

Just How Wrong Is Polygamy?

RESEARCH INSTITUTE – SPECIAL SERIES – BIGAMY PERMITTING

AT IMPASSE IS BIGAMY A THIRD OPTION?

LATE MIDDLE AGES CHURCH

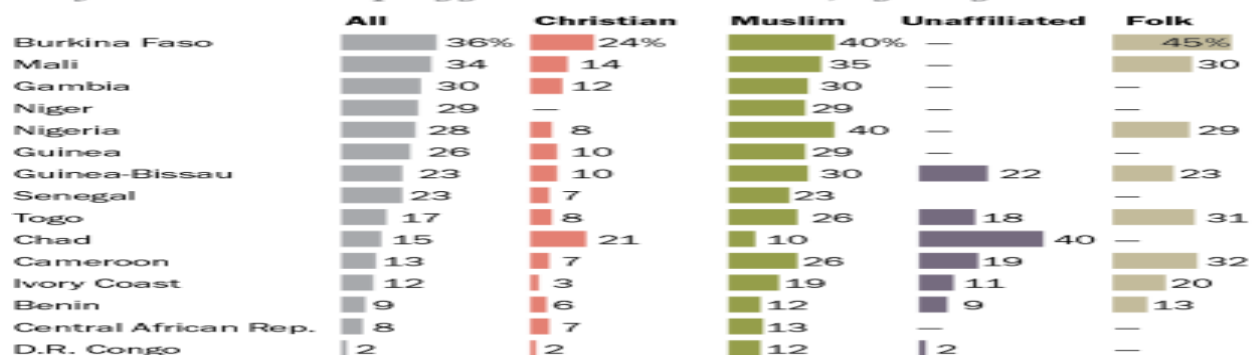
➤ *When Philip of Hesse wanted to end his marriage and marry another woman, what was Martin Luther's controversial advice?*

- As head of the wife he could take her life in order to end the marriage
- Philip could get divorce without Catholic Church or Pope's consent
- Send his present wife into exile
- Divorce wrong – commit bigamy!

AN IMPASSE @THIRD WORLD OUTREACH?

In some African countries, sizable minorities of people live in polygamous households

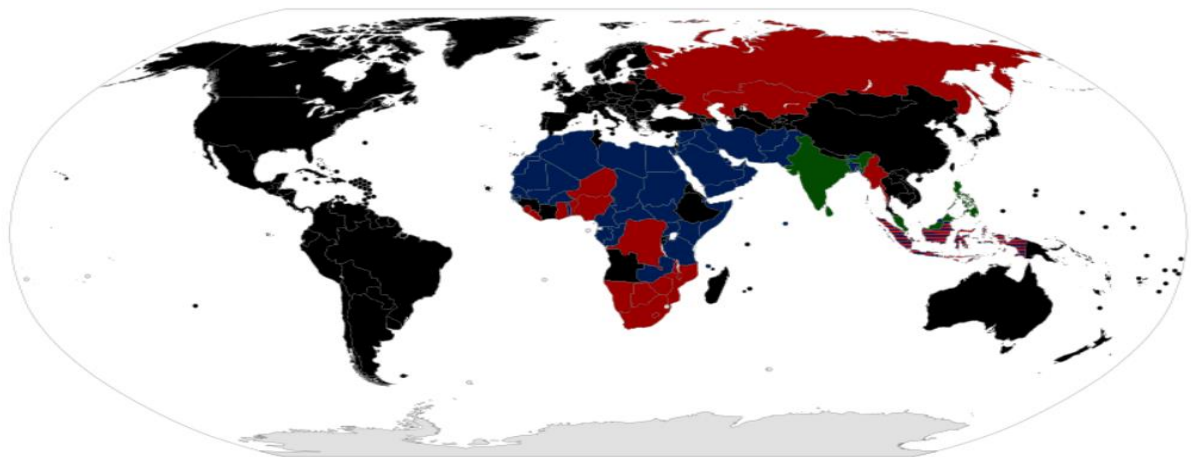
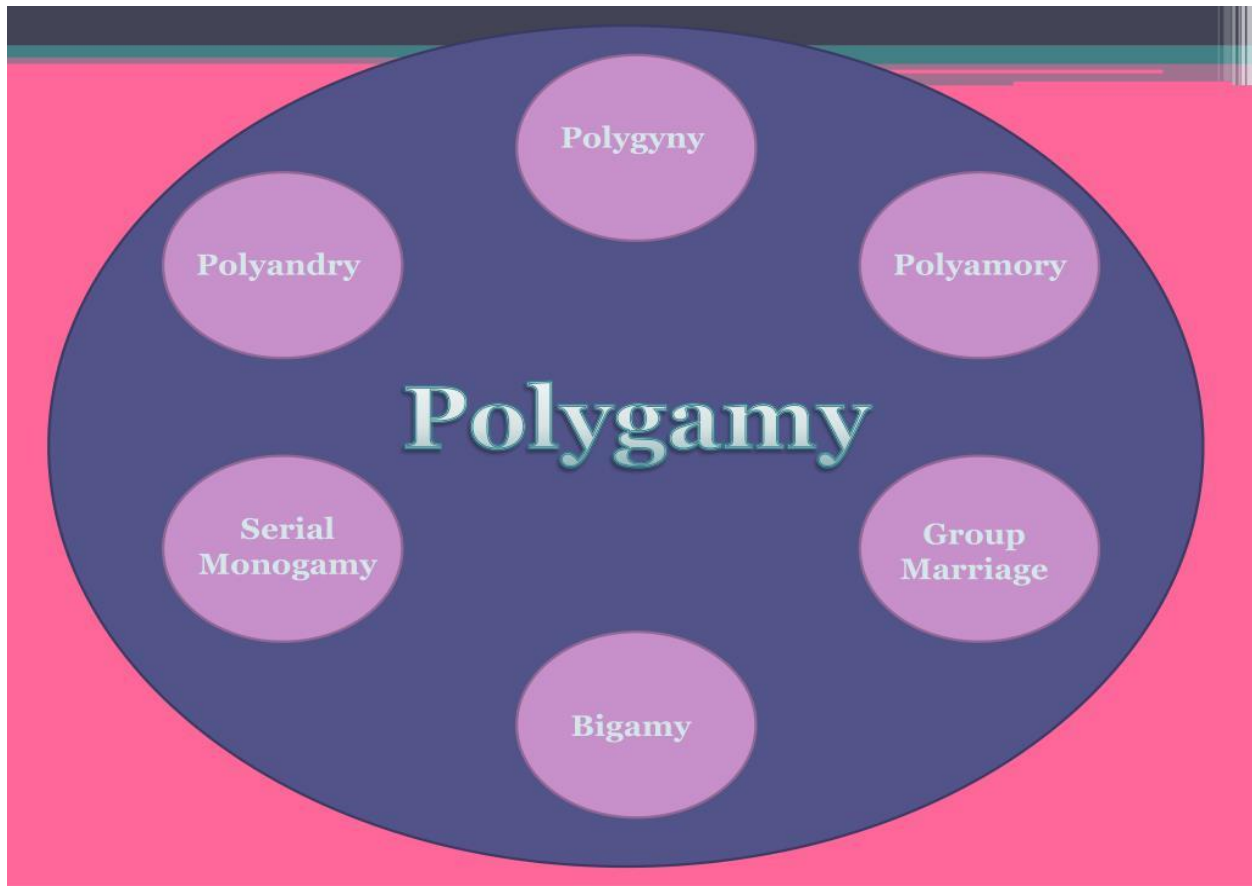
% of individuals in polygamous households, by religion









Note: Dashes indicate that group sizes were too small to present separately.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010-2018 census and survey data.
"Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World."

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

by David Lee Burris



-  Polygamy is only legal for Muslims
-  Polygamy is legal
-  Polygamy is legal in some regions (Indonesia)
-  Polygamy is illegal, but practice is not criminalised
-  Polygamy is illegal and practice criminalised
-  Legal status unknown

The Inheritance Rights of the Firstborn

¹⁵ “If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, ¹⁶ then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, ¹⁷ but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first-fruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.¹

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Dt 21:15–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.



CHAPTER CXXXIV – THE MARRIAGES OF JACOB ARE A FIGURE OF THE CHURCH.

