


Women's Response to Plural Marriage

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lural marriage was a complex phenomenon in both theology and practice. It was no less complex psychologically. Some LDS women ardently accepted it as a divine principle. Others viewed it as an unwelcome but necessary sacrifice to achieve salvation. A few loathed it. There were women who coaxed reluctant husbands to take an additional wife. Others quietly acquiesced — either in initial discussions or when presented with a *fait accompli*, and still others left the household rather than accept a sister wife. Sometimes the inner and outer persons were in conflict. Inwardly repelled and outwardly obedient, many women faced a struggle that for some led to triumphant self-control and for others to shattering disillusionment.

The principle of plural marriage was promulgated unofficially both before and after its public life. Introduced in the 1830s, it emerged officially in 1852 after the Latter-day Saints had relocated in Utah, putting a geographical buffer between themselves and larger society. Officially terminated in 1890, the practice continued *sub rosa* until 1904 when it was completely disavowed by Church authorities and membership.

Those living the principle did so counter to the commonly held mores of Western society. This required them to justify their actions to themselves as well as others. For some, the justification was obedience to religious principle. For others, it was the pursuit of celestial glory. Some sought a larger posterity. Many accepted the counsel of ecclesiastical leaders or the urging of associates to live plural marriage. The satisfaction of romantic desires motivated at least some. (I have no evidence of sexual gratification motivating women.) For others, practical needs made the system feasible. At least a few women were tricked or even coerced.

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A quantitative study has yet to be made, but this essay reviews the motivations that led to acceptance of plural marriage among Mormon women based on anecdotes, family histories, and surviving first-person accounts. Not only does this study illuminate the complexity of plural marriage as a feature of the LDS heritage, but it raises larger issues of the dilemma confronting all who profess religion and reason while coping with their own humanity.

"If any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second . . . then is he justified" (D&C 132:61). This revelation established the divine mandate to marry plurally. After forty years of practicing it, when the Church was confronting national opposition, 2,000 LDS women gathered at the Capitol Theater in Salt Lake City on 6 March 1886 to address the reports that they were violating Christian marriage principles. Among other speakers, Ellis Shipp of Salt Lake City, a physician and the first of Milford Shipp's four wives, explained: "True we practice plural marriage, not, however, because we are compelled to, but because we are convinced that it is a divine revelation, and we find in this principle satisfaction, contentment, and more happiness than we could obtain in any other relationship" (Shipp 1886, 37). Numerous other public statements by LDS women affirm their feeling that they lived the principle in adherence to divine mandate.

One might be tempted to dismiss such statements as propaganda designed to appease anti-polygamy critics. However, similar feelings are expressed in the personal papers of many participants. Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton summarize: "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" (1979, 199).

Yet, not everyone accepted the principle full-heartedly and without qualm. This was particularly true during the early years in which it was practiced clandestinely. Eliza Partridge Lyman, a plural wife of Joseph Smith, reminisced in 1877 in Salt Lake City:

A woman living in polygamy dare not let it be known and nothing but a firm desire to keep the commandments of the Lord could have induced a girl to marry in that way. I thought my trial was very severe in that line and I am often led to wonder how it was that a person of my temperament could get along with it and not rebel, but I know it was the Lord who kept me from opposing his plans although in my heart I felt that I could not submit to them, but I did and I am thankful to my Heavenly Father for the care he had over me in those troublous times. (1846–85, 13–14)

The primary motivation in both this and the statement of Ellis Shipp is obedience to divine revelation.

While visiting Utah in 1872, Elizabeth Kane accompanied her husband Thomas and Brigham Young on a tour of LDS settlements from Salt Lake to St. George. A non-LDS observer, she tells of a plural wife she named Delia J. of Parowan married to a husband twice her age. Though childless, Delia was an earnest advocate of plural marriage as a divine institution. Elizabeth asked if she could support a Congressional act forbidding any further plural mar-

riages but legalizing those already in existence to secure the social position of all wives. Delia exclaimed: "Secure my social position! How can that satisfy me! I want to be assured of my position in God's estimation. If polygamy is the Lord's order, we must carry it out in spite of human laws and persecutions'" (1974, 105). Yet, Elizabeth reports that the first wife had told her Delia "could not bring her mind for a long time to see it to be her duty. But she is reconciled now" (1974, 104).

