

Mormon Polygamous Families

Life in the Principle

by

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Demographic Characteristics of Mormon Polygamous Families

Mormon polygamy raises a lot of questions about demography. Since polygamy was practiced for such a short period of time and no known official records were kept of plural marriages, questions such as how many wives each husband had, how old the wives were when they married, how many children they had, and just where in Mormon country polygamists lived are difficult to answer. Many of the popular stereotypes about polygamy are in response to these frequently asked questions. Using data collected for this study and other studies, this chapter looks at the practice of polygamy from a statistical point of view.

Studies on Mormon Polygamy

Scholars have explored Mormon polygamy from a variety of perceptions. James Hulett, a sociologist, conducted interviews with plural husbands and wives and children raised in those families for his doctoral dissertation. Kimball Young, also a sociologist, used Hulett's interviews in his *Isn't One Wife Enough?* and concluded that most polygamous families were successful. Stanley S. Ivins's historical article on the number of Mormons who practiced polygamy has been a standard for many years. Vicky Burgess-Olson used many of Hulett's interviews in her doctoral dissertation comparing monogamous and polygamous families.¹ And historians, geographers, and social scientists have written on the practice of polygamy in St. George

and the Washington County area, Kanab, the colonies in Mexico, and the settlements in Alberta, Canada, Cache Valley, Springville, and parts of Davis County. Lowell "Ben" Bennion, a professor of geography at Humboldt State, is currently working on a study to determine the numbers of polygamous families based on the 1880 census.

Although not the final word on the demographics of polygamy, this chapter provides a statistical overview based on family group sheets, listing husbands, wives, and children submitted to the LDS Genealogical Department by descendants of the families included in this study. The total number of plural wives and husbands varied with each category since family group sheets were not available for all wives and some of the information was not listed on all the sheets. Since the interviews cited in this study were mainly conducted in the 1930s (Hulett) and between 1976 and 1984 (Redd Center), it deals with a later period of polygamy. Had it been done a generation earlier, it would have been possible to capture the memories of those who lived between 1852 and 1880 before opposition became formal and intense. As it is, these reminiscences reflect the problems encountered by those who lived "the principle" during the last sanctioned days.

Characteristics of Sampled Polygamous Families

Over 60 percent of the men, nearly 75 percent of the first wives, and over 80 percent of the other wives were born after 1847 when the Mormons settled Utah. (See Table 1.) These husbands and wives married into polygamy during the underground period of 1881 to 1890 and between 1891 and 1904, between the First and Second Manifestos. (See Table 2.) Most of the marriages, especially to the first wife, were performed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, Utah. The next most frequent sites were St. George where the first temple was completed in 1876, Logan where the second temple was finished in 1885, and Mexico, where polygamists fled to escape the U.S. marshals in 1885 and where plural marriages were performed after 1890 by Stake President Anthony W. Ivins and various General Authorities who determined that these marriages were not, in the phrase of the Manifesto, "contrary to the laws of the land." (See Table 3.)

The sampling also shows that the majority of the plural wives lived in Utah for most of their childbearing years. First wives were more likely to have their children in Utah because they were not vulnerable to arrest as were subsequent plural wives. The largest percentage of children were

Table 1

Birthdate of Husbands and Wives

Sample includes 169 husbands, 150 first wives, 143 second wives, 60 third wives, and 21 fourth wives.

<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Husbands</u>	<u>1st Wife</u>	<u>2nd Wife</u>	<u>3rd Wife</u>	<u>4th Wife</u>
Pre-1847	38.3%	28.0%	11.9%	13.3%	9.5%
1847-60	40.0	36.0	30.0	21.7	33.4
1861-70	17.7	24.7	37.1	33.3	23.8
1871-80	4.0	9.3	14.7	21.6	14.3
1881-90	0.0	2.0	6.3	10.1	19.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2

Date of Marriage

Sample includes 171 husbands, 171 first wives, 162 second wives, 54 third wives.

<u>Date of Marriage</u>	<u>1st Marriage</u>	<u>2nd Marriage</u>	<u>3rd Marriage</u>
Pre-1860	17.0%	4.9%	5.6%
1861-70	21.6	10.5	16.6
1871-80	32.8	21.6	18.4
1881-90	18.7	37.7	27.7
1891-1904	9.9	25.3	31.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3

Place of Marriage

Sample includes 158 first marriages, 136 second marriages, 42 third marriages, and 19 fourth marriages.

<u>Place of Marriage</u>	<u>1st Marriage</u>	<u>2nd Marriage</u>	<u>3rd Marriage</u>	<u>4th Marriage</u>
Salt Lake City	51.3%	40.4%	35.7%	42.1%
Logan	4.4	17.6	14.3	15.8
Manti	1.0	2.9	0.0	0.0
St. George	13.3	15.4	16.7	10.5
Mexico	2.0	14.7	13.0	21.0
Canada	5.0	3.7	3.0	5.3
Other	23.0	5.3	17.3	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

born in Salt Lake and Cache counties. For those areas outside of Utah, the greatest number of children were born in Mexico. (See Table 4.) Many of the husbands and wives maintained continuous residence in Utah or returned to the state before their deaths. The Mormon colonies were abandoned in 1912 during the Mexican revolution, and many of the colonists did not return. Therefore, less than 10 percent of the husbands and wives died in Mexico. Arizona, where many of the colonists settled after they left Mexico, rather than Mexico itself, was the second deathplace listed after Utah. (See Table 5.)

Between 40 and 50 percent of the husbands and wives were born in Mormon country, including Utah and southern Idaho. Less than one-third were born outside the United States. (See Table 6.) Other studies show that these figures were true not only of polygamous but also of other families in Utah at that time. Dean May's demographic portrait of Cache Valley shows that in 1860, 67 percent of the population there was U.S. born; in 1870, 62 percent; and in 1880 roughly the same. Gene Pace's study of nineteenth-century LDS bishops also shows that 60 of the bishops and two-thirds of their wives were born in the United States.²

These figures do not match Nels Anderson's conclusion, however. He found that only 2 of 71 polygamous husbands and 15 of 150 polygamous wives in Washington County in 1880 had been born in Utah. He concluded that the immigrant women were older and "anxious to obtain husbands but could not compete with the younger Mormon women for the younger men."³ Pace also found that immigrants were more likely to marry in polygamy. Of the 835 wives of bishops who served between 1847 and 1900, 69 percent of the immigrants were married in polygamy and 53 percent of the U.S. born were plural wives. He found, however, that "the combination of spouses which most consistently produced polygamous marriages were those involving women, immigrants or Americans, who married immigrant men."⁴ These differences show that a final word is not available on the relationship between immigrants and polygamy and that it may have varied in location and social status. Though the sampling for this study shows a slightly higher percentage of foreign-born third wives, the stereotype of the single Danish girl beginning to work as a maid at a home and then marrying the husband as a plural wife does not appear to be the norm.

There are also disagreements on the ages of plural wives. Anderson explained that there were more foreign-born plural wives because they

Table 4

Location of Families by Birthplace of Children

Sample includes birthplaces of children of 157 first wives, 147 second wives, 53 third wives, and 18 fourth wives.

<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>1st Wife</u>	<u>2nd Wife</u>	<u>3rd Wife</u>	<u>4th Wife</u>
Utah	66.7%	51.0%	52.8%	55.6%
Idaho	8.3	8.2	1.9	0.0
Mexico	14.1	23.8	32.0	38.9
Others	10.9	17.0	13.3	5.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5

Location of Families by Deathplace of Husbands and Wives

Sample includes deathplace of 179 husbands, 140 first wives, 136 second wives, 45 third wives, and 22 fourth wives.

<u>Deathplace</u>	<u>Husband</u>	<u>1st Wife</u>	<u>2nd Wife</u>	<u>3rd Wife</u>	<u>4th Wife</u>
Utah	55.3%	61.4%	58.8%	66.7%	77.3%
Arizona	7.8	10.0	11.0	6.7	4.5
Idaho	5.6	8.8	9.6	0.0	0.0
Mexico	7.8	6.4	4.4	8.8	9.0
Canada	18.4	8.6	11.0	15.6	4.5
Others	5.1	4.8	5.2	2.2	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6

Birthplace of Husbands and Wives

Sample includes 182 husbands, 163 first wives, 148 second wives, 57 third wives, and 21 fourth wives.

<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Husbands</u>	<u>1st Wife</u>	<u>2nd Wife</u>	<u>3rd Wife</u>	<u>4th Wife</u>
Utah/Idaho	46.2%	57.7%	67.6%	56.1%	52.4%
United States	24.8	17.1	8.1	10.5	14.3
Europe/England	28.0	22.1	23.6	31.6	33.3
Others	1.0	3.1	0.7	1.8	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

came to Utah as "older women, many of them ranging between 25 and 35 years of age. . . . Polygamy was a boon for them."⁵ Another popular view has often been the opposite of Anderson's: there were so few eligible women that men were marrying girls who were 14 years old. Although there are examples of both older women and young girls marrying in polygamy, statistical studies show neither pattern was the norm. The husband was usually in his early twenties when he married his first wife and she in her late teens. (See Tables 7 and 8.) Almost 60 percent of the polygamous husbands married a second wife six to fifteen years later. (See Table 9.) At the time of this marriage, the husband was between the ages of twenty-six and forty, but usually in his early thirties. His second wife was between seventeen and nineteen years of age.⁶

Mormon men did not collect harems. About 60 percent of the men married only one plural wife. Approximately 20 percent had three wives, the last wedding occurring two to five years later in just under one-third of the cases, six to ten in about one-quarter of the sample, and eleven to fifteen in just over one-fifth of the cases. The husband was usually in his late thirties; the third wife's average age was nineteen. Ten percent of the husbands married a fourth wife, and he was usually between thirty-six and forty-five. The fourth wife's age still averaged nineteen. Just under 40 percent of the marriages took place between two and five years after the third marriage, and the same percentage took place between six and ten years.⁷

To put these figures another way, men chose women for their second, third, or fourth wives who were approximately the age of his first wife at the time of their marriage even though he was from ten to thirty years older. (See Table 10.) Husbands selected a first wife within five years of their age, but less than one-fifth were within five years of their second wife's age. Most of the second wives were between six and twenty years younger than their husbands. For third wives, most were between eleven and twenty years younger. More than a quarter were over twenty-one years younger than their husbands. One possible reason is that men were attracted to younger women. Another is that the revelation on plural marriage—"if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another"—suggested that the plural wife should not have been married before.⁸ Furthermore, a woman sealed to a previous husband could be married only for time, not eternity, making widows less desirable. If a man wanted more children (highly valued in Mormon society), the wife's age would have been a factor as well. Marrying younger second wives was not unique

Table 7

Husband's Age at Marriage

Sample includes 157 husbands with first wives, 150 husbands with second wives, 58 husbands with third wives, and 22 husbands with fourth wives.

Husband's Age	1st Wife	2nd Wife	3rd Wife	4th Wife
15-20	28.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
21-25	59.2	18.0	3.5	0.0
26-30	11.5	29.3	12.1	4.6
31-35	1.3	27.3	22.4	18.2
36-40	0.0	12.7	27.5	31.8
41-45	0.0	4.7	15.5	22.7
46-50	0.0	5.3	12.1	13.6
51-55	0.0	0.7	6.9	0.0
56-60	0.0	0.7	0.0	9.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 8

Wife's Age at Marriage

Sample includes 152 first wives, 145 second wives, 56 third wives, and 23 fourth wives.

Wife's Age	1st Wife	2nd Wife	3rd Wife	4th Wife
15-20	74.3%	56.5%	58.9%	65.2%
21-25	25.0	28.3	25.0	17.4
26-30	0.7	7.6	3.6	4.4
31-35	0.0	4.1	10.7	8.7
36-40	0.0	2.1	0.0	8.7
41-45	0.0	1.4	1.8	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

to polygamy either. Pace found that of the monogamous bishops he studied who married a second time—usually after the death of the first wife—the second wife was on the average sixteen years younger.⁹

It is not clear whether plural marriage actually increased the Mormon population since plural wives had fewer children than their monogamous counterparts. (See Table 11.) Although plural marriage seems to have reduced the number of births per wife, some of the plural wives may not have married if polygamy had not been an option and would not have had

Table 9

Length of Time between Marriages

Sample includes 137 examples between first and second marriages, 46 between second and third marriages, and 18 between third and fourth marriages.

	<u>1st-2nd</u>	<u>2nd-3rd</u>	<u>3rd-4th</u>
0-1 yrs.	2.9%	8.8%	11.1%
2-5 yrs.	23.3	30.4	38.9
6-10 yrs.	35.8	26.2	38.9
11-15 yrs.	23.4	21.5	11.1
16-20 yrs.	7.3	4.4	0.0
21 +	7.3	8.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 10

Age Difference between Husband and Wife

Sample includes 151 first wives, 151 second wives, 59 third wives, and 18 fourth wives.

	<u>1st Wife</u>	<u>2nd Wife</u>	<u>3rd Wife</u>	<u>4th Wife</u>
Wife Older				
0-5 yrs.	7.9%	3.3%	0.0%	5.5%
Husband Older				
0-5 yrs.	71.5	19.9	6.8	0.0
6-10 yrs.	15.9	27.8	8.5	11.1
11-15 yrs.	4.0	27.2	23.7	16.7
16-20 yrs.	0.7	16.6	35.6	33.3
21-25 yrs.	0.0	2.6	10.1	16.7
26-30 yrs.	0.0	2.6	13.6	16.7
31-35 yrs.	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

any children at all. The number of children per husband definitely increased with polygamy.¹⁰ (See Table 12.)

A common justification for polygamy was that a first wife was childless. Determining the prevalence of this particular pattern is difficult. If a wife had no children, quite often no family group sheet would be submitted to the LDS Genealogical Department. This study found that first wives had more children than other wives. Pace also found that first wives

Table 11

Number of Children per Wife

Sample includes 168 first wives, 160 second wives, 50 third wives, and 27 fourth wives.

<u>Children</u>	<u>1st Wife</u>	<u>2nd Wife</u>	<u>3rd Wife</u>	<u>4th Wife</u>
0	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
1-5	9.0	25.6	32.0	22.3
6-10	46.0	52.5	56.0	55.5
11-15	43.0	21.9	12.0	18.5
16-20	0.1	0.0	0.0	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 12

Number of Children per Husband

Sample includes 144 husbands.

<u>Children</u>	
1-5	0.0%
6-10	5.0
11-15	23.6
16-20	27.8
21-25	22.9
26-30	13.2
31-35	5.5
36+	2.0
Total	100.0

had more children than the other wives. Monogamous bishops' second wives also had fewer children than the first wife.¹¹

The intervals between births were under three years for nearly all of the wives.¹² Children interviewed sometimes claimed the wives seemed to be pregnant at the same time and that there was almost a competition between them to have babies, though that was not the norm. James Wyatt recalled a "friendly" rivalry. The two wives of his father, John Horsecroft Wyatt, of Wellsville, Utah, Julia Ann and Betsey Leavitt, who were also full sisters, had fourteen children between 1891 and 1905. Julia had six children and Betsey had eight. Five of them were born within five months

of each other.¹³ For example, Wyatt had a half sister Hazel born just a month before him.¹³ Georgiana Stowell Lillywhite remembered that her mother, Mary Olive Bybee, the first wife, and her sister Rhoda Maria, the second wife (also full sisters), had parallel pregnancies. "They had to get one just because we did," Georgiana said. Olive had six and Rhoda had eight children between 1888 and 1905, and only three of them were within two months of each other.¹⁴ A careful examination of the family group sheets reflects that the Stowell example rather than the Wyatt's was typical. While some children were born at the same time, it was apparently not a competition between the wives to get pregnant.

Geographical Variations

Although such figures give a general view of polygamy, recent studies indicate variations in individual communities. "Ben" Bennion's current study based on the 1880 census in Washington County shows, for example, the figures varied from almost 40 percent in St. George to only just over 11 percent in Harrisburg/Leeds. In Kane County, the figures ranged from 10 percent in Rockville to 67 percent in Orderville. In northern Utah's Davis County, only 5 percent practiced polygamy in South Weber while nearly 30 percent of the families in Bountiful did. His study of Springville (Utah County) showed 15 percent were polygamous families. Larry Logue, a research assistant at the University of Southern California, found that nearly 30 percent of the men in St. George were polygamists in 1870—a figure that rose to 33 percent in 1880. Chris Nelson determined 63 percent of the Mormon men in Mexico were polygamists.¹⁵ Why did communities vary to such an extent? The relative safety from judicial prosecution drew many polygamists to Mexico, particularly after the 1890 Manifesto. Bennion hypothesized that the higher percentage of polygamists in St. George reflected greater religious commitment in general since many accepted calls from Church leaders to settle there.¹⁶

Another unanswered question is whether Mormon polygamy was primarily a rural or urban phenomenon. If polygamy was rural, would it have died out with urban development as it did in some African societies? And was Utah a rural or an urban society? Given that the U.S. census lists a community over 2,500 as urban, Utah had six urban areas in 1890 (Logan, Ogden, Provo, Springville, Salt Lake City, and Park City), and twelve in 1900 (the addition of American Fork, Brigham City, Eureka,

Lehi, Payson, and Spanish Fork). However, population alone cannot determine what is urban. Even in these communities, many of the residents were involved in agriculture in some way, usually a characteristic of rural life. Joseph F. Smith, the President of the Church near the turn of the century, lived in Salt Lake City, but his families (he had five wives) had gardens and farm animals on their property. Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen used Max Weber's definition of an *Ackerburgerstadt* (best translated as a garden plot city) to define Salt Lake City since although it had a commercial character, the residents grew much of their own food-stuff.¹⁷ Elements of rural life persisted throughout urban Utah into the twentieth century. And according to Pace, the Mormons "foster urban growth by creating settlements which offered the advantages of both urban and rural life. Gathering together in towns and cities, they derived the social and economic benefits of community living, yet still engaged in major agricultural pursuits beyond the principal residential areas. Although numerous small towns lacked the population to qualify as cities, they possessed a number of urban characteristics."¹⁸

This explanation does not lend clarity to the problem at all. Given Pace's definition, St. George would qualify as an urban area as opposed to some of the smaller communities in Washington County. St. George had a higher percentage of polygamists than some other areas in the county, so it would seem polygamy was urban. However, Springville, a city by the census definition, was only 15 percent polygamist.

What then was the deciding factor? Was it the stake president who refused to advance men in the priesthood or call them to positions of leadership if they did not marry an additional wife? Did some General Authorities preach polygamy more often in some communities? Were more obedient members likely to settle in a particular area? No records exist to answer these questions. Pockets of polygamy developed, especially after the underground period in Mexico and in some communities just outside of Utah in Arizona, Wyoming, and Idaho. A number of men in Davis County apparently married in polygamy because Stake President Frank W. Taylor was a polygamist. Such larger questions may be answered in part by the painstaking sifting of data drawn from the experiences of individual families.

This chapter has shown that this painstaking sifting provides some valuable information about polygamy that can disprove or support the exist-

ing stereotypes. Although based on men and women who married into polygamy during the last days of Church sanctioning, the data eliminate many of the popular beliefs. Most of these plural wives and husbands were born after 1847 in Mormon settlements in Utah, Idaho, and other areas of the West. They lived most of their lives in the western United States, although this study reflects a number who moved to Mexico where polygamy was practiced for a longer period of time. Rather than a harem of wives, most plural husbands had only one additional wife. Instead of marrying the very old women to provide for them economically or the very young women because of a shortage of available brides, most husbands married young women in their late teens. As in monogamous families where a husband remarried after the death of a first wife, most first wives in polygamy had more children than subsequent wives. Husbands definitely had more offspring than they would have had with only one wife. Children were spaced about the same in monogamous and polygamous families, and there was no competition between wives for having children. Finally, polygamists were not concentrated in urban or rural areas. Without more data, it is impossible to determine why there were more polygamists in some communities than others. Apparently it had more to do with the families and the Church leaders than with the size or nature of the community. Most importantly, this chapter shows that why and how people practiced polygamy are not easy questions to answer and require a great deal more research.