"If, then, the teaching of the prophets and of Himself moves you, it is better for you to follow God than your imprudent and blind masters, who even till this time permit each man to have four or five wives; and if any one see a beautiful woman and desire to have her, they quote the doings of Jacob [called] Israel, and of the other patriarchs, and maintain that it is not wrong to do such things; for they are miserably ignorant in this matter. For, as I before said, certain dispensations of weighty mysteries were accomplished in each act of this sort. For in the marriages of Jacob I shall mention what dispensation and prophecy were accomplished, in order that you may thereby know that your teachers never looked at the divine motive which prompted each act, but only at the grovelling and corrupting passions. Attend therefore to what I say. The marriages of Jacob were types of that which Christ was about to accomplish. For it was not lawful for Jacob to marry two sisters at once. And he serves Laban for [one of] the daughters; and being deceived in [the obtaining of] the younger, he again served seven years. Now Leah is your people and synagogue; but Rachel is our Church. And for these, and for the servants in both, Christ even now serves. For while Noah gave to the two sons the seed of the third as servants, now on the other hand Christ has come to restore both the free sons and the servants amongst them, conferring the same honor on all of them who keep His commandments; even as the children of the free women and the children of the bond women born to Jacob were all sons, and equal in dignity. And it was foretold what each should be according to rank and according to fore-knowledge. Jacob served Laban for speckled and many-spotted sheep; and Christ served, even to the slavery of the cross, for the various and many-formed races of mankind, acquiring them by the blood and mystery of the cross. Leah was weak-eyed; for the eyes of your souls are excessively weak. Rachel stole the gods of Laban, and has hid them to this day; and we have lost our paternal and material gods. Jacob was hated for all time by his brother; and we now, and our Lord Himself, are hated by you and by all men, though we are brothers by nature. Jacob was called Israel; and Israel has been demonstrated to be the Christ, who is, and is called, Jesus.

Justin Martyr to Trypho



St. Justin Martyr
(100 - 165)

"Reason dictates that those who are truly pious and philosophers should honor and love only the truth, declining to follow the opinions of the ancients, if they are worthless."

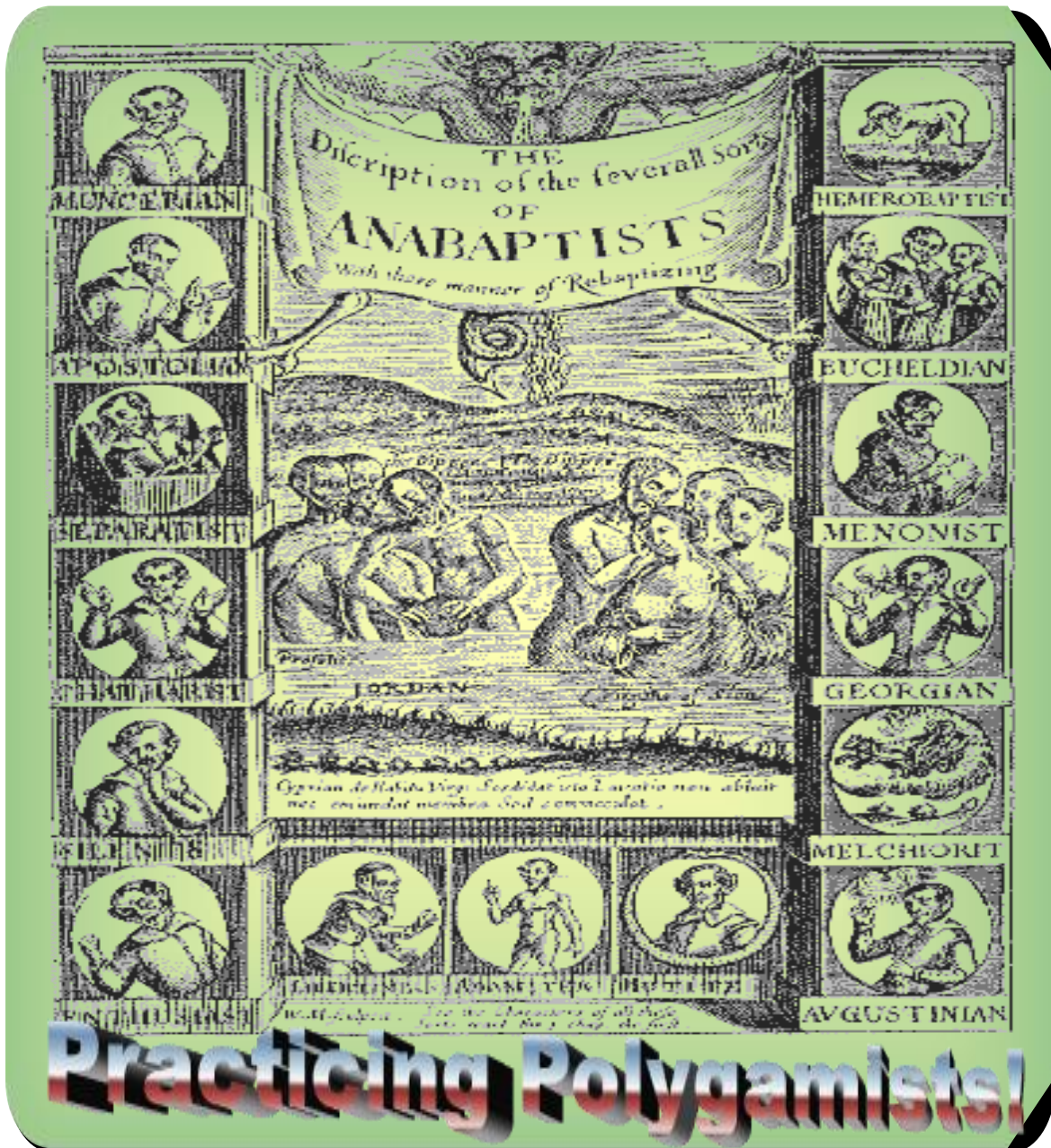
- First Apology

The Historian's Hut

Quote from "First Apology," from *St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies*, ed. Leslie William Barnard, in *After The New Testament: A Reader In Early Christianity*, edited by Bart D. Ehrman, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
Background photo: Justin Martyr, Russia, 1XX, from pravicon.com [Public domain] via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, and modified. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Justin_Martyr,_Russia,_1XX.jpg
Background photo: Holy patriarchs (Menologion of Basil II), by anonymous [Public domain] via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, and modified. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holy_patriarchs_\(Menologion_of_Basil_II\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holy_patriarchs_(Menologion_of_Basil_II).jpg)



Ana-Baptist Answer To An Excess Of Female Converts:



The Twelfth **Episcopal Church** Lambeth Conference held in 1988, in **Resolution 26 - Church and Polygamy** stated:

This Conference upholds monogamy as God's plan & as the ideal relationship of love between husband and wife; nevertheless recommends that a polygamist who responds to the Gospel and wishes to join the Anglican Church may be baptized and confirmed with his believing wives & children on the following conditions:

1. that the polygamist shall promise not to marry again as long as any of his wives at the time of his conversion are alive;
2. that the receiving of such a polygamist has the consent of the local Anglican community;
3. that such a polygamist shall not be compelled to put away any of his wives, on account of the social deprivation they would suffer;^[73]

C.A.R.M. HAS MAINSTREAMED ACCOMMODATION:

In polygamy, should a man divorce his wives after becoming a Christian?

by Matt Slick / Apr 3, 2021 / Questions, Marriage



In some cultures around the world, people practice polygamy. When they become Christians, should these men **divorce** all but one of their wives to adhere to the biblical teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman (([Gen. 2:24](#); [1 Cor. 7:2](#); [1 Tim. 3:2](#)))? No, they should not. They should stay married, treat their wives well, and do not marry any more women. Furthermore, they would be disqualified from being an elder and pastor due to the following verses.

“For this reason, I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion,” ([Titus 1:5-6](#)).

Polygamy in the Old Testament

Polygamy was permitted in the Old Testament ([Deut. 21:15](#)), but God never commanded it. The first recorded polygamist was Lamech ([4:23](#)). Jacob was tricked into marrying sisters ([Genesis 29:16-30](#)). Gideon had wives ([Judges 8:30](#)), as did Elkanah ([1 Sam. 1:1-2](#)), David ([1 Sam. 25:43](#)), Ashur ([1 Chron. 4:5](#)), Rehoboam ([2 Chron. 11:21](#)), and Solomon, who had 700 wives ([1 Kings 11:1-3](#)).

