

Utah Mormon Polygamy

It's Belief and Practice

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A Note of Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was organized April 6, 1830. It was presided over by Joseph Smith until his death in 1844. He is sometimes referred to in this pamphlet as Joseph the Seer, or Joseph the Martyr.

Following his death there occurred a period of scattering and near ruin. However a reorganization was effected. To the presidency of this Reorganization came Joseph Smith, the eldest son of the founder. He succeeded his father and presided over the Reorganization from 1860 until 1914. At his death he was succeeded by his son Frederick Madison Smith.

The great majority of the descendants of Joseph Smith the Seer cast their fortunes with the Reorganized Church. No one of them to this date has affiliated with the Utah Mormon Church. The Joseph Fielding Smith referred to in this pamphlet as a one-time president of that church was not a descendant of the original founder.

Those who chose to follow the fortunes and leadership of Brigham Young now have headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, and for convenience of identification that organization is referred to in this tract as the Utah Mormon Church.

The author of this tract is a grandson of the founder of the church and a member of the First Presidency of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This church has its headquarters at Independence, Missouri. Letters of inquiry may be addressed to "The Auditorium," Independence, Missouri.

I.—Present Status of Mormon Polygamy

Pronouncements by Utah Authorities

RELATIONS between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and our friends of the Utah Mormon Church are more cordial than they were in years gone by. That is a matter for congratulation. There is no reason why a spirit of rancor and bitterness should be perpetuated between us. There remain, however, certain fundamental differences. Possibly these may now be discussed frankly, with fairness and generosity, and without resultant ill will: the question of polygamy is one of those fundamental issues.

Our friends in Utah themselves voluntarily raised the question in an official article which appeared in the *Deseret News*, church section, June 17, 1933, signed by their president, Heber J. Grant, and his two counselors. Their article disclaims the present practice of polygamy. It sets up as the position of the Utah church that only one man has authority at any time to solemnize plural marriages: i. e., the president of their church and that the president is not now solemnizing nor has he solemnized such marriages. It announces that certain members persist in entering secretly into polygamous marriages contrary to church orders. It announces that such are liable to discipline and excommunication. The article reprinted in pamphlet form is sent out to stake officers with an introductory letter signed by the Presidency and dated June 17, 1933.

Instructions are given to stake officers to take action against those practicing polygamy. The pamphlet bears the title: "Official Statement From the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."

The *Deseret News* article also goes on to give a history of polygamy in which the doctrine is set forth as of divine origin and commandment the practice of which they were reluctantly forced to give over because of federal prosecutions and which they are now bound to refrain from because of civil law and the terms under which Utah obtained statehood in 1895. (The State Constitution stipulates, "Polygamous or plural marriages are forever prohibited.") Following are the opening two paragraphs of the *Deseret News* article:

"The First Presidency have recently received letters making inquiry concerning the position of the Church regarding the contracting of polygamous or plural marriages. It is evident from these letters, as well as from certain published material—some of it distributed during our last General Conference—that a secret and, according to reputation, an oath-bound organization of misguided individuals is seeking to lead the people to adopt adulterous relations under the guise of a pretended and false polygamous or plural marriage ceremony.

"While the position of the Church since 1893 has been repeatedly set forth, namely, that polygamous or plural marriages are not and cannot now be performed, yet in order that there may be no excuse for any Church member to be misled by the false representations or the corrupt, adulterous practices of the members of this secret, and (by reputation) oath-bound organization (of which the history of the Nephites and Lamanites show so many counterparts), it is deemed wise again to set out the position of the Church on this matter, at the same time tracing the outlines of the historical facts lying behind the Church's position, of which many young Church members may not be fully aware."—*The Deseret News*, June 17, 1933.

FORMER SIMILAR PROCLAMATIONS

This is by no means the first pronouncement of the kind to come from the authorities in Utah. The "Woodruff Manifesto" promulgated by their president, Wilford Woodruff, September 24, 1890, advised their people to cease the practice of polygamy and was approved by the conference of October, 1890.

Ten years later Lorenzo Snow (Woodruff's successor), issued a warning in the *Deseret News*, January 8, 1900, announcing that certain members were going into Mexico to contract polygamous unions under impression that the manifesto applied only in the United States; this practice was denounced and forbidden.

At their general conference in Salt Lake City, April, 1904, Joseph Fielding Smith, then president of the church, made a statement to the conference, saying that numerous reports had it that polygamous marriages were being solemnized in Utah. He denied that the church had given sanction to such marriages or had knowledge of them. He announced that anyone solemnizing such a marriage or entering into it would be deemed in transgression and liable to excommunication. The conference approved his pronouncement.

