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They are God's children. My children are God's children. God is just as much responsible for my children as I am.

Now, brethren, I want to say to you–I do not know whether you know it or not–there are a lot of things you do not know that you ought to be told–if there are any people who are neglected in the Church of Jesus Christ it is the families of the leaders of the Church. They go out and tell you how to take care of your families, and they are away from home and their families take care of themselves. You want to be careful.[41]

Few knew of the disparity between what the membership understood of Golden and the lamentable contrast in his home life. A close friend aware of these circumstances theorized that the burden of perfection imposed upon all the Brethren compelled Golden to seek some form of refuge through his natural wit. Such besieged yet humorous responses coexisted in the complex personalities of such comparably gifted men as Mark Twain and Will Rogers. As Golden suffered from the waywardness of his children, alienation from his wife, and differences with the Brethren, his humor no doubt kept him alive and functional at times of great despair. Yet any balanced portrait must also consider his staunch and shining faith, an aspect of his character that is underexplored in this short essay. Most shadows are longer than the object which casts them. The dark shadows of Golden's private life deserve honest scrutiny, but so does the unconstrained brightness of his loyalty and love for the gospel.

[41]Ibid., April 1921, 178-81.

Mary Bennion Powell: Polygamy and Silence

John Bennion

IN THE SPRING OF 1902, twelve-year-old Mary Bennion of Taylorsville, Utah, discovered a letter to her father from a woman she had considered a mere friend of the family. It led to the revelation that her father, Heber Bennion, had taken second and third wives a decade after the Woodruff Manifesto. This revelation was so devastating to Mary that she never fully recovered from it. In her mind, her father had not only broken the laws of heaven and the land but had shattered all of the conventions of romantic, tender courtesy a husband owes a wife and had broken the heart of her mother, Susan Winder Bennion, who, at that point, had borne ten children and buried three.

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TABLE 1

The Plural Families of Heber Bennion (1858-1932)

1. *Susan Marian Winters,* born 25 June 1859, Payson, Utah, to Oscar Winters and Mary Ann Stearns Winters; married 11 September 1885 in Logan, Utah; died 16 June 1936, Taylorsville, Utah; ten children, all born in Taylorsville except for Ethelyn:
   1. Ethelyn, 6 August 1886 in Pleasant Grove-7 June 1919
   2. Heber Jr., 30 January 1888-10 September 1968
   3. Mary, 11 January 1890-10 January 1918.
   4. Lucile, 14 February 1892-18 June 1925
   5. Ada, 12 March 1894-13 March 1894
   6. Helen, 11 June 1895-29 June 1980
   7-8. Arthur and Allen (stillborn twins), 23 December 1897
   9. Sterling Alfred, 27 January 1899-29 June 1890
   10. Rulon Oscar, 14 March 1900-22 February 1960

2. *Emma Jane Wester.* She had no children, and the ancestral file contains no further information about this wife.

3. *Mary (Mayme) Bringhurst,* born 19 February 1883 at Taylorsville, Utah, the daughter of John Bringhurst and Emma Trip Bringhurst. No marriage date appears on the family group records, but the family records give a marriage year of 1901; eight children:
   1. Susie, 19 February 1903 in Provo, Utah. Mary records this birth on p. 3 of her 1901 journal as 1902. See other discrepancies below. She does not list birth months or days.
   2. Ruth, 24 August 1904, n.p.
   3. Herbert Grant, 23 September 1907 [Mary says 1906] in Salt Lake City
   4. John B., 3 July 1910 [Mary says 1909] in Salt Lake City
   5. Richard, 5 January 1913, [Mary says 1912] n.p.
   6. Gwendolin, 12 October 1914, n.p.
   7. Ralph, 9 August 1916, Brigham City, Utah, died 19 November 1916

Twelve-year-old Mary was keeping a diary at that time, but she does not mention this event; however, as an adult, Mary recorded her traumatic reaction in marginal notes in her journal; in a personal essay titled "The End of Childhood"; in an unfinished novel, "A Utah Idyll"; and in two sets of handwritten notes which may have been the beginning of a family history centering on polygamy.[1]

These narratives—with their patterns of silence, formulaic expression, and emotional outbursts—document Mary's struggle to signify family events differently than her father interpreted them. He matured during the years when the Church was embattled over plural marriage, and consequently he read his marriages as obedient sacrifice. Mary's cultural inheritance was divided; she received not only the tradition of her father but also the secular ideology of monogamous romance, reinforced at that point by the Church's movement toward conformity with mainstream America. Consequently, she read his second and third marriages as destructive infidelity. In her narratives the stories of the fathers and those of the children struggle for supremacy. They are a rare glimpse into part of the price paid by Mormon polygamous families at a time of painful transition.

FAMILY IDENTITY AND THE WOODRUFF MANIFESTO

Between the first Manifesto given by Wilford Woodruff in 1890 which publicly discouraged new plural marriages yet left private loopholes, and the second Manifesto, given by Joseph F. Smith in 1904, which publicly and clearly renounced polygamy, Mormonism's "peculiar institution" was in transition. During those fourteen

[1]These five sources, all of which will be quoted in this account, are housed in two depositories—the first three at the University of the Utah, the last two at the Utah Historical Society. They are: (1) Mary Bennion Powell, Journal, 23 vols., Bennion Family Collection, MS 251, Boxes 4-5, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah; (2) Mary Bennion Powell, "The End of Childhood," typescript, n.d., Bennion Family Collection, Box 5, Fd. 2; (3) Mary Bennion Powell, "A Utah Idyll," typescript, n.d., Bennion Family Collection, Box 5, Fd. 3; and (4) Mary Bennion Powell Muhs (Muhs was the surname of her second husband), "Incidents in the lives of my immediate ancestors and my immediate family" and (5) "January 1970—More Notes," handwritten accounts, n.d., both in Bennion Collection, MS B-16, Box 7, Fd. 2, Utah State Historical Society Salt Lake City.

years, the Saints grappled with what the Woodruff Manifesto meant.[2] Some believed it meant that no new marriages should be formed; others believed that husbands and wives should separate; still others believed that marriages could still be contracted outside the United States. The doctrinal confusion produced disorder in the day-to-day roles lived by husbands, wives, and children in plural marriages. When she heard the announcement, one plural wife, Annie Gardner, wondered what would happen to her: "I was there in the Tabernacle the day of the Manifesto and I tell you it was an awful feeling. There President Woodruff read the Manifesto that made me no longer a wife and might make me homeless. I sat there by my mother and she looked at me and said, 'How can you stand this?' But I voted for it because it was the only thing to do. I raised my hand and voted a thing that would make me a unlawful wife."[3] Her primary concern might have been practical, but she also felt uncertain because the story had been transformed which gave identity to her plural family.

In some cases the Woodruff Manifesto had little effect on the way family members viewed each other. Albert L. Payne of Provo, Utah, remembered that his father occasionally attended the Salt Lake Theatre with his two wives decades after the Manifesto. "There was no reason to hide," he recalled. "They didn't talk about it, but they did things together."[4]

In other marriages, the social and financial status of plural wives became ambiguous, affecting the ways children and parents defined their relationships. In 1888 Matilda Pehrson became the second wife of my great-grandfather, Israel Bennion. Federal pressure against plural marriage was already almost intolerable; and the Manifesto two years later left her stranded in uncertainty. For a decade and a half after her marriage, she and her four children used either

[2]See Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Interpreting Woodruff," and "Post-Manifesto Polygamy," chapters in his *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 149-50, 153-63; Jesse Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987); and Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Library and Tanner Trust Fund, 1969).

[3]Quoted in Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families,* 12.

[4]Ibid., 85.

her maiden name or a fictitious name, as if she had no legitimate husband. Her daughter Ruth Bennion suggests in "A Report on Plural Marriage in the Vicinity of Vernon" that the right to use a husband's name may have been precious to Matilda:

> When [she] was a young child, she received a patriarchal blessing at the hands of Presiding Patriarch, John Smith, and it contained among other things, the promise, "Thou shalt secure unto thyself a name which shall be held in remembrance among the Saints." This promise was not fully fulfilled until about sixteen years after her marriage, long after the danger of apprehension and conviction was past. . . . In about 1904 the Tooele Stake President announced in a public meeting that she [Matilda] and her family should be known by the name of Bennion, and this name should be used on all the records of the Church.[5]

In addition to not having her husband's name during the early years of her marriage, Matilda also had little financial support from him. After finishing her education at the University of Deseret, she taught school in her hometown of Vernon, Utah, where her husband also lived. Her son, Angus Bennion, writes that she saved $1,000 from her salary which was her "living" for the next few years.[6]

Just before the birth of her first child in 1892, Matilda moved to Salt Lake City to protect herself and her husband from prosecution. In 1894 she returned to Vernon and rented part of a house which was a quarter mile away from the home of her husband and his first wife, Jeanette Sharp Bennion. According to Ruth, she "continued to raise a family in a community where she met with a mixture of behavioral responses, ranging from ridicule and mild persecution on the one hand, through indifference and unconcern, but also including loyalty and sympathetic attention."[7] Angus adds that she made her living by taking "care of the post office in

[5] Ruth Bennion, "A Report on Plural Marriage in the Vicinity of Vernon," *Centennial Story Collection* (N.p.: Vernon Ward, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977), 45.

[6]Angus Bennion, "Matilda Pehrson," ibid., 81.

[7]Ruth Bennion, "Report on Polygamy," 45-46.

Vernon, which yielded her and us children a bare subsistence."[8] Her father gave her vegetables and a cow.

In about 1901 Israel and his "first wife and family" moved seven miles outside of town; Matilda paid $300 for his vacated house which was "roomy enough, but with bare floors, under which the winter wind could gain access, and drafty doors and windows."[9] Five years later, Israel wrote in his journal: "I paid back to Matilda $300.00 that she had before time paid to me for my house and lot in Vernon. Thus, I have given her that house and lot: this, in my present financial condition is a fair portion to her."[10]

While some plural families had ambiguous identities even before 1890, the Woodruff Manifesto certainly made familial relationships even more uncertain, especially for marriages contracted after that date. Mary Bennion's father, Heber, believed that his call to take new wives previous to the Woodruff Manifesto was still in effect after the Manifesto. Mary copied a letter which her father, then seventy-one, wrote on 9 July 1929 to his brother-in-law, Church President Heber J. Grant, defending his post-Manifesto marriages: "About the year 1887 I was ordained a presiding Seventy in one of the quorums over Jordan by Abraham Cannon and Brother Gould of Z.C.M.I. They tried to exact a promise from me that I would enter into the practice of plural marriage. I hesitated and demurred, but they finally ordained me with a strong injunction to enter into that principle when opportunity afforded."[11] Heber says that he engaged

[8]Angus Bennion, "Matilda Pehrson," 81.

