of the priesthood—most likely those pertaining to the spiritual wife doctrine. It appears that from this conversation Clayton received permission to begin taking spiritual wives, which he did almost immediately. Importantly, Clayton calls that permission, “a favor which I have *long desired*.”²¹⁶ On its own, this phrase is perplexing. How had he “long desired” something he had only just then come to know about? It should be evident by now that Clayton’s connection to the Companion Revelation provides the clear answer. Clayton had actually been desiring spiritual companions long before he arrived in Nauvoo.

Another important example is William Clayton’s 1874 affidavit which chronicles his supposed introduction to the practice of plural marriage. In the affidavit, Clayton declares he spoke with Joseph Smith “in the month of February, 1843 date not remembered.” He claims Joseph said he had learned about “a sister [Sarah Crooks] back in England, to whom [Clayton] was very much attached.” Clayton says he replied, “there was, but nothing further than an attachment such as a brother and sister in the Church might rightfully entertain for each other.”²¹⁷ As previously exposed, this statement is demonstrably not true. Clayton also claims that Joseph told him he would give him the money to bring Sarah to Nauvoo. Clayton’s own Nauvoo journal directly contradicts this part of his later account.²¹⁸

Most importantly, Clayton claims the following about this conversation between him and Joseph Smith:

²¹⁶WCNJ, Mar. 7, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 94.

²¹⁷William Clayton, “Revelation on Celestial Marriage,” Feb. 16, 1874, MS 2673, CHL, *LINK*.

²¹⁸In 1874, Clayton testified that in February 1843 Joseph Smith told him, “I give you authority to send for her, and I will furnish you with means,” which Smith allegedly did (Clayton, “Revelation on Celestial Marriage”). But Clayton’s Nauvoo Journal contradicts this. In the journal, the conversation actually occurred March 9: “he told me it was lawful for me to send for Sarah & said he would furnish me money” (WCNJ, Mar. 9, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 94). Yet Sarah left Liverpool on March 21 (Saints by Sea website, *LINK*)—too soon for a letter sent on March 9. Clayton had already sent it February 12: “Wrote to Sarah Crooks . . . counted \$500 silver & Gold” (WCNJ, Feb. 12, 1843, James Allen typescript). On May 31, he confirmed she “received word that I sent to bro Clark on Feby 12th & started immediately” (WCNJ, May 31, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107). These entries highlight contradictions in Clayton’s later account and issues within his edited Nauvoo journals.

[It] was the first time the Prophet Joseph talked with me on the subject of plural marriage. He informed me that the doctrine and principle was right in the sight of our Heavenly Father, and that it was a doctrine which pertained to celestial order and glory. After giving me lengthy instructions and information concerning the doctrine of celestial or plural marriage, he concluded his remarks by the words “It is your privilege to have all the wives you want.”²¹⁹

Clayton gives the clear impression in this account that this was the first time he had ever learned about plural marriage—not just from Joseph, but in general. This was his introduction to the principle of the plurality of wives. However, strong evidence in this paper indicates that years earlier, as “Elder C” in Fielding’s September 1841 account, Clayton had already practiced a form of spiritual wifery under the Companion Revelation.

”The Spiritual Wife System” in England

The spiritual wifery that appears to have begun with the Companion Revelation continued on in England for years. Manchester Mormon Charles D. Miller, brother of Clayton’s friend Thomas Miller, wrote in 1842 that he and his brother William believed taking plural wives was a true doctrine.²²⁰ In 1844, as mentioned previously, mission President Reuben Hedlock wrote that he was having “trouble with the spiritual wife system” in England. It was causing “much confusion” amongst some of the branches in England.²²¹ In 1846, Charles D. Miller wrote about a vivid dream he had concerning taking plural wives.²²² That same year, he recorded: “The knowledge of Plurality of Wives was at this time whispered among a few Saints . . . many were dissatisfied with their husbands & then felt to make Covenants with others[;] thus many of the saints got entangled & a spirit of Lasciviousness brooded over the Churches in [E]ngland . . . all was known to the Presidency & they sent 3 of the Twelve & all was put in Order again.”²²³ Miller’s observation is worth noting. By 1846, many of the Twelve Apostles were themselves practicing spiritual wifery. That “3 of the Twelve” were sent to England to try to extinguish the British spiritual wife practice is further strong

²¹⁹Clayton, “Revelation on Celestial Marriage.” Clayton’s account offers further confirmation that Joseph Smith was not involved in the events that took place in England. His statement that Joseph first spoke to him about these matters “some time in the month of February 1843 date not remembered” strongly suggests that Joseph had no prior knowledge of—let alone participation in—what Clayton was doing under the Companion Revelation while in England.

²²⁰Charles D. Miller reminiscences and diary, Aug. 1846-May 1853, MS 4461, CHL, *LINK*.

²²¹Hedlock to Richards, 1, *LINK*.

²²²Charles D. Miller reminiscences, 12.