4

Motivations for Practicing Polygamy

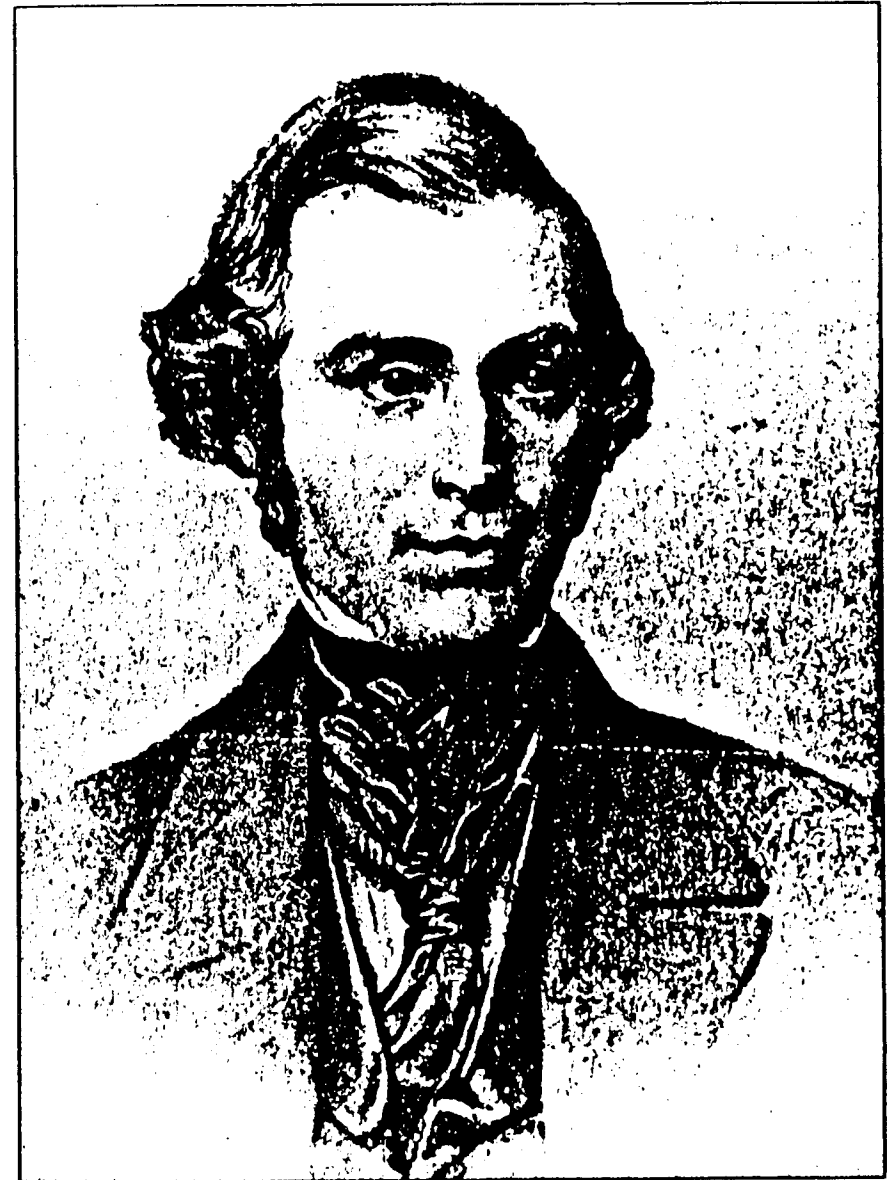
Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came from a Euro-American monogamous background, and the practice of polygamy was very foreign to them. Defending the practice to themselves and to non-Mormons was very important. When Orson Pratt publicly announced the Mormons were practicing polygamy in 1852, he used several arguments to justify the practice, and his reasons were expanded by members of the Church. Pratt argued that polygamy was a revelation received by Joseph Smith, and members of the Church could not receive their highest exaltation in the post-earth life unless they obeyed the commandment of plural marriage. Polygamy helped to fulfill Adam and Eve's commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and to raise the children in religious homes. Monogamy, Pratt also argued, was unnatural when compared with other world societies, and polygamy helped control immorality. Over the years the members also suggested other reasons why polygamy was practiced including a shortage of men because of wars and because there were not enough good male members of the Church for righteous women to marry. They also used the argument that more women than men joined the Church. All of these justifications prove incorrect when compared with history and demographic studies, but they are still given as reasons why the Mormons practiced polygamy. Some children even saw prestige, power, and economics, common reasons for marrying in polygamy in other societies, as reasons why a young girl would want to marry a man established and well accepted by the community rather than a young

man her own age just starting out. Few children raised in polygamous homes saw possible sexual motivations, but as children they were not aware of all their parents' actions. However, public justifications for polygamy rarely included the sexual reasons that non-Mormons seemed convinced were the explanation. While other private sexual motivations might have existed, they were out of character with the Victorian ideal to which the Mormons subscribed.

Religious Motivations

For Pratt and most of the Saints, the compelling argument was that plural marriage had been commanded by God through Joseph Smith. Pratt described the Prophet as the "one man in all the world . . . who can hold the keys" to receive "new revelation." Pratt explained that obedience to the principle of plural marriage was necessary so couples could "attain their exaltation" and "be counted worthy to hold the scepter of power over a numerous progeny."¹

Other members of the Church also argued that in order to reach the highest degree of the celestial kingdom—life in the presence of God where they would be able to create worlds, continue to produce spirit progeny to people them, and become like God—would be withheld from those who did not participate in plural marriage. In 1935 Ross S. Bean, a son of a polygamous marriage, wrote to one of Kimball Young's research assistants that his father "would go the grave without attempting any justification beyond the fact that it was given to our people as a divine principle and that to gain the highest glory in life hereafter we must conform to it."² As Orson Welcome Huntsman explained during the Utah Historical Records Survey, "Celestial marriage is one of the most sacred and essential principles of the gospel, for without it neither we nor our forefathers can claim our wives or our wives claim us and enter upon our exaltation in the eternal worlds."³ Annie Richardson Johnson of the Mormon colonies in Mexico and Arizona, also the child of a polygamous family, summarized the same doctrinal position: "Like Joseph Smith, polygamists had sealed their testimony, not only with their blood but with the power of acceptance when the principle of Plural Marriage was revealed. . . . This extreme test was possible only because they knew that theirs was the revealed Church of Jesus Christ directed by his priesthood and by revelation, and that its blessings came through daily obedience to its principles."⁴



In 1852, Orson Pratt publicly announced that the LDS Church was practicing polygamy. Utah State Historical Society.

Pratt's second argument was that polygamy would fulfill God's commandment to Adam and Eve to "multiply and replenish the earth." He rhetorically asked, "Does it say continue to multiply for a few years, and then the marriage contract must cease? . . . No. . . . When male and female are restored from the fall, by virtue of the everlasting and eternal covenant of marriage, they will continue to increase and multiply to all ages of eternity." Like other societies where offspring was one of the major motivations for practicing polygamy, the Latter-day Saints believed having large families was a blessing. However, rather than only the economic and prestige factors considered by other groups, in the LDS Church the desire for children had theological overtones.⁵ Believing that God had literally fathered spirit children who needed bodies to come to the earth, Mormons saw having children as a way of providing "earthly tabernacles." By husbands marrying more than one wife, the men had more children than they would have had otherwise. Although the women did not have more children, the Mormons argued that some women who may not have had the chance to marry would now have the opportunity to bear children. George W. Brimhall, president of the Brigham Young Academy, recalled attending a meeting on 18 January 1852 where the revelation on celestial marriage was read. The speaker explained polygamy was introduced "for the purpose of peopling this desert land as speedily as possible, for as a rule, the migration from the South and East passed through to better lands." Price Nelson told a young woman he was courting, "I believed in polygamy . . . to have a big family. I love children and I always prayed I would have two wives and go on a mission."⁶ As demonstrated earlier, although plural wives did not have more children than their monogamous counterparts, plural husbands did and the Latter-day Saints argued that there probably were more children born because of polygamy than there would have been without it.

Given the theological framework, childlessness in mortality was particularly devastating to Latter-day Saint couples. Although most first wives were not childless, some, like Sarah in the Old Testament, accepted polygamy so their husbands could have offspring. Reuben Hill's father, George, married his mother after twelve childless years of marriage to his first wife. Childless Wealthy Clark of Bountiful, Utah, gave her husband Edward Barrett permission to remarry after a mysterious male visitor promised her children if she allowed a second marriage. She gave permission for a second marriage and had six children in the next fifteen years.⁷

Simply having more children to populate the world was not the only issue, though; children needed to be raised in homes where they could be taught the gospel of Christ, and having more wives enabled members of the Church to have more children who would be raised in righteous homes. The Mormons felt that through polygamy not only more women would have the opportunity to marry, but also they would have the chance to marry men who were active members of the Church. With both parents actively obeying what they saw as God's commandments, proponents argued, there was a better chance that they would be raised in God-fearing homes. Just one righteous parent was incapable of providing the proper home environment.

Children were also "foreordained" to come to certain homes. As Orson Pratt explained in 1852, "Abraham and many others of the great and noble ones in the family of spirits, were chosen before they were born, for certain purposes, to bring about certain works, to have the privilege of coming upon the stage of action among the host of men, in favorable circumstances."⁸ According to LDS doctrine, the members of the Church are the descendants of Abraham and heirs to the "promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The Lord commanded Abraham to "lift up your eyes and behold the stars; so thy seed shall be, as numberless as the stars." Pratt told the Saints, "Why not look upon Abraham's blessings as your own, for the Lord blessed him with a promise of seed as numerous as the sand upon the seashore, so will you be blessed, or else you will not inherit the blessing of Abraham." When asked if Abraham was "to accomplish it all through one wife," he replied, "We read . . . of a plurality of wives and concubines, which he had, from whom he raised up many sons."⁹

Mormons often pointed to the illustrious records of polygamous families to show that like Abraham, plural marriage had helped them raise a righteous generation. Orson Rega Card, who grew up in the Mormon settlements of Alberta, Canada, claimed in 1981 to have heard that 90 percent of the present-day bishops were descendants of polygamous families. Joseph Donal Earl, whose family lived in Bunkerville, Utah, speculated, "The controlling factor in the Lord's establishing the principle of polygamy at that time [was] in order to get additional spirits here and to get them through certain family lines." Dorris Dale Hyer said, "Most of the families that went in the mission field came from these very few polygamous families." Linnie Fillerup Monteirh from Mexico added, "A lot of the Authorities of

the Church⁴ have come through polygamous families."¹⁰ Of course, after several generations of descendants of polygamous families intermarrying with those from monogamous families, a much larger number of people seem to have been descended from plural families. If these same people had been asked if they were descended from monogamous families, that would also be the case. Those using this argument, however, did not go through that logic. The Mormons were attempting to prove the value of polygamy so they looked at it only from that viewpoint.

In a letter from J. E. Hickman, a teacher at the Murdock Academy in Beaver, Utah, to C. M. Haynes of Chicago, dated 18 December 1907, Hickman pointed out what he saw as some of the other virtues of polygamous children. He said that they were superior in weight and height to monogamous children. More of the polygamous children survived childhood and fewer had birth defects such as being tongue-tied or cross-eyed. A greater percentage of polygamous boys (248 of 2,416) than monogamous boys (555 of 19,916) served missions. He concluded, "Again I find a difference which indicates that the boy of the class P has something inherent in him which gives a superiority over the boy of class M."¹¹

Finally Pratt argued in 1852 that monogamy was unnatural. He explained, "Only about one-fifth of the population of the globe . . . believe in the one-wife system; the other four-fifths believe in the doctrine of a plurality of wives, . . . and are not so narrow and contracted in their minds as some of the nations of Europe and America, who have done away with the promises." Monogamy, according to Pratt, invited immorality. He erroneously pointed out "haunts of prostitution, degradation, and misery" were not found in ancient Israel, nor in societies practicing polygamy. He went on to explain, "Whoredom, adultery, and fornication have cursed the nations of the earth for many generations; . . . but they must be entirely done away with from those who call themselves the people of God." Prostitution could be "prevented in the way the Lord devised in ancient times; that is, by giving to his faithful servants a plurality of wives by which a numerous and faithful posterity can be raised up, and taught in the principles of righteousness and truth."¹²

Mormon women who met in January 1870 to protest the Cullom Bill wrote, "Resolved: That we acknowledge the institutions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the only reliable safeguard of female virtue and innocence; and that the only sure protection against the fearful sin of prostitution and its attendant evils, now prevalent abroad." Using

the same type of argument but with no specific cases to back it up, Ida Stewart Pacey, of Provo, claimed that polygamy would cure the "social evil" of prostitution and argued that if some men had not married several wives, they might not have been faithful husbands.¹³

Folk Justifications

Despite the theological reasons for maintaining polygamy, the Saints frequently buttressed their defense with other reasons, since a logical question would be why the Lord gave the commandment in the first place. Most of these arguments were certainly not unique. Many societies, including nineteenth-century America, viewed marriage as an advantage for women, pitying those who did not marry and assigning them an inferior social and economic status. Yet male mortality often unbalanced the population, particularly in times of war. Anthropologist Melvin Ember argued that polygyny developed in societies where women outnumbered the men. In 1869, a Christian philanthropist advanced the same argument after the Civil War. Since male mortality was higher than female and also since many men refuse to marry, monogamy was "a cruel and oppressive system." He maintained, "Polygamy would even out both excesses—giving the surplus woman a husband and the men more vigorous wives."¹⁴

Ellen P. (Nellie) Moffett Done, a plural wife in the Mormon colonies of Chihuahua, reported a folk version of this belief. "In the colonies it was very much like the early days of Utah. When they were coming to Utah, you remember the United States grabbed a lot of the men for the Spanish-American War and took them. A lot of them got killed and that left a lot of women in Utah. Brigham Young told the men, 'Take more than one wife.'¹⁵ Actually the Mormon Battalion was called by the U.S. government in response to the LDS Church's request for help in moving west. When the government suggested in 1846 that Mormon men could help fight in the Mexican-American War, Brigham Young agreed. The Battalion marched south from Nebraska to New Mexico and then on to California. Young promised the men as they were leaving that they would not be involved in the fighting and they were not.¹⁶

Bernitta Bartley, the child of monogamous parents, also thought that polygamy resulted from war, but she claimed it was the Black Hawk War that "cleared out the men. . . . They had to repopulate in a hurry."¹⁷ The Black Hawk War, a series of skirmishes between 1865 and 1868, involved

Mormon settlers and Ute, Paiute, and Navaho Indians, and few Mormons were actually killed.

Variations of the demographic argument were that there were not enough "good" men (excluding bachelors and nonmembers) in the Utah Territory to provide a husband for each "good" woman. As Sarah Hendricks of Cove, Utah, explained in an interview, "There were so many women that were good women in the Church. There were many more than there were men. A lot of them would have never had the privilege of becoming mothers and wives if they hadn't had polygamy. It was a blessing for them in that day." Charles Smith Merrill of Salt Lake City ventured, "There are probably a third more women who are righteous than there are men. What are these women going to do? If they can't have a husband, they can't have the joy of family life."¹⁸ Linnie Fillerup Monteirh added, "The authorities counseled a girl that was not married when she was quite old to take a husband and be a second wife to him. They would select some man that they thought would make a good husband for her. It would give her a chance to raise a family." Her own father, Charles Richard Fillerup, had complied when the stake president asked him to take Mary Johnson, an "older woman," as his second wife. Linnie explained, "It was almost like being called on a mission." "Older woman" was obviously a relative term in this case. Examination of family group sheets reveals that Mary was only 18 years old when she married Charles.¹⁹

Carrie C. Smith, a resident of Cardston, Alberta, felt that the population imbalance still prevailed after the Manifesto of 1890. With many young men "partaking of the habits of the world," she queried rhetorically, "what were the pure daughters of Israel going to do for good LDS husbands?" Mercy Weston Gibbons, a plural wife, used a similar defense in a 1938 interview. "They were all preaching to the men to marry the girls and I guess it was very useful. You look around you nowadays and see plenty of unmarried young girls and old maids but not in those days." Jesse Barney of Arizona averred in 1982 he felt certain polygamy would again be practiced in the Church at least partly because of this perceived demographic imbalance, and quoted Brigham Young as saying, "There would be seven women hanging onto one man's coattail," actually found in Isaiah 4:1.²⁰

The demographic argument probably reveals more about the need to defend polygamy than it does about the actual male-female ratios in the Church. For example, in Cache County in 1860 there were slightly more males than females (males 1,317, females 1,288). By 1870 there were a

few more females (males 4,071, females 4,158), and by 1880, there were about equal numbers (male 6,286, female 6,291).²¹ In areas where plural marriages were practiced extensively, there may have been actual shortages of women. Luke William Gallup wrote his sister in September 1865, "Women are scarce or I should have had another [wife] long before this, but it's all right as it is, my intention is good when one comes along for me."²² William eventually married twice more, and although all of his wives eventually left him, he implied there was something wrong with them. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell whether he was a difficult person to live with or if he showed poor judgment in selecting wives.

From an anthropological viewpoint, it is unfortunate that plural marriage flourished without judicial harassment only between the 1850s and 1880s, because responses from second- and third-generation polygamists might have reflected a different perspective. The second generation gave hints of that. Rhoda Ann Knell Cannon, the third wife of David Henry Cannon, the St. George Temple president, explained, "I didn't think a thing about [polygamy]. We just accepted it." Another believer who grew up in a polygamous home and later married two wives himself described his belief. "I believed in polygamy because it had always been taught me and we lived it at home. I always wanted to marry in polygamy, and I'm glad I did."²³

Prestige, power, and economics also played a role in later polygamous marriages. Vicky Burgess-Olson, studying a sample of eighty-two wives married between 1847 and 1885, found that most of the first and second wives accepted polygamy because of their belief and "dedication to the principle." For more than a quarter of the youngest wives the main motivation was status. Ursula Rich Cole, the daughter of William Lyman Rich and his first wife, Eliza Amelia Pomeroy, explained, "I guess Mira was surprised when father asked her, but she believed in the Principle. And besides father was a good provider and by that time had accumulated property. Any girl would have taken a successful bishop in preference to a single man with nothing."²⁴

Sexual Motivations

In some societies sexual motivations were given for marrying in polygamy. When cultural mores prohibited sexual intercourse during pregnancy and lactation, additional wives allowed men to satisfy their sexual needs.