Six years later under date of October 5, 1910, Joseph Fielding Smith and his two counselors addressed a letter to presidents of stakes again warning on this matter.

Again at the general conference, April 9, 1911, the warning was repeated and was later published and distributed in pamphlet form signed by the three members of the presidency.

And yet again under date of January 31, 1914, their presidency addressed a letter to all stake presidents and counselors stating that members were still secretly advising and encouraging others to enter into polygamous marriages. They urged action against such. Then came this later warning from President Heber J. Grant and his counselors under date of June 17, 1933.

UNABLE TO CONTROL THE PRACTICE?

That makes at least six times in the past thirty-three years that it has been found or deemed necessary to protest innocence on the part of the church and to warn recalcitrant members and threaten them with excommunication. Taking these statements at their face value as sincere they make it quite clear that polygamous tendencies among many of the membership have continued with active manifestations sustained over a long period of time and apparently beyond church control. Sporadic and isolated cases few in number could be dealt with quietly and locally. The church seems unable to stamp this thing out. At least these repeated public utterances indicate failure up to and including June of 1933. The matter seems by no means to be a "dead issue."

THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE

This is not surprising. The church in Utah still cherishes the *doctrine* while denouncing its *practice*. A noxious weed in a flower garden may send up branches which may be broken off one by one from time to time, but so long as the root is cherished and cultivated and encouraged to live it will send up

other branches. Utah Mormons have not repudiated the doctrine of polygamy. They still defend it as a divine institution commanded of God. They retain in their *Doctrine and Covenants* a purported revelation commanding it, condemning those who reject it, making it the springboard from which to leap into eternal progression and exaltation in the future world. Against this allegedly divine commandment is set up only the puny legislation of men. Inevitably always will be found men so taught who will say: "We ought to obey God rather than man"—especially those who feel that in this particular matter it would be rather interesting to obey God.

Not until the Utah Mormon Church shall put from them belief in the doctrine, repudiate it and remove it from their creed, their teachings, and their Scriptures, will they stand clear before the world and be safe from its constant recrudescence in practice. When this is done a basis will be found for a more cordial approach of the churches to each other.

THE CHURCH FAIRLY WARNED IN 1831

It is to be remembered that in January, 1831, the Saints were commanded to go to Ohio and there the Lord would give them his law for their safety. They were warned:

"And now I show unto you a mystery, a thing which is had in *secret* chambers to bring to pass even your destruction in process of time, and ye knew it not, but now I tell it unto you, and ye are blessed, not because of your iniquity, neither your hearts of unbelief, for verily some of you are guilty before me; but I will be merciful unto your weakness."—*Doctrine and Covenants* 38: 4; Utah edition 38: 13, 14.

They gathered to Ohio and received the law, and on the marriage question were told: "Thou shalt love thy wife with *all* thy heart, and shall cleave unto *her* and *none* else. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 42: 7; Utah edition 42: 22).

Had this warning been heeded the spiritual adversary of the church secretly formulating his plans for "its destruction in process of time" might have been balked. Time passed on. The church up to the death of Joseph Smith in 1844 adhered strictly to monogamy. The law in the *Doctrine and Covenants* was specific and clear on that point; so was the practice of the church. But eight years after the death of Joseph, Brigham Young first publicly promulgated the doctrine and asked his church to accept it. Both the doctrine and the practice had been developing in secret chambers without general knowledge of the church.

Because the warning was not heeded, the church as organized came under condemnation and the Re-organization became necessary. Spiritual and material destruction came upon thousands. And now from this latest pronouncement from Utah we glean paragraphs showing how this thing brought them to the dust and close to ruin before they were forced to leave off its practice. We quote:

"During the entire period of the presidency of John Taylor, 1880 to 1887, relentless prosecution of men who had entered into the relationship of plural marriage was intensified. Under the provisions of the Edmunds-Tucker law the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was disincorporated, the Perpetual Emigration Fund Company was dissolved, and all property belonging to the Church, with the exception of buildings used exclusively for religious worship, was escheated to the government.

"Hundreds of men who had contracted plural marriages were heavily fined, and imprisoned. All persons who could not subscribe to a test oath which was provided especially for those who practiced or believed in the practice of plural marriage, were disfranchised.

"It became obvious that no human power could prevent the *disintegration* of the church, except upon a pledge by its members to obey the laws which had been enacted prohibiting the practice of polygamy."

Out of such conditions, born of desperate inability to do otherwise, came the Woodruff manifesto renouncing the practice of polygamy. Had the revelation quoted been heeded, had each man of the ministry thus enjoined loved his one wife with "*all his heart,*" and had he, as commanded, clung "to her and *none else*" this thing would never have come upon the church in Utah or any part of it.