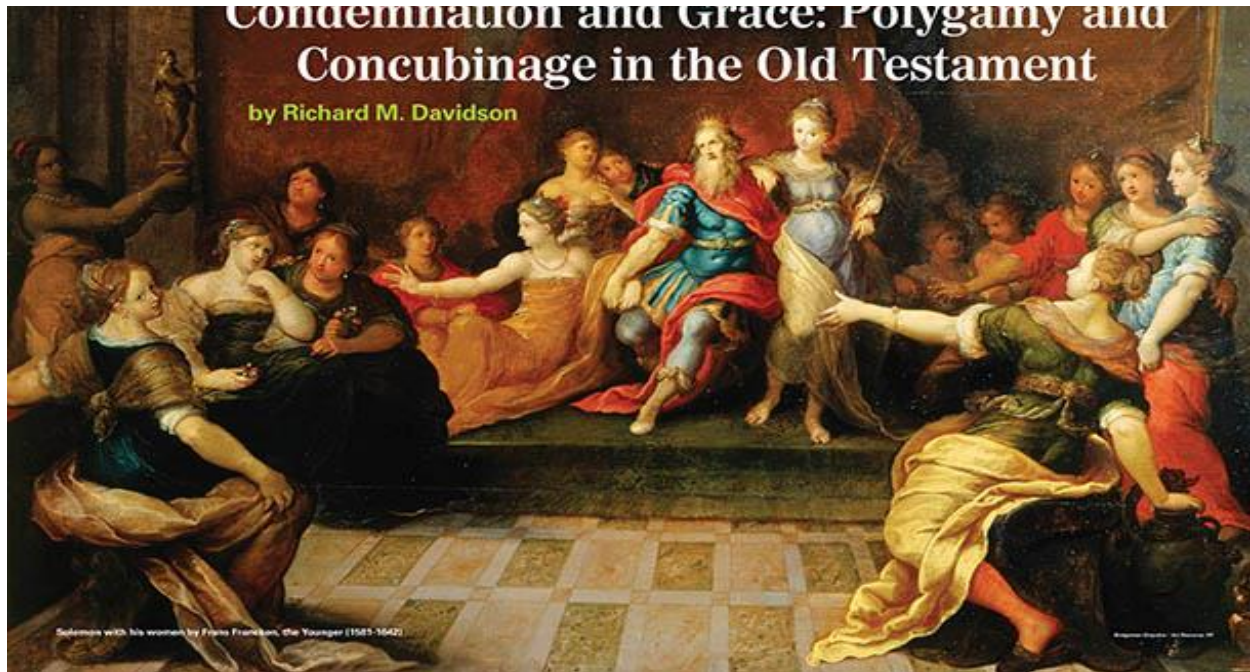
So, if God allowed polygamy in the Old Testament, shouldn't it be allowed in the New Testament? No, it should not. God allowed polygamy because of the sin of people. But it was not how God originally created things.

- “For this reason, a man shall leave his father & mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh,” ([Genesis 2:24](#)).
- “And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE & THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH?’ 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.’” ([Matthew 19:4–6](#)).
- Furthermore, as representatives of Christ, we are to marry one woman, just as God designed it. And we must not ignore [Deuteronomy 17:17](#), which says, “He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself,” ([Deuteronomy 17:17](#)). This warning was fulfilled, for example, when the wives of Solomon lead him into idolatry ([1 Kings 11:3](#)).
- So, polygamy isn't the God-ordained means of marriage.
- But, as I said above, if a person already had wives when he became a Christian, he should stay with them, **don't divorce them, don't marry any more,** and treat them well.

Christian Research Journal Is A One-Stop Resource:

Condemnation & Grace: O. T. Polygamy & Concubinage

Author: Richard M. Davidson



The divine design for marriage established at creation is a *monogamous* relationship between “a man...and...his wife” (Gen. 2:24).¹ Paul’s citation of this verse makes even more explicit the monogamous design: “And the *two* [not three or more] shall become one flesh” (Eph. 5:31, emphasis added). Monogamy is ultimately rooted in monotheism and in the concept of *imago Dei* (image of God): just as the Lord God, who is “one” (Deut. 6:4), is not involved in promiscuous relationships within a polytheistic pantheon, so husbands and wives, created in God’s image, are to be monogamous in their marital relationship with each other. However, a distortion of the creation design for monogamy manifests itself during Old Testament times in the practice of polygamy and concubinage.²

POLYGAMY AND CONCUBINAGE IN GENESIS

The book of Genesis contains several examples of polygamy and/or concubinage—Lamech (Gen. 4:18–24), Nahor (Gen. 22:20–24), Abraham (Gen. 16 and 21), Jacob (Gen. 29–30), Esau (Gen. 26:34–35; 28:8–9; 36:2–3), and Eliphaz (Gen. 36:12). Though no explicit verbal condemnation of this practice is given in these biblical narratives, the narrator (whom I take as Moses) presents each account in such a way as to underscore a theology of disapproval. The record of these polygamous relationships is bristling with discord, rivalry, heartache, and even rebellion, revealing the negative motivations and/or disastrous consequences that invariably accompanied such departures from God’s Edenic standard.³ These inspired narratives with their implicit theology of disapproval speak even louder, and more eloquently, than explicit condemnation.

With regard to Abraham’s relationship with Hagar, although Hagar was humanly regarded as Abram’s wife (Genesis 16:3), the narrator carefully records the contrast between human understanding and the divine perspective. Throughout the story, God regularly calls Sarah Abram’s wife (Gen. 17:15, 19; 18:9–10) but refers to Hagar only as “Sarai’s maid” (Gen. 16:8–9; cf. 21:12) and not as Abram’s wife. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the account of Abraham’s return to a monogamous status (Genesis 21) with the account of Abraham’s test of faith on Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22), the narrator seems to suggest that it was after returning to faithfulness in his marital status that Abraham was prepared to pass the supreme test of loyalty to God.

With regard to the polygamy/concubinage of Jacob, in addition to the narrative bristling with details of disastrous consequences of polygamy in Jacob's dysfunctional family, there are also hints in the text that after Jacob's wrestling with the Angel at the Jabbok River (Genesis 32:24–28), he returned to a monogamous state. Before the encounter at the Jabbok, the narrative repeatedly mentions Jacob's sexual relationship with all four wives/concubines, but after this event, the only conjugal relations mentioned are with his wife Rachel (Gen. 35:16–19). Whereas before Jacob's name (character) change at the Jabbok, he had called both Rachel and Leah "my wives" (Gen. 30:26; cf. 31:50), after the Jabbok experience, he called only Rachel "my wife" (Gen. 44:27). Most telling of all, in the genealogy of Genesis 46, the narrator mentions Leah, Zilpah, and Bilhah as women who "bore to Jacob" children, but only Rachel is classified as "Jacob's wife" (Gen. 46:15, 18, 19, 25). Thus, the narrator seems to imply after Jacob's conversion experience at the Jabbok, he continued to care for Leah, Zilpah, and Bilhah, but no longer considered them his wives and concubines, and returned to a monogamous relationship with the wife of his original intention, Rachel.

MOSAIC LEGISLATION

According to some interpreters, several Pentateuch laws assume, allow for, and approve of the practice of polygamy. But a careful analysis of these passages reveals that none of them supports polygamy or concubinage as the will of God.⁴

For example, Deuteronomy 17:16–17 does not give the king permission to have several wives, as some claim; rather the divine will in these verses is that the king have *no* multiplication of horses (i.e., no chariotry), *no* multiplication of wives (i.e., no harem), and no amassing of *excessive* wealth.⁵ The legislation most frequently cited supporting polygamy and concubinage in the Pentateuch is found in Leviticus 18:18. This passage is commonly translated as tacitly allowing for plural marriages. For example, the NASB reads, “You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister [Heb. *’ishah ’el-’akhotah*, lit. ‘a woman to her sister’] as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.” In this and most other modern versions, the phrase *’ishah ’el-’akhotah* (“a woman to her sister”) is taken as referring to a literal (consanguine) sister. The implication of this reading is that although a certain incestuous polygamous relationship is forbidden (i.e., marriage to two consanguine sisters while both living, technically called sororal polygyny), polygamy in general is acceptable within the law.

