

and women can continue their progression and further learn principles of perfection before they are brought to the final judgment (Alma 40:6–21). Jesus Christ went to the postmortal spirit world while his body lay in the tomb to preach the gospel to them (1 Pet. 3:19–20; 4:6; D&C 138:11–37) so that those spirits in the postmortal spirit world could hear and accept or reject the gospel. Since baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, temple endowment, and SEALING are earthly ordinances, Latter-day Saints perform the ordinances vicariously for the dead in their temples (*see* SALVATION FOR THE DEAD). Because individuals differ so widely in their obedience to God’s commandments, LDS theology rejects the traditional Christian concepts of the single option of heaven or hell in explaining the final destiny of souls (*see* SOUL). Through a vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 76), the Lord has shown, as he also revealed to Paul, that there are several DEGREES OF GLORY in mankind’s eternal reward (D&C 76; cf. 1 Cor. 15:42).

The plan of salvation was created by the Father, brought into reality by the atoning sacrifice of his Beloved Son, and facilitated by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It embraces the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, including the Resurrection, and sweeps across all time from the premortal existence to the final state of IMMORTALITY and eternal life.

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## PLATES, METAL

[*The Book of Mormon mentions several records, most of which were inscribed on metal plates. The text of the Book of Mormon was inscribed on metal plates; see Book of Mormon Plates and Records; Book of Mormon: The Words of Mormon; and Gold Plates. In addition, the scriptural record possessed by the Book of Mormon colony that fled Jerusalem and came to the Americas under the leadership of the prophet Lehi was engraved on plates of brass; see Book of Mormon: An Overview. This*

*colony continued to prepare metal plates, which were then used to inscribe records both sacred and secular; see Book of Mormon Economy and Technology. It is also known that a prophet named Ether inscribed on metal leaves the record of his people, the earliest Book of Mormon group to migrate to the Western Hemisphere; see Book of Mormon: Book of Ether and Jaredites. The final set of plates abridged by Mormon were seen by the Book of Mormon Witnesses. For information about the major writers or abridgers of these plates, see Mormon; Moroni<sub>2</sub>; Mosiah<sub>2</sub>; and Nephi<sub>1</sub>.]*

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## PLURAL MARRIAGE

Plural marriage was the nineteenth-century LDS practice of a man marrying more than one wife. Popularly known as polygamy, it was actually polygyny. Although polygamy had been practiced for much of history in many parts of the world, to do so in “enlightened” America in the nineteenth century was viewed by most as incomprehensible and unacceptable, making it the Church’s most controversial and least understood practice. Though the principle was lived for a relatively brief period, it had profound impact on LDS self-definition, helping to establish the Latter-day Saints as a “people apart.” The practice also caused many nonmembers to distance themselves from the Church and see Latter-day Saints more negatively than would otherwise have been the case.

Rumors of plural marriage among the members of the Church in the 1830s and 1840s led to persecution, and the public announcement of the practice after August 29, 1852, in Utah gave enemies a potent weapon to fan public hostility against the Church. Although Latter-day Saints believed that their religiously-based practice of plural marriage was protected by the U.S. Constitution, opponents used it to delay Utah statehood until 1896. Ever harsher ANTIPOLYGAMY LEGISLATION stripped Latter-day Saints of their rights as citizens, disincorporated the Church, and permitted the seizure of Church property before the MANIFESTO OF 1890 announced the discontinuance of the practice.

Plural marriage challenged those within the Church, too. Spiritual descendants of the Puritans and sexually conservative, early participants in plural marriage first wrestled with the prospect and then embraced the principle only after receiving personal spiritual confirmation that they should do so.



The family of Alvin F. Heaton and his two wives Sarah Jane Carroll (married in 1880) and Lucy Spencer (married in 1882), in Moccasin Springs, Arizona (1907). In 1890 the Manifesto announced that no new plural marriages were to be authorized.