Helen Mar Whitney, a plural wife of Horace K. Whitney, wrote *Why We Practice Plural Marriage*, an important defense, in 1884. Her personal justification was included: "Had it not been for the powerful testimony from the Lord, which gave me a knowledge for myself that this principle is of celestial birth, I do not believe that I could have submitted to it for a moment." Her own resistance had been physically debilitating: "During that season I lost my speech, forgot the names of everybody and everything, and was living in another sphere" (1884, 9; Crocheron 1884, 112).

Romania Bunnell Pratt Penrose, a plural wife of Parley P. Pratt and later of Charles Penrose, experienced an intense struggle as well but termed living plural marriage as cathartic: "Were it lived according to the great and grand aim of its author, though it be a fiery furnace at some period in our life, it will prove the one thing needful to cleanse and purify our inmost soul of selfishness, jealousy, and other mundane attributes" (1881, 6). Though Romania dissolved her sealing to Pratt in 1881, she continued to accept the principle, marrying plurally as the third wife of Penrose in 1886.

As a woman contemplated plural marriage, she had to come to terms with its centrality to salvation in the Mormon view: "For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory" (D&C 132:4).

Although the twentieth-century Church interprets the new and everlasting covenant as celestial marriage, the nineteenth-century Church most often understood it as plural marriage. Not only did one have to be married in the temple (celestial marriage) but it had to be done plurally for each male and his wives to reach the highest degree of celestial glory. Annie Clark Tanner, a plural wife of Joseph M. Tanner remembers, "It was taught at that time [1880s] that the second wife opened the door of salvation in the Celestial Kingdom not only for herself but for her husband and his first wife" (1976, 62).

Bathsheba B. Smith, the first wife of Apostle George A. Smith, alluded to this doctrine when she said, "Being thoroughly convinced, as well as my husband that the doctrine of plurality of wives was from God and having a fixed determination to attain to celestial glory, I felt to embrace the whole gospel. . . . Accordingly I gave to my husband five wives, good, virtuous, honorable young women" (Tullidge 1877, 320-21).

Elizabeth Fuhriman was twenty-four, single, and being courted by a young single man who would call on her at work in Logan's ZCMI. This perturbed the manager, Isaac Smith, who also had an eye for Elizabeth. He eventually forbade the youth to continue his store visits. Smith was fourteen years her

senior and married, but he proposed and she accepted even though the year was 1894 and plural marriage was officially discouraged. When later asked by her daughter, Elva, why she had chosen the one over the other, Elizabeth said he was a good talker, good looking, a good dancer, and that he convinced her "how many more blessings she would receive in the life hereafter if she married into polygamy" (Shumway 1980). Kimball Young reported that one wife felt so strongly that her own glory would be lessened by her husband's refusal to be married plurally that she divorced him after two years and became the plural wife of a man many years her senior (1954, 108).

However powerful the motive of salvation, it was not equally compelling to all. When the principle was announced in 1852, Fanny Stenhouse, then on a mission with her husband in Switzerland, retired to her room to read the revelation more closely. "Before I had got through one half I threw it aside, feeling altogether rebellious against God. I now began to feel perfectly reckless, and even willing to throw aside my religion, and take 'my chance of salvation,' rather than submit to Polygamy, for I felt that that new doctrine was a degradation to womankind" (1872, 34). Fanny permitted her husband to marry again, but later, both left the Church and lectured stridently against plural marriage.

While few went so far as Fanny, perhaps a little of her rebelliousness is to be found in many of those that confronted the principle. Many women like Delia J. and Helen Mar Whitney became more convinced of their faith through the practice of polygamy even though, as we have seen, they sometimes harbored feelings of doubt or rebellion. The reality for most women was probably a mixture of faith and frustration.

Some LDS women saw plural marriage as a means to increase the number of children reared in a knowledge of gospel principles, a view supported by Section 132: "[Plural wives] are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men" (D&C 132:63). Helen Mar Whitney felt children were "stars" in their mother's "crown" and each added to the glory of the woman and her husband in the afterlife (1884, 9). Eliza Martin Allen of West Jordan, the first wife of Daniel R. Allen, echoed these feelings, preaching to her reluctant husband during the 1850s that it was essential to their glory for him to have more wives and to rear and properly train a large number of children (Jensen 1948, 52). Daniel eventually married five other women between 1857 and 1872.