[9]Ibid., 82

[10]Israel Bennion, Journal, 3, private typescript for Israel's descendants. The original diary, MS 13900, is at the Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

[11]Mary Bennion Powell, "Parts of a letter written by Heber Bennion to Heber J. Grant," 9 July 1929, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 7, Fd. 2, 2-3. The original letter is not in Heber Bennion's papers at either the University of Utah or the Utah Historical Society. Mary's notes are extracts from a letter copied for her by Vic Jorgensen on 10 February 1973, LDS Church Archives. If nothing else, this copied letter shows that Mary believed her father had the authority and encouragement of Church leaders to enter into polygamy. Heber Bennion's sister, Hulda Augusta Bennion, married Heber J. Grant in 1884 and died in 1952. She was the second of his three wives but the only one to survive well into the century. Lucy Stringham died in 1893 and Emily Harris Wells in 1908.

to marry two women in the mid-1890s but "released" them, following the advice of George Q. Cannon, who said that the time was not yet right. Then, he explained, "In the late 90's one of the Presidents of my Stake told me that there was now an opportunity to get into that principle. I noted the recurrence of that word 'opportunity.' To be sure of my ground this time I went first to President George Qu. Cannon. He said 'Yes' the door was open again, but there must be harmony with the first wife, to avoid trouble in the family, and for the Church. Accordingly I went ahead and took two wives."[12]

Heber's religious conviction shaped the way he viewed his marriages—the story he told himself about his own experience. He felt that he was obeying his religious leaders when he married and that it was an act of pious duty which would bring him divine glory. The 1929 letter to President Grant also gives a valid reason for secrecy surrounding the marriages—"to avoid trouble . . . for the Church." However, not all members of his family agreed that Heber's call to polygamy was divinely sanctioned.

Beginning with her discovery at age twelve and continuing for the rest of her life, Mary resisted her father's version of the family experience. For her, his plural marriages destroyed the family peace and tainted his love for her mother and the children of that first marriage. In notes attached to the end of her copy of his 1929 letter, she says that his letter is tragic

> because of the unnecessary ignorance . . . that caused hundreds of Mormon men to become polygamists because they believed God had commanded them to through Joseph Smith and his followers in the Church Presidency, who, also, considered themselves the only representatives of God on Earth. These deluded men *believed* a *man* told them *God demanded* of them the greatest sin in my estimation a human being can commit—*adultery.* The Mormon fanatics declare that . . . this sin can be committed only by *women* in the Church—but never by *men,* who were told to do it *by Church Authority.* And as there can be no greater pleasure, joy, and peace, on earth, than that afforded by monogamy, so there can also be no greater mental pain than that endured by a loving wife whose husband had been made to become a polygamist, by Church authority. She had no place to go, for comfort, not to God, because she'd been taught to believe God

[12]Ibid., 3.

> commanded her husband to put other women in her place. And she couldn't divorce her husband and get one who believed in monogamy, because she'd been taught this would be a terrible sin against God. This constituted for her a *living death,* from which she longed for release even if that would mean the natural death of the body.[13]

Father and daughter read their family experience in opposite ways depending on whether they believed a polygamous or a monogamous marriage was ideal. At the end of his 1889 journal Heber wrote, "Missed the train for Pleasant Grove."[14] In the margin of her bound copy of that journal, Mary bitterly penned, "He missed the train all right. The train for happiness; for early in life, he decided to be a polygamist, which broke his wife's heart, and the hearts of all her children who were old enough to know that marriage means absolute and single loyalty to ones spouse."[15] However, for Heber polygamy was the gateway to the celestial kingdom. Father and daughter each constructed their story of his plural marriages out of cultural narratives already available to them through family tradition, Church doctrine, and national culture.

Male Dominion and Family Identity

As a second-generation Mormon in Utah, Heber Bennion received from *his* father at least three legacies—polygamy, the habit of meticulous journal keeping, and a love of agricultural pursuits. All of these actions were shaped by his desire to obey priesthood authority and to increase in dominion of lands, wealth, knowledge, reputation, wives, and posterity. For both men, dominion over wives and children meant not only the pleasures of possession but also the responsibility to organize an economic and spiritual life for them—to succor those in one's kingdom.

Heber's father, John Bennion, was born just outside of Harwarden, Wales, where John's father leased a small farm. John, according to the family story, was accused of trespassing and poaching on the preserves of a nobleman. He ran away to Liverpool rather

[13]Ibid., 5.

[14]Heber Bennion, Journal, 6 vols., 25 July 1889, Bennion Family Collection (U of U), MS 251, Box 2, Volume 4.

[15]Ibid.

than face prosecution. In that city he apprenticed himself as an "iron moulder and boiler maker" and was converted to Mormonism by John Taylor. In 1842 he sailed to the United States and settled in Nauvoo, eventually traveling west with the other Saints. He and his brother Samuel settled first east of the Jordan River but eventually moved across the river to a more permanent home north of Taylorsville.[16] Each move was either in obedience to a leader or to expand economic possibilities, and soon John owned herds of cattle, sheep, and horses which grazed as far as West Jordan on the north, Rush Valley on the west, Castle Dale on the east, and the Muddy Mission in the South. His economic movement from barely above laboring class to the status of a great landowner exemplifies the American and Mormon dreams. In his journal he regularly recorded his satisfaction. This passage shows that economic and religious work were unified his mind:

> The past year has been a time of prosperity with the people of the Latter day Saints in these vallies. Crops on the whole have been better than any season since we settled this country. The large increase of population in this & neighboring territories & the words of inspired men has waked up the farmers to a sense of duty to take care of the grain, and lay it up in store that Israel may have bread at a time when famine is wasting the Gentile nations. Some few not of our faith are already casting in their lot among us for peace sake & many more a[re] tired of the war & trouble in the states. In this day of prosperity I pray the Lord to preserve me & my family in the faith & love of the gospel that we may keep our garments unspotted from the pollutions of this vain and wicked world.[17]

John's desire for dominion was not merely selfish; he wanted to gather others under his protection and organize good lives for them. Most members of such families believed that the family would march, with the father at its head, straight to the celestial kingdom. An article published in the *Millennial Star* barely a decade after John

[16]Harden Bennion, *The Bennion Family in Utah,* 5 vols. (1931; reprinted n.p.: Bennion Family Organization, 1981), 1:24, 32, 40.

[17]John Bennion, Journal, 1 January 1865, edited by Mildred Bennion Eyring, *Bennion Family History* (n.p.: Bennion Family Association, ca. 1968), 3:232.

sailed for America indicates the pressure on good men to become polygamists:

> The great object of the Lord and all good men is to increase and multiply life. As there are doubtless many spirits waiting to be clothed upon with bodies—as God is about to remove many of the male sex from the earth, by judgments, for their wickedness in neglecting to keep His commands—and as He designs to make a short work upon the earth in the last days—we may naturally conclude that He will require every deserving man and woman living upon the face of the earth, after they have arrived at proper maturity, to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"—and this cannot be done except upon the ancient order of plurality of wives, which the Lord has seen fit to restore in these last days.[18]

Following the pattern of many leaders of the Church, John took three wives: Esther Wainwright in 1842, Esther Birch in 1856, and Mary Turpin, Heber's mother, in 1857.[19]

In addition to its being a record of his labor on his farms, John Bennion's journal serves as a record of the growth of his family. He thinks of them partly as a resource over which he has a stewardship. In 1866 he wrote:

> Esther Ann and Mary have each given birth to another son whom we named David and Marcus. Our daughter Angeline was married to Geo Spencer on the 4th of November and on the 8th I was engaged in getting my winters firewood in Butterfield kanyon when by falling I fractured my knee. This kept me to my bed awhile. Twas tedious for me to endure as I has [sic] scarcely lay in bed a whole day. Afterwards in the house I thought it was well that in the vigour of my lifetime the Lord had blessed my labours so that now I have means and a good faithful family, so that if I properly direct their labours we shall continue to live comfortably although I am disabled for hard work. I pray the Lord that my skill in directing may increase and make up for this.[20]

[18]John Jaques, "The Measure of Creation," *Millennial Star* 15 (26 March 1853): 197.

[19]Harden Bennion, *The Bennion Family in Utah,* 1:24, 163, 196. Brigham Young renamed Esther Birch "Esther Ann" to distinguish her from Esther Wainwright.

[20]John Bennion, Journal, *The Bennion Family of Utah,* 3:246.

His journal is a record before God of his dominion. It carries the story of the benefits of a righteous polygamous family, creating familial unity among his twenty-nine children.

John passed not only his attitudes and habits but much of his earthly kingdom to his sons. In his history of the Bennion family, Harden Bennion, Heber's half-brother, writes, "Heber's father was a close student of the likes and dislikes of his sons, their aptitudes, their tendencies toward the various activities and occupations that naturally came to them as they grew into youth and manhood; and as a result of such study Heber was chosen as the shepherd of the family."[21]

After John's sudden death from an injury with a horse in 1877, Heber Bennion continued to handle the sheep herds, having been given a personal interest in them. He had ranch property in Taylorsville, Bingham, Bluffdale, and near Coalville. "Heber's livestock interests [grew] until he had sheep and cattle 'scattered on a thousand hills' and he was one of the leading livestock men of the state."[22]

In 1885 he married Susan Winder, who bore him ten children, seven of whom lived to maturity. They built a "splendid farm home"[23] in West Taylorsville, where he became bishop and state legislator—an important man in the community. Later he purchased a large house closer to his business interests in town in Waterloo Ward.[24]

Following his father's habit of recording his stewardship before God, Heber made a record of his dominion in the eight extant volumes of his journals. In 1894 he wrote, "I am much interested in my father's journal. . . . Unimportant things when recorded grow in interest with age. . . . We can speak after death only by what we have written; all else is only tradition and hearsay. And how weak is tradition compared to the journaling from my father's record."[25]

In January 1889, while serving a mission to the Eastern states,

[21]Harden Bennion, *The Bennion Family of Utah,* 1:200.