²²³Charles D. Miller reminiscences, 12.

evidence that what was happening in England was operating independently of—and perhaps even in tension with—the system that later emerged in Nauvoo.

Yet, despite efforts to put it down, the British practice of spiritual wifery continued. In 1848, Thomas Miller was excommunicated for teaching the “two wife system” and for taking Elizabeth Thompson as his second wife.²²⁴

A number of other men and women from Manchester, England, engaged in extramarital relationships that may have been influenced by the “spiritual wife system,” and were certainly consistent with Fielding’s account. As mentioned previously, there was Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden. As well, in August 1839, Deacon Roger Parker was in a relationship with Alice Bleasdale who, though unmarried, was “by him pregnant.”²²⁵ In January 1840, an older, married priest named Brother Heath went to bed with a young woman, Mary Ann Webb.²²⁶ In June 1840, James Mahon married Elizabeth Mills, though it was believed he was already married to another woman at the time.²²⁷ In January 1843, Manchester immigrants to Nauvoo, John Bleazard and Betsy Poole, were tried and excommunicated by the Nauvoo High Council for adultery. Betsy had left her husband, Daniel Poole, in England, and they had not divorced. She later persuaded the High Council that Daniel had mistreated her, and both she and John were shortly thereafter rebaptized.²²⁸

It is not certain whether all of these individuals were aware of or directly inspired by the Companion Revelation. Yet the behavior, attitudes, and relationships of many Manchester Saints clearly fostered a moral climate receptive to it—and to the broader British practice of spiritual wifery.²²⁹

It is critical to note that all of this began and continued independently of Nauvoo spiritual wifery. Features of the English version appear distinct from Nauvoo and especially later Utah polygyny and polyandry. The key distinction was in the womens’ role in the system. Charles Miller’s statement that many women were unhappy with their husbands and “felt to make covenants” with other men indicates that women were empowered under this form of spiritual wifery to seek other companions. Therefore, it is likely that the British spiritual wife system that encouraged this liberty in women was an outgrowth of the Companion Rev-

²²⁴Harris, “Mormons in Victorian England,” 76, *LINK*.

²²⁵JFJ-3, Aug. 9, 1839, 79, *LINK*.

²²⁶JFJ-2, Jan. 14, 1840, 102, *LINK*; WCMD, Jan. 24, 1840, 8, *LINK*.

²²⁷WCMD, May 31, 1840, 62, *LINK*.

²²⁸Nauvoo Stake High Council Minutes, Jan. 28, 1843, 27, and Feb. 4, 1843, 29, LR 3102 22, CHL, *LINK*.

²²⁹Other Manchester Mormons also show possible influence from the Companion Revelation. Thomas Green, a widower, married Margaret Connolly, who was likely still living with or married to Samuel Clarke, the father of her child, Anne. After Margaret’s death in 1837, Green married Mary Ann Gibson, then emigrated to America. Following Mary Ann’s death in 1850, he married his stepdaughter Anne Clarke—31 years his junior—in 1851. They had 11 children, and Green later married two additional wives polygamously in Utah. (See “Thomas Green,” FamilySearch website, *LINK*; “Margaret Connolly,” FamilySearch website, *LINK*.)

elation which inspired mostly women to obtain manifestations regarding new companions. With Nauvoo spiritual wifery and Utah polygamy, men directed the practice exclusively and women were subservient to it.²³⁰ Importantly, the occurrence of spiritual wifery in England was not a brief anomaly, but rather, was a persistent phenomenon that began in the British mission and carried over to America.

Conclusion

Clear contemporaneous records from 1840 to 1848—left by Joseph Fielding, William Clayton, the Nauvoo High Council, Charles Miller, Reuben Hedlock, Thomas Miller, and others—establish beyond refutation that a form of spiritual wifery was being practiced during the first British mission.

Fielding, in his diary entry of September 2, 1841, leaves a stunning account of an actual revelation promoting the practice. He describes a small group of Manchester saints who, under strict oath of secrecy, sought divine manifestations to identify new spiritual companions. He documents behaviors of a number of Mormons in England who may have been influenced by that “Companion” revelation.

Elder William Clayton’s Manchester diary provides remarkable corroboration. He spent virtually every day alone with eligible bachelorettes during his mission and records highly inappropriate familiarity with them. He frequently describes meetings at the homes of the Hardmans, Thomas Miller, William Miller, and others—gatherings where mostly women were present. These meetings closely align with Fielding’s description of the “choice band.” Clayton also documents strange visions and dreams—usually received by women and many related to his wife and family—that mirror Fielding’s account of the “new Companion Revelation.”

Like Fielding, Clayton recounts numerous instances of women prophesying judgments, curses, and woes. His record of Susan and Thomas Miller’s relationship nearly replicates what Fielding describes—especially Susan’s dream revealing who her husband’s next companion should be if she were to die. Clayton openly confesses to sexual temptation and love for Sarah Crooks and documents an astonishing level of intimacy in his daily interactions with her. He even records a dream Sarah had about receiving a new companion.