Nor did the men of Utah alone suffer. President J. M. Grant, counselor to Brigham Young, and father of their present president, declared in a sermon September 21, 1856:

"If they could break asunder the cable of the church of Christ, there is scarcely a mother in Israel but would do it this day. And they talk it to their husbands, to their daughters, to their neighbors, and say they have not seen a week's happiness since they became acquainted with that law, or since their husbands took a second wife."—*Journal of Discourses*, volume 4, page 50.

While Brigham Young in a sermon, September 21, 1856, said:

"Men will say, 'My wife, though an excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife'; 'No, not a happy day for a year,' says one; and another has not seen a happy day for five years. . . . I am going to give you from this time to the sixth day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty, and say to them, Now go your way, my women with

the rest, go your way. And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me. I will go into Heaven alone rather than have them scratching and fighting around me.—*Journal of Discourses*, volume 4, pages 55-57.

This is not the testimony of prejudiced men looking in from the outside. This is the testimony of leaders and advocates of the system; the most accurate picture obtainable of what it was like in practice. It is in full accord with the picture that Jacob drew in the *Book of Mormon* when denouncing the polygamy of the Nephites: “Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives . . . and the sobbings of their hearts ascends up to God against you.”—Jacob 2: 40.

AN INVITATION

May we not ask our Utah friends to recognize this matter in its true light and go further than they have yet gone? They have renounced the *practice* of polygamy; if they will now renounce *belief* in it they will be safe from its persistent and continuous reappearance among them to their chagrin and public embarrassment. Then can we draw somewhat closer together in amity, with one ancient and insurmountable obstacle removed from between us.

II.—Utah Mormon Polygamy

ITS ORIGIN AND PRESENT STATUS

In these articles we refrain from challenging the good faith of the authorities of the Utah church as at present constituted; and we endeavor to write courteously and with due restraint, striking not at persons, but at principles.

Time has modified the intense feeling that of old was stirred by a discussion of this subject. We should now be able to discuss it on its merits without incurring resentment. Admitting then the sincerity of the protestations of the Mormon authorities that they do not now sanction new polygamous marriages (even that they discipline rebellious members who enter into them) there remain these points to remember:

1. They have not renounced the doctrine. It is still an integral part of their belief; fundamental to their faith. It tends to break forth in practice.

2. From our standpoint they have never repented of the doctrine and its former practice though repeatedly admonished to do so by the late President Joseph Smith under prophetic unction; and in more recent years by President Frederick Madison Smith, who in 1905 in his "*Message From the Seed of Joseph the Seer,*" said:

"Obeying the mandates of the Spirit, I call upon the Mormon people, leaders and all, to repent. . . . The call is to forsake the errors which unauthorized men have introduced and which they still seek to maintain."

3. The issue between them and us remains still vital and fundamental from the standpoint of *belief*,

also from the standpoint of their possible future *practice* of this doctrine.

ORIGIN OF THE DOCTRINE

Coming back now to the question of the origin of the doctrine and practice of polygamy. Though Brigham Young first promulgated the doctrine publicly in Salt Lake City in 1852, he asserted that it was predicated on a revelation given to Joseph Smith July 12, 1843. He claimed to have kept this document secretly after the death of Joseph Smith until he chose to make it public. He said:

“This revelation has been in my possession many years, and who has known it? None but those who should know it. I keep a patent lock on my desk, and there does not anything leak out that should not.”—*Supplement to Millennial Star*, Volume 15, page 31.

Unable to produce the original document, he declared that Emma Smith had burned it. (*Millennial Star Supplement*, volume 15, page 30.) To this, Emma Smith replied that she had never seen such a document, and added concerning the story that she had destroyed the original:

“It is false in all its parts, made out of whole cloth, without any foundation in truth.”—*Church History*, volume 3, page 352. (The student will do well to read her entire testimony.)

Touching a question of veracity such as this, we accept the testimony of Emma Smith on the strength of her record and her character.

CHARACTER OF THE REVELATION

The so-called revelation is too lengthy to reproduce here. It is section 132 of the Utah Book of

Doctrine and Covenants and may be studied in detail by those interested. It is to be noted that this document purports to put the stamp of divine approval not alone upon marriage for eternity, but also upon plural marriage up to at least ten wives (though its devotees did not limit themselves to ten).

It makes this new system of marriage a vehicle of salvation and exaltation in this language:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man marry a wife according to my word, and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, according to mine appointment, and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant whatever, and all manner of blasphemies, and if they commit no murder wherein they shed innocent blood, yet they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation; but they shall be destroyed in the flesh, and shall be delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption, saith the Lord God.” (*Utah Doctrine and Covenants* 132: 26.)