However, the Hebrew phrase *’ishah ’el-’akhotah* (“a woman to her sister”) in its eight occurrences elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible *always* is used idiomatically in the distributive sense of “one in addition to another,” and *nowhere* refers to literal sisters.⁶ Likewise, the masculine equivalent of this phrase, *’ish ’el-’akiw* (“a man to his brother”), appears twelve times in the Hebrew Bible, and is always used in a similar idiomatic manner with a distributive meaning of “one to another” or “to one another,” and *nowhere* is it to be translated literally as “a man to his brother.”⁷

Consistent with usage elsewhere in Scripture, Leviticus 18:18 should be taken idiomatically and distributively as referring to “one [woman/wife] in addition to another [woman/wife],” and not to literal sisters.

Numerous other considerations related to this passage—semantic, syntactical, literary-structural, contextual, and theological evidence—lead me to join those scholars who conclude that this verse refers to any two women, not just to two consanguine sisters. In other words, this legislation prohibits *all* polygamy.⁸ God’s will here is revealed as opposing all polygamy/concubinage, even though there are no punishments mentioned for this practice during Old Testament times.⁹ The prohibitions in Leviticus 18—including polygamy/concubinage in v. 18—are presented as universal moral law, applicable to all humanity (trans-cultural) for all time (trans-temporal), upholding the order of creation.¹⁰

POLYGAMY AND CONCUBINAGE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

The book of Judges contains several accounts of polygamy and/or concubinage. Judges 8:30 records the case of Gideon, who “had many wives.” The context of this passage makes clear that Gideon’s polygamy came in the setting of his apostasy later in life, when he not only became polygamous but also idolatrous (vv. 24–28). Thus, there’s no divine approval for his polygamous relationships.

Several other of the judges may have been polygamous, due to their numerous offspring: Jair (Judges 10:3–4), Ibzan (Judges 12:8–9), and Abdon (Judges 12:13).

The concluding narrative block of Judges (chapters 19–21), which includes the story of a Levite and his concubine (Judges 19), all too vividly portrays the explosive nature and destructive capacity of decadent sexuality. This material probably was placed at the end of the book to highlight the depths of degradation to which the people of Israel sank when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

POLYGAMY AND CONCUBINAGE DURING ISRAEL’S MONARCHY

The books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles also reveal a society that has strayed far from God’s moral standard. Those who fell prey to the prevailing customs of bigamy, polygamy, or concubinage included even the pious ones, such as Elkanah (1 Sam. 1–2), and the political leaders of the united monarchy: Saul (1 Samuel 14:50; 2 Samuel 3:7), David (10 wives/concubines besides Bathsheba and Michal; 2 Sam. 5:13; 1 Chron. 3:1–9; 14:3), and Solomon (700 wives, 300 concubines; 1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 11:1–7).

At least six of the twenty Judean kings of the divided monarchy are mentioned as having more than one wife: Rehoboam (2 Chron. 11:18–21), Abijah (14 wives; 2 Chron. 13:21), Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:14–17), Joash (2 Chron. 24:2–3),¹¹ Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:15), and Zedekiah (Jer. 38:23).

In the northern kingdom, only Ahab's polygamy is recorded (1 Kings 20:3–7), although other kings may well have followed this practice. The genealogical records of Chronicles also mentions several polygamists: Jerahmeel (1 Chron. 2:25–28), Caleb (1 Chron. 2:46–48), Ashhur (1 Chron. 4:5), Izrahiah and his four sons (1 Chron. 7:3–4), and Manasseh (1 Chron. 7:14). The biblical narrators faithfully record all the anguish and disharmony involved in having a “rival wife” (1 Sam. 1:6; see the account of Hannah's experience, esp. vv. 10–11, 15) in disregard of the Leviticus 18:18 legislation, and the disastrous personal and national results of kings “multiplying wives” to themselves in blatant disobedience to the divine prohibition in Deuteronomy 17:17.

With regard to the life of David in particular, contrary to those who have suggested that God approved of David's polygamy and even called him “a man after His own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) while he was in the polygamous state, Ron du Preez makes a strong biblical case for the conclusions that (1) this statement of divine approval did not apply to David while he was a polygamist; (2) the narrator also reveals the negative divine assessment of David's polygamous relationships; (3) Nathan's message to David in 2 Samuel 12:7–8 doesn't indicate that God sanctioned or supported David's polygamy practice; and (4) toward the end of his life, King David returned to a monogamous state (with Bathsheba; 2 Sam. 20:3; 1 Kings 1:1–4).¹² During and after the Babylonian captivity, there is no Old Testament mention of plural marriage among God's people.

THE SUM OF THE MATTER

In the Old Testament, there are some thirty-three reasonably clear historical cases of polygamy and/or concubinage out of approximately three thousand men mentioned in the Scriptural record. Most of these examples involved wealthy patriarchs or Israel's judges/monarchs. Within these narratives involving polygamy or concubinage, divinely inspired writers invariably embed their tacit condemnation of these practices. Mosaic legislation never commands/condones plural marriages but prohibits polygamy/concubinage (Lev. 18:18) as part of universal moral law based on the creation order. **Thus, the Old Testament documents a departure from the Edenic sexuality model in practice but affirms this departure is not approved by God.**

The Old Testament also reveals God's condescension in relating to His people, despite polygamy/concubinage, recognizing the hardness of their hearts (with divorce, Matthew 19:8), while at the same time expressing His disapproval for the practice, and ever prompting and empowering them to return to the Edenic/Mosaic standard of morality. The tenderness with which God cared for the victims in a polygamous situation is wonderfully displayed in His treatment of Hagar and Hannah.

Does 2 Samuel 12 approve of Polygamy?

A recent caller to the radio broadcast asked for further clarification as to whether 2 Samuel 12:8 might well suggest that God approves of the practice of polygamy. In 2 Samuel 12, the Lord, speaking through Nathan the prophet, says to King David, “I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would have added you many more things like these.”

At face value, this seems to suggest God gave David multiple wives, and then stood ready to add to his harem with divine sanction. Of course, that’s precisely the problem with pressing Scripture into a literal labyrinth, because—in truth—if Nathan’s words are anything at all, they are *ironic*. David had murdered a man in order to have another woman appended to his harem. Despite the generosity of the very God who had made him sovereign ruler of the land, the king had stolen the wife of a servant and that to satisfy his carnal lust. Thus, in language that dripped with irony, Nathan the prophet pronounces judgment against Israel’s king. As such, 2 Samuel 12 hardly constitutes divine approval for the practice of polygamy.

And this is not a singular case. As with David, Solomon, David's son, had extravagances in multiplying not only horses, but multiplying wives, and that was a significant factor in the unraveling of a kingdom. Who can forget the explicit admonition of Moses in Deuteronomy 17:17: *Do not multiply wives or your heart will be led astray!* If this applied to the great kings of Israel, how much more the subjects of the kingdom. Moreover, monogamous marriage is clearly taught in Genesis (2:22-24), and then reiterated by Christ himself. Indeed, Jesus went on to say that, "Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9). Not only so, but marriage is an analogy for the relationship God has with his people, with the Church, His one & only bride.


Furthermore, **reading the Bible for all its worth involves recognition that narratives of Scripture are often *descriptive* as opposed to *prescriptive*.**

The fact that Scripture reveals the patriarchs with all their warts and moles and wrinkles is to warn us of their failures, it's not to teach us to emulate their practices. Far from blinking at David's polygamous behavior, the Bible reveals that as a result of his sin, the sword never left his home.