Although sexual factors were rarely given in Mormon society, some of the children of polygamous unions were not always convinced of the purity of their fathers' motives. Loraine Farrell Ralph, the daughter of George H. Farrell and his first wife Amanda Adaline Steele, commented, "I don't think for a minute those men married for religious reasons. Yes, I believe it was a divine revelation and there weren't many people and it served its purpose at that time. The men may have kidded themselves that they were marrying for the Principle, but I don't think they did."²⁵

E. W. Wright, the eighth son of Amos Russell Wright's first wife Catharine Roberts, said his father believed strongly in the principle and undoubtedly married for religious reasons. Yet knowing he could marry younger women made his first wife less attractive and he did not treat her as well.²⁶ J. W. Wilson, a monogamist on the high council in the Juarez Mexico Stake, wrote, "Polygamy is a true principle . . . but men did not live it as they should have done. . . . I talked to a man who had married a number of wives. I asked him why he did it and he said . . . that all of his marriages were due to inspiration. . . . I asked him that now as he grew older and his desires were dying if he had inspirations to marry and he said no, that he had no more inspirations. That was the reason polygamy could not be lived, men believed it because of their lustful desires."²⁷

Although some children quoted the motives of their fathers for marrying plural wives, very few mentioned sexual motivations—either positive or negative. In interviews conducted during the 1930s, James Hulett asked some questions about sexual relations in polygamy and was told sexual intercourse was practiced only for procreation. On the whole, he did not receive any answers to his inquiries about sex. Of course, one of the reasons for that simply might be that the children were unaware of their parents' sexual activities. Rarely, especially in Victorian America and even today, would parents discuss their sexual behavior with their children. Children were told the religious motivations not only for polygamy but also for sexuality. Although religious motivations may not have been the only reason why Mormons practiced polygamy, there is no way to determine other factors. Certainly they would not have even considered the possibility of plural marriage if they had not been instructed to do so.

Downplaying sexuality in a society trying to cement itself together is another possible reason for polygamy. In *Religion and Sexuality*, Lawrence Foster compared the marriage patterns of Shaker celibacy, Oneida Community complex marriage, and Mormon polygamy. He concluded that

additional sexual opportunity was not the reason why Mormons practiced polygamy. Instead, "by partially breaking down exclusive bonds between husband and wife and by undercutting intense emotional involvement in family affairs in favor of Church business, polygamy may well have contributed significantly both to the success of the long-range centralized plans set in motion at this time and to the rapid and efficient establishment of religious and communal order."²⁸ However, the sources in this study do not support such a conclusion. There was intense love between husbands and wives; while the love had to be shared, plural husbands and wives did have romantic attachments. Even if the "exclusive bonds between husband and wife" were broken by the practice, it was never given as one of the reasons why Mormons upheld polygamy. At best it might be a desired result of the practice, and even that is questionable.

Eunice Stewart Harris, a first wife, expressed the opinion of most polygamous husbands and wives and their children about why they accepted polygamy:

My husband and I both believed in this principle and both desired to practice it. We both felt within our very souls that the time had come when it was our duty to obey that principle no matter what results might follow. The call had come and we had to obey it. I am thankful I felt it as strongly as he did, otherwise, when the test came, I might have faltered. July 28, 1886, my husband married Annie Jane Wride, a plural wife in the Logan Temple. I want to bear testimony to my children, my grandchildren, and my great grandchildren, that I know to the very depth of my being that this order of marriage is true and that it was revealed from God, and I thank my Heavenly Father for my testimony. Let me say to you as my mother said to her children, "Never say you do not believe it nor tear it down. Rather say you do not understand it."²⁹

Most men, women, and children involved in polygamy echoed Harris's feelings. As Kimball Young concluded:

While we examine the wide range of motives which appear in our records of polygamous families, we note that there is nearly always the basic faith in the principle of plurality of wives. While individuals must have variety in the intensity of their belief in this matter, on the whole the system has become deeply embedded in Mormon culture. It was thought to have divine sanction and to promise rewards here and in the hereafter. . . . Secondary motives . . . emerged, but since the

deeper motives are hidden below the surface of our daily habits, it is not expected that writers of personal documents or informants in interviews would be able to expose their deeper desires in these matters.³⁰

Orson Pratt's public announcement of the practice of polygamy set forth the major reasons why the Mormons engaged in plural marriage. The key reason was that, according to LDS Church doctrine, God had revealed his will to Joseph Smith. Pratt's other reasons were a partial explanation of why the Lord gave that commandment. Pratt used biblical examples—the command to Adam and Eve to populate the world and to Abraham that his seed would be as numerous as the sands of the sea, practical examples—children should be born in righteous homes, and plural marriages would help control immorality, and historical examples—polygamy was practiced by most of the societies of the world. Over the years Mormons suggested other reasons for the practice to help explain to themselves and non-Mormons why God would have given such a commandment. None of their motivations were the sexual ones most non-Mormons suggested, and given the Victorian life-style Mormons subscribed to, lascivious desires probably were not a consideration. Whatever the reasons given to justify the practice, most likely none of the Mormon polygamists would have ever considered marrying another wife without the religious motivation, the command from God. The desire to live their religion and follow their prophet has to be seen as the major argument why they accepted the principle.

5

Entering Plural Marriage

Descendants of plural marriages tend to agree that a husband had to obtain the consent of the first wife before he could marry again and had to be asked by, or at least have the permission of, Church officials as well. However, no records are known of a set procedure for obtaining that permission. Assuming plural marriages were performed in the Endowment House, in a temple, or by someone having the "sealing power" to perform them, an interview held, and a recommend issued, there was at least some type of approval by Church officials. But descendants disagree on who could give permission. According to some, this approval had to come from the President of the Church; others felt that it needed to come only from the bishop or the stake president. Also, since quite often the plural wives lived close together, it might be assumed that the first wife had some say in the decision. Although the revelation stated that if the first wife did not give her consent "she then becomes the transgressor," none of the descendants referred to that clause.¹

These decisions, however, were not made in a uniform way. Sometimes the first wife freely gave her consent or even initiated the decision to practice polygamy. Other wives felt pressured into accepting their husbands' choices for fear of what might happen in the next life, while a few were not even informed of the marriages. Women who accepted a proposal of plural marriage also had a difficult decision to make. Accepting plural marriage was not only a woman's decision; men also had to ponder the choices. Although some men were specifically called to marry in polygamy, others

simply felt they were obeying a general commandment of the Church that applied to all members. Most, however, did not marry in polygamy, thus avoiding the decision altogether. For those who did accept the principle, their courtships were the same as monogamous ones during the nineteenth century. Marriages came about not because of romantic physical attraction but because of a desire to work for common goals. The marriages of Joseph C. Bentley, Charles Edmund Richardson, and John Theodore Brandley illustrate some of the variations.²

Case Studies

Joseph C. Bentley of St. George helped train his first wife Margaret (Maggie) Ivins at a telegraph office. They married in 1886 when Joseph was 27 and Maggie was 18. Joseph later explained, "When I asked Maggie to marry me I told her that I wanted her to know how I might someday take a plural wife and she said, 'I wouldn't think much of you if you didn't.'" After their marriage, Maggie felt that her cousin, Gladys Woodmansee of Salt Lake City, a young poet active in Church programs, would be a good choice for her husband's second wife. Gladys, involved in her literary activities, was not really interested in marriage, but she accepted Maggie's invitation to visit her in St. George. Joseph courted her during the visit and later when he came to Salt Lake City for the semiannual General Conferences. Eventually he proposed to Gladys, and after some thought about living polygamy and giving up her career, she accepted.

The First Manifesto had been issued by this time, and few new plural marriages were being performed. According to Bentley family tradition, Joseph approached Church leaders several times about marrying Gladys because he knew that other marriages were being approved, particularly for engagements contracted before the Manifesto. He was finally told to talk to George Q. Cannon, a counselor in the First Presidency, who advised him to move to the colonies in Mexico. Joseph and Maggie moved in 1894, Gladys came to visit, and the marriage finally was performed. Joseph was then 35 and Gladys was 29. Both families continued to live in Mexico, five of Maggie's nine children and all five of Gladys's children being born there.

Joseph became a prominent figure in Colonia Juarez, serving as bishop, businessman, and part owner of a store. One of his partners, Ernest Leander Taylor, had a daughter, Maud, who was known for her red hair and her

running ability. Joseph was attracted to Maud while she was still in her teens. Her father was anxious to have Joseph as a son-in-law and encouraged his attentions. When Maud noticed that the bishop was attracted to her, she was embarrassed and upset. She wrote in her autobiography, "No matter what time I went to school I would meet him at the corner of the shoe shop. . . . The first time he met me on the corner after school and asked if he could walk home with me, I was scared to death. . . . When he began to pay too much attention to me, the kids my age would tease me." She also recalled his courting visits on Wednesdays. "One evening I had my hair all in rags for curlers. Brother Bentley came and mother came in to tell me to come out. I said I wouldn't come out. She said that I didn't realize what a wonderful man he was. I said, 'I don't care. Let him go home to his own folks. I don't want him.'" When Joseph asked her to be his third wife, she hesitated but finally accepted. They were married in 1901 when Joseph was 42 and Maud 16, and eventually they had eight children. According to one of the other wives' children, Maud probably did not love Joseph when she married him, but she learned to love him and appreciate her marriage.

Sarah Louise (Sadie) Adams was 14 when she married 24-year-old Charles Edmund Richardson in the St. George Temple in 1882. Several years later while they were living in Wilford, Arizona, Sadie heard a sermon by a General Authority about plural marriage and felt deeply convinced of it. About the same time, Sarah Matilda Rogers, a young woman in the Richardsons' ward, told the bishop that she wanted to marry Edmund. When the bishop approached Edmund with Sarah's request, he was confused. He had no plans to marry again and did not love Sarah, yet he didn't feel he could refuse her outright. He reportedly paced the floor, trying to make a decision. Sadie, however, did not share his confusion. "You know that you should be entering into this principle," she told Edmund, "and you have no right to deprive that good woman of having a family." Edmund finally agreed to marry Sarah, the ceremony taking place in the St. George Temple in 1887 when Edmund was 29 and Sarah 31.

One of Edmund's children observed that he did not experience the same difficulty in marrying a third wife, though again Sadie supplied an important impetus. Caroline Rebecca (Becky) Jacobson, a Danish immigrant, worked in Sadie's home. Sadie was impressed with her and suggested Edmund marry her. He proposed, but Becky refused. Then while Edmund was serving a mission to the Indians in Arizona, he wrote back

that he had met several Indian women who might be good candidates for a third wife. Sadie wrote Edmund that he could have all the Indian women that he wanted, but she felt that he should marry Becky. When he returned approximately two years later, he proposed to Becky again, and this time she accepted. The Edmunds-Tucker Act had been passed and U.S. marshals were arresting polygamists, so Edmund, Sadie, Becky, and later Sarah moved to Mexico where he married Becky in Colonia Juarez in 1889. Edmund was then 31 and Becky 14 years younger.

In Mexico, Edmund became a lawyer and acquired a ranch in Colonia Diaz. His legal practice required him to be closer to the government headquarters in Nuevo Casa Grande, so he moved Sadie to Colonia Juarez and his other two wives stayed in Colonia Diaz to take care of the ranch. He traveled back and forth between the two homes. In Colonia Juarez he met Daisie Stout. The comparatively common practice of polygamy in the colonies meant that marriageable girls considered all men, married or single, as possible husbands. Daisie's father, David Fisk Stout, had four wives, and she believed in plural marriage. Edmund, a well-to-do man, she felt would provide the support she wanted for her children.

Edmund was taken aback by the request and expressed doubts about their comparative ages. However, while he considered her proposal, Stake President Anthony W. Ivins warned Edmund that if he didn't marry Daisie soon he would lose the chance since Church President Joseph F. Smith planned to outlaw all plural marriages. Edmund, 46, married Daisie, 20, in March 1904, one month before the Second Manifesto. He did not have time to tell his wives in Colonia Diaz about the marriage, and both Sarah and Becky were shocked and somewhat displeased.

John Theodore Brandley of Richfield, Utah, met his first wife, Marie Elizabeth Naegeli, while serving a mission in Switzerland. After he returned to Utah, she and her mother came to the United States. Theodore and Marie married soon after her arrival in 1872 when Theodore was 21 and Marie was 18. Louis, a son of the second wife, described Marie as Theodore's "first love" and their relationship as a "true and sweet romance."

Ten years later, in 1882, Theodore married 18-year-old Margaret Keeler, Louis's mother. Louis explained that "in Utah polygamy was in flower. The leaders of the Church advised—even urged—the faithful elders to take plural wives as a sacred duty, to hasten, I think the building of Zion. Love and romance were strangely lacking, seemed unnecessary. It was an arrangement designed to fulfill a sacred obligation with the 'highest

order of the celestial kingdom' as its goal and 'eternal increase' its reward." Louis noted that his mother simply recorded in her journal on the wedding day, "Today I married Theodore Brandley." Louis said that she saw the marriage both as a "business arrangement" and as a biblically ordained model where second wives "always took second place to the chosen wives and actually became their handmaids." She expressed neither romantic love for his father nor dismay at the differences in their ages but simply considered him a faithful Latter-day Saint, worthy to have plural wives.

Theodore served a second mission to Switzerland from 1876 to 1878 where he met Rosina Elizabeth (Eliza) Zaugg and Emma Biefer. Eliza was from Columbiar, Switzerland, and both women were young converts. Louis said that his father's diary records show him asking the mission president's permission to take Eliza and a friend on a picnic, and Aunt Eliza later confirmed to Louis that the romance had begun then.

Theodore's first wife, Marie, died in 1892, just after they had completed a new home and bakery in Richfield. He first asked Maggie to care for Marie's children, and Maggie moved into the new home. Poor health left her unable to care for her children and Marie's eight, so she moved back to her own home. Theodore hired housekeepers, including Eliza and Emma, who had immigrated to the United States and whom he brought to Richfield. Later he moved to Canada with Eliza and married her there. When Emma came to visit, she also married him. Some records indicate these marriages were performed as early as 1891 and 1893; others set them at the more likely dates of 1901 and 1903, Eliza having her first child in 1902 in Canada. Emma returned to live in Salt Lake City. Theodore visited her twice annually when attending General Conference, and she had twins in 1909. Maggie continued to live in Richfield until her death in 1910, seeing her husband only when he returned to Utah for conference. According to Louis, Theodore apparently had two wives successively occupying the prime place in his affections. The other two were "in the same matrimonial class, not handmaids to the chosen wives, but rather . . . Isaiah's class of women," Isaiah 4:1 reading, "In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."

These stories demonstrate the various roles of wives and Church officials in the decision to marry in polygamy. Though there were some common threads, no set courtship procedure was established. Each relationship developed in its own way.

The First Wife's Consent

As these cases demonstrate, the first wife's involvement could vary from active encouragement—even selecting a second wife as Maggie Bentley did—to having the decision simply announced to her. This range of practice indicates a certain amount of functional ambiguity about whether the first wife's consent was actually necessary. According to the revelation Joseph Smith received, recorded in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the first wife was to give her consent. However, she was not always consulted. Joseph Smith apparently did not tell his first wife, Emma, about all of his marriages. Polygamy was practiced openly without opposition from the government for a relatively short time. There were few public announcements and definitely no handbook on the procedure for selecting and marrying a second wife.

Without formal guidance and direction, Latter-day Saint men and women had to rely on the scriptures, a few statements by Church leaders, and their own judgment, all of which contributed to the diversity. Burgess-Olson found only 22 cases where she could determine whether the first wife gave her consent. Of these, over 90 percent agreed to the plural marriage. Alma Elizabeth Mineer, the second wife of Joseph Felt, reported, "When a man married he must have the consent of the Church authorities and of his first wife. He must obtain this consent freely and fully before he married her, and he must be a man worthy to live in polygamy." Agatha Walker, the second wife of Joseph McAllister, also said that the first wife was supposed to give her consent in theory, but sometimes the husbands got it because the wives knew they would have to consent to polygamy and other times the men married without consent anyway.³

Andrew Jonus Hansen wrote in his autobiography, "In those days great stress was laid on the importance of Celestial Marriage, including a plurality of wives." He quoted from a 9 October 1875 talk given by Wilford Woodruff, then one of the Twelve Apostles, that many bishops and elders had only one wife because their wives would not let them marry again. According to Woodruff, no man should let a wife prevent him from marrying again. When John Jacob Walser returned to Payson, Utah, from a mission, "I married my second wife. No, my first wife did not like the idea at first. She was upset but she got used to it."⁴ Ann Elizabeth Riter Young protested to George Q. Cannon, the First Counselor in the First Presidency, that she could not give her consent for her husband, Seymour, to

marry a plural wife because one of their children had cerebral palsy and they had other illness in the family. Hortense Young Hammond described her mother's reaction. "She knew who it was that Papa was courting, and of course, that broke her heart. Papa knew she didn't want it, but Papa was between the devil and the great deep blue sea" because he felt that he had been commanded by revelation to marry another wife.⁵ She was referring to a revelation given to John Taylor in 1882 in which Seymour was called to the First Council of Seventy provided "he will conform to my law." In spite of the revelation, he put off taking a plural wife for another 18 months. During April conference in 1884, John Taylor "commanded" Seymour to enter polygamy "immediately." As a result, he married Abbie Corilla Wells on 28 April.⁶

Although some husbands simply did not ask for consent, they were probably the minority. Mae Douglas, the child of Margaret McFarland and P. P. Bingham, said, "Mother just cried her heart out when she found out about it. No, he probably never did consult Mother about the marriage to Isabel, and the marriage just finished her." Her mother, after the first shock, regained a cheerful demeanor and "always put the bright side outside. I think lots of her jovial behavior was just to hide her real feelings." E. W. Wright said of his mother, Catherine Roberts, the first wife of Amos Russell Wright, "I'm pretty sure Mother was resentful of the whole thing. But in such a situation a woman doesn't dare stand in her husband's way, because she'd blame herself for whatever happened to him afterwards."⁷ Harriet Snarr Hutchings said that when her father, Daniel Hammer Snarr, was encouraged to marry in polygamy, "My mother [Alice Thompson, the first wife] accepted it; she lived it graciously, but it was always a heartbreak." Harriet, her mother's youngest daughter, said she could not cry when her father died because he had hurt her mother so much, even though her mother "let me know she really loved him."⁸

The children and husbands reported a variety of reasons the first wives allowed or encouraged polygamy. When Brigham Young asked David Henry Cannon, who later became the St. George Temple president, to marry a second wife, he told his first wife, Welhimina Logan Mousley, that he did not want to. According to Douglas, a son of David's third wife, Rhoda Ann Knell, Welhimina said, "You've never questioned him. I can't see any reason why you should start now to question the Prophet."⁹ LaVetta Cluff Lunt Taylor, who grew up in the Mormon colonies in Mexico and Arizona, said she knew that her mother, Sarah Ann Weech Cluff, the first

wife of Heber Manasseh, had faith for two reasons: his marriage to Susan Carolyn Sims in 1898 after she had seven children, and her encouragement for him to go on a mission when she was pregnant with their tenth child.¹⁰ Gottlieb Ence in his life sketch explained, "My dear wife Elizabeth being a good Latter Day Saint wished to obey all the Principles the Lord has revealed unto Man. . . . She was willing to sacrifice her own feelings in order to be able to inherit a place in his Celestial Kingdom. She then consented and let me have her sister Caroline for my second wife, this she did in full faith that it was a commandment of God, and that she would be rewarded for doing so."¹¹

Mary Elizabeth Woolley Chamberlain of Kanab, Utah, wrote an interesting story about how she agreed to marry her husband if he won the consent of his five previous wives. "During the weekend he made the rounds and returned Monday morning with a favorable report. I don't know how much pressure he had to bring to bear but he told me that one wife was more than willing to give her consent when she learned that I was his choice, as she had feared it was to be one whom she disliked very much." Similarly, Dorris Dale Hyer's father, Andrew Larse, at first proposed to a second wife to whom his first wife, Ellen Gilbert, objected. She agreed to a second marriage when he suggested Dorris's mother, Elizabeth Helen Telford, who had been working in the household.¹²