[22]Ibid., 1:203.

[23]Ibid., 1:201.

[24]Mary Bennion Powell, Journal, Vol. 2, 2 May 1908.

[25]Heber Bennion, Journal, 6 December 1894, Bennion Family Collection (U of U), MS 251, 100.

Heber recorded, "Held fifty-seven meetings; baptized eight persons and assisted in the baptism of five others; blessed or assisted in blessing six children, and administered to the sick ten times . . . traveled three hundred and twenty miles by rail and walked about five hundred, and wrote one hundred and thirty-seven letters."[26] His record gives evidence before God of an industrious life, but it also defines him as the righteous leader of his family. Heber includes in his journal his service to the Church: "On the 9 of Jan. [1890] I was ordained a High Priest and Bishop of our ward. . . . This was a great surprise to me so young and boyish [Heber was thirty-one], & overwhelming almost to suffication [sic] at the time, but I had previously learned to adjust myself to the changing vissitudes [sic] of life and round up my shoulders for most any thing."[27]

His dominion also included public responsibility. During the 1890s he was elected to the state legislature: "I was complimented by the Democratic Party putting through several of my pet measures, among others a bill authorizing the sale of University lands and another was exempting morgages [sic] from taxation. . . . I was a member of several committee and chairman of the com. on enrollment. . . . In the midst of some mischief we probably did some good."[28]

Much of his journal records the agricultural labors performed by him and his family: "Sold part of my cattle as beef in the Spring at a low figure and sent the remainder off to the hills. Bought and planted 2000 fruit trees in two fields. The larger one containing 1400 prunes, cherries & peaches was entirely destroyed later on with grasshoppers. Yet with all these misfortunes I seem to prosper and make money. Such is life in the west."[29]

Heber believed in hard work and made his children labor. Daughter Mary wrote, "We all worked to the utmost limit of our strength because father believed that hard work was a great character builder, and that it was impossible to make a child work too hard."[30]

[26]Heber Bennion, Journal, typescript, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 2, Fd. 5, 47.

[27]Heber Bennion, Journal, 1892, Bennion Family Family Collection (U of U), MS 251, 42.

[28]Ibid., 43.

[29]Ibid.

Gathering dominion through his work and the authority of the priesthood was the controlling metaphor of the story Heber told himself. Consequently, Heber followed his father and took additional wives. He married Emma Jane Webster in 1900 and Mary (Mayme) Bringhurst in 1901.[31] Emma Jane, who bore Heber no children, entered the family with little disturbance, but eighteen-year-old Mayme Bringhurst, the mother of eight, was apparently more strong-willed, and her marriage affected family cohesion more drastically.

From his father, Heber inherited the drive for dominion, and from the Church he received the traditions of valuing God's law over federal law, of using polygamy as an avenue to ecclesiastical power, and of keeping acts secret which violated federal law. These inherited principles made it possible for him to view his secret marriages as righteous ones. When members of his family saw things differently, his first reaction was to silence them, possibly because they were endangering family unity and threatening his goal of carrying his wives and children to heaven with him.

MARY BENNION'S DOMINION

Like her father and grandfather, Mary valued hard work on the farm, in the house, and in the Church. Her first of twenty-three journals begins: "Mary Bennion born on the Canaan Farm, Taylorsville Utah, January 11, 1890. . . . I am eleven years old and am in the fourth grade."[32] Obeying her father's instructions, she makes a record of her acts—evidence of a life well spent. During the first year of her journal, she records that she caught a horse, tramped a load of hay, made yeast, put on a boil of meat, rendered some tallow, churned and molded the butter, took provisions to sheep camp, branded and docked sheep, helped make fence, went berrying, stoned cherries, herded the stock, made fires, picked currants, washed pans to strain milk, picked prunes, picked up potatoes,

[30]"Incidents in the Lives," 8.

[31]Mary Bennion Powell, Journal, Vol. 1, verso of p. 1.

[32]Ibid.

dressed the children, harnessed the horses, hitched a horse to running gear, hooked up the horse, cleaned chickens, milked and did chores, got kindling, and peeled pears for preserves. Often, perhaps because she was tired of detailing her acts, she simply writes, "Worked around" or "Did chores."

Like her father and grandfather, she treasured a well-organized household and a well-tended ranch. A passage from 1 April 1906 when she was sixteen is typical:

> I got breakfast, fed the lambs, strained the milk, did the dishes, and then spent an hour or two weeding the lawn. Bros. Mathews and Gerrard came and finished putting the moulding up in the dining-groom and stairway. I washed the walls, ceiling and floor of the bathroom. We now have the parlor, the kitchen and the cellar to clean before our spring house cleaning will be finished. Today a horrible thing happened which ended in a loss of about five hundred dollars. Four horses were left hitched to a plow in the field and while the hired man was away they got tangled in the harness and one horse got his neck broken.[33]

She appreciates the order produced by hard work, and she hates careless destruction.

In 1914 she demonstrates this trait again by complaining about the disorder produced by interlopers in her home: "When I came home from Logan after school closed I found at Thorndyke [the family's name for their home in the Waterloo Ward] besides Aunt Mayme and her family three other families, namely Dr. Burton, wife and two children from southern Utah, Mrs. Lemon, son and daughter, from Mexico; and Mr. Johnson, wife and three children, also from Mexico. The place looked like part of a tenement district. Tin cans, papers, egg shells etc were scattered about the lawn, and dirty—oh!"[34] Her value of cleanliness and orderliness has been violated.

Mary knew herself to be a good worker and organizer; she was proud, as were her father and grandfather, of her ability to be a good steward over her more limited dominion. When she was nineteen and away at school, she records that she "wrote to papa and mama

[33]Ibid., Vol. 2.

[34]Ibid., Vol. 6, June 1914.

to see if I could be the housekeeper this winter."[35] She is requesting authority from her parents to be in charge of the household. Her mother, ill much of the time, was unable to work. Perhaps also Mary is requesting that she have authority instead of her father's other wives.

She records church activities in her journal as her father and grandfather did. As she grew older, she taught in the Sunday School, Primary, MIA, and Relief Society. She also valued education, attending the LDS University, where she received a certificate as a nurse; the Agricultural College in Logan; and finally, when she was fifty-nine, the University of Utah.

Perhaps even more than her father and grandfather, she treasured family relationships. Nearly every passage of her journal details the movements of her parents, brothers, and sisters. On 4 July 1907 she recorded: "Ethel went to Saltair with Ray, Heber [her brother] went up the canyon with a crowd of students and Lucile and I went to Wandamere [a local resort] (with Arthur Petersen & his brother). Papa came in from the sheep herd but he left Sterling out there. Mama, papa, Rulon and Helen went to Wandamere. Helen stayed over to Aunt Mary Lizzie's."[36]

The most cheerful entries are times when family and friends gathered for a church meeting or party. Just before her brother Heber Jr. left on a mission to Germany she wrote: "Worked till noon, then we went up town and had our family picture taken. Then we went out to Taylorsville to Heber's 'farewell.'"[37] She then names some of the friends and family who came. "There was a good program. Heber spoke in his calm, deliberate way, without the least sign of breaking down. The bishop said some very complimentary things about him. We had a splendid time dancing. Everybody treated us fine. L. & I danced 13 [to] 15 times each."[38]

While her record of work is straightforward, joy breathes through her descriptions of family and friends—showing the impor-

[35]Ibid., Vol. 4, 26 August 1909.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., Vol. 3, 16 September 1908.

[38]Ibid.

tance of these relationships to her. Each year her family spent the month of August at their Chalk Canyon ranch near Coalville. The journal is bright and playful when a crowd of relatives is there:

> Tonight the crowd went to Upton to a dance. On account of the muddy roads there were only a few people there at first, so that when we got to Clarkes we were told that the musicians had come home and gone to bed. Heber went in and roused them and sent them to the hall. . . . About half a dozen Upton boys, hearing us singing, followed on horses and joined in the dance. Besides this they treated us to candy, nuts and soda water. Just before we came home we had a Virginia Reel and Joe swung some of us around in a way we will never forget.[39]

But when the crowd is gone, her feelings about the trip to the ranch are very different. On 1 September 1906 after an extended time when she was ill and alone, she writes, "We got home about four o'clock in the afternoon. It rained nearly all day. At last I am home after spending the most lonesome and dreary five weeks of my life."

Given this careful attention to family relationships, the most remarkable absence in her journal is reference to her father's other wives after her 1902 discovery that two more women, one of whom had already given birth to his child, belonged to her father's family. In her journals, even after his 1902 discovery, she mentions them rarely, as if they were neighbors dropping by. It is not until about 1911 that she begins referring to them as "Aunt Emma" and "Aunt Mayme."

In her journal she refers often to young men with whom she danced, played parlor games, or walked, but she avoided marriage until she was twenty-eight. In 1918, she married Charles Powell, with whom she had grown up near Pine Cliff, her father's ranch east of Coalville; and they had six children. Charles was a farmer and a salesman; they were perpetually on the edge of poverty. Mary was ill, anxious, and depressed much of her life, a condition she blamed on her father for overworking her and for submitting her to the mental stress of living in a polygamous family. Despite her questions, she remained active in the Church all her life.

[39]Ibid., 31 July 1908.

Because she doesn't describe the polygamous relationships in her journal, the clearest record of her attitude is in the carefully articulated essay and fictional narratives of her day of discovery; the tone of revulsion comes clearly through every version.

The Narratives of Mary Bennion's Discovery

In January 1949 at age fifty-nine, Mary made the following entry across the blank left side of the first page of her first journal begun at age eleven in 1901:

> Rereading my journal fills me with mixed emotions, fond affection for my family, astonishment that I had to work so much harder than any of the friends of my childhood, even though my father was wealthy when I was growing up; amusment [sic] at my simplicity; pity at my helplessness—at the helplessness of humanity in general; grief at my father's torturing my mother with his polygamous life.