Finally, let me say this; **As God permitted divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts, so too He put up with polygamy because of humankind's insolent stubbornness.**

Indeed, God causes even the wrath of man to please Him. Thus, in His sovereign purposes, He might well have tolerated the practice of polygamy for the very purpose of providing economic stability and security for women trapped within the confines of a patriarchal society. Yet, as redemptive history reveals, God does not simply leave His people where they are—He moves to sanctify them. **In the effulgence of Scripture, women are elevated from the confines of a patriarchal society to the status of complete ontological equality with men.**

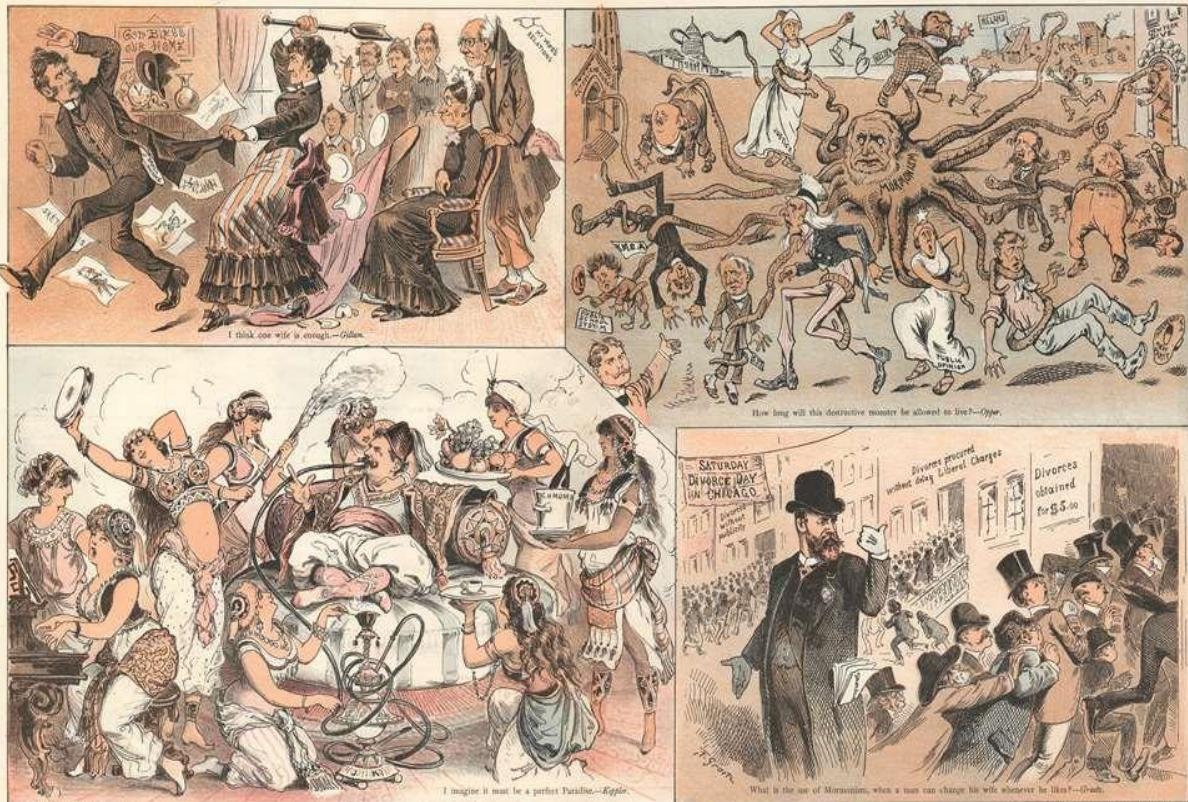
GotQuestions.org
Animated Series



**Why did God
allow polygamy
in the Bible?**



PUCK.



I think one wife is enough.—Gillie.

How long will this destructive monster be allowed to live?—Ogden.

I imagine it must be a perfect Paradise.—Kippie.

What is the use of Mormonism, when a man can change his wife whenever he likes?—Dinah.

A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE MORMON QUESTION.
Four artists who differ in style and in mind.
The cartoon on the Mormons have jointly designed.

The result of their labor is here—and, what's more,
We'll remark that in Utah they laugh at all four.

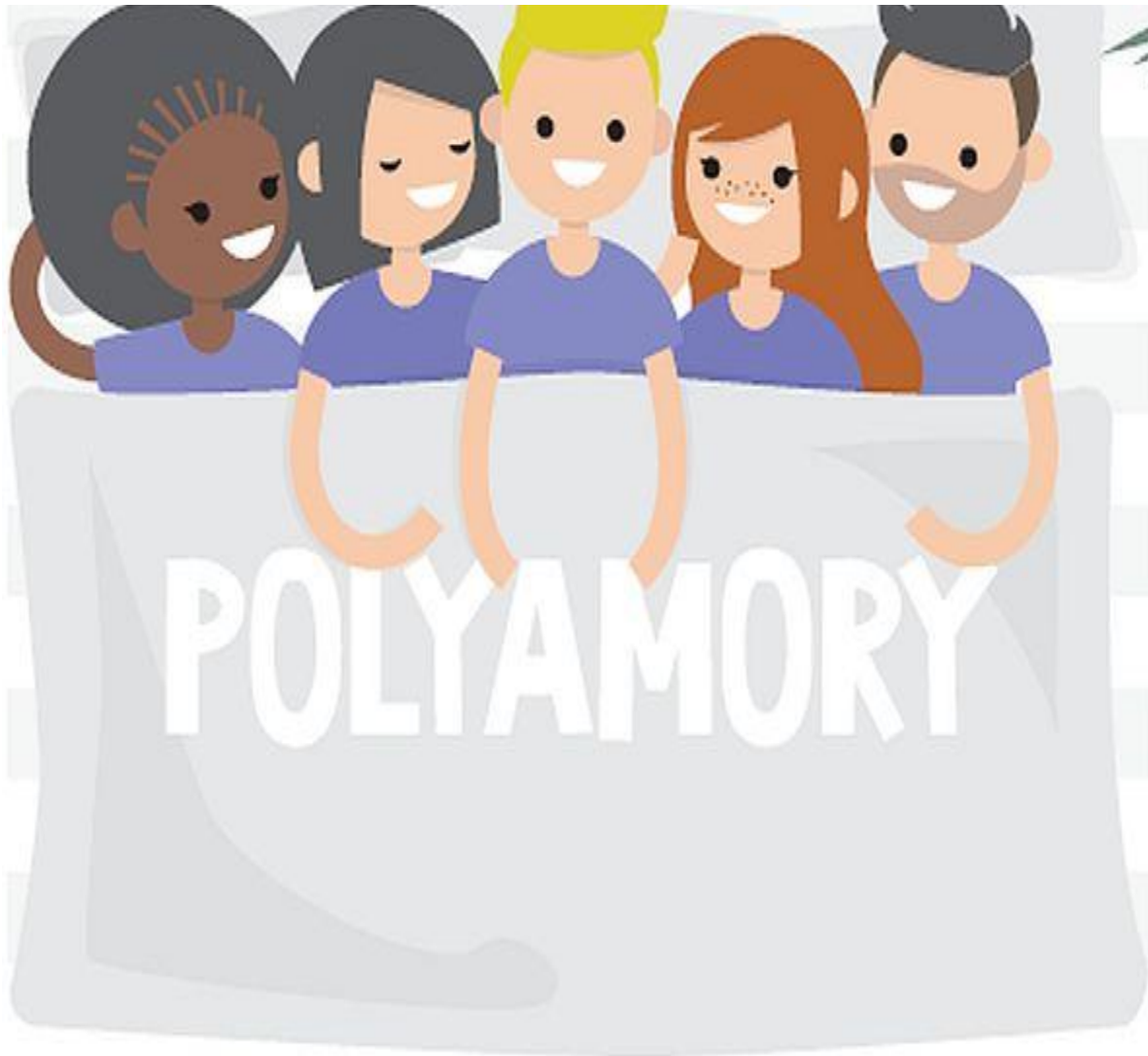


NASHVILLE STATEMENT IN A NUTSHELL

Article	Summary
1	Marriage: one man, one woman
2	Chastity outside marriage, fidelity within
3	Creationism affirmation
4	♂ ♀ God's original creation design
5	♂ ♀ God's original creation design (reproductive structure)
6	Born that way. What Jesus sez about eunuchs.
7	Self-conception defined by God's holy purpose
8	<i>....same sexfruitful lifepurity of life.</i>
9	<i>Sin distorts. Any sex outside of heterosexual marriage is immoral.</i>
10	Approval of homosexual 'immorality' and transgenderism is a sin.
11	Everything the signers of this document affirm is the truth.
12	God forgives if you "put to death sinful desires".
13	"Bathroom bills' get support here, in so many words.
14	John 3:16, basically.

Two or More: Christian Polyamory's Problematic Theology

Author: C. Daniel Motley



Apologies for sexual relations outside of marriage based on consent have been around since the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Justification of polyamorous relationships based on Trinitarian language and Jesus' charity ethic are dangerous for a proper understanding of Christian sexual ethics.

The Rise of Christian Polyamory. Christian polyamory builds on a foundation of consent but seeks to normalize the relationship by appeal to creative interpretations of Scripture and Christian theology.