When the first wife was barren, she felt particularly obligated to permit the husband to have another wife. Jennie Harrington Tanner, first wife of Brigham Young Academy professor Joseph Marion Tanner, consented to his marriage with Annie Clark in 1883 because she had no children (Tanner 1976, 63-64). Wealthy Richards Clark of Farmington, the wife of Edward Barrett Clark, was childless during the first six years of their marriage. She received a priesthood blessing in 1885 which promised her children only when she permitted her husband to marry again. She acquiesced and permitted him to

marry Alice Randall that year. The blessing was fulfilled, though it exasperated her that Alice bore a child before she had hers (Clark 1979, 5). Childless Muzetta Porter Burton of Ogden was miserable during the first four years of her marriage to John F. Burton. In 1903, even after the banning of plural marriage, she felt strongly enough about the need to have children that she persuaded her husband to take her sister Florence as a wife. She pursued a career but continued to assist in the education and upbringing of the five children that came from the second marriage (Burton, 1929). Thus, some first wives salved the wound of barrenness by sacrificing their monogamous marriage.

Subsequent wives likewise found motivation in the desire to have posterity. Sarah Rogers of Snowflake, Arizona, older and with no prospects for marriage during the late 1880s, heard Charles Edmund Richardson speak in church and was impressed. One of Charles's daughters relates that Sarah greatly desired to have a family. Sarah's own daughter reports that Sarah's mother pressured her to marry Charles polygamously. A third of Charles's children report that Sarah finally approached the stake president and expressed her feelings. When the stake president delivered the message, Charles was beset with doubt and confusion. He paced the floor at nights protesting to Sadie, the first wife, that he could not do it. Sadie responded, "You know that you should be entering into this principle and you have no right to deprive that good woman of having a family" (Shumway 1980, 5; Blau 1980, 10; Richardson 1980, 13). Charles told Sarah that he did not love her but would agree to the marriage. Sarah became the second wife in 1887. Third and fourth wives joined the family in 1889 and 1904.

Many of those who entered plural marriage reported experiences that conveyed divine confirmation. For Louisa Greene Richards, founding editor of *Woman's Exponent* and wife of Levi W. Richards, after earnest prayer came an inner witness — "not suddenly, as it comes to some but gradually and unmistakably" (1882, 94).

For others the witness was more startling. Sarah Kendall Durfee of Springville, the first wife of Jabez Erastus Durfee, had rebelled against her husband's desire to remarry, became ill, and received a visitation from the other world. Her son reports that the person said: "'Sarah, you're awful sick, aren't you . . . Listen, your husband wants to take a second wife and you're opposing him, bitterly opposing him and that is a true principle. . . . He should stand at the head of the home and you should go with him and your children should go with him. If you don't, when you pass out of this life you'll be just canceled out'" (Durfee 1979, 3). Sarah promised to relent, and in 1880 Jabez married the second wife of five additional wives to be added to the family through 1902.

Emma Mortenson, working in Colonia Diaz as a teacher after the Manifesto, was unmarried, twenty-four, and concerned. She fasted and prayed about a husband and was comforted in a dream where she was shown the picture of the man she was to marry. Although she had previously vowed not to marry a redheaded man, she noted in her dream that her husband-to-be had red hair and a small moustache. She later went to Colonia Juarez and boarded with the Skousen family. She was shocked to recognize James Skousen as the

man of her dream. She had not only vowed never to marry a redhead but also never to marry into plural marriage. She became his second wife in 1901 (Skousen 1979, 11).

The impressive spiritual manifestation to Vilate Kimball, first wife of Heber C. Kimball, should not be overlooked. Joseph Smith had revealed the principle to Heber but Vilate knew nothing of it. She was perplexed at the turmoil in her husband's mind. Depression settled over them both and she prayed fervently to know the cause: "Her mind was opened, and she saw the principle of Celestial marriage illustrated in all its beauty and glory, together with the great exaltation and honor it would confer upon her in that immortal and celestial sphere if she would but accept it and stand in her place by her husband's side" (Whitney 1881, 74). Their mutual gloom lifted when she went to Heber, aware now of his unexpressed concerns.

Their mutual revelation represents the ideal. In general, this thorny problem was not easily resolved. Kimball Young recounts that a man in Paragonah, Utah, told his wife "he had had a revelation to marry a certain girl and that in the face of such divine instructions, she must give her consent. The next morning she announced that in the night she, too, had received a revelation 'to shoot any woman who became his plural wife'" (1954, 123).