Edna Clark Ericksen of Wyoming said her father, Hyrum Don Carlos Clark, talked to her mother, Ann Eliza Porter, about polygamy before they were married in 1880, explaining, "His family was polygamous minded and that he was too. He said, 'So it might well be that some day I'll want to get another wife.'" Edna's mother talked to her father, Alma Porter, who was also her bishop, because she felt polygamy was "terrible." Her father told her that her future husband's desire to live polygamy was "noble and unselfish. If he wants another wife, you must be equal to it. That is my advice to you. Accept it as nobly as he does."¹³

Ida Walser Skousen, the wife of James, of Salt Lake City, explained, "At conference time we had so many visitors and Emma Mortenson was one. That started it. She and Jim were married several months after it. He talked it over with me. I knew all about it and every time he went to see her and all that happened. One day I was combing his hair and I said to him, 'Would you marry Emma if I refused consent?' He said that he wouldn't, but the responsibility would be on my head. Now I'd be willing to take [the responsibility of him not marrying in polygamy], but I wasn't then."¹⁴

Deciding to Be a Plural Wife

Just as polygamy could be hard for the first wife to accept, a second wife sometimes struggled in accepting the principle. Some had spiritual manifestations to aid their decision. Julia Ann Angell was not sure she wanted to marry in polygamy when Matthias Knudson asked her to be his second wife, not until she dreamed her deceased niece came and gave her a letter from Eliza R. Snow. The letter read, "If you will live it as it should be lived, you will be blessed." Rosalia Tenney Payne of Colonia Diaz, who became the third wife of Edward in 1903, said she used to make fun of polygamy until she read Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants and realized it was a divine principle. When she was asked to be a plural wife, her family was against it and she had doubts that she was making the right decision. "But I finally felt that I was doing the right thing and that assurance has never left me."¹⁵

In one case, the absence of spiritual manifestation prevented a plural marriage. Annabell Wheeler Hart said her mother's first husband left her when she joined the Church. "In 1887, she went to Utah with some missionaries that were on their way home. . . . They said that she could come and live with them and their families in Southern Utah. Later on, one missionary [who was already married] said, 'What would you say, Sister Doty, if I told you that it had been revealed to me that you should marry me?' . . . My mother had a great spirit. She said, 'He would have to reveal it to me, too.'" Annabell explained, "That ended that because she did not get any response from her asking the Lord about what she should do."¹⁶

Other family members often played crucial roles in decisions to enter plural marriage. One man married his wife's sister partially because their mother "wanted my dad to marry [her] because she loved my dad too. She wanted my dad to marry these two sisters so that they would keep him in the family."¹⁷ Emma Romney's parents did not approve of the young man who was courting her and were pleased when her sister's husband, Edward Christian Eyring, asked Emma to marry him. Their approval was an important element in her decision. Edward's daughter-in-law, Mildred Bennion Eyring, speculated, "I suspect that when Grandfather Romney found how competent his son-in-law . . . was he at least helped to bring about the second alliance." Matilda Peterson said that she was only allowed to go to dances with old married men because "our father and mother felt we could not be saved unless we went into polygamy." Once she went

home with a young single man instead of a twice married man that her father approved of and "paid for it" the next day.¹⁸

Mary Elizabeth Woolley Chamberlain, who grew up in a polygamous home and had required her husband-to-be to get the consent of his five wives, firmly believed in polygamy. Years before her marriage, she wrote a poem describing the struggles of the Saints to live polygamy in which she asked rhetorically:

Will the daughters of Zion be fearing
To choose for the right and for God?
With fines and imprisonment threatening
Will they hold fast the Iron Rod?

Her answer was:

Better marry a man who'd be constant
Though wives he may have more than you.
If he is faithful to God and his covenants
Be onward he'll be faithful to you.
Though of Babylon's proud wealth he can boast not,
Don't fear if his heart's only true,
The riches of earth can compare not
With affection eternal for you.¹⁹

Church Encouragement and Approval for Polygamous Marriages

An equally wide variation existed in the second traditional checkpoint in plural marriage: official instruction or permission. Of the approximately 200 men used in this study, 78 of the men or their descendants identified a Church official who asked them to marry in polygamy or who approved the marriage. Over 80 percent of these 78 reportedly received a direct request to marry a plural wife.

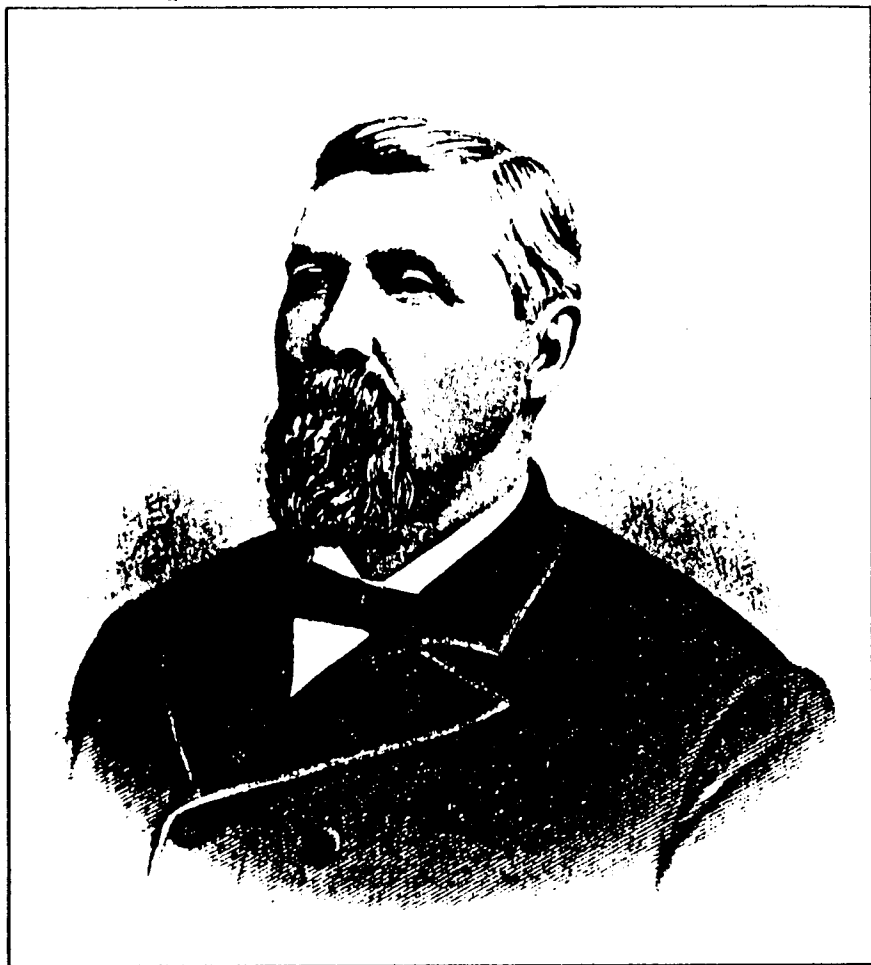
George Lake said that President Brigham Young asked him to come to Salt Lake City in 1861 and receive special ordinances in the Endowment House. Lake accepted the invitation and simultaneously had his wife sealed to her first husband, Lake's brother. When Young asked Lake how he was doing, he replied he regretted that his wife had been sealed to another man. Young told him, "You have done your duty my boy and your reward shall be greater. . . . Go to now, and in two weeks be here with two more for yourself." Lake wrote, "I pleaded for a little more time as I

wished to make a wise choice, so as not to have trouble with him for a divorce. This he thought would be a good plan but said not to delay."²⁰

Arthur E. Snow, a son of Erastus and his third wife, Elizabeth Ashby, told how Brigham Young encouraged his father to marry for a fourth time. Although Erastus was living in a log house with three wives, he obeyed. Arthur added, "During this time Brigham was putting considerable pressure on the men to marry the excess women, generally indicating a likely place to find a wife. Erastus married his fourth wife under these circumstances, and there was no love in this match, although the wife fit well enough into the picture."²¹

Both John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff encouraged all men in official Church positions to marry in polygamy. President Taylor said, "If we do not embrace that principle soon, the keys will be turned against us. If we do not keep the same law that our Heavenly Father has kept, we cannot go with Him. A man obeying a lower law is not qualified to preside over those who keep a higher law."²² Taylor also said that polygamy "was applicable to High Councillors, Bishops, and their counselors and all who preside in Zion and if these officers should not obey this law, their places should be filled with men, who have obeyed the law."²³ Wilford Woodruff also observed, "The reason why the Church and Kingdom of God cannot advance without the Patriarchal Order of Marriage is that it belongs to this dispensation just as baptism for the dead does, or any law or ordinance that belong to this dispensation. Without it the Church cannot progress. The leading men of Israel who are presiding over stakes will have to obey the law of Abraham, or they will have to resign."²⁴

David John recorded in his journal that in 1884 John Taylor, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith discussed "Celestial Marriage saying it was binding on all the Latter-day Saints and no man was entitled to the right of Presiding without abiding this law." After explaining that Joseph Smith said that no coward could enter the order the speaker pointed out, "If Bro. Wm. W. Cluff and Abraham [sic] Hatch and other leading men had gone into this order 18 months or more ago Zion would today have been upon a higher place than now." According to William Forman, a bishop and tithing agent in Heber City, Utah, his stake president, Abram Hatch, said at a subsequent local priesthood meeting that it took Wilford Woodruff 40 years to obey the Word of Wisdom and it may take him that long to live polygamy. Forman recorded in his journal on 11 March 1884 that Hatch "feels quite important and says he is not going to resign."²⁵



Abram Hatch, the stake president in Wasatch County from 1877 to 1901, was a monogamist and reportedly refused to marry a plural wife. Utah State Historical Society.

Other General Authorities also encouraged men to marry in polygamy and may sometimes have put pressure on them. According to the children of Andrew Larse Hyer, Apostle Marriner W. Merrill "from Richmond, came over and wanted Father to head the seventy's quorum" in Lewiston, Utah, and requested him to take another wife. Hyer agonized, calling it "the hardest decision he ever had to make in his life." After Merrill's third visit, however, he finally talked it over with his first wife, Ellen Gilbert, subsequently married Elizabeth Helen Telford in 1885 in the Logan Temple, and fathered 11 children by her.²⁶

Stake presidents and bishops also gave authorization counsel. Laura Andersen Watkins said that the stake president told her father, James Michael, who also lived in Lewiston, that he was well enough off to marry again and suggested Susan Eliza Stephensen, a 22-year-old "good looking" woman not currently courting. "Father just took that for granted what he should do," commented Laura. "I think he accepted it just the same as Mother [Margaret Maria White] did." Mary Diantha Cox Sherratt said that Anthony W. Ivins, president of the Juarez Stake, asked her father, Amos, to marry again since he had no children. He married Mary's mother, and she and Amos had eight children. Torrey L. Austin reported his father, Edwin Nelson, a surveyor who lived in the Bear Lake area of Idaho and who married Alnora Naomi Chase Lane in 1863 and Emma Wood in 1872, did so because "it was a call, an individual call, for each individual to go into that relationship."²⁷

Still others, though without specific instructions, felt that additional marriages were in harmony with Church policy. John C. Larsen, interviewed in 1938, said that he just followed general Church counsel and married three wives. Arabelle Parkinson Daines, the daughter of Samuel Rose and his third wife, Maria Smart, said her father was not given specific counsel but that all "worthwhile men" considered polygamy at that time. Lucy Fryer Vance, who was raised by her grandparents Hyrum Smith and Sarah Clarinda Bingham Phelps in Mesa, Arizona, said that her grandfather heard Brigham Young speak in Montpelier, Idaho, encouraging the men to marry in polygamy. Her grandfather thought, "If I am worthy and I am sure I can take care of two, I will take the counsel of the Church Authorities."²⁸ He married his first wife's sister, Mary Elizabeth Bingham, in Salt Lake City in 1873, seven years after his first marriage.

Courtship

After the decision to enter plural marriage, the problem of pursuing another wife remained. Plural marriages resulted from courtships that were not that much different from other romantic involvements in the nineteenth century. The modern perception of men and women marrying for love was rarely mentioned in marriage manuals. According to them, love should not be a "guiding star" in marriage plans. "A married couple should feel love for each other, but the love should grow out of the relationship rather than being the cause of it." Instead, men and women were to consider religion, character, and physical traits rather than romantic love.²⁹

Plural husbands also seemed to have these same feelings about love. When Ida Stewart Pacey asked her father, Andrew, how he could love two women, he simply answered just as she could love two children. Marital love was not seen as something held exclusively for one person. Learning to work together for common goals including the ultimate reward, eternal life, was more important than physical attraction. After telling of his love for each of his three wives as long as they were faithful to him, Joel Hills Johnson's "poem" concluded:

Should each prove True
Their work to do
Like truth and faithful wives
Then all shall share
My love and care
With crown of endless lives.³⁰

With this attitude about love, nineteenth-century "dating" in monogamous and polygamous marriages was much different from today. As one historian explained, "Of course, there were courtships. . . . After dances [and] church meetings, . . . young men would . . . ask young women, 'May I carry you home?' When the relationship had progressed to the stage where the suitor had a call on the young woman's family, the couple was said to be 'sparkin'.' These courtships were very short and by our standards quite formal."³¹

Mormon polygamous husbands varied in what they wrote about their marriage plans. While some men described their marriage interests with their first wives in great detail, many were very brief. Walter John Winsor explained his first marriage, "When I was twenty-one, nearly twenty-two,

I got married. . . . We had to make our own entertainment and there wasn't much time for courting."³² Descriptions of second and third romances also varied in length and courtship was not emphasized in the men's writings. For example, Christopher Layton wrote in his autobiography, "On April 12, 1856, Caroline Cooper and I were married in Salt Lake City. President Brigham Young officiating," and "On August 12, 1862 Rosa Ana Hudson and I were married in Salt Lake City, Daniel H. Wells officiating." He made no mention of these women earlier in his autobiography. Warren Foote recorded in his autobiography that on 18 February 1856 he went to Provo to visit Eliza Maria. On 2 March 1856 he added, "Eliza Maria Ivie was sealed to me by Pres. B. Young in his office at SLC."³³

Mary E. Croshaw, the fourth wife of George H. Farrell, agreed with this perception of brief courtships. "Married men didn't do any courting of their plural wives. Why, we would have thought it was dishonorable for a mature married man to go sparking like a young man. They just came and asked us, and if we wanted them, we agreed."³⁴ Laura Moffet, the second wife of W. F. Jones, remembered she was tending her brothers and sisters in her parents' absence when she saw him coming. "He had not paid any attention to me before, nor had I thought of him, but just as soon as I saw him coming across the lot I knew what he wanted. In those days no married man paid attention to a girl unless he wanted to marry her. He did not say much but asked me if there was any reason why I could not marry in polygamy. I knew then we were engaged."³⁵ Mary Elizabeth Woolley Chamberlain said that she had contact with her husband-to-be before he proposed but it had been all business. "When months later he proposed marriage to me it came like thunder from a clear sky and was such a shock that I resented it very emphatically. I had never dreamed of such a thing." Lydia Naegle Romney, the daughter of John Conrad Naegle and his sixth wife, said her father "always had his eye open" for prospective wives but he courted "in a reserved way."³⁶

A few men were apparently more open in their search for plural wives. Murlyn Lamar Brown said that his mother, who had grown up in the Mexican colonies, chose monogamy because she was repelled by what she perceived as impersonal systematization. "There were some brethren in Colonia Juarez and Colonia Dublan that felt it was their duty to make sure that every young lady in the country had an opportunity to go into polyg-

amy. . . . They made a mockery out of it by going around and asking all the girls that they ran into to marry them."³⁷

Other families preserve no record of anything but brisk efficiency. Claude E. Hawkes, the son of the first wife of Joshua, explained the bishop advised his father to marry a second wife so he asked the daughter of a neighboring farmer. Claude said that the second marriage was more a "business arrangement" and second wife Sarah saw it as a "chance for a good match." There was "no special love" between them. Anderson P. Anderson, a son of Christian and his third wife, Anna Christiansen, said his father's first wife, Christine, was the first and only love. He married the second wife, Rasmine, because he felt sorry for her, his third, Anna, because the principle was being preached, and his fourth, Hannah, because Anna recommended it.³⁸

Although the stereotype of immigrant women being funneled into polygamy is not supported statistically, anecdotal evidence shows some men married immigrants out of duty, simultaneously solving the dual problems of economic support and assimilation. When his wife advised him to marry again, Priddy Meeks of Parowan, Utah, decided upon a "handcart girl," preferably an immigrant without any relatives or money. After several inquiries, he learned of a girl who had just arrived in Salt Lake City and had no relatives. When he approached her, she was not interested. Disappointed, he turned to 16-year-old Mary Jane who had dreamed Meeks, nearly 60, would be her husband. Meeks wrote, "People may say what they want about mismated in age in marriage, but the Lord knows best about these matters. And if ever there was a match consummated by the providences of God this was one." Lawrence Leavitt told how his father, Thomas Dudley, of Bunkerville, Nevada, selected his second wife, Ada Ann Waite: "I think in Dad's case it was a case of she was just a young girl. She had just come from England and didn't know anyone, only just who she met there. . . . They were preaching polygamy. . . . I guess it just fell in line."³⁹

In many cases, marriage developed as a logical conclusion to a relationship which may have remained only business or social. Emma Goddard was living with her sister and her husband Benjamin and teaching at the same school Benjamin was. After a year, "we fell in love with each other and we accepted polygamy when we joined the Church. He did not love Allie the less for loving me, but he loved us as much for what we were and

he continued to love us both." In this case, marriage "seemed a natural thing to do."⁴⁰

Thirty-three-year-old Melvina Clay Greer, the wife of Daniel Skousen of Colonia Juarez, suffered from lameness after the birth of twins, her fifth and sixth children. A member of the ward, Alma Spilsbury, offered the services of his 17-year-old daughter Sarah. Sarah, who wanted to finish high school, protested, but her father convinced her that the Skousens needed her. She worked for several months, enjoyed the family, and liked the daughters who were slightly older than she was. "She just loved [Daniel's] smile and his happy congenial spirit, his personality, his friendliness to her and appreciation for her work." Sarah was keeping company with a young local man, George C. McClellan, but when Daniel, who was in the Mutual Improvement Association presidency, the Church's organization for young men and women, slipped Sarah a note in Mutual asking her to walk with him instead of George, she did. They were married in 1901. Hannah Skousen Call, one of Melvina's daughters, said that she didn't know why her father married Sarah Spilsbury, but he used to say, apparently in jest, that he married her so that he would not have to pay her wages.⁴¹

The role of the first wife varied in subsequent courtships. Mary Lucile Clark Ellis said, "My mother told me once that Father was very considerate of her while he was courting Alice Randall. He would always tell her where he was going. When he came home, he would tell her what they did and where they went. She said, 'I would sit home and read the Book of Mormon.'" In other cases the first wife actually participated in courting. George Albert Wilcox noted that he and his first wife visited his choice, Susan G. Crabtree, and the first wife was the spokesperson. They courted for two years although George called it "a case of love at first sight." He then rather ingeniously added a couple of "girls" to his list and asked his wife which she preferred. She selected Susan.⁴²

Mercy Weston Gibbons of Laketown, Idaho, accepted two Swiss girls in her home as boarders after a widowed Mr. Irwin brought them from Paris, Idaho. When both her husband and Irwin began courting them, Mercy assumed that the marriage was only a matter of time. Exasperated by sleeplessness, she borrowed 50 dollars from her mother and sent her husband off with the one he was courting to be married. "I guess I only just hurried along the marriage."⁴³

Alma Elizabeth Mineer Felt remembered the role the first wife played in her courtship and marriage. "I was still very young when Louie Felt (Louie Ma) [the first wife] fell in love with me. She had no children and she wanted her husband to marry a girl who would give him children. I had done work for her and she liked me so she asked me if I would consider marrying her husband. I laughed at it at first, but later thought more about it." Rudgar H. Daines, the son of William Moroni and his third wife, Chloe Hatch, described a similar situation. "When Mother was sixteen, Aunt Elizabeth noticed how beautiful she was. I guess she went and helped Aunt Lizzie once in a while. . . . The romance developed. Aunt Lizzie told her mother and her father that she wanted Chloe for William's second wife."⁴⁴

At the other end of the spectrum, wives were excluded from the selection of a plural wife. Mary Jane Rigby, the third wife of Samuel Roskelley, said that the whole family knew when Samuel was courting his fifth wife, Sarah Maud Burton, and he made no secret about his intention to marry her. Mary Jane said that the fifth marriage was difficult for all the wives to accept and she could not even describe her feelings. She felt it was probably harder for the first wife. Marva Little said her mother, resentful of her father's courtship of a prospective wife, once locked him out of the house, but her father married the woman nevertheless.⁴⁵ Betsy Lowe Allen of Cove, Utah, was still in bed recovering from the birth of her first child when she saw her husband "out spooning" with her sister Nellie who had come to help. As Betsy's son Clarence tells it, "He was holding Nellie in his arms and kissing her. She cried until her milk dried up. When they came and told her that they were in love and wanted to get married, she asked what could she do about it."⁴⁶

Contemporary images of plural marriage are inevitably shaped by reactions read into the past. Assumptions of raging jealousy, supersaintly sweetness, kindly father figures, or lecherously roving eyes are all sufficiently common human behaviors to have occurred. At the very least, plural marriage through the selection of a second wife represented a rite of passage for the first marriage—no matter whether it came as the confirmation of an earlier decision, as a joint effort, or as a resented intrusion. All of these experiences occurred, and none can explain the situation completely. Although the first wife's consent was required by scripture, occasionally it was not sought nor freely given. Church leaders did encourage

some men to marry in polygamy, but that did not always happen. Courtships depended on the individuals and could be initiated by the husband, the first wife, or the new wife. However, like all courtships in the nineteenth century, they were usually brief, and romantic love was not the prime reason for marriage. In Mormondom, the motivation was religious.

