

The extract of this sermon that was given at the Early Morning Meeting in Shiloh Tabernacle Lord's Day May 14, 1905.

## Polygamy

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### What Does the Seventh Commandment Require?

It is all very well to fling the word "adulterer" at a man who has two wives, but, if you do, you have to fling it at Moses.

You have to fling it at the prophets, at the priests of Israel, and at myriads who lived, and loved, and served God according to their light.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" never meant, "thou shalt have only one wife."

I say it this morning boldly, because it is time to say it.

I am a monogamist.

I have not use for polygamy in Zion.

I have no intention of planting it in the valleys of Mexico.

### Polygamy Not Necessarily a Violation of the Seventh Commandment.

But there is no use in saying that the command "Thou shalt not commit adultery" means "Thou shalt have only one wife."

Moses did not so understand it.

God did not so understand it.

The time has come when this has to be said, and I am saying it now.

Moses had more than one wife, and one of them was black.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel were founded by men who were the offspring of Jacob's two wives and his concubines.

I do not approve of polygamy; I do not believe that it ever worked well.

Polygamy began with the family of Cain, whom God finally destroyed.

The first polygamist of whom we have any knowledge was the boastful murderer Lamech, who addressed a poem to his two wives, Adah and Zillah.

He said to these wives:

Adah and Zillah hear my voice:  
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech;  
For I have slain a man for wounding me,  
And a young man for bruising me:

If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

He was the first polygamist, and when God destroyed the world by the flood He did not save a single polygamist.

The families of the polygamist were swept away.

### The First Apostle with Authority Goes Back to the Beginning.

The only ones he saved were Noah, a Monogamist, and his three sons and their three wives.

They were all monogamist; four husbands and four wives that alone were saved out of the whole earth.

I do not say for a single moment that God ever originated Polygamy; but when the Seventh Commandment was given it was not understood to teach Monogamy.

It was clearly understood that they could have more wives than one; in fact, the Law of Moses made provision for having more than one wife.

It commanded a man, when his brother died childless, to take his brother's wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

I repeat that I am not defending Polygamy, and will not defend it for one moment.

I believe with Jesus that "twain shall become one flesh."

He said:

"And He answered and said, Have ye not read, that He which made them from the beginning made them male and female.

And said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh?

So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Therefore, as the Prophet of the Restoration, and the Apostle of the Lord Jesus, the Christ, I have a right, with Authority, to take you back to the beginning; and at the beginning there was but one man and one woman.

I believe that this question of one wife does not rest upon the interpretation of the Seventh Commandment.

I do not hesitate to say this:

Truth Not Advanced by Insisting Upon An Error.

If you say it commands only one wife, then Moses himself, many true leaders of Israel, and many of those most faithful to God for nearly one thousand five

hundred years trampled upon the Seventh Commandment.

I do not believe that for a moment.

It was permitted by God, as many other things were permitted for a time, because of the hardness of the people's hearts.

That is what one has to recognize in Christianity—that the times of human ignorance “God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.”

Now, in these Latter Days, my duty is to bring the Church up to the first standard.

But I will not say that the Seventh Commandment forbids something that it does not forbid.

You do not get on any farther by saying that it does, and therefore I do not hesitate to say that I shall receive into fellowship those in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere that are not monogamists, if they have repented and turned to God.

If a man had six wives and turned to God, do you think I would tell him to fling five wives and their families out into the streets? Would that be right?

#### A Condition in Other Lands that the First Apostle Has to Face.

No man who has even the instincts of humanity would say that it was right.

I have to face this problem in China, in Africa and in all the world.

You do not know half the troubles I have.

They say, “We love you, we follow you; but shall I throw my families and my wives into the street?”

I answer, “No!”

If they have erred in this matter they should not treat their wives, or their families, cruelly.

They are under obligations to care for their families, and although I would not advise a continuation of wrong relationships, yet I would not counsel harshness or rashness in seeking to right the wrong of the past.