Women's responses to dreams, visions, divine mandates and the promise of celestial glory were influenced greatly by their perceptions of the connections between this life and the afterlife. There were, however, other more down-to-earth motives that influenced Mormon women.

The counsel of ecclesiastical superiors was often decisive for women entering plural marriage. Young notes that in thirty-three instances where a motive is mentioned, thirty attributed their decision to the counsel of Church authorities (1954, 106). This motive is also mentioned commonly in the interviews of the LDS Polygamy Oral History Project. Sarah Williams of Cedar City responded to the advice of Church leaders and incurred the hostility of her family. When she left home to marry Benjamin Perkins in the fall of 1881, her father disgustingly said he had no desire to even wish her goodbye if she left to come back a plural wife. When she returned married, her mother scolded her. Sarah picked up her sister's baby, but the sister snatched it away and slapped her. Finally, Sarah's mother gave her a quilt and a blanket and asked her to leave permanently. Sarah felt that since she had been advised by her Church leaders to get married plurally, she was doing right and must take "the consequences" (A. Lyman 1930, 7-8).

Ecclesiastical leaders preached plural marriage consistently from the pulpit. Catherine Pond, married to Brigham Pond in 1885 as his second wife, explained to her son that her principle motive was to follow the counsel of Church authorities. She said that she had been taught by these authorities to accept the proposal of a worthy man if he asked her to marry into polygamy (Pond 1980, 16). Hyrum Clark proposed to Ann Eliza Porter on condition that she accept another wife later. Ann went to her father, Alma Porter, a bishop, and confided to him that she thought it was terrible. He said, "No, that is very noble and unselfish. If he wants another wife, you must be equal

to it" (Eriksen 1980, 16–17). Kimball Young quotes a nineteenth-century Mormon: "We'd heard it preached all our lives and we believed it was the true Principle. It was preached and preached and preached at us. When they weren't preaching that, they preached marriage" (1954, 203).

Frequently, when men were given positions of leadership, a Church leader would request that a man, and by implication his wife, enter the principle. Prior to being called as seventy's quorum leader, Andrew Lars Hyer of Lewiston, Utah, was told by Apostle Marriner Merrill to take a second wife. He conferred with his wife, Ellen Gilbert, and proposed a possible second wife. Ellen suggested instead their maid, Elizabeth Telford, whom he married in 1885 (Hyer 1978, 1).

The archetype for this private persuasion can be found in the experience of Isaac Robeson Farley of Ogden. When he and his fiancée Madeleine Malan came to Brigham Young in 1858 for the ceremony, President Young told him to bring her twin sister, Emily, as well. Isaac obeyed, and Emily agreed (Farley, n.d.). On another occasion, Brigham Young advised a man to marry a specific immigrant girl of sixteen before he departed to the Dixie Mission. The girl refused since her parents had not yet arrived. Brigham had the girl brought to his office where he explained that it was a commandment, that they would be blessed if they kept it and condemned if they did not. His counsel had the desired effect, and the two were wed (Young 1954, 109).

Blessings of ecclesiastical leaders sometimes encouraged plural marriage. We have already noted the blessing of Wealthy Richards Clark that promised her children if she accepted the principle. Emily Crane of Fillmore, Utah, was already engaged to George Penny, a single man, when Lorenzo Dow Watson proposed to her. She was undecided. Her parents sought a blessing from the stake patriarch for her. The blessing advised her to reconsider her choice and stated that she would marry plurally. Emily asked George if he would ever approve of plural marriage and, when he said no, she broke the engagement and married Watson (Driggs 1975, 4).

Sometimes friends, relatives, and other Church members provided the necessary emotional support, even when it came ambiguously. Ellen Elvira Nash Parkinson of Preston, Idaho, was eight months pregnant with her third child in 1887 when her husband, William C. Parkinson, married Louisa Benson. Ellen found the situation difficult to accept and sought her mother's counsel. The mother had been married plurally and responded to Ellen's plea, "You are no better than I to stand it." Ellen finally accepted the marriage because the Church urged it and the family all "approved" it. "There was nothing to do but make the best of it" (Parkinson 1965, 208). Ellen Gilbert Hyer of Lewiston, Utah, first wife of Andrew Lars Hyer, counselled her children, "Think nothing of it. It is just our religion" (Hyer and Ririe 1978, 19). Rudger H. Daines of Logan commented similarly that the plural marriage of his parents, William Moroni Daines and Chloe Hatch "was just a natural thing in their lives" (1976, 19).