Verse 19 stipulates that on condition that they “commit no murder whereby to shed *innocent* blood,” they “shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things.”

It is to be remembered, too, that this so-called revelation, along with sealing for eternity and plural marriage, carries “concubinage” with equal authority and force and divine approval—that custom of keeping women for personal use not under ordinary sanction of marriage or with legal status as wives in which the ancients indulged themselves in their households. (See verses 37, 38 of the “revelation.”) The real attitude of the Lord on that matter will be considered in the next number.

We have never known one to rise in Utah to defend the institution of "Concubinage" (in fact the term is resented) yet the two go together in the "Revelation" as they did in the lives of the patriarchs and kings whose example is cited in defense of polygamy. Why accept the one and spurn the other?

In the opening verse the Prophet is represented as having asked the Lord how he "justified" Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon in "having many *wives* and *concubines*." This despite the fact that Isaac had only *one* wife and Joseph well knew that the Lord had said in the *Book of Mormon* that the example of David and Solomon was "abominable in his sight."

In order that we may maintain the moderate tone of this discussion we do not attempt to set forth our opinion of this so-called "revelation" sanctioning polygamy and concubinage; it is difficult to express our opinion moderately.

ITS AUTHENTICITY

Utah Mormons as we have seen claim this revelation was given to Joseph Smith in 1843 and was privately kept by Brigham Young under lock in his own desk until he saw fit to introduce the doctrine in Utah in 1852. Reorganized Church representatives have vigorously denied this allegation and have maintained that Joseph Smith neither taught nor practiced the doctrine. These six several points (and others, not here listed) have been set up by them in the controversy:

1. That no word from the pen or voice of Joseph Smith favorable to polygamy is found in any publication representing the church prior to his death.

2. That, to the contrary, the teachings of the standard books of the church all enjoin monogamy. These books include the *Book of Mormon*, translated by Joseph Smith; the *Doctrine and Covenants*, containing revelations given through him; and the Inspired Version of the *Bible*, as corrected by him. These he left to the church as its constitutional law, presumably representing his own mind and will as well as the mind and will of God. Furthermore, the official organ of the church, the *Times and Seasons*, contained his signed denunciation of polygamy and notice of expulsion from the church of one who had advocated it. (*Times and Seasons*, volume 5, page 423; see also volume 5, page 474; volume 5, pages 490, 491.)

3. That his wife, Emma, of outstanding reputation for veracity, in her dying testimony denied that her husband ever had any other wife or ever sanctioned polygamy. She testified: "No such thing as polygamy, or spiritual wifery, was taught, publicly or privately, before my husband's death, that I have now, or ever had any knowledge of . . . He had no other wife but me; nor did he to my knowledge ever have." (*Church History*, volume 3, page 355, 356.) Under the terms of the so-called revelation Joseph could not have taken another wife without Emma's knowledge. His son, Joseph, President of the Reorganization for fifty-three years, and personally known to thousands of us, joined in the testimony that his father had but one wife.

4. That there was never any progeny born to Joseph Smith excepting by his one wife, Emma. Judge John F. Philips of the Circuit Court of the United States in his Temple Lot decision (1894) commented on that fact: "No such marriage ever occurred under the rules of the church, and no offspring came from the imputed illicit intercourse, although Joseph Smith was in the full vigor of young manhood, and his wife, Emma, was giving birth to healthy children in regular order." (Decision of Judge Philips in the Temple Lot Case, pages 20-26.) During July, 1933, Inez Davis, of our Church Historical Department, prepared for me a list of the direct posterity of Joseph and Emma Smith. At that time there were 159 living and 31 dead, making a total of 190 descendants born to Joseph Smith through the line of his one wife Emma Hale Smith, and to date no posterity ever in evidence credited to him from any of the numerous alleged plural wives. 190 to 0 is a heavy score against a system allegedly set up to produce posterity.

5. Testimony of women who claimed that they were his wives shows evidence of fraud and collusion and does not "stand up in court." Two of them, thought to have clearer case than others, actually did appear in person in the Temple Lot Suit and Judge Philips discredited their testimony in his decision. (See *Decision*, pages 20-26.)

6. That the motive for deception on the part of Brigham Young and his immediate associates is found in the fact that on the 29th day of August, 1852, when they first brought the alleged "revelation" to light they were deeply involved in polygamy and desired to claim the sanction of heaven for their

marital ventures. No one of them was a prophet. Brigham said publicly that he was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. Consequently they invoked the name and the memory of Joseph Smith who was revered by the church as a prophet; and at one stroke secured the prestige of his name and themselves came from under the onus of introducing the system which was destined to bring so much of grief. On that day in 1852 when Brigham Young introduced the doctrine publicly he was, according to Utah biographers, the husband of twenty women. (See *Pictures and Biographies of Brigham Young and His Wives*, copyrighted 1896, and endorsed by the Presidency of the Utah Church.) This was in direct conflict with the constitutional law of the church. Something had to be done. Something was done.