Now I am in for it from those who fear the Truth!

But I believe that you will stand with me in this interpretation of the Word of God.

Do not imagine that I intended to tolerate Polygamy in this Church, because I will not.

I will remove from fellowship any who would originate and who practice it.

I teach you with Apostolic Authority that we have to

get back to the Primitive Conditions, but I say that the Seventh Commandment did not mean in the days of Moses what many of you thought it meant.

#### Christian Kept Back by Erroneous Interpretation of Scripture.

Christianity all over this world has been kept back by that erroneous interpretation, and by other false teaching. Some day I shall speak quite fully on this subject, because I owe it to my people through out the world.

I believe that it would have been better for Abraham not to have had two wives, but Sarah, his first wife, was to blame for that—the very woman who afterwards made a fuss about it, and caused him to act cruelly.

I have always felt that the action of Abraham in that matter was contemptible.

After yielding to Sarah's proposal to take Hagar, who bore him a son, he again yielded to Sarah's cruel request, and sent Hagar away.

The bondwoman whom he had ennobled and set free, by making her his wife, was sent out, with his son Ishmael, into the wilderness, with a little water and food, in the expectation that they would die there.

That was one of the meanest things that any man could have done, even if his name was Abraham.

There were lots of mean streaks about Abraham; perhaps there are lots of mean streaks about you and me that we do not see.

But if I were guilty of such meanness as that I should deserve to be written down pretty severely.

#### The Far-reaching Consequences of Abraham's Cruel Deed.

The deplorable fact, however, is that it is the custom of some theologians to praise Abraham for sending away this second wife and his own son.

But the Angel of God did not praise him. Instead of doing that, he took care of Hagar and Ishmael.

The wickedness of this act of Abraham has never been forgotten by the descendants of Ishmael.

The Ishmaelites today have a grudge against the Israelites, and fight like demons.

The descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac are fighting today tooth and nail.

The Ishmaelite descendants of Abraham feel that they have a right to be recognized as Abraham's sons but the Israelite, says, "No, get away; you are the son of the bondwoman."

I desire to help the Ishmaelite all I can, and to win him to God, but he cannot be won by saying foolish things about his mother.

Abraham did another bad thing. The Book of Genesis chapter 25, verses 1 to 7 records the following facts concerning his third wife—Keturah—and his sons and also his concubines and his children by them:

And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah.

And she bare him Zimran and Jokshan, an Medan and Median, and Ishback, and Shuah.

And Jokshan began Shea, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim, and Leummim.

And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephher, and Hanoah and Abhida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

And these were the days of the years of Abrahams' life which he lived, an hundred threescore an fifteen years.

Was it not mean and unjust to his six sons by Keturah to "give all that he had unto Isaac?"

It continues to this day, and will until they all become brethren in Jesus, the Messiah.

These are some of the far-reaching consequences of Polygamy and of Concubinage.

Let me tell you that Polygamy has never worked well, and never will work well.

It is not the nature of things for it to work well.

A far better way on earth is Primitive Monogamy.

### The Still Better Way Declared by the Christ.

But there is a still better way, of which the Lord Himself tells.

He said (Matthew 22:29,30), "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God. For in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as Angels in Heaven."

That is the better way.

But, as afar as the present is concerned, I say with emphasis, that I shall maintain the Laws of the United States, and the laws of Mexico, which say that Polygamy is unlawful and ought to be punished.

At the same time I do not uphold that law by urging

reasons that are not sound; I do not stand for this law on the ground of the seventh Commandment.

Lawyer Barris, is it not fair to say that the meaning of laws is to be ascertained by centuries of practice, and the decisions of the highest Courts?

LAWYER BURRIS—"That is what makes law."

FIRST APOSTLE—And do you know any place where, in the past, the Seventh Commandment was regarded as a strictly monogamist law? Was not the interpretation distinctly polygamistic, for many, many centuries; yes or no?"