The pressure to conform was at times intense. Elijah Nicholas Wilson courted a young woman whom he does not name in Cache Valley. Elijah had

spent an unusual youth, growing up with the Shoshone, and was regarded by some as a renegade. They attempted to thwart his suit and encouraged the girl to marry a man of good standing in the community who was already married. She told Elijah "her folks and the bishop and all of the neighbors had turned loose on her and she saw no peace until she promised to marry him [Elijah's rival]" (1971, 194-203).

Economic security or status was an acknowledged motivation for some LDS women. Conditioned by modern society to accept romance as a primary motive to marry, we tend to forget that "pioneer people were motivated by elementary survival interests," as Nels Anderson suggests, "and none were more practical than some of these pioneer women, many of whom favored men who were more secure economically and able to provide the substance for living" (1942, 403). An unmarried woman may have been attracted to a polygamous man because, as Vickey Burgess-Olsen notes, polygamous husbands were usually better off occupationally than their monogamous peers and held higher positions in the Church (1975, 125).

Elizabeth Kane relates an instance where Sarah Comstock, a maid, obtained a jesting promise from the first wife that she could marry the husband after seven years of service. At the end of the seven years, she broke an engagement to another man, reminded the wife of her promise and claimed it, sharing the home and goods of the well-to-do husband (1974, 104).

A first wife might find some short-term economic advantage if her husband married a domestic who would continue her service to the family. Thus, Melvina Greer Skousen encouraged her husband, Daniel, to marry a hired girl saying, according to her daughter, "You might as well marry her and keep the money in the house" (Walser 1976, 22). Financial advantage was not the only benefit. Phylinda Loverage Terry of Union, Utah, sorrowed so deeply at the death of one of her children in 1848 that her health failed. Her husband Charles brought in Sarah Hammond, a neighbor's daughter, to assist the family during the wife's illness. She cared lovingly and competently for the children. Phylinda continued to fail and consented for Charles and Sarah to be married in 1851, thereby providing for the stability of her family once she was gone. She soon died (Blair 1937, 11).

A first wife usually had the most status among the wives. According to her daughter, Caroline Romney Eyring of Colonia Juarez, Mexico, was willing to permit a second marriage because she believed "that the way they would get their celestial glory was by living this principle." However, she expected to be "queen bee" as her own mother, a first wife, had been. She was disappointed when Edward, the husband, decided that Caroline and Emma, the second wife and Caroline's sister, would be treated equally (Calder 1980, 5; Eyring 1976, 11).

Sometimes a plural marriage offered escape from a difficult situation. Pearl Dean Taylor of Colonia Juarez worked "real hard" to tend her invalid parents until she married Samuel Walter Jarvis as a plural wife in 1902 (Augustus 1976, 8). Emmeline B. Whitney, a widow, wrote in 1852 to Daniel H. Wells, who had five wives, requesting that he "consider the lonely state"

she faced and "return to her a description of his feelings for her." They were married that year (Eaton-Gadsby and Dushku 1978, 459). Nancy Gibbons was forty-eight and John D. Lee was thirty-five when, according to his report: "She told me she was without friend that she could in reality claim as a counselor or lodge the secrets of her breasts with, and that she had thought rather hard of me for I was one of the first elders that brought the gospel to her and a man in whom she always reposed the most exquisite trust and confidence" (Lee 1938, 99). She became his twelfth wife.

First wives, likewise, found themselves looking at the situation from a practical point of view. Viewing plural marriage as inevitable, one anonymous wife encouraged her husband to marry: "If you're going to get married, I want you to do it while I'm young. I don't want you to wait until I'm old and good for nothing and then bring in a young wife" (Young 1954, 113).

From a scriptural perspective, love was not a prerequisite to plural marriage. As Section 132 observes: "If any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed" (D&C 132:64). When asked by her son if she loved her husband, second wife Catherine Pond responded that she did not but that she learned to love him (Pond 1980, 11). One peppery prospective second wife in St. George (identified only as Carolyn Y.) refused to have romance mixed up with her religion: "Yes, religion that was what it meant to me. I wouldn't have no courtin'. Before we was married he used to want me to go out walkin', but I wouldn't have it. 'No courtin', I says to him. 'If you've got anything to say to me, you know how to say it and where. Come to the house and say it out straight, no strollin' around like young lovers. I don't go walkin' with any woman's husband'" (Sarah Comstock in Mulder and Mortensen 1954, 433).