In 1843, one year before his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith dictated a lengthy revelation on the doctrine of marriage for eternity (D&C 132; *see* MARRIAGE: ETERNAL MARRIAGE). This revelation also taught that under certain conditions a man might be authorized to have more than one wife. Though the revelation was first committed to writing on July 12, 1843, considerable evidence suggests that the principle of plural marriage was revealed to Joseph Smith more than a decade before in connection with his study of the Bible (*see* JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE), probably in early 1831. Passages indicating that revered patriarchs and prophets of old were polygamists raised questions that prompted the Prophet to inquire of the Lord about marriage in general and about plurality of wives in particular. He then

learned that when the Lord commanded it, as he had with the patriarchs anciently, a man could have more than one living wife at a time and not be condemned for adultery. He also understood that the Church would one day be required to live the law (D&C 132:1-4, 28-40).

Evidence for the practice of plural marriage during the 1830s is scant. Only a few knew about the still unwritten revelation, and perhaps the only known plural marriage was that between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger. Nonetheless there were rumors, harbingers of challenges to come.

In April 1839, Joseph Smith emerged from six months' imprisonment in LIBERTY JAIL with a sense of urgency about completing his mission (*see* HISTORY OF THE CHURCH: C. 1831-1844). Since receiving the SEALING key from ELIJAH in the

KIRTLAND TEMPLE (D&C 110:13–16) in April 1836, the Prophet had labored to prepare the Saints for additional teachings and ordinances, including plural marriage.

Joseph Smith realized that the introduction of plural marriage would inevitably invite severe criticism. After the Kirtland experience, he knew the tension it would create in his own family; even though Emma, with faith in his prophetic calling, accepted the revelation as being from God and not of his own doing, she could not reconcile herself to the practice. Beyond that, it had the potential to divide the Church and increase hostilities from outside. Still, he felt obligated to move ahead. “The object with me is to obey & teach others to obey God in just what he tells us to do,” he taught several months before his death. “It mattereth not whether the principle is popular or unpopular. I will always maintain a true principle even if I stand alone in it” (*TPJS*, p. 332).

Although certain that God would require it of him and of the Church, Joseph Smith would not have introduced it when he did except for the conviction that God required it *then*. Several close confidants later said that he proceeded with plural marriage in Nauvoo only after both internal struggle and divine warning. Lorenzo Snow later remembered vividly a conversation in 1843 in which the Prophet described the battle he waged “in overcoming the repugnance of his feelings” regarding plural marriage.

He knew the voice of God—he knew the commandment of the Almighty to him was to go forward—to set the example, and establish Celestial plural marriage. He knew that he had not only his own prejudices and pre-possessions to combat and to overcome, but those of the whole Christian world . . . ; but God . . . had given the commandment [*The Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 69-70 (Salt Lake City, 1884)].

Even so, Snow and other confidants agreed that Joseph Smith proceeded in Nauvoo only after an angel declared that he must or his calling would be given to another (Bachman, pp. 74–75). After this, Joseph Smith told Brigham Young that he was determined to press ahead though it would cost him his life, for “it is the work of God, and He has revealed this principle, and it is not my business to control or dictate it” (Brigham Young Discourse, Oct. 8, 1866, Church Archives).

Nor did others enter into plural marriage blindly or simply because Joseph Smith had spo-

ken, despite biblical precedents. Personal accounts document that most who entered plural marriage in Nauvoo faced a crisis of faith that was resolved only by personal spiritual witness. Those who participated generally did so only after they had obtained reassurance and saw it as religious duty.

Even those closest to Joseph Smith were challenged by the revelation. After first learning of plural marriage, Brigham Young said he felt to envy the corpse in a funeral cortege and “could hardly get over it for a long time” (*JD* 3:266). The Prophet’s brother Hyrum Smith stubbornly resisted the very possibility until circumstances forced him to go to the Lord for understanding. Both later taught the principle to others. Emma Smith vacillated, one day railing in opposition against it and the next giving her consent for Joseph to be sealed to another wife (see comments by Orson Pratt, *JD* 13:194).