13

Participant Evaluation of Polygamy

It would be unusual, given the complexity of polygamy, if husbands, wives, and children did not have mixed reactions to it. What is surprising is the degree of unanimity and the willingness of the participants to work out problems. They accepted and lived polygamy because of their religious beliefs. This chapter will examine what women, men, and children said about the practice of polygamy and then try to determine the success of these families.

The Female Point of View

Marrying in polygamy was the fulfillment of a "divine principle revealed to Joseph Smith," according to Alma Elizabeth Mineer, the second wife of Joseph Felt. Caroline Pederson Hansen wrote after her decision to marry in polygamy, "We were very happy in our innocence that day, little dreaming of the trials ahead of us which we would have to endure in trying to live together under those conditions."¹

Mary Jane Done Jones, the first wife of Timothy, expressed similar feelings, stating she saw many women pray for polygamy who regretted it once their husbands married again. "Polygamy was a great trial to any woman. And it was just as hard on the man. He had to learn to adjust to his women and his troubles were made worse by the women having to learn to adjust too." She not only accepted polygamy though, but she saw virtue in it. "Polygamy was a great principle and we were taught to believe

in it. I know that it does bring added blessings if one lives it the best she knows how. It makes one more unselfish and more willing to see and understand other people. After you learn to give in and consider other people, it makes you less selfish in all your relations. I never wanted polygamy, but I don't regret that I lived it."²

Margaret McNeil Ballard recorded, "On October 4, 1867 my husband married my sister Emily for his second wife. Although I loved my sister dearly and we knew it was a commandment of God that we should live in the Celestial marriage, it was a great trial and sacrifice for me. The Lord blessed and comforted me and we lived happily in this principle of the Gospel and I have thanked the Lord every day of my life that I have had the privilege of living this law."³

Lucy Walker Kimball explained that polygamy was a "grand school. You learn self control, self denial, it brings out the nobler traits of our fallen natures, and teaches us to study and subdue self while we become acquainted with the peculiar characteristics of each other." Alma Elizabeth Mineer Felt concurred. "When people had what I call the spirit of polygamy they were happy and they raised good and happy families. They had bitter times of course. No woman can help being jealous of another and if all the wives did not have the spirit of polygamy then there was suffering. It was a hard principle to live, but when it was lived at its best, it was truly a divine principle. Women learned to control themselves and develop resources within themselves that they would not have done otherwise."⁴

Most polygamous wives did not blame their hardships on polygamy. Although Sarah Lucretia Phelps Pomeroy had to support herself and her children barely knew their father, she told her son Reuel before she died that "she, of course, wished that her life had been different, but she was glad it was polygamous. . . . She was always very, very sorry that this bitterness had crept in and had been in the family, but the principle of polygamy was just as valid as far as she was concerned as baptism was." Elizabeth Acord Beck said she had hard times, but she was happy as a polygamous wife. "Perhaps I should not say that because there were times when I felt that I had more than I could bear and I became disgruntled. But those things happen to any wife in monogamy and on the whole I was very happy."⁵

Mildred Bennion Eyring, a daughter-in-law of Caroline Romney, said, "I have never known anyone else who came so near to being the Pollyanna of fiction. When she [Caroline] was staying with us in Salt Lake a few

weeks before her death she said one evening, 'I'm glad Papa and Emma will have some time by themselves—Anyway, I guess I'm glad.' She was still trying to see the bright side even at the time of her death." Looking back as an adult, Nilus Stowell Memmott realized, "I was brought up very sheltered from a lot of the problems. My mother never was one to cry to her children about things. . . . I'm sure it was a heartache to my mother. . . . But still she felt that it was her duty." Clarence Allen said, "Mother naturally was hurt to think that her love for Dad had to be divided with another woman. Even though it was her sister, she didn't approve of it. She had to go along with it because in those days that was the style, that was the trend of marrying in the Church in polygamy."⁶

The Male Point of View

Like the women, men believed that living plural marriage was obeying a higher law. Edward Christian Eyring wrote in his autobiography, "This record shows that at least part of the families making up this account have lived in Mormon polygamy. This will no doubt be obnoxious to some who may read it. Even some of our descendants may wish it had been otherwise. I wish to impress this fact upon the minds of my children that to discredit the principle of plural marriage is the same as discrediting any other principle of the Mormon Doctrine. . . . I testify to you that I know my father entered into the principle in full faith of receiving a generous reward from our Heavenly Father for this honest effort to live it properly. The same can be said of my father-in-law, Miles P. Romney and I testify to you myself after twenty-eight years experience in trying to live it that I know the principle is divine."⁷

Men gave many of the same reasons as the women did for accepting polygamy. Esaias Edwards recorded in his journal on 27 March 1874, "I have entered into the order of plural marriage and have been living in and practicing the same with good effect. . . . I have enjoyed more of the Spirit of the Lord living in that order than I ever had in any period of my life." George Q. Payne, a son of a polygamous family, said, "Polygamy is one of the truest and greatest principles of our church. . . . It took big men to live it. . . . It was an ennobling thing, if lived rightly. I know of no other way of living that made men more self reliant, more unselfish, and more self controlled."⁸

John J. Esplin gave a semihumorous view of his situation. "It wasn't

meant for all men to have two wives and maybe I wasn't one of them. It's hard on a man that's kind of nervous. It is more than he can stand having to worry about them and seeing that everything is all right." Harriet Jane Hakes, the second wife of Benjamin Julius Johnson, was certain that "polygamy is harder on the man. He has to put up with two women and when he does anything, he has two pairs of eyes watching him and two people to account to."⁹

After asking his housekeeper to marry him, Martin B. Bushman wrote, "It was then I realized the responsibility that I was taking upon myself being a young man only twenty-six years old and in poor circumstances. So I went to the Lord in secret prayer and asked that if it was his will that I should marry her that it would be so. If not, may something turn up to stop the marriage. I had learned by reading the revelation on the subject that men may marry more than one wife and if it done for a righteous purpose it would be attended with blessings and after living in that order for forty years I have been blessed with means to provide homes for my families and school for my children and have had joy in doing so."¹⁰

Children's Views of Polygamy

Children who grew up in polygamous families accepted the system as God's commandment as well. Conrad Naegle, a trained historian, regrets that he did not ask his mother how she felt about polygamy. But "polygamy was not something that bothered me. I wasn't ashamed of the fact that I was a Mormon; I wasn't ashamed of the fact that I was a product of polygamous families because they lived the law of the Lord. . . . It was something that I accepted on faith. . . . Who am I to question it?" Harriet Snarr Hutchings, who grew up in the Mormon colonies in Mexico, explained, "We never thought of polygamy because everybody around us was living like we did, so it was just one of those things. That was the way to live."¹¹

Ivan R. Richardson explained, "If I was to judge polygamy solely on the basis of what happened in our family, I would have to say I'm in favor of it. It made us better people. It taught me to be unselfish. It taught us to work for a common goal with others. It was a social trial. Abrasive though it might be, it made better people. I would have to say it was a good thing as far as our family was concerned." He added, "True we were called bastards by some Mormon people in the same community that we lived in.

We had to undergo quite a bit of persecution in that valley because we were polygamists. . . . But within the family itself we had peace and love."¹²

Many children felt that they could not condemn the practice of polygamy. Louis Brandley said, "From my childhood I have accepted polygamy as the Lord's way for my mother and her family. My first feeling is that it brought lots of misery to the people who tried to live it mainly because they weren't prepared. My next feeling is that I can't discount polygamy because it was responsible for my birth." When Winnifred Newton Thomas started her interview, she explained how polygamy was part of her testimony of Brigham Young and Joseph Smith. "As far as I am concerned, polygamy is a good thing when the Lord decides it is to be used. . . . If it weren't for polygamy, I wouldn't be here, so who am I to say that polygamy is right or wrong? I only say it is right."¹³

Although most polygamous children accepted the principle, some, especially those born after the Manifesto, had mixed feelings. Florence Jackson Payne explained, "I believe in polygamy, of course. It seemed natural to live in. In spite of what we went through Mother always taught us that it was a great and true principle. I told my husband when we married that if ever polygamy should be lived again, I'd not stand in his way of marrying, but I don't know whether I could promise that again. I hope it will never be necessary for me to live it." Mabel Amelia Porter Carroll noted, "I always said that I was glad it was done away with. I wouldn't have wanted to have to live it, but I would have tried if I would have had to." Esther Phelps Whatcott said, "I never felt but what I could live in polygamy and be happy. Some people say that they couldn't accept it. I didn't have a jealous hair or any jealousy about me."¹⁴

Some children reported having to deal with hurt feelings. "When I say I'm a polygamous child," commented Jennie Lowe Huff, "so many people look at me kind of funny. I can't understand because it just seemed like it was so natural. But it has kind of hurt me. They didn't even have to show it; I could feel the feeling they felt within them. They wouldn't hardly believe that we could live that way." Emma Scott, the oldest daughter of William and his second wife, Emma Hoth McNeil, said, "All my girl chums thought mother and we were getting a raw deal and that father was unjust. Oh, yes, I had spells of bad feelings about it." Keith Romney admitted, "I had three older sisters [who] were old enough to get in on the

traumatic experience of my father taking these extra wives. They had a tendency to blame the Church for it. Consequently they weren't very close to the Church after that happened."¹⁵

Polygamy is sometimes even more difficult for the third and fourth generations to comprehend. With their monogamous traditions and the Church's stand against polygamy they have a hard time understanding how their grandparents and their great grandparents could have agreed to marry in polygamy. Steve Faux, whose grandparents were polygamous, prefaced a paper that he wrote at Brigham Young University with compelling curiosity. "The real reason for writing this paper comes from my obsessive desire to understand my polygynous ancestry. Thus this paper really represents my search for personal conclusions on the matter in the absence of convincing answers from familial traditions or standard histories."¹⁶

Measuring the Success of Mormon Polygamous Families

In some of the interviews in the LDS Family Life Oral History Project, the interviewers asked, "How would you measure the overall success of your family?" Quite often those questioned would respond, "What do you mean by success?" Does success mean economic advantages? Does it refer to continued Church activity? Does it refer to the emotional and social relationships within a family? Kimball Young and Vicky Burgess-Olson attempted to measure the success of polygamous families based on economic security, housing arrangements, the attitude of the first wife and family towards polygamy, and the relationships between the families. Although these elements were important for a successful polygamous family, this study found that even the presence of all or nearly all of these elements did not completely eliminate problems and conflicts. While it is easier to define economic success, it may be more important to examine how well the families got along, how much acceptance or conflict there was between families, and how well the wives, children, and husbands accepted the principle of plural marriage. These questions are more difficult to answer since feelings are difficult to quantify.

Anthropologist Paul Bohannan asks two questions in determining the success of a polygamous family: (1) Do the co-wives get along? and (2) How do the half siblings relate to each other? "The most successful instances are those in which the context of both sets of relationships is firmly struc-

ture and where only a minimum is left for the individuals playing the roles to work out on a personal basis. A satisfactory structural relationship to fall back on if the personal relationship fails seems to be vital."¹⁷ Mormons did not have the advantage of an inherited and solidly tested structure since polygamy was practiced for such a short time in the Church. Individual personalities proved the most important variables. Yet most polygamous families learned to solve problems and control conflict because they believed what they were doing was required of God.

As this study has shown, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints decided to go into polygamy based on religious belief. They would not have considered living the principle if they had not felt that they would be blessed and receive rewards in an afterlife. The ability to overcome problems of husbands dealing with more than one wife, wives dealing with co-wives, and children dealing with an extended family was possible because of that same faith. Religious motivations enabled them to deal with or suppress expected jealousies and disagreements that would occur in any family, especially where there were more than one wife.

Although those practicing polygamy were religiously motivated, their beliefs did not tell them how to lead daily lives. Unlike African societies who have practiced polygyny for generations, the Mormons did not have set procedures on how the husband and wife, the wives, and the children should relate to each other. Although the families had no societal traditions to fall back on, they were able to adapt most of the Euro-American monogamous traditions to their new life-style. Relationships varied depending on the family. In some cases they were very close, and wives related to each other as sisters and children considered their fathers' other wives' children as brothers and sisters. In other cases where the wives were different ages, they were almost like mothers and daughters. And sometimes they did not interact at all. The relationships between husbands and wives usually determined how the children in the different polygamous families got along. With no rules, each family established its own, so there was not a "typical" Mormon polygamous family. While some were very unhappy, most seemed to have gotten along very well.

Stresses on family relationships sometimes resulted in divorce, although not often since during the Victorian period separation and divorce were not usually considered viable alternatives. Death often led to family disagreements, especially over inheritance, and these proved more problematic in polygamous than in monogamous families. The laws Congress passed

against polygamy and the underground that the Mormons adapted to avoid arrest also reorganized families. Finally, the Church's Manifestoes also meant that plural families had to adjust their life-styles.

Although differences arose between monogamous and polygamous families in the LDS Church during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, polygamous families were very much a reflection of the Victorian ideal. Husbands, who were quite often farmers, worked outside the home; wives were responsible for the home chores; sons learned their future roles from their fathers; and daughters learned from their mothers. These roles were modified when the family underwent change. Both monogamous and polygamous husbands served missions, and then the wives might have to work outside the home. However, as soon as possible, the wives returned to their role as homemaker. Husbands were often away because of work, but polygamous husbands were with their families even less because they had to divide their time amongst several. Monogamous and polygamous families were active in Church activities and had religious activities at home. Children did not have especially close relationships with their fathers.

While other studies have emphasized the negative aspects of Mormon polygamous life, pointing to jealousies between husbands and wives and between the wives themselves, husbands being absent and wives having to be self-sufficient, and families being divided, this study shows that while these experiences did occur, they were the exception rather than the norm. Because they believed they were obeying a higher commandment of God, Latter-day Saints practicing polygamy had fewer negative experiences than have generally been reported. While negative experiences happened on a day-to-day basis—and probably more than in monogamous families—Mormon polygamous family life was not a completely new life-style but an adaptation of the Victorian family pattern.

Notes

Introduction

1. Ora Packard Clyde interview, 11; Larry Troutman interview, 11.
2. Jonathan S. Cannon interview, 13.
3. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 209-22.
4. James Edward Hulett Jr., "The Sociological and Social Psychological Aspects of the Mormon Polygamous Family"; Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*

1. The Practice of Polygamy

1. George Peter Murdock, *Ethnographic Atlas*, 1-2, col. 14; Melvin Ember, "Warfare, Sex Ratio, and Polygyny," 197.
2. Genesis 16:1-3; 21:9-16; 25:1-6, 20-23, 29-30; 25:5-6; Exodus 21:10; and Deuteronomy 25:5-9.
3. I Samuel 1:1-2; II Samuel 11; and I Kings 11:1-3.
4. John Cairncross, *After Polygamy Was Made a Sin: The Social History of Christian Polygamy*; I Corinthians 7.
5. Cairncross, 8, 47.
6. *Ibid.*, 54-63; Joyce Westphal conversation. Joyce Westphal told me that one of her ancestors had married plural wives during this time period.
7. Cairncross, 69.
8. This brief chapter on the history of polygamy in the LDS Church cannot begin to list all the research that has been done on the subject. What follows is simply an overview of polygamy in the Church. Secondary sources, rather than the primary sources, were consulted, so published books are cited rather than manuscripts. For more information on Mormon polygamy, the reader should refer to those secondary works that will also provide more information on the primary sources available. *Mormon Polygamy: A History* is an overview of the history of polygamy. Van Wagoner comes to no new conclusions, but he does give a summary of

other research. Gustive D. Larson, "Government, Politics, and Conflict," and "The Crusade and the Manifesto," in *Utah's History*, Richard D. Poll et al., lists the laws passed against polygamy. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," is the most complete study of post-Manifesto marriages and cohabitation.

9. I Nephi 13:26-27, Book of Mormon.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 132:1-3, 61.
11. Daniel W. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," 19-32; Linda King Newell and Valene Tippets Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith: Prophet's Wife, "Elect Lady," Polygamy Foe*, 152. Also see 95-105, 130-56, and 297-98.
12. Van Wagoner, 4, 6.
13. B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:96-101; Van Wagoner, 5-7.
14. Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 100; Van Wagoner, 89.
15. Arrington, 100-103; Van Wagoner, 22-23, 65-69.
16. *Journal of Discourses*, 1:53-66. Hereinafter referred to as JD. Hosea Stout, *Journal*, 1.
17. Van Wagoner, 91, 115, 138.
18. Larson, "Government, Politics, and Conflict," 244.
19. Van Wagoner, 108; Larson, "Government, Politics, and Conflict," 250-51.
20. Larson, "Government, Politics, and Conflict," 251, 252.
21. Van Wagoner, 111; Larson, "Government, Politics, and Conflict," 254.
22. Larson, "The Crusade and the Manifesto," 259-60.
23. *Ibid.*, 267.
24. Quinn, 29-30; Van Wagoner, 132.
25. Van Wagoner, 138.
26. Scott Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff Journal, 1833-1898*, 113-14; Official Declaration 1, Doctrine and Covenants; and Van Wagoner, 147.
27. Andrew Jonus Hansen, *Autobiography*, 48.
28. *Ibid.*, 48-49.
29. Annie Gardner interview, 4.
30. Quinn, 48-49.
31. *Ibid.*, 49; Van Wagoner, 147.
32. Quinn, 49.
33. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 61; Van Wagoner, 153-54.
34. Hansen, 49.
35. Rose B. Hayes and Mrs. Clark interview, 1.
36. Elizabeth Ann Schurtz McDonald interview, 1.
37. Quinn, 51.
38. Conover Wright interview, 2.
39. Lorin "Dutch" Leavitt interview, 5.
40. Quinn, 81.
41. Jessie L. Embry, "Exiles for the Principle: LDS Polygamy in Canada,"

108-16; B. Carmon Hardy and Victor Jorgensen, "The Taylor-Cowley Affair and the Watershed of Mormon History," 18.