These two traditional views coexisted with the generally accepted role of love as prelude to marriage increasingly adopted by American society in general throughout the nineteenth century.

A third wife had love as her first priority in marriage: "I don't think I thought anything about the Principle . . . when I married. . . . I fell in love with my husband and married him, just as a girl would today, only it was in polygamy. He was twenty years older than I was, but he never seemed old. I think I loved him even when I was a little girl" (Young 1954, 117). Sarah Crossley, baptized as a child in England, knew many of the missionaries including Peregrine Sessions. Sarah immigrated with the Willie handcart company at the age of thirteen and suffered severely. Peregrine took her into his Bountiful home, cared for her, and when she was eighteen, married her. She relates, "I think I had loved him from my very childhood, and although I was his fourth wife and many years younger I was the happiest woman in the world" (Burningham 1979, 1-3).

Such happiness could create its own disruptions. According to the son of Betsy Lowe Allen of Cove, Utah, when she found her husband, James Carson Allen, "spooning" with her younger sister Ellen a year after her own marriage, she cried so long and so heartbrokenly that she could no longer produce milk

for her baby (Allen 1980, 22). Ann Doney Lowe of Franklin, Idaho, confided in her son that she deeply loved his father, James Galloway Lowe, but when he married Elizabeth Kingsford in 1885 after five years of monogamy, it was nearly unbearable for her (Lowe 1976, 8).

Kimball Young suggests that wives not romantically attached to their husbands were better able to adjust to plural marriage (1954, 209). One of the strongest advocates of plural marriage, Zina D. H. Young, advised that a successful polygamous wife "must regard her husband with indifference, and with no other feeling than that of reverence, for love we regard as a false sentiment; a feeling which should have no existence in polygamy" (Van Wagoner and Walker 1982, 417).

There is no evidence to suggest that sex motivated women to accept plural marriage over monogamy. Commenting on this, Romania Pratt Penrose said in 1886:

It cannot be true, as asserted, that plural marriage is entered into as a rule for sensual motives. It is self-evident that it is not the case with women, and it is unreasonable to suppose that men would bring upon themselves the responsibilities, cares and expenses of a plural family, when they could avoid all this, yet revel in sin. (Penrose 1886, 31)

Even anti-Mormon literature portrayed Mormon women as victims of lust rather than proponents of sensual designs.

Not all women were given a choice, either to accept a plural wife or to become one. Young reports two cases. One man, after sixteen years of marriage, requested his wife to ready his temple clothes. When she inquired the reason, he said it was to remarry (1954, 122). One son reports hearing his father tell his mother that the authorities threatened to release him from the bishopric if he did not take another wife. The mother reluctantly consented (1954, 74).

Fourteen-year-old Anna Eliza Berry in 1879 accompanied her mother and stepfather to St. George, ostensibly to tend the younger children and to enjoy the ride. Once while feeding the team she asked her stepfather why he was taking her to the temple. He said to marry her. She writes, "Well I just felt horried [sic] and thought but never dare say is that the way a woman gets Married cant a woman say who she wants." She went through the temple for her endowments. While she was in the sealing room, she writes, "I was lookin at the pretty rooms and I remember of knelling on the alter and a man talking. Mr. H. C. said yes and after they said to me to say yes I wispered yes not noing what I was saying." On the return journey the stepfather put his arm around her shoulder and called her his "little wife." She was aghast and said, "Why, be I your wife? He said yes, but I said well I never new [sic] that. He said dont tell a sole or we will half to be put in prison for living in poligmeiy and I did feel so bad I wondered if all girls got married that way and would like to run away" (Day 1899-1907, 4).

Uneasy decisions and unsettling adjustments confronted many women in plural marriage. Dropped into the balance of a woman's decision were the weights of faith, emotion, and reason. When the factors had been weighed, the

women decided on various courses, ranging from outright acceptance and encouragement of the system to adamant rejection.

Theresa Thompson, an example of the first extreme, questioned her husband-to-be, Anson Bowen Call, at the time of his proposal in 1885: "Do you believe in polygamy and would you practice polygamy?" He didn't hardly know what to say because he wanted to gain her favor. He said, 'I believe in the principle and if the opportunity comes I would practice it.' She said, 'I am thankful of that' " (Alder 1976, 27). Theresa later consented to three more wives entering the family after the Manifesto. She outlived them all.