TESTIMONY OF ALLEGED WIVES OF JOSEPH

Reverting for a moment to the testimony of women who claimed to be the plural wives of Joseph Smith: It has been discovered upon examination that some of these women were actually married (?) to him, by proxy, long after he was dead. Utah has been generous in the matter of offering me grandmothers—but such credentials are very unsatisfactory. A brief examination of three typical cases of those claiming to have been married to him while he yet lived is illuminating. The first is that of Eliza R. Snow, who rather late in life began to be called Eliza R. Snow Smith, a belated and unwarranted use of the name. Her claims are set forth in *Representative Women of Utah*, page 2:

“Here, [Nauvoo] the Relief Society was organized by Joseph, March, 1842, and Sr. Eliza was chosen for secretary.

There are now three hundred branches of the Relief Society. Eliza was at this time the wife of the Prophet."

We observe the claim that she was Joseph's wife in March, 1842. Another authoritative Utah publication, the *Historical Record*, volume 6, page 233, says: "Eliza Roxey Snow, married to the Prophet June 29, 1842, President Brigham Young officiating." If they were comfortably established as husband and wife in March why were they remarried again in June? But Eliza R. Snow is on record in a way most damaging to her own claims. In the *Times and Seasons*, the official church organ, Nauvoo, Illinois, issue of October 1, 1842, appeared the following certificate, in connection with a similar certificate signed by leading men of Nauvoo:

"We the undersigned members of the ladies' relief society, and married females do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being practiced in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints *save the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, and we give this certificate to the public to show that J. C. Bennett's 'secret wife system' is a disclosure of his own make."

This certificate is signed by nineteen women, and the name of Eliza R. Snow appears fourth on the list. October 1, 1842, she publicly declared that she knew of no system of marriage existing in the church save the well-known monogamic rule contained in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Yet now we are asked to believe that at that very time she was a polygamous wife. She is ruled out of court by her own signed and printed testimony.

The case of Mrs. Zina D. Huntington Young is perhaps the most amusing and remarkable one with which we have to do. It is said of her:

“Sr. Zina was married in Nauvoo, and had two sons; but this not proving a happy union, she subsequently separated from her husband. Joseph Smith taught her the principle of marriage for eternity, and she accepted it as a divine revelation, and was sealed to the Prophet for time and all eternity, after the order of the new and everlasting covenant.”—*Representative Women of Deseret*, page 12. (A Utah publication.)

The name of her first husband is given in *Pictures and Biographies of Brigham Young and His Wives*, as Henry Jacobs.

The date of her alleged marriage to Joseph is fixed on page 233, volume 6, of the *Historical Record* (published in Utah): “Zina D. Huntington, afterwards the wife of Brigham Young, sealed to the Prophet, October 27, 1841.”

The *Record of Marriages in Hancock County, Illinois*, gives the date of the marriage of Zina D. Huntington and Henry B. Jacobs as March 7, 1841, John C. Bennett, mayor of Nauvoo, officiating.

Now we have the main facts regarding this versatile woman assembled. They run like this: She was married to Mr. Jacobs March 7, 1841, and within seven months and twenty days bore two sons,—not twins,—became dissatisfied with the union, separated from Mr. Jacobs, and was married to Joseph Smith. Surely there was little need for the introduction of polygamy when Zina D. and Mr. Jacobs could achieve such results under the old system of monogamy. Furthermore in 1846 (two years after Joseph’s demise,) she gave birth to a son and named him Chariton Jacobs. She seems to have held the position of wife to Mr. Jacobs all the time; her later story, an afterthought; a bid for notoriety.

Louisa Beeman's claims are set forth in the *Historical Record*, volume 6, page 233, as follows: "Louisa Beeman, married to the Prophet April 5th, 1841, Joseph B. Noble officiating."

The facts in the case are that Louisa Beeman was not even a member of the church at that date and did not unite with the church until two years later, at which time she was still "Louisa Beeman." In Joseph Smith's history, as published by the Utah Mormons,—*Millennial Star*, volume 21, page 75,—the following item appears: "Thursday, May 11, (1843) six a. m., baptized Louisa Beeman, Sarah Alley, and others."