42. Van Wagoner, 161.
43. *Ibid.*, 169.
44. *Ibid.*, 174.
45. *Ibid.*, 184; Alexander, 67-68.

2. *The Impact of the Antipolygamy Laws*

1. Jane Synder Richards, *Reminiscences*, 50-51; Joel Hills Johnson, *Autobiography*, 84-85.
2. Torrey L. Austin interview, 4; George W. Terry, *Journal*, 12.
3. William James Frazier McAllister interview, 6; Martha Geneva Day Larsen interview, 3.
4. Austin interview, 5.
5. Truman Call interview, 1-2.
6. Christopher Layton, *Autobiography*, 51-52; Merle W. Wells, *Anti-Mormonism in Idaho, 1872-92* discusses some of the laws passed in Idaho against polygamy. David Boone and Chad J. Flake, "The Prison Diary of William Jordan Flake" gives an overview of the reaction to polygamy in Arizona.
7. Ann Amelia Chamberlain Esplin interview, 26.
8. Emma Westerman Ashworth interview, 1; Evan B. Murray interview, 1.
9. Austin interview, 5.
10. Emma Hoth McNeil interview, 2-3.
11. Gardner interview, 4.
12. Georgina Bollette Critchlow Bickmore interview, 22; Layton, 53.
13. James L. Wyatt interview, 11.
14. Lula Roskelley Mortensen interview, Appendix, 3.
15. Bickmore interview, 1-2; Nevada Watson Driggs interview, 1.
16. Esplin interview, 18.
17. Alma Elizabeth Mineer Felt interview, 6; Manomus Lovina Gibson Andrus interview, 4.
18. Morgan Hinman, *Journal*.
19. Jonathan E. Layne, *Autobiography*, 26; Levi Savage, *Journal*, 7.
20. Bickmore interview, 23.
21. Mortensen interview, 13; Reuben L. Hill interview, 2.
22. Emma McNeil Scott interview, 5; Bickmore interview, 22.
23. In B. Carmon Hardy, "The Mormon Colonies in Mexico, 1885-1912," 72.
24. Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village*, 1.
25. A. James Hudson, "Charles Ora Card: Pioneer and Colonizer," 80-81; Donald Godfrey Card and Melva R. Witbeck, "The Journal of Charles Ora Card, September 14, 1886-July 7, 1903," 4.

26. "Polygamy in Mexico," 2; Card and Witbeck, 19.
27. Charles W. Kindrick, "The Mormons in Mexico," 703.
28. Hardy, "The Mormon Colonies in Mexico, 1885-1912," 78-79; Hatch, 11.; B. Carmon Hardy, "Early Colonization of Mormon Polygamists in Mexico and Canada: A Legal and Historiographical Review," 9-13.
29. Lowry Nelson, "Settlement of the Mormons in Alberta," *Group Settlements: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada*, C. A. Dawson, ed., 203-4.
30. Hardy and Jorgensen, 17-18; Embry, "Exiles for the Principle," 109-110; and *Statutes of Canada*, 1890, 53 Vic, c. 37.
31. Eunice Stewart Harris, Life Story, 9; Layne, 26.
32. There is a great deal of confusion about these marriages in Mexico—who authorized them, when they were performed, etc. D. Michael Quinn has carefully traced these plural marriages as well as other post-Manifesto marriages in "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904"; Ivins, 5-6.
33. Henry Eyring, Journal, 65; Edward Christian Eyring, Autobiography, 14, 17; and Caroline Eyring Miner, *The Life Story of Edward Christian Eyring (1868-1957)*, 31.
34. Cardston Alberta Ward Minutes, 25 November 1888; Embry, "Exiles for the Principle," 110.
35. Mildred Newton Stutz interview, 9-10.
36. Embry, "Exiles for the Principle," 112.

3. Demographic Characteristics

1. Hulett, "Sociological and Social Psychological Aspects"; Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*; Stanley S. Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy"; and Vicky Burgess-Olson, "Family Structure and Dynamics in Early Utah Mormon Families—1847-1855."
2. Dean L. May, "A Demographic Portrait of the Mormons, 1830-1980," *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, eds., 82; D. Gene Pace, "Community Leadership on the Mormon Frontier: Mormon Bishops and the Political, Economic, and Social Development of Utah before Statehood," 82, 238.
3. Nels Anderson, *Deseret Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah*, 400.
4. Pace, 238.
5. Anderson, 400.
6. Ivins's article based on over a thousand cases, Burgess-Olson's study of 100 plural wives and this study of 170 men support the conclusion that the husband was in his early twenties and the wife was in her early teens at the time of the first marriage. Ivins said that a husband married his second wife 13 years after the first. Christa Marie Sophie Ranglade Nelson, "Mormon Polygamy in Mexico," 60, found that the second marriage was about ten years after the first.
7. Ivins set the average time lapse at four years, Nelson set it at seven. Nelson found the husband's average age to be 46 at the time of a fourth marriage. Ivins

and Nelson agreed the time between the third and fourth marriages was the same as between the second and third.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 132:61.
9. Pace, 230.
10. Burgess-Olson found polygamous wives averaged 8.5 children to the average monogamous wife's 9.8. Ivins found even a greater difference—an average of 5.9 per polygamous and 8 per monogamous. James E. Smith and Phillip R. Kunz, "Polygamy and Fertility in Nineteenth Century America" found a much smaller difference—7.4 for polygamous wives and 7.8 for monogamous wives. According to Pace's study of bishops, polygamous wives averaged 7.9 children and monogamous wives 8.9. Ivins set the average of children per husband at 15, while Nelson said that the men she researched averaged 13.6.
11. Pace found that first wives had an average of 9.6 children, second wives 7, third wives 7.3, and fourth wives 4.8. Monogamous bishops' second wives (usually their first wives had died) averaged 6.5. Nelson found that the first wife averaged 8.1 children, the second 7.3, the third 6.6, and the fourth 5.8. Burgess-Olson also found a declining number, the first wife averaging 9.1, the middle wife 7.5, and the youngest wife 7.6.
12. Burgess-Olson found that the monogamous wives had their children 1.8 years apart while the intervals for polygamous wives averaged 1.9 for the first wife, 2 for the middle, and 2.3 for the youngest wife.
13. Wyatt interview, 4; John Horsecroft Wyatt Family Group Sheets.
14. Georgia Stowell Lillywhite interview, 14; Brigham Stowell Family Group Sheets.
15. Lowell "Ben" Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: 'Dixie' versus Davis Stake," 30-31; 36-37; Lowell "Ben" Bennion, "The Geography of Polygamy Among the Mormons in 1880"; Larry Logue, "A Time of Marriage: Monogamy and Polygamy in a Utah Town," 10; and Nelson, 57.
16. Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880," 30-31.
17. Aseneth Smith Conklin interview, 6; Edith Smith Patrick interview, 13; Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City*, 3.
18. Pace, 175.

4. Motivations for Practicing Polygamy

1. JD, 1:64-65.
2. Ross Bean to Fay Ollerton, 13 December 1935.
3. Orson Welcome Huntsman, Utah Historical Records Survey.
4. Annie Richardson Johnson, *Heartbeats of Colonia Diaz*, 294.
5. JD, 1:59; Judith E. Brown, "Polygyny and Family Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa," 323; Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, 38; and Steven Faux and Harold L. Miller Jr., "Evolutionary Speculations of the Oligarchic Development of Mormon Polygamy," 15-16.

6. George W. Brimhall, *Autobiography*, 2; Price Nelson interview, 4.
7. Reuben L. Hill interview, 1; Walter Clark interview, 5-6; and Edward Barrett Clark Family Group Sheets.
8. JD, 1:58.
9. *Ibid.*, 1:59-60.
10. Orson Rega Card interview, 14-15; Joseph Donal Earl interview, 13; Dorris Dale Hyer interview, 10; and Linnie Fillerup Monteirh interview, 5.
11. J. E. Hickman to C. M. Haynes, 18 December 1907.
12. JD, 1:60-62.
13. Young, 43; Ida Stewart Pacey interview, 2.
14. *Ember*, 197; Cairncross, 200.
15. Ellen P. Moffett Done interview, 13.
16. Richard Poll et al., *Utah's History*, 118-21.
17. Bernitta Bartley interview, 25.
18. Sarah Hendricks interview, 14; Charles Smith Merrill interview, 10.
19. Monteirh interview, 6; Charles Richard Fillerup Family Group Sheet.
20. Card and Witbeck, 129; Mercy Weston Gibbons interview, 1; and Jesse Barney interview, 40.
21. *May*, 61-63.
22. Luke William Gallup, *Journal*.
23. Rhoda Ann Knell Cannon interview, 6; Young, 104.
24. Burgess-Olson, 8; Ursula Rich Cole interview, 4.
25. Loraine Farrell Ralph interview, 3.
26. E. W. Wright interview, 5.
27. J. W. Wilson interview, 2-3.
28. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiences of the Nineteenth Century*, 211.
29. Eunice Stewart Harris, *Life Story*, 6.
30. Young, 118-19.

5. Entering Plural Marriage

1. Doctrine and Covenants 132:64-65.
2. Stories about the Joseph C. Bentley, Charles Edmund Richardson, and John Theodore Brandley families are taken mainly from interviews with children and some autobiographies. For information on Joseph C. Bentley and his three wives, Margaret, Gladys, and Maud, see Maud Taylor Bentley, *Autobiography* and the following interviews in the LDS Polygamy Project: Anthony Ivins Bentley (Embry, 1976), Harold Bentley, Lavinia Bentley Jackson, Richard Ivins Bentley, Rinda Bentley Sudweeks, and Israel Ivins Bentley. For information on Charles Edmund Richardson and his four wives, Sadie, Sarah, Becky, and Daisie, see Jessie L. Embry, *Richardson Family History* which includes a paper about the Richardson family and all of the oral histories with the children of the Richardson family. For information on John Theodore Brandley and his four wives, Marie,

Margaret, Eliza, and Emma, see Louis Brandley interview (Embry, 1983), and Louis Brandley interview (Ursenbach, 1976). Louis Brandley also donated copies of histories that he had written about his father and his wives to the Redd Center which are catalogued with his oral history interview in the Manuscript Division of the Harold B. Lee Library.

3. Burgess-Olson, 108; Felt interview, 9; and Agatha Walker McAllister interview, 4.
4. Andrew Jonus Hansen, *Autobiography*, 26; John Jacob Walser interview, 5.
5. Hortense Young Hammond interview, 8.
6. Kenneth L. Cannon III and Jessie L. Embry, "Seymour B. Young."
7. Mae Bingham Douglas interview, 2; E. W. Wright interview, 1.
8. Harriet Snarr Hutchings interview, 10; Daniel Hammer Snarr Family Group Sheets.
9. Douglas Cannon interview, 4.
10. LaVetta Cluff Lunt Taylor interview, 5; Heber Manasseh Cluff Family Group Sheets.
11. Gottlieb Ence, *Life Sketch*, 36.
12. Mary Elizabeth Woolley Chamberlain, *Autobiography, 1936-1939*, 106; Dorris Dale Hyer interview, 1.
13. Edna Clark Ericksen interview, 16-17.
14. Ida Walser Skousen interview, 1.
15. Farel Knudson Chamberlain Kimball interview, 2; Rosalia Tenney Payne interview, 4.
16. Annabell Wheeler Hart interview, 2.
17. Walter Barney interview, 4.
18. Miner, 31; Matilda Peterson, *Autobiography*, 3.
19. Chamberlain, 104-5.
20. George Lake, *Autobiography*, 9.
21. Arthur E. Snow interview, 1.
22. Quoted in Matthias Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: Fourth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: History of his Life and Labors as Recorded in his Daily Journals*, 560; David John, *Journal*, 419.
23. Quoted in Cowley, 490.
24. John, 421.
25. William Forman, *Autobiography*.
26. Merle Gilbert Hyer and Estelle Hyer Ririe interview, 7; Andrew Hyer Family Group Sheets.
27. Laura Andersen Watkins interview, 5; Mary Diantha Cox Sherratt interview, 10; and Austin interview, 3.
28. John C. Larsen interview, 2; Arabelle Parkinson Daines interview, 1; and Lucy Fryer Vance interview, 1.
29. Michael Gordon, "The Ideal Husband as Depicted in the Nineteenth-Century Marriage Manual," *The American Man*, Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph N. Pleck, eds.

Norman D. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1986) 4

Recurrent Encounters with Plural Marriage

PERHAPS THE MOST important social and political consequences of the B. H. Roberts and Reed Smoot cases resulted from the resurrection of the question of continued plural marriage in the Mormon community. Among politicians, church involvement in affairs of state and economic and social control may have been most important, but the rank and file of Americans, and other nationals as well, saw the continuation of plural marriage as a betrayal deserving heavy punishment. Most Christians in the Western tradition could not understand how any enlightened human being could believe in or engage in a practice which they considered degrading to women at best and barbaric at worst.¹

Mormons found the transition from the practice of plural marriage to the norms of Victorian America enormously painful. As many as a fifth of the inhabitants of most Mormon towns lived in plural families; most leaders—both general and local—had plural wives; and a whole generation of Latter-day Saints had grown up believing that plurality was not only wholesome and beneficial but ordained of God. Indeed, most church members probably interpreted Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants as requiring plural marriage for eternal exaltation. Generally, the terms "new and everlasting covenant" of marriage, "celestial marriage," and plural marriage were thought to be equivalent. At the time of the Smoot hearings and in connection with the Budge case relating to Idaho disfranchisement, church leaders were called upon to re-examine this question and to clarify their beliefs.²

Practices and beliefs once adhered to and continued over a long period of time take on a life of their own. The protests which came from some members after blacks were admitted to the priesthood in 1978 suggests not only the depth with which beliefs can be held, but the division which can take place between the more liberal or progressive

elements in the church willing to accept change and conservatives or fundamentalists who find continuity in clinging to the old ways.³

Certainly the apparent divergence of public pronouncement and private practice was a difficult problem both for members and non-members. Perhaps the clearest announcement of the public position of the First Presidency following the Manifesto was the 1891 statement of President Woodruff before Judge Charles F. Loofbourow, appointed master in chancery to determine the future status of church property. At that time President Woodruff said that "the manifesto was intended to apply to the church everywhere in every nation and country. We are giving no liberty to enter the polygamous relations anywhere." Some Latter-day Saints, including a number of general authorities, interpreted this statement as "policy," not doctrine; as "expediency," not binding practice; as a temporary concession to the government for immediate legal purposes, and not as a directive. Ecclesiastical leaders who could not believe that the Lord would ask them to give up a principle for which they had contended so long reinforced this view.⁴

Nevertheless, at various times members of the church leadership reaffirmed President Woodruff's resolve. In a meeting of the Presidency and the Twelve in April 1901, some apostles raised the question of the possibility of new plural marriage outside the United States. President Lorenzo Snow said that such marriages were not permissible, and President Joseph F. Smith agreed. President Snow went as far as to say that God had removed from the president of the church the privilege of granting permission to perform plural marriages, and since the Prophet was the only one who could give such permission, it could not be granted.⁵

Some question exists as to the legal condition of plural marriages outside the United States at that time. Although polygamy was generally illegal under Mexican law, Heber J. Grant said that President Porfirio Diaz had granted permission for plural marriages. However, such marriages were illegal in Canada after 1890, if not before. In that year the Canadian Parliament had passed the Thompson bill, which defined polygamy as a crime punishable by fine and imprisonment. Somewhat earlier stake president Charles O. Card had assured Canadian authorities that the Saints were not practicing plural marriage in Canada.⁶

Nevertheless, it is clear today that plural marriages were contracted

after the Manifesto. Two apostles eventually lost their positions as a result of the continuation of the practice, and later testimony has demonstrated that while some leaders such as John Henry Smith, Reed Smoot, Francis M. Lyman, and George F. Richards were adamantly opposed to polygamous marriages after 1904 if not before, some new marriages had the support of members of the church's hierarchy. Before that time, some church leaders opposed new plural marriages in public while encouraging selected members to enter into new unions in private. In part because of this, the evidence with respect to presidents Woodruff, Snow, and Smith is contradictory, and a number of general authorities like Abraham O. Woodruff and Matthias F. Cowley insisted that the church leadership including President Smith approved such marriages. On the other hand, President Smith performed no plural marriages himself, but rather performed a proxy temple sealing for the deceased David H. Cannon and the living Lillian Hamlin in 1896.⁷

Publicity generated by the Roberts case rekindled national curiosity and outrage over the practice, and it became a matter of national concern and discussion. National periodicals and Protestant journals such as *World's Work*, *Harper's*, *Arena*, and *Missionary Review of the World* published articles arguing that plural marriage had actually been expanding from 1891 to 1903. President Joseph Smith III, representing the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and Charles W. Penrose and Joseph F. Smith exchanged views in the *Arena*. Perhaps the most favorable article published by a non-Mormon was Richard Ely's April 1903 article in *Harper's*, which argued that, far from being a sign of lust, polygamy necessitated a commitment to frugality. Ray Stannard Baker pointed out that "there are still Mormons, as a citizen of Salt Lake City graphically put it, 'who can take a car going in any direction and get home.'" Charles Spahr in the *Outlook Magazine*, generally impressed by the people of Utah, was somewhat negative on polygamy, though he pointed out that the better classes, not the dregs of society, generally practiced it.⁸

Currently available evidence indicates that, while the number of new plural marriages was small in the LDS community as a whole, there was actually an increase from the late nineties until the time of the Smoot investigation. Moreover, a substantial proportion—perhaps as high as 15 percent—of stake and ward leaders had entered new polygamy, often at the urging of a church leader. Joseph Eckersley of

Wayne County reported that he had heard rumors that Abraham O. Woodruff had authorized secret marriages in Mexico and Arizona. Eckersley himself was set apart as second counselor in the stake presidency in November 1903, and Matthias F. Cowley told him that "it was not the policy of Pres. Joseph F. Smith to censure any man for entering the order of plural marriage since the days of the Manifesto, provided he acted wisely and done so with the sanction and by the authority of the proper authority." In meetings of the First Presidency and the Twelve during September and October 1903, at least John W. Taylor and Marriner W. Merrill were still urging that some plural marriages ought to be solemnized to keep the institution alive.⁹

Such discussion in a theoretical sense within the Twelve and clandestine efforts of some persons to promote plural marriage could be tolerated only until it became apparent that they caused irreparable harm to the church. The election of Reed Smoot and the subsequent protest, incorporating as it did the charge that the church in general and its leadership in particular encouraged lawlessness through new plural marriages, provided the catalyst for action on the matter.