Teaching new marriage and family arrangements where the principles could not be openly discussed compounded the problems. Those authorized to teach the doctrine stressed the strict covenants, obligations and responsibilities associated with it—the antithesis of license. But those who heard only rumors, or who chose to distort and abuse the teaching, often envisioned and sometimes practiced something quite different. One such was John C. Bennett, mayor of Nauvoo and adviser to Joseph Smith, who twisted the teaching to his own advantage. Capitalizing on rumors and lack of understanding among general Church membership, he taught a doctrine of “spiritual wifery.” He and associates sought to have illicit sexual relationships with women by telling them that they were married “spiritually,” even if they had never been married formally, and that the Prophet approved the arrangement. The Bennett scandal resulted in his excommunication and the disaffection of several others. Bennett then toured the country speaking against the Latter-day Saints and published a bitter anti-Mormon exposé charging the Saints with licentiousness.

The Bennett scandal elicited several public statements aimed at arming the Saints against the abuses. Two years later enemies and dissenters, some of whom had been associated with Bennett, published the *NAUVOO EXPOSITOR*, to expose, among other things, plural marriage, thus setting in motion events leading to Joseph Smith’s death (see *MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM SMITH*).

Far from involving license, however, plural marriage was a carefully regulated and ordered system. Order, mutual agreements, regulation, and covenants were central to the practice. As Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote in 1845,

These holy and sacred ordinances have nothing to do with whoredoms, unlawful connections, confusion or crime; but the very reverse. They have laws, limits, and bounds of the strictest kind, and none but the pure in heart, the strictly virtuous, or those who repent and become such, are worthy to partake of them. And . . . [a] dreadful weight of condemnation await those who pervert, or abuse them [*The Prophet*, May 24, 1845; cf. D&C 132:7].

The Book of Mormon makes clear that, though the Lord will command men through his prophets to live the law of plural marriage at special times for his purposes, monogamy is the general standard (Jacob 2:28-30); unauthorized polygamy was and is viewed as adultery. Another safeguard was that authorized plural marriages could be performed only through the sealing power controlled by the presiding authority of the Church (D&C 132:19).

Once the Saints left Nauvoo, plural marriage was openly practiced. In WINTER QUARTERS, for example, discussion of the principle was an “open secret” and plural families were acknowledged. As early as 1847, visitors to Utah commented on the practice. Still, few new plural marriages were authorized in Utah before the completion of the ENDOWMENT HOUSE in Salt Lake City in 1855.

With the Saints firmly established in the Great Basin, Brigham Young announced the practice publicly and published the revelation on eternal marriage. Under his direction, on Sunday, August 29, 1852, Elder Orson Pratt publicly discussed and defended the practice of plural marriage in the Church. After examining the biblical precedents (Abraham, Jacob, David, and others), Elder Pratt argued that the Church, as heir of the keys required anciently for plural marriages to be sanctioned by God, was required to perform such marriages as part of the RESTORATION. He offered reasons for the practice and discussed several possible benefits (see *JD* 1:53-66), a precedent followed later by others. But such discussions were after the fact and not the justification. Latter-day Saints practiced plural marriage because they believed God commanded them to do so.

Generally plural marriage involved only two wives and seldom more than three; larger families like those of Brigham Young or Heber C. KIMBALL

were exceptions. Sometimes the wives simply shared homes, each with her own bedroom, or lived in a “duplex” arrangement, each with a mirror-image half of the house. In other cases, husbands established separate homes for their wives, sometimes in separate towns. Although circumstances and the mechanics of family life varied, in general the living style was simply an adaptation of the nineteenth century American family. Polygamous marriages were similar to national norms in fertility and divorce rates as well. Wives of one husband often developed strong bonds of sisterly love; however, strong antipathies could also arise between wives.