Writers such as Jeff Hood provide justification for those who desire to pursue these types of relationships. Hood, a former Southern Baptist minister, states “love [is] the thrust of scripture.”⁵ He sees the polygamist relationships pursued by the patriarchs as problematic, but the arrival of Jesus signals an era of love and tolerance that supersedes the Old Testament. When confronted with Paul’s teaching on marriage, Hood dismisses him: “I find Paul’s patriarchal words to be derogatory, demeaning and dismissive.”⁶

(1) Hood mentions the Old Testament’s portrayal of polygamist relationships as a sign of God’s openness to options outside monogamy, (2) **Hood used the perceived silence of Jesus as grounds for His approval** of sexual relationships other than monogamous, heterosexual ones, and was critical of Paul’s views on sexuality, dismissing him as representative of the views of Jesus.

Christian Theology and History Is No Friend to Christian Polyamory. The increasing acceptance of polyamory by progressives and (soon-to-be former) evangelicals is a symptom of the state of the church’s witness to God’s normative pattern.

Christian history reveals that no theologian has advocated for this position at any time in history.

Half-Century Ago Truth Magazine Did Three-Part Series:

Is Polygamy Wrong? (No. 1)

We have all read and heard many words showing God's disapproval of divorce and remarriage when the divorce was obtained for most any excuse that could be devised. This results in at least two people that are living in adultery. However, most of us have failed to make very much of a study of what God's will would be concerning the polygamy practice. Polygamy is, according to Webster the "State or fact of having a plurality of wives or (rarely) of husbands, at the same time." Most of us have always thought of such a situation as sin but have failed to study the problem to know just why we think of it as a sin.

No doubt our failure to study this particular problem much in recent years is due to the fact that we live in a land where polygamy is against the law of our land, and thus we have little contact with it. When we do hear of it, the law of the land usually steps in & corrects the situation immediately. Therefore, since polygamy is not a practice here it can't very logically become a problem among the Lord's people here. Since it is no problem, we have a tendency to ignore it to a very great extent.

We make a thorough study of those problems with which we become personally associated, and only a cursory examination of others, and maybe no study at all.

It is sad, but true, that there are places where polygamy is a grave problem among the Lord's people. In any nation where such has been the practice of the people of the land prior to their contact with the gospel, it will become a problem with which the bearer of "glad tidings" must cope. The man who has "married" two or more wives and then obeys the gospel will be brought face to face with the question of what to do with the last one, or ones. The woman who is but one wife of many for the same man, then hears the truth of God and obeys it, will be faced with the question of what she must do in order to please her God.

This polygamous condition prevails in several places in the world & in some where the Lord's church has made great strides to reach great numbers of these people with the gospel.

Polygamy And Adultery

Now just what is wrong with polygamy?

What answer would you give if faced with the question by an earnest, sincere individual who is living in that condition, wants to do what is right, but is terribly concerned about those who are his responsibility because of multiple marriages? Perhaps you are ready to answer that anyone ought to know that to have sexual relations with more than one woman involves a man in adultery and God condemns adultery. However, notice the definitions that are given of the term *adultery*. Webster says it means "Voluntary sexual intercourse by a married man with other than his wife or by a married woman with another than her husband."

Thayer says the Greek word *moichao* means "to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife, to commit adultery with . . ." **Notice that these definitions make it necessary to prove that it is unlawful to have more than one wife or husband before we can condemn polygamy per se as adultery.**

Here is where we begin to encounter some difficulty in our efforts to show polygamy to be wrong, or anti-scriptural. It is a well-known fact that polygamy is recorded as being quite common among some of God's chosen people in days of the Old Testament!

In Genesis 4:19, we read of the first record of a polygamist as Lamech took two wives. There's no voice of criticism of that act in the record. Abraham took a second wife in the person of Sarai's handmaid (Genesis 16:3) and perhaps a third all at the same time by way of Keturah (Genesis 25:6 and I Chronicles 1:32). Once again there is no real criticism of the act as such in the Bible record. Such outstanding characters as Jacob (Gen. 29:31-30: 24), Elkanah (I Sam. 1:1-2), David (I Sam. 18:27 and 25:39-43), and Solomon (I Kings 11:1-3) were guilty of polygamy with no censure from scripture record regarding the polygamy itself. In fact, Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon are all outstanding men in the Old Testament record and are commended by the scriptures. To some this would seem to mean the approval of polygamy by the Lord, for they deem it unthinkable these men would have been violating the will of the Lord in the matter. Of this much we can be sure - either the Lord approved of polygamous relationship, or else these men were guilty of sin in their sexual relations with these women!

Problem Clearly Stated

As we study this problem we must strive to determine what is God's will in the matter.

Our efforts ought not to be expended in trying to prove outstanding men always did what God wanted men to do, but rather to prove what God wanted done & recognize that all men fell short of God's desire until Jesus came to live on earth. There wasn't a perfect example prior to His coming and there has been none since.

Thus, regardless of what our estimation of the character of those described in the scriptures or of those we may know and appreciate in our own personal contacts, we must not let their practices persuade us to attempt to alter or to compromise God's will on any subject.

Read Genesis 37 and the subsequent chapters. David was guilty of taking another man's wife, getting the husband drunk and finally having the husband murdered in order to cover his sin, and then continuing with the murdered man's wife as his own. Read 2 Samuel 11:2-27. These men, remember, are men who are highly commended in the scriptures, but this does not change the fact that God condemns dishonesty and deceit, drunkenness, murder, disrespect of persons and partiality, and any unlawful sexual relations. It would be just as logical to endorse these things in the life of an individual because these outstanding men practiced them as to endorse & approve polygamy in an individual's life because they practiced it.

If we discover that polygamy is condemned in the word of God it would be tragic to endorse and approve that which God has condemned.

As we think on this problem these questions are involved: Is it lawful in God's sight for a man to have more than one wife? Is a sexual relationship with a second companion unlawful only when another's companion is taken? Does a marriage ceremony make sexual relationship lawful with any unmarried persons that might be persuaded to go through such a ceremony? If there is no civil law to demand a "marriage ceremony" is the attitude of mind (just have no intention to live under the same roof and be called husband and wife) the only thing wrong with sexual relationship between a man and a number of unmarried women? Can a man ever continue in sex relationships with two women and both relationships be considered lawful?

If these questions can be answered affirmative then polygamy can very logically be lawful in the sight of God. Our laws would then be in contradiction with that which God approves & could thus be disregarded when one is beyond their jurisdiction. If any one of these specific questions must be answered in the negative then polygamy must be against the will of God.

Polygamy and Fornication

Someone may be ready to say that all we need to condemn polygamy is to show that the Lord condemns fornication; that it's a much broader term than adultery, and would thus include polygamy.

Webster defines fornication as, "1. Illicit sexual intercourse on the part of unmarried persons. cf. ADULTERY. 2. Figuratively, especially in Scripture, idolatry." Thayer says of porneia, "fornication." and "illicit sexual intercourse in general. Now, as Thayer points out, fornication covers illicit sexual intercourse in general, and God surely condemns fornication. Read I Cor. 5 :1-13 ; 6:9-11; 6:15-18. Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5 :3-6; Col. 3 :5-7; and I Thess. 3 :3-5 : However, to answer thusly is to beg the question. It still assumes that which must be proved. **We must yet prove from the scriptures that polygamy involves an illicit or unlawful intercourse. When we can do this we will have fully answered the question of our title "Is polygamy wrong?" This would mean it is fornication, and therefore sinful.**

Truth Magazine IV:2, pp. 11-13
November 1959

Is Polygamy Wrong? (No. 2)

We turn now in our study of polygamy to material contained in God's word that will specifically apply to it. Our examination will be fourfold in its nature. We will first go back to the original plan, or authority, by which the home was founded. Next, we will note the comments of Jesus on the subject of marriage. Third, we will examine some illustrations from the pen of the apostle Paul, and last we will notice some questions in an effort to clarify the whole picture in our thinking.

Genesis 2:23-24

In Genesis, chapter two, we have a record of the Lord's desire that man have "a helpmate for him," and His recognition that none of the animals that had been made was satisfactory. Thus, he caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, took one of his ribs, and made the first woman. When the Lord presented her to Adam his response was as follows: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife & they shall be one flesh." Read Genesis 2:18-24.

Here then is authority for what we have come to know as the marriage relationship. Lest someone come forth with the quibble that the statement quoted was the voice of Adam and not the voice of God, we cite the times these words are quoted in the New Testament as God's will on this matter. Note Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; and Ephesians 5:31.