The managers for those challenging Smoot's seating included Robert W. Tayler, who had led the opposition to B. H. Roberts's admission to the House of Representatives. The committee published extracts from the constitution and statutes of Utah, which prohibited not only new plural marriages but also any continued polygamous cohabitation. After the protests and answers had been entered into the record, Joseph F. Smith was called to testify on March 3, 1904. President Smith said that, with tacit federal and public approval, citizens of Utah who had entered into plural marriage prior to the Manifesto were permitted to continue to live in those relationships. He admitted that he was continuing his own marriages in accordance with this understanding. Tayler then proceeded to the consideration of new plural marriages. President Smith testified that "there has not any man, with the consent or knowledge or approval of the Church, ever married a plural wife since the Manifesto." During the course of the discussion, the question of the actual number of plural marriages arose. Joseph F. Smith stated that about 4,000 men had been in polygamy, about 2 percent of the church population. He also pointed out that plural marriage had declined and that half of the Twelve and both his counselors were monogamists. Fred T. Dubois, senator from Idaho and one of those protesting Smoot's seating, pointed out that Smith's total membership

figures included children, who could not have been polygamists, and that as many as 23 percent of the Mormon population of Utah over age eighteen may have been involved in polygamy.¹⁰

Following the Smoot hearings, efforts by non-Mormons to prosecute polygamists and those continuing to live in plural marriage increased. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, for a long time neutral in regard to the church, opened an attack early in 1904 through a series of articles aimed at the practice of polygamy. The Women's Christian Temperance Union announced in October 1904 that it would not rest until polygamy was made a crime throughout the United States. In January 1905, the Women's Interdenominational Council announced that it had established a fund to track down polygamists. Investigations, which led in some cases to convictions, were opened in Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Canada.¹¹

By the April Conference of 1904 the Twelve and the First Presidency discussed the wisdom of making a statement to pacify the country. Anthon H. Lund, with his usual perceptive insights, favored the statement as a means of letting the Saints themselves know the status of plural marriage in the church. He pointed out that many who were following the Smoot proceedings were beginning to doubt the sincerity of church leaders. Abraham O. Woodruff, a holdout on the issue, said he was very much opposed to anything against a principle "which had given him birth and which would tend to obliterate it."¹²

In spite of this sentiment, the consensus of the First Presidency and the Twelve was that a statement was necessary, and one was drafted. At the closing session of the general conference on April 6, 1904, Joseph F. Smith read the declaration, which stated that no plural marriages had been "solemnized with the sanction, consent or knowledge of the Church," and announced that "all such marriages are prohibited, and if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize or enter into any such marriage he will be deemed in transgression against the Church and will be liable to be dealt with . . . and excommunicated therefrom." Francis M. Lyman, president of the Council of the Twelve, moved the adoption of the statement as policy of the church and those voting in conference approved the resolution unanimously.¹³

Shortly before this declaration, called the Second Manifesto, was issued, Reed Smoot summed up the feelings of some of the Twelve. He observed in a letter to Jesse N. Smith that not all members of the

church had "lived strictly to our agreements with the government and this lack of sincerity on our part goes farther to condemn us in the eyes of the public men of the nation than the mere fact of a few new polygamous cases or a polygamist before the Manifesto living in a state of unlawful cohabitation. . . . We must," he wrote, "be honest with ourselves, with our fellow-men, and with our God."¹⁴

After the adoption of the Second Manifesto, the Twelve began to take measures to enforce it. On May 3 Francis M. Lyman wrote John W. Taylor that he was advising each member of the council that the rule in regard to plural marriages "will be strictly enforced against each and every person who shall be found guilty of offense against that rule." Thereafter, circular letters were sent to various church officials stating the same policy. The Twelve pursued the matter quite vigorously. Letters were sent on June 3 and 9 to Anthony W. Ivins, leader of the Mormon colony at Colonia Juarez, Mexico, inquiring about a member who had gone to Juarez within the last two years to marry a plural wife. Ivins was asked to investigate and, in addition, "to put your foot on it, giving the parties to understand that President Woodruff's Manifesto is in effect, and that therefore such marriages cannot be performed with our sanction and approval." In the quarterly meeting of the Twelve in July 1904, the apostles agreed that no one should utter among the Saints sentiments contrary to the pledges of the president of the church. As a safeguard against the abuse of the sealing privilege, the First Presidency annulled the previously granted freedom of apostles to seal couples "for time and eternity" in Canada, Arizona, and Mexico, where there were no temples.¹⁵

Sentiment grew that some of those of the Twelve who had approved or participated in new plural marriages since the Manifesto should be disciplined. After a consideration, John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley were not sustained at the October 1904 conference nor at the succeeding two general conferences. Their resignations were requested by and presented to the council on October 28, 1905, but not accepted at that time. Some general authorities were disturbed at the removal of the two, but many considered it a necessary sacrifice.¹⁶ The resignations were asked for and received both for the relief of the church and because Taylor and Cowley had proved defiant against the position taken by the Presidency and the Twelve following the Second Manifesto. In many ways, the two apostles' positions were like those of Moses Thatcher and B. H. Roberts in the 1890s. As long as no definite

rule had been adopted, each member of the Twelve and First Presidency could do as he wanted on the question. However, the Second Manifesto of April 6, 1904, had the same effect on Cowley and Taylor as the Political Manifesto had had on Roberts and Thatcher. President Smith, clearly was saddened by the need to chasten these two men with whom he had served for many years. They had, however, "unwisely brought trouble both upon themselves and the Church. And the enemy is after them fiercely. I scarcely see," he wrote, "how they can escape most serious consequences."¹⁷

Some Latter-day Saints expressed disappointment or anger at the resolve to stop new plural marriages, but after 1904 President Smith and associates were adamant. Those teaching and practicing plural marriage since the Manifesto must be dealt with.¹⁸ The illness and subsequent deaths of three members of the Twelve, Abraham O. Woodruff, Marriner W. Merrill, and George Teasdale, may have saved them from censure for continued defiance of the Second Manifesto.

At the quarterly meeting of the Twelve during April conference 1906, a decision was made to present the previously obtained resignations of the still-recalcitrant elders Taylor and Cowley to the conference. At the same time, the First Presidency and Twelve sustained George F. Richards to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Marriner W. Merrill and Orson F. Whitney and David O. McKay to fill Taylor's and Cowley's positions. The names of the three new apostles were presented at conference on April 8, 1906, but the council members registered considerable sadness over the resignations of Taylor and Cowley. Taylor left for Canada, and Cowley, remaining in the United States, was instructed that he might "bear testimony," but he was forbidden to accept invitations to preach.¹⁹

Repudiation of the principle of new plural marriage, however, could not spare President Smith and others from further humiliation. Indictments were issued against Heber J. Grant, Joseph F. Smith, and others, largely on the investigations of Charles M. Owen. The charge against President Smith grew out of the birth on May 21, 1906, of Royal G. Smith to Mary T. Schwartz Smith. In Europe at the time, Joseph F. Smith was arrested on September 30, 1906, following his return, on a charge of illegal cohabitation, and released on his own recognizance. Under considerable pressure, the case was brought to trial, and on November 23, 1906, Joseph F. Smith pled guilty and was fined \$300.²⁰

As revelations and charges of new plural marriage appeared, efforts at enforcement of the 1904 ban continued, and in 1909 the general authorities began an investigation which was to have long-range consequences. On July 14, 1909, the First Presidency called a committee consisting of Francis M. Lyman, John Henry Smith, and Heber J. Grant to look into alleged new plural marriages. The committee was charged with dealing "summarily" with those found guilty. Other apostles were asked to help. Several persons—patriarchs, stake presidents, mission presidents, and others—were asked to testify. Some were dropped from their church positions. One person who had been under consideration for appointment to the First Council of the Seventy was passed over because "he had married plural wives since the Manifesto and his appointment would bring trouble on the church sure." At a special meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve with thirty-eight of the Church's sixty-two stake presidents, held February 8, 1910, President Smith reiterated that the church must keep its pledge to the federal government. "No one has the authority to solemnize plural marriages," President Smith said, adding that if marriages were performed, he would be held responsible. There was some dissension in the meeting, but President Smith stood firm. Stake presidents were to take the lead in disciplining those who had violated church rules. To make the matter perfectly clear to its members, the church began to announce excommunications for plural marriage in the pages of the *Deseret News*. A circular letter of October 5, 1910, instructed bishops to try new polygamists for their membership.²¹

The task of the Lyman Committee proved extremely difficult. On July 7, 1909, Carl A. Badger and Louise A. Badger called on Heber J. Grant with the news that their sister Bessie had recently married into plurality with one of Elder Grant's former European missionaries. In general the pattern of this case was similar to that of subsequent cases which came before the committee. Those called to testify were generally local church leaders. Most professed a lapse of memory, or dissembled on the witness stand, or refused to testify. Some took the position, undoubtedly because of statements made to them previously by authorities like Woodruff, Merrill, Taylor, or Cowley, that they were justified in taking new plural wives, "provided they could get them properly," by which they seemed to have meant that they could gain approval of an apostle, a stake patriarch, or someone they recognized as an authority and could keep the matter beyond the notice of the

church's enemies. In those cases where sufficient evidence could be gathered to prove a marriage after 1904, excommunication often resulted.²²

In some cases, local church leaders were asked to take jurisdiction. Understandably, it was sometimes difficult to get the stake presidents and bishops to act.²³ Since most of those entering plural marriages were the leaders in the church and the community, they were also generally close personal and ecclesiastical associates of the local authorities. Ordinarily, a high degree of trust, cooperative spirit, and brotherly love had developed, and local leaders were torn between their loyalty to members who had served long and well and their obligation to sustain the church Presidency and the Twelve. Often, considerable exhortation and counsel was necessary to secure action. Undoubtedly, the example of the Lyman Committee on the general church level helped to encourage local officials, but prosecution was no easy matter.

On November 15, 1910, Reed Smoot met with the First Presidency and Elder Lyman prior to returning to Washington. The discussion centered on new polygamy, and Smoot wanted a statement for President Taft making clear the church's position. The agreement, confirmed again by the First Presidency, was that those who had married after 1904 would be disciplined. Those cases between the Woodruff Manifesto of 1890 and 1904 would be "dealt with according to circumstances." If the parties had been "drawn into [new marriages] by Apostles they would not be excommunicated" but would be released from any position in the church where members were liable to be asked to vote for them. Though not strictly adhered to, enforcement generally followed this pattern.²⁴

In spite of evidence that plural marriage was on the decline after 1904, attacks continued. Indeed, the revelations of the Smoot investigation and information of new plural marriage opened what amounted to a national magazine campaign against the church and its leadership. In May 1907 Senator Julius Burrows published an article in the nationally circulated *Independent*, charging new plural marriages and duplicity on the part of the church. Similar articles followed in 1908, and the intensity increased during 1910, when Harvey O'Higgins wrote an article in *Collier's* on new polygamy in Utah. Articles by Richard Barry appeared in the September, October, and November 1910 numbers of *Pearsons*, and in December 1910 ex-communicant

Frank J. Cannon began an eight-issue exposé in collaboration with O'Higgins, published first in *Everybody's* magazine and eventually issued in book form.²⁵

Some of the articles were obviously poorly conceived and hastily written attacks. One of the best researched of the articles was that by Burton J. Hendrick, published in *McClure's* for February 1911. Hendrick spent more than a month and a half in Salt Lake City, visited the general conference, and talked with Anthon H. Lund, John Henry Smith, and Ben E. Rich about the new polygamy cases. Anthon H. Lund's fears after consulting with Hendrick that "with the poor showing which we are making on these cases that we will be represented in a bad light" were fully confirmed. Hendrick drew a picture of "a great secret society" in which "all members of the church are oath-bound under the most frightful penalties, not to reveal these [temple] mysteries." He wrote of a largely inaccessible rural society, suspicious of outsiders and sustained by duplicity. Though his article painted Mormonism in a thoroughly bad light, he showed the results of his research in an understanding of some of the finer distinctions of Mormon theology.²⁶

In many ways, the most outrageous of the articles were Alfred Henry Lewis's "Viper" series. Unlike Hendrick's, Lewis's articles were poorly researched, showing an abysmal ignorance of Mormon theology and history. As an example, Lewis wrote that the church had developed from Joseph Smith's fraud, perpetrated, Lewis said, with the assistance of two fictitious "stenographic angels, Thummim and Urim," who were "detailed from on high" to assist Joseph Smith in "convenient" trances to render "the [golden] plates into English." The remainder of church history, he wrote, was filled with murder and terror which held the faithful and Gentiles alike in submission.²⁷

Perhaps the major problem in this entire literary attack on Mormon society was a failure to understand the cement which held the Mormon ecclesiastical polity together. Stories of Danites, blood atonement, and temple mysteries notwithstanding, members remained loyal to the church because of shared testimonies of the gospel. In some cases, as is clearly evident in politics, members changed their views because of pressure from church leaders, but in the final analysis they did so voluntarily since the church had no power to attack their lives or property. Members who lost their testimonies could and did leave the church.

Thus, the Gentile residents in many towns and cities included apostates who were unwilling to subordinate themselves to the authority of the church leadership.²⁸

In addition, church leaders were willing to tolerate a great deal of latitude and disagreement as long as there was a basic "harmony" and sense of purpose in building the kingdom. Far from being vindictive or ruthless, the church leadership tended to be lenient with wayward members who were basically in harmony with the church and its doctrines. Defiance and insubordination, however, would not be accepted.²⁹ Beyond this, the church responded to unavoidable outside pressure, such as that of the Smoot investigation. Many of those who were excommunicated or disfellowshipped could probably have saved their church membership had they not clung so tenaciously to a discredited principle in opposition to contemporary prophetic dicta.

By early 1911 the magazine articles and books attacking the church had brought about "the renewal of the discussion" of the "new polygamy cases." Reed Smoot, more politically sensitive than many other leaders, "insisted that the only way the Church can clear itself is to handle every new case of polygamy and remove from any position in the Church those who entered." Merely because the church "has not approved or sanctioned the marriages" did not mean that the nation would not hold the church leaders "responsible for them." Smoot realized, of course, that church leaders were afraid that by offending church members "if wholesale action is taken" they might breach the harmony which held the organization together. Smoot himself thought that "non action will have a worse effect, especially upon the young people."³⁰

The Council of the Twelve excommunicated Elder Taylor on March 28, 1911, and disfellowshipped Cowley two months later. The arguments which Taylor and Cowley produced at their trials for the continued practice and for their actions in promoting and protecting plural marriage were similar to those surfacing at other similar trials. Taylor, for instance, believed that a revelation to his father, John Taylor, provided all the authority necessary for members to continue, on their own, to enter into and perform such marriages. He and others were thus extremely belligerent when the church judicial system began to deal with them. Matthias F. Cowley believed that they had the approval of the church leadership to continue to perform and enter into the marriages. In the effort to protect the church, in addition, Cowley and

others said that they were justified in lying in order to prevent embarrassment or punishment for doing "that which is right."³¹

As might be expected, antichurch activity continued. In February 1913 the Senate, over President Taft's veto, passed an immigration bill which prohibited believers in polygamy from entering the country. Reed Smoot received a telegram from Joseph F. Smith asking him to sustain the veto, but he wired the president that he could not and that if the present bill were "defeated a more radical one would be passed by next Congress." The old proposal for a constitutional amendment against polygamy was revived, and some of Smoot's friends thought he ought to support it in the Senate.³²

The problems which the Latter-day Saints faced in dealing with the new plural marriages were similar to those which members of any organization might confront in the wake of rapid change. Any body will include people uncomfortable with change and insistent upon the old ways of doing things. In a religious organization this is particularly serious since the beliefs of the people are often tied to particular behavior. In this case those fundamentalists who insisted on entering new plural marriages were fearful that their salvation would be jeopardized should they fail to adhere to the principle. The realities of modern life, however, made such practices impossible, and conservatives like Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, and Reed Smoot were more anxious to have the church become accepted and continue to grow than to adhere to a way of life which had become outmoded.

In sociological terms, these events constituted a crisis in world maintenance. Even though the church was a voluntary organization in the nineteenth century, it was such a closed community in Utah and parts of Idaho, Arizona, Mexico, and Canada that the organization could be used to maintain what Peter Berger has called a "plausibility structure" or internal regulatory mechanism for the world view including political, social, and economic unity. By the twentieth century such a community was impossible, and as the church leaders found themselves unable to maintain all aspects of the world view of the nineteenth century, members learned that they could reject counsel and find some support among others in the church out of harmony with the Second Manifesto. Many simply refused to accept the new paradigm which rejected plural marriage as necessary for salvation. Some were punished, but others remained in the church clandestinely despite the efforts to ferret them out.³³

Nevertheless, as the exhortations, circular letters, personal counsel, and church trials originating with the general authorities had the desired effect, those continuing to preach and practice new plural marriage were increasingly isolated from the church community. New local and general church leadership replaced the older generation of members committed to a perpetuation of the Principle, and by the 1920s some church members began to dread the discussion of plural marriage, which they considered an embarrassing blot on an otherwise glorious history.

By the 1920s conditions had obviously changed. While speaking to a group of temple workers in March 1921, President Grant denounced those "breaking the laws of God and Man . . . [who entered] into what they claimed to be plural marriage to obey the law of God. I laid it down very plainly," he wrote, "that it was to gratify animal passions instead of fulfill the law of God." In 1924 the First Presidency assigned James E. Talmage to encourage the stakes to take action against dissidents. Joseph W. Musser, a high councilman from Salt Lake, and others were dealt with by the church in spite of the allegation that the church was casting out the best blood by cutting off those who entered into plural marriage. President Grant considered Musser's statements impudent."³⁴

These efforts to eradicate the celebration of new plural marriages and to discipline those who entered into them after 1904 reveal a great deal about the attitudes of church members on a number of important questions. In the first place, it seems evident that members detected, during at least the five years after 1904, a seeming conflict in church doctrine and practice. On the one hand, many believed that plural marriage was essential to the New and Everlasting Covenant. On the other, they bore testimony that God authorized the church president as prophet, seer, and revelator to reveal changes in church doctrine and practice. Instead of meeting this problem head on, which would probably have created additional conflict, they reinterpreted the meaning of the terms. Largely through the efforts of James E. Talmage, the leading theologian in the church at the time, the general authorities reaffirmed the need for eternal marriage but excluded the necessity of plural marriage from the requirements for exaltation. A second conflict which they faced was that between the need to preserve the church and its teachings pure and undefiled and the need to preserve the church organization itself to provide ordinances of salvation to its

members and to spread the gospel abroad. Some thought the price of abandoning plural marriage and disciplining members who entered it too high, but most considered it little enough in view of the obvious benefits which accrued from a closer harmony to the general attitudes of early twentieth-century America.

The Second Manifesto of 1904 was an extremely important benchmark in resolving both of these conflicts. Prior to that time, members continued to receive support for the belief that the denials of new plural marriage were for the public consumption, and that for the initiated a different rule of "beating the devil at his own game" obtained. This produced a sort of dissonance difficult to maintain in a voluntary organization which required not only the good will of its adherents but of the larger society for its continued existence and prosperity. The Second Manifesto and its enforcement removed that dissonance and, in addition, isolated those within the organization who insisted upon perpetuating the duplicity which had previously existed. The organization itself was undoubtedly strengthened as a result.

Chapter 4: Recurrent Encounters with Plural Marriage

1. On the attitudes toward the practice of plural marriage see E. Victoria Grover-Swank, "Sex, Sickness and Statehood: The Influence of Victorian Medical Opinion on Self-Government in Utah" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1980); for an opposing view see Larson, *The Americanization of Utah for Statehood* (chapter 1, note 5, p. 317), p. 281.

