**Question: How does complex marriage influence the daily life of the Oneida Community through the scope of the Oneida Community?**

**Exhibit Source: *Slavery and Marriage* by John Humphrey Noyes**

John Humphrey Noyes was the leader and founder of the Oneida Community in Upstate New York. He believed that the second coming of Christ already occurred, and therefore, humans were close to Christian perfection and should begin to abide by the rules of heaven described in the book of Revelation in the Bible. While Noyes did not specifically state that Christian perfectionism was utopian, it is implied that it is the closest form to a perfect human, utopian society following Christian principles. Also the community’s principles of communal living and implications of complex marriage eliminating jealousy reflect the utopian principle of happiness as competition is eliminated, similar to the ideas of Plato and More. Part of the new rules post-second coming was the abolition of marriage and the creation of free love or complex marriage. Complex marriage is the commonly held belief in the Oneida community that everyone is married to each other, and therefore, can and should have sexual intercourse with each other. This belief catapulted the Oneida community to infamy. Complex marriage had a profound influence on the Oneida community’s daily life through the creation of the utopian principle of happiness as it shaped relationships between sexual partners and further emphasized communal ties.

Mr. Free Church, the symbol of the Oneida community and beliefs, first argues against traditional marriage by comparing marriage to slavery. This comparison directly tells the reader the position of the Oneida community that marriage like slavery oppresses the sexes and demonstrates the profound influence on the Oneida community by shaping the relationship as freeing and liberating. In addition, this argument also introduces the utopian principle of happiness. Mr. Free Church argues that only with complex marriage can the community achieve happiness as he implies that humans are enslaved while married and cannot truly be happy until freed from those chains. Mr. Free Church demonstrates this argument by saying, “…but this marriage in pairs is only one form or method of bringing about sexual union, and I believe that this method is as arbitrary as the slaveholder’s method of securing natural service; and it is very extensively, if not universally, a cruel and oppressive method of uniting the sexes…” (Noyes 8). This quote demonstrates the strong communal ties, which relate to the utopian principle of communal living. In addition, the quote also displays the freeing relationship as he shows how the liberation from marriage is natural and morally right, creating the utopian principle of happiness. This moral justification validates the Oneida community’s complex marriage and characterizes the relationships as naturally healthier and stronger than those in a traditional marriage while showing basic utopian principles of happiness and communal living.

 Judge North, the symbol for US rejecting the progressively radical views of Oneida community, tries to candidly reject Mr. Free Church’s argument for complex marriage by saying, “But the Bible sanctions Marriage, and you must admit it is a divine institution. ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery,’ is one of the ten commandments,” (10). This counterargument for traditional marriage directly addresses the biblical counterargument against the complex marriage through the ten commandments. In addition, this counterargument argues that utopian principles cannot be achieved through complex marriage as it directly conflicts with Biblical teachings, preventing true happiness from being achievable to Christians. Mr. Free Church refutes Judge North’s argument against complex marriage by saying, “The Bible sanctions Marriage only as it sanctions Slavery—i.e. temporarily, and because the world, by reason of sin, has not hitherto been prepared for better institutions; for it expressly declares in Matthew 22:30, that in the final state of mankind, Marriage will be abolished…” (10-11). He furthers this conversation into the comparison between marriage and slavery yet again, refuting the idea that the utopian principle of overall happiness could happen due to basic Christian beliefs. In addition, this comparison adds to the argument that the complex marriages are freeing and low-key.

 In conclusion, this pamphlet demonstrates the beliefs of the Perfectionist movement of the Oneida Community through the lens of complex marriage. In addition, this pamphlet demonstrates how the Perfectionist movement sought to find the utopian principle of happiness in a Christian scope through complex marriage. The comparison of traditional, monogamous marriage to slavery draws on the idea that marriage chains people down and harms them by limiting their natural freedom and impulse, preventing regular society from becoming a utopia. Noyes proposes a solution to this confinement by arguing for complex marriage, implying that it would allow for overall utopian happiness. Noyes defends his belief in complex marriage through biblical references to try to convince Christians that this is what the Bible called for; however, Noyes changes the meaning of these Biblical readings to fit his argument for the abolishment of traditional marriage and creation of complex marriage. I think that it is similar to Plato’s Republic that Noyes tries to gain support for his utopian society’s controversial beliefs by lying through changing the meaning of the Bible. Plato also lies to create Kallipolis when he suggest lying to the people about souls made of gold, silver and bronze and why only certain people can be together and how they should have families. Noyes clearly draws on Plato’s beliefs for his complex marriage theory, showing the influence of utopian ideals on the community. In addition, this argument shows complex marriage’s profound influence on the Oneida Community by characterizing the liberation from marriages as freeing and creating stronger, healthier relationships between those in the community. Through this representation of complex marriage, Noyes argues that the utopian principle of happiness is achievable.