On the next page she explains why as a child she wrote a journal which contains no introspective wandering, only a list of acts:

> This diary (as well as all other diaries I have written—perhaps I should just say all diaries) needs a great deal of explanation. I will do some of it but it would take the knowledge of an Omniscient God to explain it properly. I will do the best I can without such help—at least for the present.
>
> First I will say that the journaling or diary writing habit was inculcated in the lives of his children by the Utah pioneer John E. [sic] Bennion. His son Heber passed it on to his children. When we were given little black bound note-books, one Christmas, our father instructed us in their use. He said we should write in them every day, all the work we did, and all the meetings we attended, and the church duties we did. As we had been trained from babyhood to blind obedience to his every word, we automatically, and mechanically, carried out his instructions. Thus our diaries were reasonable facsimiles of his, and his father's. All the most important incidents of our lives, thus, live only in our memories. Our journals might be those of any of thousands of orthodox members of the Mormon Church. We didn't even record the fact that our father was a polygamist, with three wives,—our mother the first one. Or that we had, throughout the years, acquired eight half brothers and sisters; even though these facts conditioned our lives more than anything else that has ever happened to any of us. Births, deaths, marriages, riches, poverty, sickness, war,

depression, all these things put together do not count at all, in our struggle for happiness, when compared to the fact that father was a polygamist.[40]

In the same adult handwriting of 1949, she lists her father's marriages. The name Mary Bringhurst is scribbled over with "Mistake here" written to the side.[41] Was the mistake her father's act of marriage? Or did Mary cross out the name as a way of denying that the marriage had happened?

This first journal, written in the round cursive of a child, records her acts between March 1901 and March 1906 (ages eleven to sixteen). It mentions nothing about her discovery in 1902 of her father's polygamous marriages. She ends the journal entry dated 23 December 1901, with "We put up the Christmas tree to-night." After a hiatus of slightly more than a month, she wrote on 1 February 1902, "I thought it would be of little use to write my journal for the last few months because I did the same thing nearly every day." She then writes steadily until 29 February 1902, ending that day's entry with the words, "Then I did my chores."

Her next entry marked only "Wed." with "May 1902" written above as a heading is "I will start my journal again." The entry immediately following is headed "Sep. 1902, Mon. 29," and she writes, "I think I am starting my journal for sure this time." She tells of their month-long trip to her father's ranch in Chalk Canyon and explains that her mother "has been sick for about a week. Emma Jane Webster called in to see how she was. Emma Jane is teaching school here in West Taylorsville." Even in this private medium Mary feels she needs to give a reason other than plural marriage for Emma Jane's presence—she is teaching school in the area. She does not refer to either this woman or Mayme as her father's plural wives or as her mother's sister wives.

In the lower margin of the 29 February 1902 entry is written in the handwriting of an adult, "Jan. 1949—My half-sister Susie [the first child of Mayme Bringhurst] was born on Feb. 19th, 1902. Yet I did not even know my father had other wives than my mother till

[40]Ibid., verso of page 1. I omit footnotes in the journal entries that follow when a full date appears in the text.

[41]Ibid., verso of page 3.

months after Susie was born. When I found it out I wanted to die." While Mary records her strong reaction years later, at the time of the discovery sometime in the spring of 1902 she wrote nothing—not even her daily record of work.

However, she broke her silence in four narratives which describe the day she discovered her father was a polygamist. These narratives include three nonfiction accounts ("The End of Childhood," "Incidents in the lives of my immediate ancestors and my immediate family," and "January 1970: More Notes") and a 121-page novella entitled "A Utah Idyll."[42]

In these four documents, she struggles to understand and interpret the events. Through meditation she tries to explain her feelings that something had gone wrong before her discovery and after the discovery to contain her despair and to explore her anger at the tradition of polygamy. In the following pages I juxtapose passages from the four narratives.[43]

Mary first tells of her personal anguish. In "Incidents" she writes, "First I will write about the saddest, and most poignant event of my life because I want to get it out of my thoughts."[44] In "More Notes" she penned, "When I was eleven years old a terrible thing happened to me that I wouldn't repeat here because it still hurts me to remember it, if it weren't something that should be known, in order to keep others from letting such suffering be inflicted ever again on any child. . . . It happened on an evening in spring, and it

[42]The title, "More Notes," is curious. More than what? An oral history interview in the Bennion Collection at the Utah Historical Society is restricted (see register of the collection). Also, I am unable to date the order of these manuscripts with much certainty. In a letter written to Mrs. Brodie, whom I assume is Fawn McKay Brodie, dated 29 October 1960, Mary Bennion Powell refers to "Incidents" as "the true story of a few items that later appeared fictionalized in my novelette 'A Utah Idyll.'" "End of Childhood" is marked by an editor or teacher and may be from the years she went to the University of Utah around 1950. This would make a tentative order of composition: 1. "Incidents," 2. "End of Childhood" and "A Utah Idyll," and 3. "More Notes." Details and attitudes in the narratives are so similar that they may have crystallized in her mind before 1950.

[43]For the reader's convenience and to reduce distractions, I will cite each account in the text, either as part of my narration or in parenthesis, by short title and page number.

[44] Bennion Powell, "Incidents," Bennion Collection (USHS), 7.

changed me from a happy, trusting child into a tortured adult, wishing for nothing but to die, quickly."[45]

All four accounts establish that the discovery of the second and third wives transformed her feeling about the family. Before the discovery they were happy; afterwards unhappy. In "Incidents" she writes:

> My family, up to the time of my twelfth year, seemed to me to be as happy as any family could be. We all loved each other very much. We had good health—all except mother—and our father was rich. We were a very religious family. Father was the bishop of our ward. Mother taught a class in Sunday School. We had family prayers in the mornings and evenings. We always fasted one day every month and gave the price of our missed meals to the poor. Father and mother did temple work for the dead. And whenever there was any slightest illness or accident to anyone of the family father would put his hands on our head, and after pouring consecrated oil on our heads would, in the name of the Lord command the illness to depart. It always did—in time. (7)

She further describes her family life in "Incidents:"

> I thought he [her father] was as good as God himself. He was kind and loving to us all, and was especially tender and sweet to mother. In the evenings when all the chores were done, supper was over, and the hired men had gone to the bunkhouse, our family would sit around the diningroom table, under the hanging lamp and, in the winter with the light from the big open stove flickering about the room, and eat apples while mother, (and father if he were not away at a meeting) would read to us. (8)

The writing is saturated with nostalgia for a time when her family fit what she thought was the model of an ideal American family. But then she began collecting clues that all was not right. When she came home from school one day, she "could hear mama crying, out loud, sobbing, and sort of moaning too." She tried to talk to her mother, but Susan pretended to be asleep. "My knees were shaking and I couldn't have held my head up if I had tried to. Something had been wrong at our house a long time" ("Incidents," 8).

[45]Mary Bennion Powell, "More Notes," Bennion Collection (USHS), 2-3.

As Mary explores what might be wrong in "Incidents," her memory centers on her mother: overheard sessions behind closed doors in the parlor when her father shouts and her mother pleads; her mother singing a song which seems especially sad—"I'll try to forgive him, but I cannot forget" (2); her mother weeping as she irons her father's temple robes; a mysterious doll which appears at Christmas, complete with clothing made by someone secret ("no one in our family ever did hand sewing") (5).

"Utah Idyll" also captures the undercurrent of wrongness in the family through Joan, the fictional point of view character representing Mary:

> Joan went into her room and lay down to rest a bit before supper. But as soon as she got comfortably relaxed on her bed she felt the old uneasiness come back. What could the argument have been about between her parents the night before, after they had gone to bed? She had never heard her father speak to her mother except tenderly till about a year before, now he did it often, at night, in their room. (57)

As she mulls over this problem, she remembers times when her father has been aggressive or angry; he has always shouted at the hired men, and sometimes at the children. He is impatient when someone does something incorrectly. But she also remembers him lovingly reading the children stories at night (59).

In each of the four documents, the revelation of her father's polygamy came on a single day during spring cleaning. "End of Childhood" dates it at just before the "Blossom-time Banquet" which her father gave yearly for the stake presidency and the high council (1).

The actual sequence of events is highly correlated in the four accounts and does not vary: Mary housecleans the bathroom; Heber and Susan return from a trip to Salt Lake City; Mary finds a note from the polygamous third wife; at dinner, Heber reads aloud from a newspaper account of a polygamy trial; Mary leaves the table and goes upstairs with her sisters where an older sister explains that their father has two other wives; Mary is plunged into deep despair until her mother asks her to write a letter to the polygamous wife.

The first event was housecleaning the bathroom. In "End of Childhood" Mary indicates:

> All day I had worked "house-cleaning" the bathroom. I was tired, but satisfied, when the job was finished. But I wasn't thrilled. Usually spring and housecleaning were times of pleasant excitement: painters and wall paperers all over the house, clean fresh smells, everything shining from being just polished, or brand new. And afterward papa giving the "Blossom-time Banquet" to the Stake Presidency and the High Council and their wives. But things weren't the same this year. (1)

Next, in all four narratives, Heber and Susan return from Salt Lake City just in time for dinner.[46] The details in the three nonfiction narratives are so similar that I will compare only the nonfictional "End of Childhood" and the fictional "Utah Idyll." These passages read:

> I hurriedly got supper cooked–and just in time for the return of the family from a trip to Salt Lake where they went to meet my mother's eldest sister, Mrs. Delia Booth, who often came from Provo to visit us, and whm [sic] we all loved very much. ("End of Childhood," 6)

> Joan . . . hurried into the kitchen just in time to see the carriage drive past the kitchen window. Her father and mother and Harry had gone to the city and brought Aunt Amelia, who was visiting with Aunt Agatha, to stay with them for a few days before going back home to Bountiful. ("Utah Idyll," 60)

The descriptions of the next narrative movement, finding Mayme's note to Heber, are identical, except that Mary in the nonfiction versions is more aware of the impending unhappiness:

> I had the table set and the food all ready to serve when the family trooped through the kitchen and gathered around the supper table. Mother came out to help me carry the food into the dining room. I was taking a last satisfying look in the direction of the bathroom when my eye caught a white spot on the floor. It was a folded piece of paper, the kind my Aunt Augusta used when she wrote to us from Japan–we called it onion skin. I picked it up and unfolded it. Instead of being addressed to "Dear Susie" as I expected it to be, it was addressed instead to "Dear Heber," and it wasn't from Aunt Augusta; the writing

[46] In "End of Childhood" her mother has been weeping in her room, giving the children the excuse that she has a headache. However, in "Utah Idyll" she accompanied Heber to Salt Lake.