Clayton’s documentation of nine instances of women washing his feet—eight of which involved Sarah Crooks—demonstrates an extraordinary degree of personal familiarity, deeply inappropriate for a married missionary in Victorian England. His detailed record of his relationship with Sarah makes both of them likely members of the “choice band.” The thirteen pages of redactions in his journal—focused on his interactions with women, and where the names Sarah, Rebecca, Alice, and Betsy are still faintly visible beneath the pencil

²³⁰See, for example, History, 1838–1856, volume B-1, 792, JSP, *LINK*.

marks—suggest even more damning material has deliberately been obscured. Clayton even writes that he spent the night at one sister’s house and possibly another, where he heard her sing in tongues in her sleep. He frequently mentions sisters with surnames beginning in “P”—any of whom could be the “Sis. P” that “Elder C.” went to bed with. The fact that eight of the women Clayton associated with in Manchester and Preston later became his first plural wives in Nauvoo is beyond coincidence.

All the evidence presented thus far strongly supports the conclusion that William Clayton is the “Elder C” whom Fielding describes as sleeping with different women and regularly going to bed with Sister “P” after persuading them that it was “no harm.”²³¹ Identifying Clayton as Fielding’s “Elder C.” not only offers stunning corroboration of Fielding’s account—it radically deepens our understanding of its implications.

It also seems clear that Theodore Turley—also guilty of going to bed with multiple women—is the “Elder T” mentioned by Fielding, though it remains uncertain whether he was officially part of the Manchester “choice band.”

As for Parley Pratt, while Fielding notes that a companion had been chosen for him, it’s unclear whether Pratt was aware or directly involved. Still, Pratt certainly knew of the Companion Revelation, as he discussed it with Fielding. Yet there is no evidence that he acted on this knowledge. No letter, report, or public statement survives from Pratt—or anyone else—about the spiritual wifery taking place in the first British mission. This silence is striking. If an apostle had learned of such a controversial practice, one might reasonably expect him to notify the leadership in Nauvoo—especially Joseph Smith. But no such report exists. Why? Given Pratt’s connections to the Hardman sisters and to Sarah Crooks while in Manchester,²³² his public promotion of an unusual interaction between men and women,²³³ his earlier moral scandal in 1837,²³⁴ and his later plural marriages, it is plausible that he was a member of the “choice band” and a participant in Manchester spiritual wifery.²³⁵

From this examination, important questions arise:

- Since the English practice of spiritual wifery predated the practice in Nauvoo, did the English version also have an influence on what occurred in Nauvoo?
- Did other early Nauvoo polygamists choose their first plural wives from England, as Clayton did?

²³¹Of all the women Clayton mentions, Sarah Crooks would be the most likely to have had sexual relations with him. Yet, Clayton, as Elder C, was going to bed with other women as well, greatly complicating his relationship with Sarah.

²³²Sarah Crooks to Brigham Young, Mar. 14, 1841, CR 1234 1, CHL, *LINK*.

²³³Parley P. Pratt, “Duties of Women,” *Millennial Star* 1, no. 4 (Aug. 1840): 100, *LINK*.

²³⁴See footnote 162 and 169 of this paper.

²³⁵See footnote 236.

- Since William Clayton was not truthful in his 1874 sworn affidavit concerning his relationship with Sarah Crooks and his introduction to polygamy, should his other statements about how he entered the practice be reexamined?
- Are there journals, letters, or other writings from missionaries or British Saints that remain unpublished?
- What was Parley Pratt's full involvement?
- Did British spiritual wifery extend beyond this group in Manchester and Preston and did it involve other notable Mormons?

Perhaps the most important question is: who received the Companion Revelation? It seems clear it was not given under Joseph Smith's direction, and there is no evidence he even knew of it. So, among the Manchester Saints in 1840, who was most likely to have received it? William Clayton is a possibility. But for such a radical revelation to take hold, the person revealing it would need to command sufficient respect and hold proper authority.

Ecclesiastical standing mattered deeply to Latter-Day Saints. Clayton's highest office at the time was second counselor in the mission presidency under Joseph Fielding. Ever the devoted follower rather than a bold initiator, Clayton seems an unlikely source for such a doctrinal innovation. Fielding, notably, said the revelation was considered "not lawful" to disclose—even to him, the high priest and president of the British Mission. With Joseph Smith absent, who among them could have credibly introduced it? These questions deserve close scrutiny.²³⁶

The critical point is this: the contemporary record shows that the British practice of spiritual wifery was independent of, and in fact predated, the system later formalized in Nauvoo. There is no evidence that Joseph Smith initiated or approved it. As such, the traditional and widely accepted narrative of the origins of Mormon polygamy must be re-examined.

²³⁶These questions and other evidence regarding British spiritual wifery will be explored in the author's upcoming paper: "I Will Leave You to Guess the Rest: Sarah Crooks & the Spiritual Wife Doctrine in the First British Mission."