



The Sacrament of Christian Marriage

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The cover design depicts a marriage ceremony during the period 1830-1844. Here, *one* man and *one* woman, in conformity with the law of the land and usages of the original church (1830-1844) and its legal successor, publishing this pamphlet, have their covenant solemnized by the minister whose presence stresses the sacredness of marriage.

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MARRIAGE

"They Two Shall Be One"

OUR MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The form of the marriage ceremony of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (successor to the original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1830-1844) dates back to 1835, nine years before the death of the founder of the church, Joseph Smith, Junior. That year the church formulated a document on marriage, which was approved by a "General Assembly" of the church and is now embodied in Section 111 of the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, published by the Herald Publishing House, Independence, Missouri, owned by the above church.

In the ceremony included in that document the question that the minister puts to the man and the woman is exactly prescribed and is always used by the ministry of the Reorganized Church during the marriage ceremony, just as it was in the days of the early church (1830-1844). It is as follows: "You both mutually agree to be each other's companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves *wholly for each other, and from all others*, during your lives?"

When both the man and the woman have answered that question in the affirmative, they have entered into the most comprehensive sacramental marriage covenant to be imagined. The husband has committed himself to keep himself *for his one wife and from all*

other women; and the wife has made a similar commitment. The covenant is intended to be binding while both shall live.

It is fair to assume that the words "legal rights" refer to rights created by the civil law relating to marriage.

In Illinois, where the church had its headquarters from 1839 to its disruption in 1844, the civil law of marriage was and is monogamous and it was made a felony to have more than one wife. No exception to this is known in the statutes in force at that time or since of any of the States or Territories of the United States.¹

THE BIBLE ON MARRIAGE

In the Bible the institution of marriage is dated back to the beginning, when God gave Eve to Adam; and this statement is made; "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2: 24).

Thus we have the Lord attempting the initial task of peopling the earth and doing so under the marital system of monogamy—one wife and no more. The Prophet Malachi has a pertinent question right there:

"And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore *one*? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."—Malachi 2: 15.

1. See *United States vs. Reynolds*, 98 Supreme Court Reports, page 145 (1878).

David H. Smith, youngest son of the Prophet Joseph Smith, one time wrote concerning this initial act of creation: "The earth was all before this people and needed cultivation, filling up with a godly seed, and God chose through the one-wife system to bring it about" (*The Bible vs. Polygamy*, page 2).

Later when the earth was to be reseeded, following the flood, the Lord chose again to depend upon monogamy—Noah and each of his sons having one wife each. One can scarcely imagine a time in the history of the world when the need to people the earth or any portion of it would be so much more urgent than in the beginning that the Lord would justify any departure from his original order: the more so seeing that Malachi says the Lord chose that system that he might seek a "godly seed," i. e., a righteous people.

THE BOOK OF MORMON ON MARRIAGE

The *Book of Mormon*, translated and published by Joseph Smith, is most definite on the question of marriage, as shown by the following:

"Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord, wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I, the Lord God, will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none: For I, the Lord, God, delighteth in the chastity of women."
—Jacob 2: 33-36.

Here again (according to the *Book of Mormon*) the Lord was peopling a considerable portion of the earth. The Nephites had migrated to the western hemisphere which was to be peopled by them. The rule given to them is very clear and definite: No man was to have more than one wife; extra-marital mistresses he was to have none.

The oldest son of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Junior, ("Young Joseph," who succeeded him in the presidency of the church) at one time wrote on this subject:

"This secures a three-fold cord of evidence. First; the creation,—one man, one woman, in marriage. Second; the re-peopling of the earth by Noah and his sons, each with one wife only. . . . Third; the settling of a new land by Lehi and his family, each man with but one wife."—*One Wife or Many*, page 3.

THE BOOK OF DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

As a people the Reorganized Church recognizes three books as containing the law to govern the church. These are the Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, and the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*. From the two first named, quotations have been given. Appeal is now made to the third, for "A three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4: 12). The *Book of Doctrine and Covenants* contains revelations given to the church in modern times through the prophet, Joseph Smith, Junior, and his successors in the prophetic office.

From one of the revelations given early in the history of the church we quote:

"And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless: wherefore, for this cause I gave unto

you the commandment, that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; . . .”—*Doctrine and Covenants* 38: 7.

Obediently the people gathered at Kirtland, Ohio, and there was given to them another revelation, which contained, among other instructions, this on marriage:

“Thou shalt love thy wife with *all* thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and *none* else; . . .”—*Doctrine and Covenants* 42: 7.

The law, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else,” has only one interpretation. It was very well understood, and with it in mind the church in 1835 drafted and adopted the marriage covenant, to which reference has been made, which requires the pledge quoted above to be taken: “You both mutually agree to be each other’s companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others, during your lives?” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 111: 2).

This same document, approved in 1835 by the General Assembly of the original church, made a further declaration:

“ . . . we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife; and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. . . .”—*Doctrine and Covenants* 111: 4.

It will be seen from the law quoted from the Bible, *Book of Mormon*, and *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, that the Reorganized Church, like the original church (1830-1844) which it legally succeeded, is and always has been committed to the Christian system of

marriage—monogamy—as a most sacred institution bearing the approval of the Lord himself. Upon that system Christ put his seal in these words:

“But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain [they two] shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”—Mark 10: 6-9.



Those desiring additional reading matter from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on the subject of “Marriage” should order from the Herald Publishing House, 103 So. Osage Street, Independence, Missouri, the following pamphlets:

“What Latter Day Saints Believe About Marriage”

By Patriarch Elbert A. Smith

Price.....25c postpaid

“Differences That Persist Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Utah Mormons”

By Patriarch Elbert A. Smith

Price.....10c postpaid