> was round like a child's. I turned the paper over and looked at the signature. It was simply "M." My puzzlement grew into a sickening premonition of some evil I couldn't even guess at. "Mama", I said, "Whose letter is this?" Mama was carrying the last dish into the dining room and didn't even send a glance in my direction as she said, very low, "I'll tell you after supper." ("End of Childhood," 7)

Mary then realizes that her mother knows the writer of the note but does not want to talk about it in front of others. Twelve-year-old Mary enters the dining room like a "sleepwalker," and sits in her usual place. The essayist allows the impending revelation to cast a shadow over her younger self's mind.

The narrator in "Utah Idyll" allows Joan less knowledge, making the revelation more of a shock. Joan is more childlike, less able to read the faces of the adults:

> Harry was putting the team away, and the family was seated at the table, when Joan got to the dining room. Evelyn was lighting the hanging lamp over the table, and her mother, when Joan got to the kitchen, was pouring the creamed vegetables into a bowl. Joan picked up another bowl and began dishing up the potatoes; her father didn't like to be kept waiting at meal times. Her foot touched a crackly piece of paper. Setting the dish on the back of the stove, she picked it up. It was a letter. "Dear Harry," it said, "Little Sarah is sick; I wish you were here." Turning the page over she read the signature. It was just "M." Who, in such a round girlish handwriting, could be addressing her father by his first name? It must be some poor widowed cousin of her father's, Joan thought, as she handed the piece of paper to her mother saying, "Who wrote this?" Her mother took the roast out of the oven and swiftly slid it onto a platter. She didn't answer till she was starting toward the dining room door, then, "I'll tell you after supper," she said very softly, without turning her head. (60-61)

In all four versions the meal is strained, her father preoccupied as he reads the account of a polygamy trial. "End of Childhood" portrays Mary as grown up enough to know that something is not right:

> No one was talking. No one was eating. Papa had forgotten to "ask the blessing." Instead he was reading from the newspaper and his face was white. Mama and Aunt Delia were keeping their eyes steadily on his face. In a moment he began reading aloud: "The girl's mother,

Mrs. Bringhurst, refused to testify at the trial today." No one asked, "What trial?" No one said a word.[47]

"Utah Idyll" allows the reader to know more than the naive child, but the effect in both forms is increased tension. Joan cannot understand her father's preoccupation with the newspaper:

> Joan took her place at the table between Lucy and Evelyn. Why didn't her father ask the blessing? He was reading the newspaper. Funny! He had never read, at mealtime before. Her mother and Aunt Amelia were staring at him. So was Evelyn. The little boys were giggling and making faces at each other. Ellen and Lucy were looking at some sparrow eggs Lucy was holding in her hand. Suddenly her father began reading aloud.
>
> "Mrs. Bingham,[48] the girl's mother, refused to testify at the trial today." Then he stopped as abruptly as he had begun. He looked pale. Poor father, Joan thought, with his sciatic rheumatism coming on him without warning, and nothing anyone could do about it. But she wished he would ask the blessing. She was starving. (61)

As a child might, Joan misreads the cause of her father's paleness, his obvious realization of the danger to him and his wives.

In all four versions the daughters leave the table and go upstairs where Mary learns the secret of her father's polygamy. "End of Childhood" shows her reaction, but never speaks the words of the unhappy revelation:

> Suddenly my sister Ethelyn squeezed my hand under the table, got up, and, going behind my chair, whispered to Lucile. Little Helen pushed back her chair and followed the three of us wonderingly as we went into the hall and upstairs to the south bedroom where we girls slept. Ethelyn sat on the bed she and I shared. The rest of us gathered in a circle on the floor close to her. We waited for we knew not what revelation.
>
> Though the lamps were lighted down stairs, it was still twilight

[47]"End of Childhood," 7-8. My graduate assistants and I have been unable to find the newspaper reference to this trial, apparently Mayme Bringhurst's. Although the act of reading the newspaper is in all four versions, it may be that Mary Bennion Powell has created a story confined to one day which is actually a composite of a longer range of experiences.

[48]Maida Bingham is the name given to Mayme Bringhurst in the novel.

> outside and the windows framed a softly tinted sky fretted with budding tree branches. The air was mild and scented with blossoms. The world seemed to be holding its breath with pity for what was about to happen to the soul of a child. For I was as unprepared to meet the blow that then descended upon me as a newborn baby would be to defend itself from the attack of a maneating tiger. As I write this I weep for the little girl that was I. (8)

Even here, in a memoiristic essay, she chooses not to name clearly her father's act. However, in the other three accounts, she records the actual words spoken by her sister.

"Utah Idyll" uses almost the same language to describe the act of leaving the dinner table, but the girl is still innocent of the impending revelation:

> Evelyn had gone so fast up the straight steep stairway that she was seated on the edge of her and Joan's bed by the time Joan got to the big bedroom where the girls slept. Evelyn had some secret to tell them, that was sure, and it must be pretty important, thought Joan, to have the four of them leave the table before they had started to eat. (62)

Joan's preoccupation with her own hunger increases the irony in the scene; the reader suspects what the character doesn't know. "Utah Idyll" continues:

> They were all looking up at Evelyn but her head was bent so low they could hardly see her face. There was something strange about this, and also about the way her hands lay so limply in her lap, and the way her shoulders sagged. . . . "Papa is married to Maida Bingham, and she has a baby."
>
> Slowly Joan sank back on the floor, as the words clanked together like links of an iron chain dropped on the ground. But they didn't belong *together.* They didn't make the slightest kind of sense. She *couldn't* have heard them *rightly.* But Evelyn didn't move—or speak again. Just sat there, still, with her head sinking till not even any of her face showed.
>
> A sheet of blackness appeared in front of Joan's eyes and she couldn't breathe. Then her breath came back and she could see but there was a suffocating pain in her chest. She couldn't move or make a sound. (62)

Both "Incidents" and "More Notes" describe in similar lan-

guage the despair which possesses her at this news. In both she feels she is having a nightmare from which she may soon wake, but then she realizes that her sister has spoken the truth. In "Incidents" she writes:

> I was totally blind and was suffocating. A sheet of blackness had shut out the pale silouette [sic] made by the windows and the French doors, and my chest was contracting with such force that for a moment I couldn't breathe, then an agonizing pain took the place of the feeling of suffocation. . . . I had thought I was dying and this gave me some comfort. I thought that God in his mercy was going to release me from the horror that had, without warning, descended upon our family. (12-13)

Writing at least a decade later in "More Notes" she describes her reaction in similar language: "Everything went black, as a terrible pain came in my chest and I couldn't breathe." (8)

The next event in all of the versions except for "End of Childhood" is a voice from the stairway that startles the children:

> "Girls!" The children's faces jerked as though attached to a wire, toward the door to the stairway where they could see a dark form, below a white blur, that was a face.
>
> "Never breathe to a living soul what you have just heard." The words roared out of the darkness. It was their father who had spoken to them. . . . In the silence that followed, an owl called to its mate in the orchard. It sounded like a woman's moan, "Oh, oh." The smell of blossoms became heavy in the room but there was silence like that in a mortuary. ("Utah Idyll," 63)

Mary uses the same detail—the scent of blossoms—in both "End of Childhood" and "Incidents" to symbolize the death of her childhood, her innocence, and her family's happiness.

> No one moved or spoke. The smell of blossoms became heavy in the room and in the awful silence a night owl somewhere out in the orchard called softly. It was as if Nature herself felt pity for the poor shattered lives that had so quickly and ruthlessly been torn away from all that had kept them secure and happy till this fateful hour. It reminded me of the smell of flowers at a funeral and the soft singing of a funeral hymn. For this was a funeral. Murder had just been committed in that quiet room, where joy and innocence had dwelt for so long, but never could again. ("Incidents," 13-14).

Was twelve-year-old Mary actually aware that night of the smell of blossoms, or did this detail come into the narratives later as she struggled to create meaning of that night? Whichever way it happened, the memory of smell is powerful. A scent which previously symbolized domestic security and beauty now reminds the narrator of death.

In like manner Mary came to read many details of her home and family differently after her discovery, in part because her father commanded silence concerning his polygamy, making it difficult or impossible for her to rebuild through discourse her previous feeling of family identity. While "End of Childhood" does not include his command to silence, his words are recorded in both "Incidents" and "More Notes." Mary followed his injunction in her early journals, and her marginal notes imply that the family never talked even privately about the revelation that he had three wives. When she does write about the event, the language is melodramatic, referring to physical pain, death, even murder.

According to all four narratives, Mary wakes up the next morning disappointed that she had not died in the night. She remains in her room trying to understand the transformation of her previous feeling of family security and identity. The process the adult writer uses is to assign new meanings to familiar details and people. However, here, not the scent of blossoms, but her father's character has a transformed meaning.

In "Incidents" Mary hears her father assigning the day's chores as if nothing unusual had happened the evening before. "How mother must have been suffering all these terrible months, she too, pretending nothing was wrong. Now what should I do? I couldn't go downstairs and look at my father who had suddenly descended from near Godhood to a level below that of a beast" (14-15). The language in "More Notes" is even harsher: "How could our father turn from a saint to a demon? For no one but a demon could do what he had done. Mama would live on, with a broken heart, loving him so much she couldn't leave him" (9). As she struggles to assign meanings within the new context of her parents' marriage, she naturally uses the cultural stories available to her. In the culture of her youth, which was influenced by national culture through mass media and educational changes, three people in a love relationship

could only have been understood in the context of an adulterous love triangle which produces destructive jealousy and disloyalty.

In "End of Childhood" Mary reinforces her story with Church doctrine. Her father has married after the Manifesto, thus breaking God's law through his prophet, but his disloyalty cuts deeper than a mere violation of formal law:

> And even if polygamy had no law of any kind forbidding it, papa should have known that if he practiced it, it would break mother's heart. Mama wasn't like other women. She was sensitive to the slightest hurt. And this was the greatest hurt in the world. It would kill her, and he would be her murderer. She would hide her agony till she died, just as she had been doing all this past year. ("End of Childhood," 8-9).