Joseph B. Noble, who is alleged to have performed the ceremony of marriage, was called to testify in the Temple Lot Suit, at Independence, Missouri, and his character as a witness may be discovered by reading his testimony. It is found in the published *Abstract of Evidence*:

"I never heard Joseph Smith teach the church the doctrine of polygamy, or that a man could have more wives than one, either publicly or privately. I said the other day in my cross-examination that Louisa Beeman was sealed to Joseph Smith in 1840, and that I performed the ceremony; today I am inclined to think it was a little later than that. . . . Well, I will settle down on the date that Louisa Beeman was married in 1841 or 1842. I have been rebaptized for my nonsense a good many times, and am going through again as soon as I get through with you fellows. . . . I did not say I could not tell the names of all my wives, I might tell some of them. I do not think I could tell the names of any of them, and I swear that I will not tell, just for your damned nonsense. I said it was none of your damned business because your question was so nonsensical. No, sir, I will not tell the names of my wives, just because I will not. Just because it is none of your damned business, I will not tell you the time I married my second wife. . . . I am an elder and a high priest here in the church in Utah."

Timothy advises us to give no heed to “profane babblings” and “old wives fables.” No man should be convicted on such testimony. Space will not permit an examination of other similar cases.

A STILL MORE VITAL QUESTION

However, the question of the connection of Joseph Smith with the doctrine is not the most fundamental question. On that point we quote President Joseph Smith, son of “Joseph the Martyr,” from *The Origin of American Polygamy*, page 4:

“The chief contention of the sons of the Prophet Joseph Smith, however, is not that their father was not a polygamist, but is, that whether he was or not, the dogma and practice are contrary to Scripture, ancient and modern, and are wrong, being contrary to the laws of both God and the United States. That being contrary to the fundamental and organic laws of the church, neither the dogma nor the practice could in any sense become legitimately the faith and practice of the church. No matter who the human author of the doctrine may have been, it was unlawful in every sense of the word, and is yet.”

Whatever individuals may think concerning the personal record of Joseph Smith, one thing should be evident to all: Polygamy was never at any time a part of the church doctrine and practice under his presidency and prior to his death in 1844. On that point Judge Philips ruled in the Temple Lot Case: “Certainly it was never promulgated, taught, nor recognized as a doctrine of the church prior to the assumption of Brigham Young.” And further: “Its first appearance as a dogma of the church was in the Utah Church in 1852.”—*Temple Lot Decision*, pages 20-26.

BRIGHAM YOUNG AND THE CIVIL COURTS AGREE

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ during all its history has been in exact accord in this matter with the original church under Joseph Smith; while Brigham Young himself in a sermon, September 11, 1853, said of the church in Utah in his day:

"If I have any knowledge touching the condition of this people at the present time, and the way they are taught, led, counseled, and dictated by those who go before them to open up the way, it is directly opposite of that we saw in the days of Joseph the Prophet."—*Journal of Discourses*, volume 1, page 78.

Such considerations moved Judge Sherman in the Kirtland Temple Suit, 1880, and Judge Philips in the Temple Lot Suit, 1894, to recognize the Reorganized Church as the true church in succession.

On that point Judge Sherman ruled:

"That the church in Utah, the Defendant of which John Taylor is president, has materially and largely departed from the faith, doctrines, laws, ordinances and usages of said original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and has incorporated into its system of faith the doctrines of celestial marriage and a plurality of wives, and the doctrine of Adam-god worship, contrary to the laws and constitution of said original church.

"And the Court do further find that the Plaintiff, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is the True and Lawful continuation of, and successor to the said original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organized in 1830, and is entitled in law to all its rights and property."

III.—Utah Mormon Polygamy

One Wife or Many?

A REVIEW OF THE "THREE BOOKS" ON THE SUBJECT

In years gone by a series of three remarkable brochures was published by three of the sons of Joseph Smith: *One Wife or Many*, by President Joseph Smith; *Polygamy: Was It an Original Tenet of the Church?* by Apostle Alexander H. Smith, and *The Bible vs. Polygamy*, by President David H. Smith.

President Joseph Smith emphasized three outstanding facts from *Book of Mormon* and Biblical history: that when God moved directly and personally to people or repeople the earth or a large portion of it, he three times began the work with one wife and not several for each man involved.

"This secures a three-fold cord of evidence. First; the creation, one man, one woman in marriage. Second; the repeopling 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 one wife."—*One Wife or Many*, page 3.

Brigham Young said that when Adam came to this earth he brought *one* of his wives with him. Why he brought only one for such a great undertaking was not explained. Nor yet why Brigham should need twenty-four or more wives to help people Utah while Adam needed but one with which to people the whole earth.

THE BIBLE

David H. Smith in his analysis (remarkable for its clarity) also cites first the historic precedent of Adam:

"The earth was all before this people and needed cultivation, filling up with a goodly seed, and God chose through the one-wife system to bring it about."—*The Bible vs. Polygamy*, page 2.