Note that Genesis 2:24 emphasizes a separation and an adherence. The man who takes unto himself a wife is to separate himself from the very closest ties that had existed in his life - leave his father and his mother - and adhere to his wife. The Hebrew word here translated cleave is the word *dabaq*, and according to Young's Analytical Concordance it means to adhere to. It is translated by several different expressions in the Old Testament, but in each instance this root meaning seems to prevail. Thus, we see that it was the will of the Lord that the husband adhere to the wife. Webster says that adhere means "To stick fast or cleave, as a glutinous substance; to become joined or united, as by sticking, growth, etc.; to cling." It is impossible to conceive of a man cleaving (adhering, sticking, growing, or uniting) to two or more women at the same time. Union with one demands separation from all others.

Oneness Of Flesh

In the latter part of verse 24 another statement is made that strengthens this thought. The two (man and woman or husband and wife) shall be one flesh. In other words, these two people are no longer to be considered two bodies, but one body. Neither has the privilege and/or right of uniting with another flesh, or body. Notice Paul's usage of the relationship between Christ & the church to illustrate this point. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth & cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife & they two shall be one flesh." Ephesians 5:28-31. Just as there is, as it were, one flesh or one body in the unity of Christ and His church, there is to be oneness between man and wife.

The oneness of this union of man and wife is manifested in the offspring of this union. Their descendants are in the likeness of this united or one flesh.

To give either man or woman the right to attempt unity with another, and surely the woman would have as much right to do so as the man, is to destroy the oneness of the flesh that God intended. Likewise, the offspring of this second "union" will manifest the fact that there is no real union, but rather confusion. It is impossible for a man to become one with two different women unless those two women have first become one with each other.

Perhaps someone will question my usage of the word two as we speak of both the man and woman becoming one flesh, pointing to the fact that Genesis 2:24 says that they shall be one flesh. Some would say this leaves room for man and many women (they would cover this situation) to become one flesh. I will answer by noting that many of the very oldest versions of the Old Testament do contain the word two; that at the time there were only two - Adam and Eve; and that in quotations of this verse in the passages we noted in the New Testament the word two is used by inspiration in each and every instance. Every one of us knows that two does not mean three or more, but two and only two. Thus, there is no room for more than one woman for each man or for more than one man for each woman.

Reason For This Union

Perhaps the most telling argument to be made is yet to be noted in this matter. Notice that verse 24 begins with the word therefore, which signifies a reference to something that already has preceded, and thus a conclusion is drawn therefrom. In the prior verse Adam is recorded as stating that Eve is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. The word that's here translated woman is *ishshah*, and it literally means she-man. Adam Clarke says our word woman is a contraction from an Anglo-Saxon word which means the man with the womb. Eve was to be called *wo-man* because she was taken from the man, and because of this the man is to separate himself from his father and mother and cleave unto his wife becoming one flesh with her. But what point is being made in this thought? Because of the origin of woman (she was made from man and for man) there is to be a unity of flesh between the two in what we have come to know as marriage.

As we look back over the verses immediately preceding verses 23 and 24 of Genesis, chapter two, we find the account of the creation of Eve. Notice that the woman was created by God in order to fulfill a specific purpose.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper." The creation of Eve was thus God's way of fulfilling man's need for a helper companion. When God prepares something to fulfill a need of man we can always depend on the wisdom, judgment, and power of God. His creation will be the best that could be devised to represent His will on the matter. Any change that we attempt to make is questioning of God's omniscience and omnipotence, and thus a rebellion against the will of God.

Now what did God do in preparation for the fulfillment of the first man's need in the way of companionship and help. He made just one woman! Why not two women, or three, or even more? There is purpose in that which God does. **God intended that each man have one woman, and only one woman.** This is the pattern that God has set, and for man to deviate from this pattern is to deviate from God's revealed will on the matter. The argument made by Adam, and approved by the Lord and His apostles in the New Testament, is based upon this very point. God made one woman for the man and from the one man. Therefore, for this reason, man is to be joined together with this one woman, becoming one flesh with her.

We will illustrate this point. In God's divine arrangement there was a need for the church in which man may serve the God of heaven, and in which he may look forward to salvation in the eternity to come. The church's the bride of Christ, as taught by the New Testament in such passages as Rom. 7:1-4 and Rev. 18:23 ; 21:2; 21:9; and 22:17. Just as God's wisdom supplied only one church to be the bride of Jesus, even so God's wisdom supplied only one woman to be the wife, or bride, of Adam. It is rebellion against the Lord to try to serve Him in more churches, thus attempting to supply more than one bride for Christ. It must also be rebellion against God to try and change the revelation of His Will concerning the number of women authorized to be one man's wife.

Matthew Nineteen

Now let us turn to the New Testament and note the argument of our Lord concerning God's plan for man in marriage. In Matt. 19:3-9 we have a record of the Pharisees attempting to trap the Lord into some sort of predicament that would seem to conflict with the teaching of Moses on the subject of marriage, divorce & remarriage. Their question didn't specifically refer to polygamy, but in Jesus' answer back He makes God's plan clear.

Notice these words: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he who 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: they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore, they are no more twain, but one flesh. . . What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Verses 3-6. Notice the reason given for man leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his wife and becoming one with her - because God had made them male and female at the beginning. **He did not make them male and females** - one man & several women - but one man and one woman. Jesus himself gave this as the cause for the man cleaving to his wife - not wives - and becoming one flesh or body with her - not them.

In Matthew's account the Greek word that's translated cleave is *proskollao*. Thayer says it means to "glue upon, glue to, to join one's self to closely, cleave to, stick to." The word is a combination of the preposition *pros* and the verb *kollao*. The preposition is one that means to, toward, at, near, or hard by. The verb means "to glue, glue to, glue, cement, fasten together; hence to join or fasten firmly together. force, to join one's self to, cleave to, . . ."

No Conflict Between Christ and Moses

Now after the answer of the Lord the Pharisees thought they had surely trapped Him, and thus asked, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away?" In other words, it seemed to them that Jesus was rejecting the law Moses had given them in the past. But now, notice the Lord's answer. . . , "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it wasn't so." Verse 7ff. Now Jesus was specifically dealing with the matter of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. However, He is pointing to a principle we are concerned with as we study polygamy. He has demonstrated in verses four and five that God's original plan was for one man to have one woman as wife and vice versa. Now, as the question of divorce & remarriage is discussed the question arises to why Moses would instruct Israelites to divorce & remarry for most any excuse, and since he did so, it is argued that this must mean the sanction and approval of almighty God. How startling must have been the answer to those present when he said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

The lesson for us in our study - God permitted His chosen people to do things that were not sanctioned. Because Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon practiced something isn't necessarily proof that God sanctioned it.

In Volume 1, page 108, Vincent's Word Studies in The New Testament, he makes observation about the words translated *it was not so*. "The A. V. is commonly understood to mean, it was not so in the beginning. But that is not Christ's meaning. The verb here is in the perfect tense (denoting the continuance of past action or its results down to the present). He thus means: *Notwithstanding Moses' permission the case has not been so from the beginning until now.* The original ordinance has not been abrogated nor superseded, but continues in force." Thus, we see that Jesus cites God's original plan - only one woman for each man and only one man for each woman - and says it has never been changed.

We shall conclude with some illustrations from Paul and show they are worthless if polygamy is acceptable in God's sight, and note that one passage expressly condemns plural marriages.

Truth Magazine IV:3; pp. 1-3
December 1959

Is Polygamy Wrong? (No. 3)

We turn now in our study to two illustrations used by the apostle Paul in his letters to the church at Ephesus and the church at Rome. In Ephesians 5:22-31, part of which has already been quoted in a former article, Paul makes a comparison of the relationship that exists between the husband and the wife and the relationship that exists between Christ and the church. Notice the following expressions: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands . . . the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. . . Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Now note some questions on this passage? Of how many churches is Christ the head? How many wives then should a man be the head of? The only logical answer to both questions is one.

For how many churches did Christ give of Himself? For how many wives can a man give himself? Once again the only possible answer is one! In this passage the Apostle Paul is using the relationship that does exist between Christ and the church to illustrate the relationship that should exist between a man and his wife.