Looking back Mary remembers many clues of her father's polygamy: his reading to her mother out of a book entitled *Celestial Marriage* which, in hindsight, she says was filled not with reasons but excuses; several odd visits by Mayme Bringhurst to her mother, one while her mother was sick. She remembers that Mayme wore a "fully gathered unbelted mother-hubbard dress—the kind worn in those days only by women who were pregnant" ("End of Childhood," 9). She also remembers coming upon Mayme asleep in a chair in the parlor:

> I stood still for minutes looking at her—spell-bound by her beauty. Her skin was waxlike in its clear creamy color, her lashes were thick and long, and curled on the ends; and her hair was a shining mound of heavy golden braids on the crown of her head. I don't know how long I should have remained in this trance of admiration if mother hadn't come indoors just then. She went past me into the parlor without speaking and shut the door. I went away puzzled. (10)

Mary's bewilderment arises in part because the girl watching the sleeping woman is caught between two opposing stories about how relationships between men and women work—that attraction is singular and governed by romance or that it is plural and governed by duty.

In all four versions Mary is pulled out of this moral and spiritual stupor by her mother. As Mary hears her mother's steps on the stairway, she quickly spreads out some photographs as if she has been examining them. Neither mother nor child, despite the knowledge they share, can break the injunction to silence by explicitly addressing the feelings engendered by the oldest daughter's revelation; but in all four versions her mother asks Mary to write a letter to Mayme. In "End of Childhood" she writes that the "riddle was dark—unfathomable, and my heart was slowly breaking" (10). She continues:

> If it could only break, literally, and I could stop living. This pain was unendurable. I cried out to God for help. God had always answered my prayers before and, as I knew, He would, He answered this one. For I heard my mother's soft slow footsteps on the stairway. I suddenly came alive in every fibre of my being. (Mother mustn't guess how I felt.[ )] I reached the floor by my trunk in one panther-like movement and carefully raising the lid took out a boxful of pictures and letters and strewed them around me, keeping one in my hand, and keeping my eyes on it as though with fascinated interest. Even when mother spoke my name, I couldn't and didn't look up. "I came to ask you to do something for me," said mama, and, as though sensing that I was unable to speak, she went on, "I want you to write a letter to Mayme telling her you—we all—love her and want her to come home soon." Mercifully she did not pause for my answer, but went on, her beautiful voice that had spoken comfort so often in the past was now meeting a supreme test, but it never faltered. "She is so young to be far away from all her family and friends, and gets so frightened when the baby is sick. Use your nicest stationery, the box you got for Christmas. I brought you pen and ink." She handed me the pen and set the bottle of ink in the tray of the trunk. When I looked up there was no one in the room but me. If I had been a mystic I would have said I had been visited by an angel. . . .
>
> Slowly my taut muscles relaxed. I took a sheet of paper out of the Christmas box, opened the bottle of ink, dipped the pen, just doing something—anything—was a relief. I started writing. With no feelings of any kind I wrote the words my mother had suggested, as though I had been hypnotized. I didn't know what address to put on the envelope, so I took it to mama—still effortlessly. My mother had made a way for me to get back into my life—however broken—and now I had hope that God and mama would always be able to make things come out right in the end, maybe it would be a long time—maybe not in this world—but sometime, somewhere things would come right. God and mama couldn't fail.
>
> So that is why I didn't die, or kill my father, or go insane. I had a mother—the best mother that ever lived. (10-11)

That last line is the end of "End of Childhood," and the language, detail, and rhetorical force of the other two nonfictional versions are almost identical. Her mother appears in the form of an angel, and the narrator is left hoping for a future in which wrongs are made right. The story is angled to show her mother's angelic but passive, victimized nature.

"Utah Idyll" is more open-ended if taken as a whole; however, the end of the passage which describes the day of revelation ends with a similar epiphany. Joan's mother comes up and asks her to write a letter to Maida. Joan obeys and takes the letter downstairs.

> No one was there but her mother, who smiled as she said, "I will address the envelope. We can't let anyone know where Maida is, or Papa might have to go to the penitentiary, like so many of the brethren had to do in the old days of polygamy." Joan handed her mother the sheet of paper and walked through the parlor. Then she ran through the dining room and the kitchen, closing the screen door noiselessly. She would go to the grove of trees by the road and hide there until she could control herself. She longed to scream, but there was no place to go where she wouldn't be heard. (63-64)

All the narratives except "End of Childhood" describe Mary rushing out the door after writing the letter, nearly into the pathway of a team of horses driven by her brother. He shouts at her in an effort to "shock her into her senses" (13). Two hired men, who have been sitting in the barn doorway, move so that her brother can drive the wagon inside. In "Utah Idyll" the narrator makes a curious observation:

> Off toward the corral fence two pigs were making a horrid noise, and a strong familiar odor struck Joan's nostrils. She ran as fast as she could through the corral and down the road to where the cows were grazing. But she had seen the embarrassment of the men. She hated men—all men! (65)

What caused the men's embarrassment? Perhaps they were supposed to be working instead of sitting. Or, a more logical possibility, which fits better the emotion of the passage, is that the pigs were breeding and the men felt awkward because of the girl's presence.

"Utah Idyll" continues with an outpouring of emotion in the form of an angry prayer:

> Sobbing, she threw herself down in a mass of sweet clover that edged the irrigation ditch. Her tears seeped into the root-filled ground. God had made him do it, she thought, just as he had Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and all the others. "I hate you, God, I hate you," she shrieked. "Kill me. Go ahead, kill me. I'd be glad." She beat the ground with her clenched fists, then buried her face in the clover stalks, her body twisting and writhing with agony. After awhile she lay still. She could hear the crickets singing. They seemed to be trying to tell her something. She rolled over on her back. The tall clover shaded her face as its tops drooped over her. The sky was a deep clear blue, and a few white clouds were piled high like bunches of cotton. When Joan was younger she had imagined they were angels looking down at her. (65)

In this passage she is soothed by her surroundings, just as in "End of Childhood" the girl had been soothed by her mother. Once again the anger subsides, but it is simply set aside instead of being resolved through any real communication. However, in subsequent pages "Utah Idyll" moves to a more complex questioning than occurs in "End of Childhood":

> Her mother had said that the angels brought babies to the earth. For a while it had hurt her—the lie. But she knew her mother wouldn't have said it if she hadn't thought that sometimes it was right to lie. Maybe that's the way it was with her father. Maybe he *thought* what he did was right. And maybe it *was*. It might seem wrong—terribly wrong. But God could see ahead, and he knew what people must do. Sometimes they had to kill in wars. It was wicked to kill, and yet *sometimes it was right.* (65-66)

This meditation breaks off as Joan's sister calls that the cattle are crossing into the alfalfa where they might bloat.

The rest of "Utah Idyll" describes the difficult dance of a marriage between one man and three women. It is unfinished, breaking off at page 121—the arguments still unresolved. But in the part that is completed, Joan emphasizes her father's cruelty to her mother who is sick much of the time. The narrative is filled with anger at the father and Maida. Watching the father sitting between the mother and Maida, she writes, "They were torturers that surpassed, in cruelty, the masters of the Inquisition, or the witch burners of Salem" (74).

Similarly, in "More Notes" she describes an intimate moment

between Mayme, who was only ten years older than Mary, and her father. Mary and her brother Heber Jr. are studying at the kitchen table in Mary's apartment near the agricultural college in Logan. Then she sees her father and his third wife: "Mayme was lolling on his lap, her arms around his neck, and her fingers running through his hair as she gazed smilingly into his face." Mary was so shocked that "my brain all but refused to accept as reality what I saw" (15). She rushed from the apartment and stood outside in the cold so long that Heber Jr., afraid for her health, took her to an aunt's house for the night. One possibility is that Mary was shocked by all human sexuality; however, she had by this time finished her training as a nurse. A more obvious explanation is that she was shocked at seeing this blatant intimacy between her father and a woman who is not her mother.

Although Mary's early journals are silent about her anguish and her anger at her father and his third wife, that anger is expressed in her later journals. On Mother's Day, 11 May 1924, when she was thirty-four, she and her husband of six years, Charles Powell, were struggling with the financial difficulties common to young families. Her mother was living with Mary's sister, Helen Bennion Barker, in or near Salt Lake City, while her father was living with Mayme in Lehi. She writes:

> We went to Helen's to visit mother as it is Mother's day. . . . Fred's mother [Fred is Helen's husband] and Aunt Eliza[49] were dinner guests, also father. . . . Aunt Eliza and father and I, being three of a kind (the outspoken kind), plunged into precarious and exciting discussions about financial and family problems. I did not enjoy the visit much for that reason. Then, when we were about to leave father said, "Come down to Lehi before you go to the ranch. Aunt Mayme says she has a ham and some groceries to give you." After we got home and to bed I lay awake till nearly morning trying to decide just what we should do about that. I know Aunt Mayme never had a kind impulse toward me in all her life and never will have and I just can't figure out what her motive is this time, or what scheme she has in mind. I don't look forward to the visit with anything but dread, but perhaps we should go for the sake of our children, just making as sure as we can that they won't have to go hungry this summer. I have worked for Aunt Mayme without any pay when her family was small, I was her nurse when John was a baby, but I didn't do it because I wanted to but because father made me, and I don't want return favors from her. Father certainly owes me help because it was thru his coercion that I overworked and broke down before I was married. He said he would give us some groceries; and now he makes it appear that we are accepting charity from Aunt Mayme, the worst enemy we have in the world. O how horribly sordid life can be at times.[50]

[49]Probably Heber's half sister Elizabeth, born to John Bennion and Esther Wainwright.

This entry expresses Mary's weight of anger against Mayme, clearly greater than that against Emma Jean Webster, her father's second wife, who is described in neutral or positive terms in the journals. Apparently personality difference as well as the polygamous relationship caused some of her lifelong unhappiness with this marriage to a woman three years younger than Mary's oldest sister.

Listeners and a Voice

Because Mary could never accommodate herself to her father's story of righteous marriages to three women, she worked most of her life through fictional and nonfictional accounts to establish her version—that his second and third marriages were cruel and unrighteous. We can never know completely why her reaction was so violent and enduring, but some understanding can be gleaned from imagining her experience. I have already discussed three possible causes of her hatred of plural marriage: her belief that polygamous marriages were no longer performed by authority in the Church, friction because of personality differences between her and the third wife, and her observation of direct harm to her mother. She attributed her mother's sickness to her father's polygamy. The form her unhappiness took was influenced by at least two other factors—her education and stories about marriage she received from the national media and her female relations.[51]

Mary's education had a more scientific or secular bent than her

[50]Mary Bennion Powell, Journal, Vol. 18, 11 May 1932.