The prophet Malachi commenting on that historic precedent says:

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

A departure from this plan later at a time when the need for a plurality of wives would be much less (if it ever existed) would of necessity be regarded as a departure indeed from the divine plan. Such departure apparently occurred first in the case of one Lamech. (Genesis 4: 19-24.) The Inspired Version of the *Bible* is very explicit concerning this man and his works:

"And Lamech took unto himself two wives . . . And Lamech said unto his wives . . . I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt . . . Wherefore the Lord cursed Lamech and his house, and all they that had covenanted with Satan, for they kept not the commandments of God . . . And their works were abominations, and began to spread among the sons of men."—Genesis 5: 30-39, Inspired Version.

Even as the *Book of Mormon* condemns the polygamy of David and Solomon as being "abominable"; so does the *Bible* (Inspired Version) condemn the works of Lamech.

The favorite defense of apologists for polygamy is found in the Old Testament history of the patriarchs and kings of Israel. The defense is not found in specific commandment from the Lord, but rather in precedent set by Biblical characters. However, these examples when analyzed reveal that the value

of the precedent is superficial. A few examples will illustrate:

Abraham's wife, Sarai, grew old without children, and to remedy the situation she persuaded Abraham to take a servant, Hagar, as consort. (Genesis 16: 1, 2.) Afterward, when the bondwoman, Hagar, had borne a child (Ishmael) Sarai became jealous and admonished her spouse to put the second woman away: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son." (Genesis 21: 10.) Now for the first time in this whole matter God speaks, and he admonishes Abraham to do as his wife has told him to do (Genesis 21: 12). God did not command Abraham to *go into* polygamy; he commanded him to *come out* of polygamy, if it might be called polygamy. As a matter of fact while Sarai gave Hagar "to be a wife," God did not recognize her as a wife; he commanded her to be put away and said her son should not be an heir equal to the son of the free woman. (Galatians 4: 30.) Hagar evidently was concubine, not wife.

The case of Jacob is cited as a classical precedent. In this case Jacob loved Rachael and served seven years for her and evidently married her. (Genesis 29: 21, 22.) But her father, Laban, on the marriage night, under cover of darkness, imposed upon him the older sister, Leah. Thus came Jacob into polygamy by the duplicity of a Godless but crafty father-in-law. Afterward, in jealous controversy, these two sisters each gave him another woman to wife. God appears nowhere in the whole entourage.

The examples of David and Solomon are cited. Of them the *Book of Mormon* says: "David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines; which

thing was *abominable* before me, saith the Lord." (Jacob 2: 27.) To believers in the *Book of Mormon* that pronouncement robs the precedent of virtue.

As a matter of fact, David and Solomon and other kings of like type were in violation not alone of the historic precedent set by the Lord in the case of Adam and Noah; they were in violation of the written law governing the kings and priests of Israel. The law for the king was:

"Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he *greatly* multiply to himself silver and gold."—Deuteronomy 17: 17.

Wives he was not to multiply *at all*. David and Solomon were lawbreakers in this regard and their example of no force to those who respect the law. Solomon had one thousand wives and mistresses. He was very wise in some things; but he made a fool of himself with women nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and his example in that regard establishes no precedent excepting one to be avoided.

Some shadow of endorsement for David's polygamy is sought in such passages as the following:

"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee *king* over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I *gave* thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom. . . ."—2 Samuel 12: 7, 8.

Here it is claimed is a clear case of the Lord *giving* plural wives. But in what sense? Was it his will and for David's good? or was it permitted because of perversity and as something to result in evil? (Even as it was against his advice that Israel should have had David or any other man for king.) Note the sequel from the very same chapter where the word "give" again appears:

“Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and *give them* unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.”—2 Samuel 12: 11.

Here he “gives” these same wives to another and for evil. It seems not to have been a sacred “giving” in either case, and the term “give” meant not as it did when God gave Eve to Adam.

A number of passages from the King James Version of the *Bible* seem to throw the mantle of divine approval over David as a very perfect man; and such passages have been used to support him in his polygamy. In numerous places in the Inspired Version, prepared by Joseph Smith, these passages read differently and conform to the *Book of Mormon* statement that David’s conduct in that matter was “abominable” in the sight of the Lord. Comparisons from one passage will illustrate our point:

“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not *perfect* with the Lord his God, *as was the heart of David his father.*”—1 Kings 11: 4, King James Version.

“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, *and it became as the heart of David his father.* . . . And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, *as David his father*, and went not fully after the Lord.”—1 Kings 11: 4-6, Inspired Version.