2. *Improvement Era*, October 1901, p. 909; Smoot Proceedings 3:45; Young Journal, January 11, 1900, uses the term *celestial marriage*, as synonymous with plural marriage; for the incidence of polygamy among the Latter-day Saints see Stanley Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," *Western Humanities Review* 10 (Summer 1956): 229–39.

3. Doctrine and Covenants (1981 ed.), Official Declaration 2; *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 23, 1978.

4. Smoot Proceedings 1:21; Eckersley Journal, September 2–6, November 9, 1903, December 26, 1904; Ivins Journal, notes from January to May 1903; Wiley Nebeker to John Henry Smith, May 27, 1903, Smith Family Papers; John Henry Smith to Wiley Nebeker, June 3, 1903, J. H. Smith Letterbooks; Lund Journal, September 4, 1903; J. H. Smith Journal, October 1, 1903. For a general treatment of plural marriage see Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt, 1954), and Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

5. Lund Journal, April 18, 1901; Young Journal, March 13, 1901.

6. Eugene E. Campbell and Richard D. Poll, *Hugh B. Brown: His Life and Thought* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), p. 18; Grant Diary, July 23, 1924.

7. Smoot Proceedings 1:110–11, 389–90, 406, 422, 2:68, 141–43, 295–96; Grant Diary, October 9, 1899; George Q. Cannon to Anthony W. Ivins, December 27, 1897, Ivins Family Papers; Anthony W. Ivins, excerpts from the A. W. Ivins Recordbook of Marriages, Ivins Family Papers; H. Grant Ivins, "Polygamy in Mexico," MS, *ibid.*; Joseph F. Smith to Reed Smoot, April 9, 1904, Joseph F. Smith Letterbook; Cannon and O'Higgins, *Under the Prophet* (chapter 1, note 24, p. 319), p. 177; Lund Journal, September 28, 1906; Smoot Diary, March 14, 1911. D. Michael Quinn, probably the most knowledgeable authority on the subject, estimates that "more than 250 plural marriages occurred from 1890 to 1904 in Mexico, Canada, and the United States by authorization of the First Presidency, and by action or assent of all but one or two members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles." "On Being a Mormon Historian," (MS in possession of the author). See also Victor W. Jorgensen and B. Carmon Hardy, "The Taylor-Cowley Affair and the Watershed of Mormon History" (chapter 1, note 30, p. 320); Kenneth L. Cannon II, "Beyond the Manifesto: Polygamous Cohabitation among General Authorities after 1890" (chapter 1, note 30, p. 320); Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (chapter 1, note 7, p. 318), chapter 5. For details on the new plural marriages see Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages," p. 40 ff.

On the Cannon-Hamlin marriage see Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriage" (chapter 1, note 4, p. 317), pp. 83–84.

8. Glen Miller, "The Mormons: A Successful Cooperative Society," *World's Work* 5 (December 1902): 2881; William R. Campbell, "Mormonism and Purity," *Missionary Review of the World* 25 (February 1902): 133–37; Joseph F. Smith, "The Real Origin of Plural Marriage in America," MS, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks; Charles W. Penrose, "The Aim, Scope, and Methods of the Mormon Church," *Arena* 27 (January 1902): 605–6; Joseph F. Smith, "The Mormonism of Today," *ibid.* 29 (May 1903): 449–56; Joseph Smith, III, "Plural Marriage in America," *ibid.*: 556–65; Richard T. Ely, "Economic Aspects of Mormonism," *Harper's* 106 (April 1903): 667–78; Ray Stannard Baker, "The Vitality of Mormonism: A Study of an Irrigated Valley in Utah and Idaho," *The Century Magazine* 68 (June 1904): 177; Charles B. Spahr, "America's Working People: X, The Mormons," *The Outlook* 64 (February 3, 1900): 305–17.

9. Estimate of the percentage is based on work by D. Michael Quinn. Ivins Journal, notes from January to May 1903; Eckersley Journal, September 2–6, November 9, 1903; Lund Journal, September 4, 1903; J. H. Smith Journal, October 1, 1903.

10. Smoot Proceedings 1:24–25, 120, 129–30, 144, 184, 201, 320–22, 324, 328, 350, 478, 487–88; Merrill Journal, May 17, 1900.

11. JH, January 5, February 13, 15, March 7, 15, May 8, 9, July 17, August 20, October 31, November 16, 1905; *Improvement Era*, June 1905, p. 639.

12. Lund Journal, April 4, 5, 6, 7, 1904.

13. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith, Sixth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), pp. 374–75.

14. Reed Smoot to Jesse M. Smith, March 22, 1904, cited in Merrill, "Reed Smoot" (chapter 1, note 23, p. 319), p. 58.

15. Francis M. Lyman to John W. Taylor, May 3, 1904, FP, letters sent; First Presidency, circular letter, May 5, 1904, Smith Family Papers; George F. Gibbs to Anthony W. Ivins, June 3, 1904, First Presidency to Ivins, June 9, 1904, FP, letters sent; Lund Journal, June 18, 20, 1904, March 27, 1902; Francis M. Lyman to George Teasdale, July 9, 1904, Smoot Papers; Grant Diary, February 20, 1900; First Presidency to Andrew Kimball, July 21, 1902, cited in Clark, *Messages* (chapter 2, note 12, p. 321) 4:45; and First Presidency to John W. Taylor and George Teasdale, October 22, 1904, FP, letters sent.

16. Smoot Proceedings 3:194; Richards Journal, April 8, 1906.

17. Joseph F. Smith to Heber J. Grant, October 4, 1905, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks.

18. Lund Journal, August 22, 1905; George F. Gibbs to Anthony W. Ivins, December 18, 1905, FP, letters sent; Joseph F. Smith to George C. Smith, December 17, 1905, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks; Richards Journal, April 10, June 2, 1906.

19. Lund Journal, April 5, 1906; First Presidency to Heber J. Grant, April

12, 1906, FP, letters sent; JH, April 6, 10, 1906; Richards Journal, March 22, April 8, July 5, 1906; J. H. Smith Journal, December 10, 1906. Elder Richards reported a personal spiritual experience involving a vivid dream of the Savior on March 22 which he later perceived to have been a foreshadowing of his call.

20. Snow, "The American Party" (chapter 2, note 3, p. 321), p. 138; Callister, "E. H. Callister" (chapter 2, note 39, p. 323), pp. 77–78; Lund Journal, November 23, 1906.

21. Richards Journal, July 14, 1909, February 8, 1910. The material in this paragraph about the scope and nature of the investigation is based on numerous diary entries in Richards's journal, which is the best available source for the trials held by the Twelve. The trials were also matters of public record since the most notorious of them were published in the pages of the *Deseret News*; Smoot Diary, September 14, 29, 1909; Lund Journal, February 8, 1910; Richards Journal, 1910 passim; First Presidency, circular letter to stake presidents, October 5, 1910, in Clark, *Messages* 4:217.

22. Grant Diary, July 7, 8, 9, 12, 1909; Richards Journal, July 21, 1909; Ivins Journal, July 21, 22, 23, 1909. The generalization about the usual response of those called to testify is based on a review of the journals of the committee members. Again, the Richards journal is the best source. For those years in which it was transcribed the Grant diary is also excellent. On the Higgs trial, which was a model, see Smoot Diaries, August 25, September 1, October 6, 1909. Higgs eventually left for Canada. See also Smoot Diaries, October 1, 3, 1910, for another case.

23. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. John A. Widtsoe, et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1919), p. 351; J. H. Smith Journal, May 7, 1911; Lund Journal, July 13, 1911; Whitaker Journal, September 24, 1912.

24. Smoot Diary, November 15, 16, 1910; Lund Journal, November 16, 1910; see also Ivins Journal, January 1911. The generalization is based on a review of numerous instances cited in the journals of participants in the decisions.

25. JH, February 11, May 7, October 31, 1908, January 22, February 27, 1909, November 12, December 13, 1910; Lund Journal, February 22, 1907; Julius C. Burrows, "Another Constitutional Amendment Necessary," *The Independent* 62 (May 9, 1907): 1074–78; Harvey J. O'Higgins, "A Reply to Colonel Roosevelt Regarding the New Polygamy in Utah," *Collier's* 67 (June 10, 1911): 35–37; Roberts, *Comprehensive History* (chapter 1, note 21, p. 319) 6:143; Cannon and O'Higgins, *Under the Prophet*.

26. Smoot Diary, October 6, 1910; Joseph F. Smith to Ben E. Rich, December 20, 1910, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks; Lund Journal, September 27, 1910; Burton J. Hendrick, "The Mormon Revival of Polygamy," *McClures Magazine* 36 (February 1911): 458–64, (January 1911): 345–61.

27. Alfred Henry Lewis, "The Viper on the Hearth," *Cosmopolitan* 50 (March 1911): 439–50, "The Trail of the Viper," *ibid.* (April 1911): 693–703, and "The Viper's Trail of Gold," *ibid.* (May 1911): 823–33.

28. On this point see A. J. Simmonds, *The Gentile Comes to Cache Valley: A*

Study of the Logan Apostasies of 1874 and the Establishment of Non-Mormon Churches in Cache Valley, 1873–1913 (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1976).

29. See, for instance, the case of Joseph Summerhays, Smoot Diary, October 12, 1910, and compare the punishment of elders Taylor and Cowley mentioned below.

30. Smoot Diary, March 14, 1911.

31. Fred C. Miller and Robert R. Black, comps., *The Trials for the Membership of John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley*, 2nd ed. (n.p., 1976), pp. 1, 18, and passim; Richards Journal, September 22, 1909, May 10, 11, 1911; Smoot Diary, October 13, 1910.

32. JH, January 20, February 2, April 20, 1912, January 19, 1913; Smoot Diary, December 10, 1913.

33. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (chapter 1, note 37, p. 320), pp. 48–49. For a discussion of the shift in world views specifically dealing with the Mormon situation see Jan Shipps, "In the Presence of the Past: Continuity and Change in Twentieth Century Mormonism," in Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective* (Midvale, Utah: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1983), pp. 3–35. See also Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985). For some discussion of some of the similarities and differences in my own and Shipps's point of view see my review of her book forthcoming in *Dialogue*.

34. Grant Diary, March 16, 1921, January 12, November 27, 1928.

Chapter 5: The Temporal Kingdom

1. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (see chapter 1, note 8, p. 318), pp. 13–14, 72–76, 298–302, 385–400; *idem.*, "Utah and the Depression of the 1890s," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 29 (January 1961): 3–18.

2. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, pp. 243–44, 384–85.

3. On these developments see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

4. For a discussion of support of business values within the mainline churches see Irvin G. Wyllie, *The Self-made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches* (New York: Free Press, 1966), especially chapter 4.

5. On the national image of the church see Jan Shipps, "From Satyr to Saint: American Attitudes toward the Mormons, 1860–1960," (paper presented at the 1973 Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians).

6. Cook cited in William E. Smythe, "Utah as an Industrial Object-Lesson," *Atlantic Monthly* 78 (November 1896): 617; *Improvement Era*, April 1912: 555–59.

7. Julian Street, "The Mormon Capital," *Colliers* 54 (November 28, 1914): 32; Smoot Diary, August 15, 1915.

8. For the interconnections of the LDS leadership in politics, family life, and

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tives" as we were all married men? He replied instantly "In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah; by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation."¹⁸

Obviously possibilities were being considered in the early 1830s, but the new system was not then formally established or widely discussed.

→ In 1842 a strange pamphlet entitled *The Peacemaker* was published in Nauvoo by Udney Hay Jacob.¹⁹ Behind the pamphlet's intricate reasoning and unorthodox biblical exegesis was an underlying concern about social disorder and a breakdown of traditional family relationships. Divorce and the lack of uniform standards from state to state were denounced; they were, in the author's mind, a manifestation of alienation between men and women. What was needed, according to Jacob, was male leadership if the family and the social order were to function properly. The work expressed a strong aversion to promiscuity: The married man who took a maid must marry her and support her as a wife. No room here for dalliances leading to pregnancies for single girls who would be abandoned and disregarded. The intention and significance of the pamphlet are unclear, but it does suggest a desire by the author for a more stable, male-led family.

It is significant, too, that during the Nauvoo period Mormon doctrine and practice were broadened to include the concepts of a graded salvation, future possible godhood for the righteous, and unbreakable relationships with an extended family by means of vicarious ordinance work for the dead.²⁰ The phrase that summed up the "sealing" of parents to both children and ancestors was the verse in Malachi promising a return of Elijah, who would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers."²¹ Although none of these concepts required polygamy, they indicated a boldness and expansiveness that could accommodate an enlarged family pattern associated with the Old Testament patriarchs. In short, there were practical, sociological, and theological predisposing tendencies within the new movement that required only a word from God, a revelation, to initiate the practice of plural marriage.

When did the crucial authorizing revelation occur? Closely related is the question of when and to what extent was plural marriage practiced during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. There is no precise answer. One point of view, that of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is that the system was introduced not by Smith but by Brigham Young. Since for various reasons Smith officially denied approval of polygamy, those disturbed by the principle could easily construct a case absolving the Prophet of responsibility. But this convenient argument was decisively refuted by, among others, Charles A. Shook, in *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (1914).²²

The most careful students of the subject seem agreed that Smith (*a*) had mentioned polygamy to associates as early as the Kirtland period of the mid-1830s; (*b*) had himself formed several plural relationships before 1843, when a revelation was announced; (*c*) had contracted some plural marriages that were platonic "eternity only" relationships; (*d*) may have sired in polygamy several children whose identities were obscured by their being raised under other surnames (but there is no hard evidence of any children except to his wife Emma); (*e*) had difficulty persuading Emma, his first wife, that the practice was approved by God. Although sexual attractiveness was probably an element of Smith's charisma, it is far from likely that his personal sex drive was the motivation. If he had been unprincipled, motivated solely by a desire for sexual gratification, there were tried and proven ways of satisfying such desires in American society without the burden of providing for additional families. Whatever the ultimate explanation of the reinstatement of polygamy, if Smith's religious sincerity is conceded, then he would naturally see the whole idea in religious terms, as, among other things, a restoration of the Old Testament practice.

Starting sometime in the early 1840s, Smith introduced a few chosen associates to the practice. Then, in 1842, John C. Bennett, who had for two years been a prominent adviser to Smith but whose character was, to say the least, unstable, left the church and published an exposé portraying the Mormon marriage system as an elaborate excuse for licentiousness. All during this time the Mormon leaders were publicly denying the practice. Whatever the ethics of these denials—which were rationalized by saying that the kind of polygamy the questioners had in mind was not the system being practiced—they were a practical requirement for gradual introduction to the church of such a difficult doctrine, necessary in fact for survival. Never during Smith's lifetime was the system publicly acknowledged, and in fact it was officially denied by Utah Mormons until 1852.

The response of the men who were introduced into polygamy between 1841 and 1846 was anything but enthusiastic. The same was true of the women who were offered the chance of becoming plural wives. Apart from the fact that the new system collided with moral assumptions they had grown up with, there were practical difficulties that made polygamy less attractive. For the men to support additional wives was seldom easy. And for women to be married on this basis without being legally acknowledged as wives can hardly have been reassuring. It was not the kind of scheme that aroused cheers and applause.

Yet such was their dedication to Mormonism and its prophet that several score were early persuaded that polygamy was a religious obligation. This belief did not come easily. Brigham Young declared that when he initially heard of the revelation on plural marriage, "it was the first time in my life

that I desired the grave."²³ Orson Pratt, later a vociferous defender of polygamy, came close to abandoning the faith after his first encounter with the new marriage system.²⁴ Others were equally distraught. Disbelief was followed by a reluctant willingness to consider the possibility and finally by acceptance of the reality. Some received their personal conviction in dreams or revelations. An intolerable tension was established in the minds of Mormon leaders who were told about polygamy. On the one hand, they believed Smith was a prophet of God and they had committed their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of the restored gospel. On the other hand, polygamy flew in the face of their traditional sense of morality. Something had to give in order for them to regain psychic equilibrium. Accepting a spiritual confirmation of the new revelation after intense personal soul-searching was the way most Mormon leaders were able to retain the consistency of their commitment.

Not all women approached with offers of plural relationships were discreet. From some of them came accusations that were magnified by rumor. Those women who accepted the system were faced with the same challenge their leaders had confronted: something had to give, and most often their faith in the gospel proved stronger than their inherited prejudice. Several of these women later described what happened. One of the frankest accounts was written by Lucy Walker, an orphan girl of sixteen who joined Smith's household in 1842. She said the following year Smith explained to her that God had commanded him to take her as a plural wife. At first she was astonished and insulted. He asked if she believed he was a prophet of God. After she answered affirmatively, he said that the principle of plural marriage had been restored by God and would "prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house, and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end." She was told to pray and that she would receive a personal testimony of the truth of what he said. She was angry, feeling that she was being asked "to place myself upon the altar a living sacrifice—perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions." She would rather die, unless she knew that God approved. After a long night of earnest prayer she felt as though her room were lighted "by a heavenly influence." "Supreme happiness took possession of me," she said, "and I received a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truth of plural marriage." On May 1, 1843, she was "sealed" to Joseph Smith "for time and all eternity" by Elder William Clayton.²⁵

The number of women so sealed to Joseph Smith is not known. One biographer listed forty-eight, but many of these were undoubtedly wives in name only, officially "sealed" to him for the future life but not living with him conjugally in the present.²⁶ As for the others, abundant discussion has failed to establish whether or not Smith actually cohabited with them, and

the lack of evidence of children from these relationships has not clarified the question. Several women later did testify that they were wives in the full sense of the word. Emily D. P. Partridge said she "roomed" with him,²⁷ and Melissa Lott Willes testified that she was his wife "in very deed."²⁸

From a clandestine arrangement, limited to the Prophet and two or three dozen leading men and the wives who were party to the practice, Mormon polygamy slowly expanded after the Prophet's death in 1844, especially during ceremonies in the newly completed Nauvoo Temple at the end of 1845 and beginning of 1846. After the Mormons arrived in the Great Basin, plural marriages continued to be performed. Finally, in 1852, the practice was openly acknowledged at a general church conference, at which Apostle Orson Pratt gave a lengthy defense of polygamy.

How many Mormons practiced polygamy? This question does not have a simple answer and cannot be determined with the precision demographers prefer. But to reckon whether half of the Mormons or a third or a tenth were in the plural relationship, approximate figures suffice. When dealing with percentages it is important to know whether we are speaking of married men, wives, or total family members. Based on the best information now available, we estimate that no more than 5 percent of married Mormon men had more than one wife; and since the great majority of these had only two wives, it seems reasonable to suppose that about 12 percent of Mormon married women were involved in the principle. The birth rate among plural wives being somewhat lower than among monogamist wives, certainly no higher than 10 percent of Mormon children were born into polygamist families. These are general figures for the period from about 1850 to 1890. More precise calculations, which will show fluctuations year by year and variations from place to place, must await the completion of demographic research now in progress.²⁹

Although the national press portrayed plural marriage as a monstrous dehumanization of women, Mormons, including many leading women, spoke out in its defense. For them it was a practical, honorable means of providing marriage and motherhood for thousands of deserving women who would otherwise be condemned to a life of spinsterhood;³⁰ it was an alternative to a variety of social evils; and it was commanded by God as a means of raising up a righteous generation. That its primary justification—and the primary motivation of its practitioners—was religious obligation, no one who has examined the diaries and letters of the time can deny. Even the Supreme Court in the crucial *Reynolds* decision did not deny that plural marriage was part of the Mormon religion but maintained that society had a right to forbid what were regarded as antisocial practices even if they were part of a religion.³¹

Usually a man did not merely decide to take an additional wife; he was