[51]Although polygamous children often suffered social ostracism and mockery, Mary's peers, like herself, knew about polygamous incidents but simply didn't talk about them.

father's. She studied nursing and read widely. She believed polygamy was a product of ignorance, a harmful and superstitious practice that would disappear in the light of science. In 1912 she wrote that she was "helping Ethel B. get statistics of the Bennion family for Dr. Titus of the A. C. who is conducting an investigation in Eugenics."[52] One of her interests in that area of study was to use scientific methodology to prove that polygamy was psychologically and genetically harmful. In her correspondence file are notes taken from her reading of "Ideas from a Study of Mormon Polygamy" by Dr. Edward Hulett Jr., apparently a survey of nearly 100 descendants of polygamous families in Utah.[53] She says she paraphrases because his thesis is unpublished and, therefore, she cannot quote directly from it. Although I have been unable to find Hulett's original document, I suspect that Mary may have expressed herself freely using language which is more hers than his.

She first summarizes evidence that polygamy was so unnatural that it unsettled mentally the people who participated in it. "One woman said that though she helped to court other wives for her husband, and that after polygamy was entered into her husband never slighted her, she thought she was going to lose her mind with the awful feelings that were caused by it."

Polygamy also affects children psychologically:

> As a rule, children were doubtful of their father's sincerity and could not understand how he could do such a cruel thing as to be disloyal to their mother. They could not be sure of his affection for their mother, or for them, and so could not feel loyalty toward him. Cunning and extreme selfishness [were] often shown by a plural wife, who would secretly put money away for her own & her children's future. . . . Most of the cruelty of polygamy was hidden from the public. Wives could never feel sure of their husbands unchanged love, and were thwarted in their need of constant devotion from their mate.

[52]Bennion Powell, Journal, Vol. 5, 5 September 1912. The A.C., Agricultural College, is now Utah State University.

[53]Mary Bennion Powell, Notes on "Ideas from a Study of Mormon Polygamy," typescript, Bennion Collection (USHS), Box 7, Fd. 2. The notes are written on the back of scrap paper entitled "Open Season for Spiders." Mary, especially during the poverty-stricken years of her marriage, wrote her diary on the backs of previously used pages.

> With enough authority people can be forced to pretend things they do not feel. . . . Social psychologists agree, generally, that there is a basic human need for intimacy in the human personality which can be supplied only in marriage. This relationship demands exclusive association of the mates, in the physical sex relationship. Polygamy made this necessary intimate exclusiveness impossible. . . . All the responses that a wife expects from her husband could, and in countless cases must have been, lacking in polygamy–as is shown by the bitterness often expressed about the man, later in his life, by members of his households. He reigned in a kingdom of heartbreak, his victims became psychologically ill, never to recover their emotional stability, and also often, even their physical health was impaired.

The latter part of this document summarizes the social inequality which occurs when men could take several wives but women could not take more than one husband. "Many polygamous as well as monogamous men were childless, yet there was no command that they give their wives other husbands. Also the old men kept many of the young men from marrying the girls they loved and who loved them. Many of the wives of polygamous husbands had fewer children than they might have had in monogamy. Some men and their plural wives purposely practiced birth control."

Another interesting aspect of her notes is that toward the end of the document she describes the ill effects of the kind of silence she felt she was subjected to by her father's command to never tell anyone about his polygamy: "Mystery arouses curiosity and curiosity binds thoughts to a subject that should be put into the background of the mind, in order that it will not stir up painful emotions. But Mormons, as a rule, do not want to discuss polygamy. They arouse curiosity, and also suspicion of their motives, by taking this uncooperative attitude." I wonder how different her life might have been if she had been able to talk openly with her parents about her father's plural marriages.

A second major influence on her hatred of polygamy was the idealized stories of passionate and blissful romantic love from the *Ladies Home Journal,* stories which countered the narratives of sacrifice, submission, and obedience about those who entered polygamy that she heard at Church. Often in her journals she mentions spending an afternoon or evening reading the *Ladies Home Journal;* in "Utah Idyll," Joan sees herself as the heroine of a *Ladies Home*

Journal story of monogamous love. Mary and her sisters were certainly socialized by the articles on style and sewing, the advertisements for beauty aids and clothing, and the practical housekeeping articles. It seems certain that the romantic sketches had an equal effect. In 1906-07 she may have read such titles as "All Because of Susie: The Search of a Man for a Christmas Wife," "The Princess Virginia: The Royal Romance of a Princess and an Emperor," "Between the Lines: The Diary of a Young Girl," "When a Girl Became a Girl to My Boy," and "The First of the Romantic Legends of Venice: Whom Death Could Not Part."[54]

One 1907 story, "The Prophet and the Girl," concerns a young woman who moves in with her fiancé's family in Wisconsin in preparation for the wedding. She meets James Jesse Strang, the Mormon excommunicant and polygamist. Strang gathers a crowd around an oak tree in the forest and directs two men to chop it down. Entangled in the roots they find an ancient casket which contains some brass plates with engravings on them. The young woman is entranced by Strang, especially after observing this miraculous event. One night she goes to meet Strang, planning to elope with him. When he aggressively kisses her on the mouth, she pulls back and returns to her fiancé. Strang follows and the fiancé confronts him and debunks the miracle. Strang apparently had drilled a tunnel from a nearby bank and pushed the casket filled with brass plates under the tree. The polygamist leaves and the young man and woman are reconciled. He looks down at her sitting in a chair:

> She was so girlish, so slender–her little frame was so charged with sentiment! The outline of one small hand, resting on the arm of the chair, suggested dainty, subtle things, which, if he could not wholly understand, he could, at least, hedge about from contact with the realities of this western life. . . . What better work could a strong man ask, he thought, than to keep this gentler influence, with all its frail sweet qualities, alive out here?[55]

This ideal–a passive, frail woman protected by a man–may have seemed attractive to a young woman who felt she was over-

[54]*Ladies Home Journal,* 14 (1906-1907).

[55]Samuel Merwin, "The Prophet and the Girl," *Ladies Home Journal* 14 (March 1907): 69.

worked. Mary also felt that her father had destroyed the protective cocoon of love established in the early years of his marriage. Growing into womanhood, Mary had limited choices–in both the monogamous romance and the polygamous marriage of duty, the wife is passive and submissive. Consequently, when she tries to write her story, the language turns to invective, melodrama, or bursts of emotion. Her narratives are more a wail against injustice than a tool for forging new definitions for women.

Another romance narrative with a historical setting which Mary may have read in the 1907 *Ladies Home Journal* is "Her Marriage: A Romance of Pioneer Days in the West."[56] In the story a man and woman have a daughter they treasure. After the father's death in an accident with an ax, a young man shows up at the door of their cabin in a storm. He lives with the mother and daughter for three years, working for the two women as if he were a son and brother. On the mother's deathbed, she asks for the village priest to come marry her daughter and this man. Her last act is to draw her daughter close: "'My own, own dear child,' whispered the mother hoarsely, 'Roger must be everything to you–father, mother, husband. You must learn to love him, and obey him as you have obeyed me. He will be kind to you, beloved'" (17). Touched by her childlike nature, the new husband says to her, "'You are a sacred legacy to me from your mother, who was my friend. The priest's words have made you my honored wife'–she shivered–'but I swear to you by her dear memory that I shall never claim you as my wife unless I can teach you to love me'" (17).

The cabin has two rooms; she is established in the inner room. He gives her a gun to protect herself from wild beasts but also apparently to protect herself from him should he lose self-control. One day in the forest, he falls and is paralyzed from the waist down. Realizing she will perish without him, he drags himself back to the cabin just as wolves attack. She promises to stay in the inner room with her gun while he defends them. A wolf crashes through the window; he shoots it and the seven wolves following feed on their fallen comrade. He continues shooting the wolves inside the cabin

[56]Harriet Rowland, "Her Marriage: A Romance of Pioneer Days in the West," *Ladies Home Journal* 14 (March 1907): 5, 17.

while they continue feeding until there is only one wolf left. It comes for him, but as he prepares to use his gun as a club (he has run out of ammunition), a gun is fired above him. His wife has saved his life. He rebukes her for disobeying him and coming out of her inner room. But then he confesses his love: "She trembled before the compelling beauty of his gaze, but could not escape the encircling arms. A soft flush tinted her delicate face, and satin-smooth as a butterfly's wing her lips brushed his cheek" (17) The story ends with that barely sexual kiss, emblem of the girl's new love for her protector.

These stories trained Mary to think of marriage as a romantic bond between one man and one woman. On the day she discovered her father's polygamy, every romantic dream she had imagined for her mother or for herself turned to ashes.

In addition to these highly sentimental narratives, Mary received stories from her maternal grandmother and others that, rather than inspiring her to make similar sacrifices for her faith, filled her with dismay at the crushing price polygamy exacted. In "Incidents" she writes about two examples; the first concerns her maternal great-grandmother, Mary Ann Frost Sterns Pratt, who married Apostle Parley P. Pratt on 9 May 1837.[57] Both had lost a spouse through death, and this "second marriage was not the romantic kind. It was rather like a marriage from motives of religious duty. She believed she should bring more children into the world, and Apostle Pratt seemed a very worthy man. When polygamy began to be practiced in Nauvoo, she dutifully gave her husband a plural wife in a tender ceremony. But she soon began to wonder if her husband had not only lost his love for her but if he had lost all interest in her welfare" ("Incidents," 1-2). Mary says that her grandmother waited several months to have her baby blessed because Apostle Pratt was gone on a mission and she wanted him to perform the ordinance. The day he returned, instead of coming to church, he went to dinner at the home of his latest plural wife. Mary records that he then

> retired to his bedroom with his young bride and stayed there for three weeks. My great grandmother drew on her vast fund of patience, bringing the meals of the couple to their bedroom door three times a day because she had been told by the new wife that "Parley is writing a book and cannot be disturbed." However when this excuse was given for her husband's refusal to be bothered with the fact that there was no more money with which to buy groceries, she decided that she was no longer "needed" by him. She left him, and got a divorce. The strange thing to me is that after she left him he professed to be heartbroken. He told Brigham Young that grief over the loss of Mary Ann had made him physically ill. He was due to go on another mission but he said he was too sick to go. But Brigham Young made him go. He wrote a long love poem about Grandma, but it left her cold. She never went back to him. (2-3)

[57] *The Autobiography Of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1961 printing), 462.