The fact that the twelve tribes of Israel (from one of whom came Christ) sprang from a lineage in which polygamy was involved is used as an argument for the institution. In a compendium of doctrines issuing from the *Deseret News Press*, some years ago, and prepared by their Apostle Franklin D. Richards and Elder James A. Little, this statement was made:

“If plural marriage be unlawful, then is the whole plan of salvation, through the house of Israel, a failure and the entire fabric of Christianity without foundation.”

This is a familiar argument. But if we are to rush to the defense of all the practices of the patriarchs and kings of Israel in order to salvage Christianity we shall have to defend some strange customs; and the institution of “Concubinage” is one of them, intertwined in Biblical history always with polygamy. They cannot be separated. As a matter of fact the Lord carried down his work through generations in spite of their vagaries and lawbreaking and chose to bless the twelve tribes whenever worthy of blessing despite the waywardness of ancestors.

One must bear in mind the primitive times in which those men lived and that the Lord used such material as he could find; further, some obscure passages, as the example just cited that seemed to commit him to their questionable *liaisons* must be understood in the light of the written law that he himself laid down and the precedent he had himself set for them in the cases of Adam and Noah. They were a wayward and “stiff-necked people” under a “school master” designed to bring them to a higher order under Christ.

In the New Testament, under the Christian regime, there is no shadow of dubiety in the teaching concerning marriage. Nowhere are dubious precedents found to hide behind. The law is clear:

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they *twain* shall be *one* flesh?”—Matthew 19: 4, 5.

“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his *own* wife, and let every woman have her *own* husband.”—1 Corinthians 7: 2.

This accords fully with the later revelation of modern times from which we shall quote. The three books are in agreement: They “two” shall be “one flesh.”

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The teachings of the *Book of Mormon* are definite and clear. The book of Jacob contains this instruction as given to the Nephites:

“For behold, thus saith the Lord, this people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures: for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. 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: 32-36.

Play is made upon the statement in the quotation from the *Book of Mormon*:

“For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people: otherwise, they shall hearken unto these things.”—Jacob 2: 39.

It is argued that room was left here for a later revelation sanctioning polygamy. However, the denunciations of polygamy as “abominable” were so unmistakable that this argument is not tenable. A

better interpretation must be sought. At that very time the Lord said he was trying to "raise up a righteous branch" (verse 34), and his rule laid down to ensure such result was: "There shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." This was a perpetual injunction against polygamy and all forms of extra marital indulgences. Clearly the meaning of the verse quoted is that when the Lord is raising up a righteous people he "commands them," i. e., he reveals himself to them. At all times they "shall hearken to these things" already written in the law.

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Coming now to our own times and the law as given in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Certainly in the beginning of the church in these later times the Lord sought "to raise up a righteous people." In fact he gave to them this instruction:

"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; Utah edition, 38: 31, 32.

This was given January, 1831. They were to go to the Ohio and there the Lord would give the law that should enable them to raise up a righteous people, without spot and blameless. This was in accord with the *Book of Mormon* statement: "For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people." (Jacob 2: 39.)

They gathered to Ohio, as commanded, and there the revelation of February, 1831, was given, and on the marriage question it said:

“Thou shalt love thy *wife* with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto *her* and *none* else.”—*Doctrine and Covenants* 42: 7; Utah edition, 42: 22, 23.

The law, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else,” is not capable of successful misrepresentation. It was very well understood. And with it in mind the church in 1835 drafted and adopted the marriage covenant which requires this pledge 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. (In Utah editions until 1876.)

This same document, approved by the General Assembly of 1835, 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.

This section remained in the Utah editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants* until 1876. It continues its place in our *Doctrine and Covenants* as representing the law of the church from its beginning until now.

Still further instruction is found in the following:

“And again, I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry, is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man; wherefore it is lawful that he should have *one* wife, and they *twain* shall be *one flesh*, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.”—*Doctrine and Covenants* 49: 3; Utah edition, 49: 15-17.

CONCLUSION

Clearly and fairly and dispassionately we have set forth the law from the three books. The preponderance of evidence is all in favor of one wife rather than many. No dubious precedents from the Old Testament can overthrow the clear-cut law that runs through the three books from the beginning: "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.) Or as Christ put it to even further clarify its meaning: "They twain [they *two*] shall be *one* flesh." No modern revelation of dubious origin and clandestine introduction to the Saints should stand for a moment against the clear and clean law of the Lord as supported by the three books of the church.

With malice toward none and with charity for all we close with an invitation to all believers in the great restoration movement to renounce (not only in practice but in belief as well) any and every theory of marriage that conflicts with the divine law: "There shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." (Jacob 2.) Let every other philosophy of marriage, whether it be polygamy, or "companionate" or "trial marriage," and every sort of extra marital indulgence be renounced, that Latter Day Saints may shine forth a righteous people without spot and blameless.