Faced with a national antipolygamy campaign, LDS women startled their eastern sisters, who equated polygamy with oppression of women, by publicly demonstrating in favor of their right to live plural marriage as a religious principle. Judging from the preaching, women were at least as willing to enter plural marriage as men. Instead of public admonitions urging women to enter plural marriage, one finds many urging worthy men to “do their duty” and undertake to care for a plural wife and additional children. Though some were reluctant to accept such responsibility, many responded and sought another wife. It was not unheard of for a wife to take the lead and insist that her husband take another wife; yet, in other cases, a first marriage dissolved over the husband’s insistence on marrying again.

As with families generally, some plural families worked better than others. Anecdotal evidence and the healthy children that emerged from many plural households witness that some worked very well. But some plural wives disliked the arrangement. The most common complaint of second and third wives resulted from a husband’s displaying too little sensitivity to the needs of plural families or not treating them equally. Not infrequently, wives complained that husbands spent too little time with them. But where husbands provided conscientiously even time and wives developed deep love and respect for each other, children grew up as members of large, well-adjusted extended families.

Plural marriage helped mold the Church’s attitude toward DIVORCE in pioneer Utah. Though Brigham Young disliked divorce and discouraged it, when women sought divorce he generally granted it. He felt that a woman trapped in an unworkable relationship with no alternatives deserved a chance to improve her life. But when a

husband sought relief from his familial responsibilities, President Young consistently counseled him to do his duty and not seek divorce from any wife willing to put up with him.

Contrary to the caricatures of a hostile world press, plural marriage did not result in offspring of diminished capacity. Normal men and women came from plural households, and their descendants are prominent throughout the Intermountain West. Some observers feel that the added responsibility that fell early upon some children in such households contributed to their exceptional record of achievement. Plural marriage also aided many wives. The flexibility of plural households contributed to the large number of accomplished LDS women who were pioneers in medicine, politics and other public careers. In fact, plural marriage made it possible for wives to have professional careers that would not otherwise have been available to them.

The exact percentage of Latter-day Saints who participated in the practice is not known, but studies suggest a maximum of from 20% to 25% of LDS adults were members of polygamous households. At its height, plural marriage probably involved only a third of the women reaching marriageable age—though among Church leadership plural marriage was the norm for a time. Public opposition to polygamy led to the first law against the practice in 1862, and, by the 1880s, laws were increasingly punitive. The Church contested the constitutionality of those laws, but the Supreme Court sustained the legislation (*see REYNOLDS v. UNITED STATES*), leading to a harsh and effective federal antipolygamy campaign known by the Latter-day Saints as “the Raid.” Wives and husbands went on the “underground” and hundreds were arrested and sentenced to jail terms in Utah and several federal prisons. This campaign severely affected the families involved, and the related attack on Church organization and properties greatly inhibited its ability to function (*see HISTORY OF THE CHURCH: C. 1877–1898*). Following a vision showing him that continuing plural marriage endangered the temples and the mission of the Church, not just statehood, President Wilford WOODRUFF issued the Manifesto in October 1890, announcing an official end to new plural marriages and facilitating an eventual peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Earlier polygamous families continued to exist well into the twentieth century, causing further political problems for the Church, and new plural

marriages did not entirely cease in 1890. After having lived the principle at some sacrifice for half a century, many devout Latter-day Saints found ending plural marriage a challenge almost as complex as was its beginning in the 1840s. Some new plural marriages were contracted in the 1890s in LDS settlements in Canada and northern Mexico, and a few elsewhere. With national attention again focused on the practice in the early 1900s during the House hearings on Representative-elect B. H. Roberts and Senate hearings on Senator-elect Reed Smoot (*see SMOOT HEARINGS*), President Joseph F. SMITH issued his “Second Manifesto” in 1904. Since that time, it has been uniform Church policy to excommunicate any member either practicing or openly advocating the practice of polygamy. Those who do so today, principally members of FUNDAMENTALIST groups, do so outside the Church.

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## POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROCEDURES

The FIRST PRESIDENCY and the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES have developed policies, practices, and procedures to give order and continuity throughout the units of the Church and to provide guidelines for its leaders. These guidelines, poli-