Many women responded cooperatively, though hesitantly. For some plural marriage was a violation of beliefs and feelings they could not accept. Belief in the principle helped other plural wives deal with their negative emotions. Sadie Richardson, of Colonia Diaz, the first wife of Edmund Richardson, struggled with jealousy as two more wives joined the family, but claimed "that woman who believes in continued revelation, could not be far off in accepting the principles of polygamy. They might have different attitudes in their living of it, but not in the divinity of it" (Richardson 1980). The third wife in Edmund Richardson's family, Rebecca Jacobson reported, "I have been happy and blessed as a polygamist wife. . . . Any sacrifice we made for each other was rewarded ten-fold." In the words of Annie Richardson Johnson, Edmund and Rebecca's daughter, "Like Joseph Smith, polygamists had sealed their testimony, not with their blood, but with the power of acceptance when the principle of Plural Marriage was revealed" (Johnson 1972, 292, 294). With such an attitude, many women felt deeply affirmed in their decision.

Mary Jensen, a fifteen-year-old living in Cottonwood, Utah, recorded that "one morning she found her mother sorely depressed with her older sister, Annie, looking very serious." She was shocked to learn that her stepfather felt "it his duty" to take seventeen-year-old Annie as his second wife. Affronted, Mary convinced her mother and her sister to refuse. She persuaded them that "the Lord doesn't want a man to marry a lot of women." Simply stated, this was the argument that Church members faced from the outside and, because of their Western heritage, from the inside. Mary's case was an argument that gave way with the passage of time. Both she and Annie were married two years later as sister wives to Joseph Moulton (Moulton n.d., 11-12).

Wilford Woodruff, while an apostle, complained in October conference in 1875 that "we have many bishops and elders who have but one wife. They are abundantly qualified to enter the higher law and take more, but their wives will not let them" (Cowley 1909, 490). Juanita Brooks's grandfather went wooing in vain when his first wife appeared at the home of the prospective wife and left after a door-slamming scene. The second woman refused the proposal (1922, 300). Ann Riter Young, first wife of Seymour B. Young, went to George Q. Cannon, counselor to Church president Wilford Woodruff and said, "I don't give my consent." She pleaded that they had a child with cerebral palsy to take care of and that her husband was already too occupied to find time for another family. This did not preclude Seymour's marriage to Abbie Wells (Hammond 1980, 8). When Charles Ora Card, stake president in

Logan and later founder of Cardston, Canada, remarried, his first wife, Sarah Ann Birdneau Card, left him and did all she could to help the federal marshals find and imprison him (Card 1980, 27).

Given the potential problems in a monogamous marriage, it is reasonable to suspect that plural marriage would generate more. Statistics indicate that plural marriage ended in divorce more commonly than single marriages. Studies of family group sheets in the Genealogical Society Library, show a 9 percent divorce rate among polygamists as compared to a 1 percent (0-9) rate among monogamists (Kunz 1980, 68-69). These statistics are probably symptomatic of the unseen, unresolved struggles that beset those so married.

An intimate glimpse of those complex feelings comes from the Leavitt family of Bunkerville, Nevada. The first wife, Mary Abbott Leavitt, had given her consent for Thomas Dudley Leavitt to remarry; but as she awaited his return with his new bride, Ada Waite, she went outside in the moonlight and "asked the Lord to give me strength that when they came I would be able to bear it. I told him how I felt in my heart and asked him if he would bless me so that this feeling would leave me, so I wouldn't have that jealous feeling and that terrible feeling. I couldn't endure it. I shed bitter tears, and I prayed with all my heart and soul." She heard the wagon, hurried back to her house, and waited in the dark. Thomas entered and struck a match. Seeing her in the shadows, he approached and, noting that she had been crying, he embraced her and said, "I want you to know that you are my first love. . . . No one can take your place, nobody" (Waite 1980, 5).

In summary, then, women accepted plural marriage for reasons both spiritual and temporal. It brought great self-mastery to some. In others it unleashed emotions that were hardly containable. Ultimately, it required the resolution of conflicting demands placed on the individual woman in response to her faith, emotion, and reason. The struggle to resolve the tension felt within each soul and acted out in each life is a matter that requests only our understanding and not our judgment. As Marinda Bateman explained to her daughter who objected to the practice of plural marriage, "Do not say you do not believe it, say you do not understand it" (Jensen 1948, 51).

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