When Mary Ann Frost Sterns left Apostle Pratt, she did not leave the Church but crossed the plains with her daughter from her first marriage, also named Mary Ann, who decades later passed on these stories to her own granddaughter, Mary Bennion Powell. Crossing the plains, the younger Mary Ann met and married Oscar Winters, and they settled in Pleasant Grove. "During that time," Mary writes,

> many [members of the Church] held firmly to the belief that to be worthy to go into the presence of God after death they must be polygamists. Mary Ann loved Oscar so much that she was willing to share him with other wives in order to secure a place for him to dwell forever in God's presence. Oscar was of the firm opinion that no heaven would be worth working for if gaining it would bring unhappiness to his wife. But try as he would he couldn't bring her around to his way of thinking. Finally he promised to become a polygamist if she could get some woman to marry him without his asking her to. Grandma told me that she asked every marriageable girl and woman in Pleasant Grove to marry her husband. They all said maybe they would if he would ask them to, but not otherwise. Finally she hit on a scheme she knew wouldn't fail. She knew her mother loved her so much that she couldn't deny her anything that was really important to her happiness. And that is why Oscar married his beautiful young mother-in-law, and then had the marriage annuled [sic]. When my grandmother told me the story she blushed and hung her head as she confessed, "Mary," she said, "As soon as the ceremony was over I knew I couldn't stand polygamy. I wasn't good enough. I had the marriage annuled." When I said to my mother "Why has this been kept a secret

from me all these years?" She said "Why should you ever have been told? It is all in the past." I said "Grandma said she couldn't stand polygamy." My mother looked astonished, then laughed, "*Mother*?" she said "It was *father* who couldn't stand it." Does anyone wonder, really, why I almost worship my grandfather Winters? (4-6)

These stories told by her grandmother, the stories in the *Ladies Home Journal,* and scientific theory about the harmful effects of polygamy gave Mary reasons upon which she constructed her opposition to her father's story—that his plural marriages were righteous. Because these stories taught her that a monogamous marriage was natural for humans, she felt that his plural marriages destroyed identity and violated the domain of women in the family. But her father's story was very strong, supported by his authority as head of the family and by generations of Church tradition in obeying God's law above the law of the land. His injunction to keep silent about the matter made it impossible for her to negotiate with him. She had no better luck going to others; neither family members nor her religious teachers would engage with her in dialogue as she struggled to confront her father's act. Members of the Church were distancing themselves from polygamy and wanted her to leave the matter in silence. As a child and even later, she had no clear audience, voice, or form for her story; thus, her narrative attempts to reconcile or rationalize her father's behavior result in either silence, sentimentality, or a strident or unbalanced voice, all of which finish a subject prematurely, either avoiding it or ignoring its complexity. But she could never give up.

Her preserved letters imply a project of writing to everyone she knew concerning plural marriage to gather evidence against her father's act. Samuel Bringhurst, Mayme's brother and a mission president at the time of his response, suggested that much sorrow could have been avoided if the family had been more open when they were all children:

> I have re-read your letter several times and I understand to some extent your feelings, and if, as you state, I have been able to help you, I am very grateful. What you said about truthfulness, frankness, and straight-forwardness surely rings true and if those affected by the polygamous marriage of your father to my sister Mayme had been told the facts frankly and truthfully in the first place, it would have spared many heart aches and misunderstandings. I can never forget my feelings as a boy when Mayme came home during the night pregnant with her first baby. We were all told by my father that both her presence and condition must be kept a strict secret; otherwise, she would have to go to prison. That was all I knew and naturally thought someone had wronged my sister. It was not until the baby was a year old that I learned the truth. . . . I commend you for your desire to write the biographies of your parents and wish you success in that worthy project. I feel honored that you have asked me to contribute my experience with them, as I loved them so much.[58]

But speaking about her father's marriages, even in private was forbidden. Her father's voice sounding at the top of the stairs—"Never breathe to a living soul what you have just heard!"—kept the young Mary from communicating with her family about her father's polygamous lifestyle.

The Code of Silence

The families of most polygamists kept silent about plural marriage because they feared legal prosecution and desired to protect the Church, but also perhaps because polygamy was shameful to a people who believed that civil law was almost as important as God's law. However, though these reasons are valid, I believe that they fall short in adequately explaining the code of silence within Heber Bennion's family and other plural families. In "The Repressive Hypothesis" Michel Foucault suggests that silence concerning sexuality was a tool of control in Victorian times.[59] Interest in sexuality magnified as discourse concerning it was repressed. Through silence, Victorian middle-class males protected their dominance and sexual freedom. Whatever her father's reasons for wishing silence, Mary regretted, especially as an adult, being unable to talk about this central condition of her family life. This silence may be similar to that imposed in our own time inside alcoholic or abusive families; these families guard a secret which no member can mention. While Mary's anguish concerning the discovery of her

[58]Samuel E. Bringhurst, Letter to Mary B. Powell, 18 November 1949, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 7, Fd. 2.

[59]Michel Foucault, "The Repressive Hypothesis," in *The History of Sexuality,* 10 vols. (New York: Random House, 1980), 1:xxx.

father's polygamy may seem excessive, she suffered as much because of it as an abused child or a child of an alcoholic suffers. Only as an adult did she try to express her unhappiness.

Why didn't she pour out her heart to her journal? A diary is often a private medium, but Mary's journal was written as a log of acts and may have been considered a public document. Several times she refers to someone else reading her journal. On 31 July 1908 she copies into her journal another young woman's diaried description of a dance. At the end of Journal 9, written in 1917 when she became engaged to Charles Powell, she lists dates marked with a code. On the bottom of the sheet she has written, "1949—The blanks represent Charle's [sic] visits to Pine Cliff [her father's ranch]. Some people are shy."[60] Because she was bashful about her courtship with Charles and because she wrote this bottom entry in 1949, she apparently thought of her journal as something which was or could be easily accessed by others and thus left blanks as the record of his visit. Rarely does she explore her own thoughts or feelings in the early journals; as a consequence, she had no private avenue for her despair. As an adult, she placed her papers in two public repositories, finally allowing her story to be read by others.

Her family was not silent only concerning polygamy. In a remarkable essay entitled "Notes on Communication or the lack of it,"[61] she describes a time during World War I when her parents and husband had her committed to a sanitarium. In April 1918, pregnant with her first child, she arrived in Taylorsville to visit her parents after a fatiguing journey from Pine Cliff. She read several newspaper accounts of the German advances in Belgium. That afternoon the family left her to rest while they went to church, but she had a real fear of being alone. She fell asleep and awakened twice, hearing screams which she believed were cries of despair because Germany had conquered. Much later she learned that the first cries were people rushing from the meeting house to their cars in a cloudburst; the second were a brother and sister fighting. But at the time she believed the United States had lost the war but her family had chosen

[60]Bennion Powell, Journal, vol. 9, Bennion Family Collection (U of U).

[61]Mary Bennion Powell, "Notes on Communication or the lack of it," Jan. 1970, typescript, Bennion Collection (USHS), MS B-16, Box 7, fd. 2.

not to tell her in an attempt to protect her fragile mind. Her parents and sister read her instability as a form of insanity and convinced Charles to have her institutionalized for six weeks. Ever after her release and after the birth of her child, she remained confused about what was happening in the war. Later she was unhappy about the lack of open and complete communication from her family during this time of emotional upheaval. Who can say from this distance in time whether her loved ones could have talked with her or whether she was in too much turmoil to listen? However, in her essay, she details the damage she felt because no one talked about their suspicions: "So now, you *see* (I hope) why it's so necessary for people, especially families, to tell each other what they are thinking, and how they feel."[62] She writes that the silence in her family

> began before my parents were married. For instance, after *I* was married, my mother told me that she had felt sure that she couldn't endure being married to a man who would want to be a polyamist [sic] but she felt too shy to mention this to my father before their wedding. When she did, he was so angry that, (he told me this) he wouldn't speak to her, and lay silent, with his back to her all night, on their wedding night. She should have told him this before. And then he and she kept it a secret when he married two other women. I wanted to die when I was finally told that he was married to a young girl and she had had a baby by him. After that I knew better than to ask them questions. If they didn't want me to know the truth they wouldn't tell it to me.[63]

Later in the essay she warns: "Ignorance can be the cause of a person's death, or loss of reputation, or standing in a community. It is Satan's great Secret Weapon! that may destroy the whole world if not checked soon. . . . We can only hope intelligence and education can defeat destructive ignorance in time to save this planet as a home for living things."[64]

I believe that Mary made her papers available to the public because, although she clearly loved her family, she wanted to stop the secret-keeping. Certainly, her version of events is slanted, but it

[62]Ibid., 18-19.

[63]Ibid., 19-20.

[64]Ibid., 35.

is her version and she wanted it heard. During the last years of her life (she died in 1929), she placed her journals with the University of Utah and her other papers in the Utah Historical Society Library. Yet taking this step was emotionally traumatic for her. At the end of "Notes on Communication," after writing her story one more time she notes, "Some people (not a few) have told me I should only write the happy things in my life story, that my grandchildren want me to write. I wish I knew if this would be right, or wrong. I don't know."[65] In "Incidents" she writes, "None of us know how long we may live. And I wouldn't want to die without recording some of the most important happenings in the lives of my forebears and in my own life. Maybe even tomorrow I may not be alive. . . . And so, tonight . . . , I will write some of 'the most poignant, pathetic and also the most joyous' events of my life."[66]

[65]Ibid., 38.

[66]Mary Bennion Powell, "Incidents," Bennion Collection (USHS), 6; she attributes the quoted words to her cousin, Howard Bennion, "whose advice I am trying to follow."

The Origin of the Word of Wisdom

Clyde Ford

The Word of Wisdom contained in section 89 of the current LDS Doctrine and Covenants has been one of the more important revelations in terms of emphasis over the years and constitutes one of the most distinctive and recognizable aspects of Mormonism.

Given the emphasis on the Word of Wisdom over the years, it is surprising that there has been little work on its origins.[1] Traditional histories on the Word of Wisdom have generally accepted the recollection of Brigham Young (described below). A complicating factor is that the Word of Wisdom is not easily read and interpreted. There are at least four reasons for this: (1) The specific questions which the revelation addresses are not recorded; (2) The wording is ambiguous; (3) The revelation was not given as a commandment; and (4) The revelation contains a complex literary structure includ-

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[1]Some authors have attempted to relate the prohibitions to social and medical movements of the early 1830s. See, for example, Lester Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), 49; Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1972), chap. 2.