LAWYER BURRIS—"Yes, sir."

FIRST APOSTLE—It is idle for any man or woman to talk nonsense on this subject.

If you expect me to say things that I never believed, you will find yourselves mistaken.

### The Monmon Polygamists Not a Vioator of the Seventh Commandment.

I have been watching the controversy over the polyamists in Utah; and the cry, too, that he is breaking the Seventh Commandment.

He is doing no such thing.

The Seventh Commandment is not being broken; but he is breaking the Law of the United States, and I approve that Law.

I approve the Law making Monogamy the practice in the United States.

If one wants to be a bigamist, he can go to China, or to some other country where there is no law against it.

He cannot be a law-abiding citizen of the United States and be a polygamist.

I will not, however, place my objet on the ground of the Seventh Commandment.

I will place it on the ground that our Lord Jesus, the Christ, occupied when He said that at the Beginning it was not so, these then being one man and one woman.

As the First Apostle of our Lord Jesus, th Christ, in these times, I have a right to tell the church and the World that they must go back to the original standard, which is Monogamy. [Applause]

Make no mistake.

I will not put it on the ground of the Seventh Commandment, but on the Word of Him who is above Moses, and who is Himself the interpreter of all Commandments.

I did not intend to say all that I have said this morning regarding Polygamy.

## EARLY MORNING MEETING.

But it had to come soon, and this will be a preparation for fuller treatment of this subject.

I trust that none of you will misunderstand what I have said. I have endeavored to be perfectly plain and clear.

I believe that the better way for every one is Monogamy in all its Purity and Power, and I maintain the laws of the United States in this matter.

If I did not, I would get out of the United States, find a big tract of land in Africa, and set up a polygamistic community there.

I have courage enough to be true to my convictions [Applause.]

But I do not believe that it would be good or wise to act upon the alternative that I have suggested.

Look down the whole line of the history of humanity, and you will find that Polygamy never worked well.

Sometimes Monogamy has not worked well. [Laughter.]

The number of cases in the American divorce courts show that.

#### I Do Not Believe In Divorces for a Whole List of Causes.

There is only one cause for divorce sanctioned by the Bible.

Think over this matter and be tender and considerate.

Remember that in countries where Polygamy has been the continuous practice that I will not tell my people to throw their wives and families out into the street.

I tell them that they are bound to maintain their wives.

And I will tell you another thing—I do not advise those wives to marry some one else.

I shall not sand in the way, in some cases, of remarriage, but I will not advise such marriages in any case; and I have good reason to support my course.

I believe that if you will think into it you will see that I have.

But everywhere that Zion exists the practice of living in conjugal intercourse with more than one wife must cease .

Women who have been wives must be kindly treated, and their children and the children of the first wife must be treated with equal consideration.

I will not have the children of the second, third or fourth wife treated less considerately than the children of the first wife.

They must all be treated as the children of one man; and he must be kind and loving to all. [Amen.] This is my Apostolic Ruling.

From all parts of the world I have been asked for his Ruling, and I have given it this morning.

Many people may not quote my words as I have spoken them, but that cannot be helped.

You know what I have said, and any wilful misconstruction or perversion of my words will be deliberately wicked.

#### Zion Has No Place for the Lawless or Disobedient.

If I believe in Polygamy, I would not be like Apostle Smoot of the Mormon Church.

I would not lie about it, but would get out of the United States, and go where there was no law against it.

I have no place for a Lawless Senator.

I have fought bad laws, but I have submitted to the punishment that the bad law imposed.

I have overcome by getting the bad law abolished.

That is what a good citizen should do.

I believe that if there had been more plain talk at the beginning of thing we should have been saved from much trouble in the United States.

I believe that the Lord Jesus, the Christ, Himself, and the Apostles, talked very plainly about this matter; but then were no stenographers in those days.

I see that my stenographers are here this morning and Zion will get the very words I say into all parts of the world

May God bless you.