To argue that one man can have two or more wives is to argue that Christ can have two or more churches! Paul uses the sacrifice of Christ for the church as an illustration of the sacrifice a man must be willing to make for his wife. To argue that one man can make that sacrifice for two or more women is to argue that Christ can give Himself again for another church, again and again for still others. Thus, Christ would become the Savior for many churches. But we know that Christ offered Himself once for all, and could not thus sacrifice Himself again for another church.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: **Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundations of the world:**

but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Heb. 9:24-28. Read also Hebrews 9:1-12 & 10:8-14.

We also know that Jesus has but one church, the body or bride, and is the savior of only one church. Read Ephesians 4:4-6 and 5:22-23. Just as surely as it is true that that Christ has only one church, gave Himself for only one church, and is married unto only one church it is also true that man can have only one wife. Otherwise, Apostle Paul's illustration does not illustrate. If polygamy is actually acceptable unto God this illustration is meaningless and inaccurate.

Second Marriage Unlawful

Found in Romans 7:1-4 we read, "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath a husband is bound by law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So if, then while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called adulteress:

but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Notice carefully the emphasized words. If we use the implied alternate wording (It is implied because of the interchange of the words man and woman in verses one and two) it would read like this: "So then if, while his wife liveth he be married to another woman, he shall be called an adulterer!"

These words deal a death blow to polygamy. There is no wall to escape the force of this passage against it. Any man or woman who marries a second companion while the first is still alive is guilty of adultery.

The most one could possibly hope for in the light of this passage would be that God has established one set of rules for the man and another for the woman; that polyandry is sinful, but that polygamy is acceptable and pleasing to God. But remember that God has one set of rules for man and woman - Genesis 2:24.

In whatever sense she is to be one flesh with him, he is also to be one flesh with her. That was His law in the beginning and from the beginning - Matthew 19:8. Thus, there can be no hope for the polygamist. He is an adulterer. Romans 7:3.

Notice again that this illustration does not illustrate if polygamy - either polyandry or polygamy- be accepted to God. If the wife can have more than one husband, the church can be married to more than one Christ! If the man can have more than one wife, Christ can be married to more than one church! If not, why not?

In the light of this study from these passages it is evident that man rebels against God when practicing polygamy in any form.

Truth Magazine IV:4, pp. 13-15
January 1960

Predicting The Future & Mistakes Of The Past



The Next Domino: Polygamy



DAVE MILLER, Ph.D.



AMERICA'S CULTURE WAR DOCTRINAL
MATTERS MARRIAGE AND FAMILY POLYGAMY

From Issue: R&R – March 2014

In the 1960s, as the storm clouds of social and political liberalism were gathering, and leftist activists were beginning their half-century long assault on traditional American (biblical) values, cries for “tolerance” and “diversity” began to be heard. As the “New Morality” asserted itself with its insistence on “free love” & “sexual freedom,” the divorce rate in the United States suddenly exploded in 1965. Lax attitudes toward sex resulted in co-ed dormitories on university campuses, and “shacking up” (unmarried couples cohabitating) became common place. The sinister conspiracy to desensitize the American public’s commitment to Christian mores was underway.

Those who resisted this undermining of the marriage institution argued that these steps would inevitably lead to additional distortions of God’s laws for human sexuality. It was not uncommon for preachers to argue against unscriptural divorce and remarriage by insisting that repentance necessitated the termination of such illicit marriages. One proof for this contention was the fact that if two men “married” each other, they would be living in a state or condition of ongoing sin (cf. Romans 6:2; Colossians 3:7). If they desired to please God, their only recourse would be to cease their sexual relationship. Many religious people found this line of reasoning difficult to accept. “After all,” they said, “two men cannot marry each other.” But here we are, over 50 years later. We can now see that the comparison between unscriptural heterosexual marriage and homosexual marriage was correct.

The gradual softening of attitudes toward homosexuality among large numbers of Americans has led the morally upright to articulate the next logical comparison. **In keeping with the domino theory, if homosexuality is now to be accepted as normal, moral behavior—in direct conflict with Christian morality—then no grounds exists for opposing additional forms of sexual perversion: polygamy, incest, bestiality/zoophilia, pedophilia, etc.** Americans, for the most part, have not become so morally depraved as to countenance incest, bestiality, and pedophilia—though these actions are increasingly asserting themselves in a quest for social acceptance. However, the next logical step that one would expect to follow on the heels of increasing acceptance of homosexuality would be the promotion of polygamy.

Sadly, tragically, those steps have been underway for several years & are intensifying. As is often the case, morally degenerate behavior is first championed by the Hollywood left in order to mainstream behavior that was once morally repugnant to Americans. After all, we saw it coming. **When our highest court in the land issued its historically and constitutionally unprecedented ruling against all state sodomy laws (*Lawrence...*, 2003), almost instantly, a convicted Utah polygamist commenced the appeals process to have his bigamy convictions overturned.** Even Utah politicians have been fuzzy on whether the *Constitution* permits polygamy as freedom of religious expression (Fahys, 1998; Helprin, 1998). A significant push forward occurred when Tom Hanks produced a HBO television series, “Big Love,” that explored the lives of a husband, his three wives & seven children. More recently, The Learning Channel (TLC) commenced the airing in 2010 of *Sister Wives*, a so-called “**reality television series**” that centers on a man, his four wives, and their 17 children. The program is in its fourth season and continues to draw strong ratings.

And now, a U.S. District Court judge in Utah has effectively struck down provisions in Utah law that criminalize polygamy, claiming that such restrictions are unconstitutional (“Federal Judge...,” 2013; *The Times...*, 2013). Incredibly, among other allegations, the judge claims that previous bans on polygamy in America were the result of a coercive “majoritarian consensus” that arose from “blatant racism” and the mistaken belief that Western morality (Christian view of marriage) is superior to the “civilizationally and racially inferior” “non-European” peoples of the East (*Brown v. Buhman*, pp. 11ff.). Another glaring instance of politically correct gobbledygook gone to seed.

The fact that such nonsense and moral deterioration was predictable and inevitable in no way reduces the shock and repugnance that must surely be felt by those Americans who still retain some semblance of moral sensibility and ethical decency. Is there no end to the incessant parade of depravity and moral degeneracy to which the American public must be subjected? “. . .nor did they know how to blush” (Jer. 6:15; 8:12).



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Keep on Polygamin'...



ARONCHES
TO
CRUMB
FACED
THE SPOTAZAKETRIEUNE '05

Christian Values That Made America Great

In the 1885 Utah Territory case *Murphy v. Ramsey*, the Court said:

For certainly no legislation can be supposed more wholesome and necessary in the founding of a free, self-governing commonwealth, fit to take rank as one of the coordinate States of the Union, than that which seeks to establish it on the basis of **the idea of the family, as consisting in and springing from the union for life of one man and one woman** in the holy estate of matrimony; the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization; the best guaranty of that reverent morality which is the source of all beneficent progress in social and political improvement.

The only “sure foundation” of civilization and the best security for morality (which, in turn, initiates progress toward social and political improvement) is **the family** defined as **one man for one woman for life**. But now the foundation is crumbling and the guaranty is failing. Hence, as our morals continue to unravel, we ought fully to expect to see the erosion of all that is stable and noble in our civilization.

Unlike today’s liberal judges who legislate from the bench, the high court did not fall for the “freedom of religion” ploy, but vehemently disagreed and issued a sweeping repudiation of polygamy:

Polygamy has always been odious among the northern and western nations of Europe, and, until the establishment of the Mormon Church, was almost exclusively a feature of the life of Asiatic and of African people. At common law, the second marriage was always void (*2 Kent, Com. 79*), and from the earliest history of England polygamy has been treated as an offence against society... From that day to this we think *it safely said* **there never has been a time in any State of the Union when polygamy hasn’t been an offence against society**, cognizable by the civil courts and punishable with more or less severity. In the face of all this evidence, **it is impossible to believe that the constitutional guaranty of religious freedom was intended to prohibit legislation in respect to this most important feature of social life.**

Marriage, while from its very nature being a sacred obligation, is nevertheless, in most civilized nations, a civil contract, and usually regulated by law. **Upon it society may be said to be built**, and out of its fruits spring social relations and social obligations and duties, with which government is necessarily required to deal.

Such legal declarations reflected the views of the vast majority of Americans for the first 180+ years of our national existence. Indeed, for most of American history, courts have had no trouble recognizing and reaffirming the idea of the family and the historic definition of marriage: one man for one woman for life. After all, this foundational premise was drawn directly from the Bible (Genesis 2:24, Matt. 19:1-12).

In still another case, several men who wished to register to vote in the Territory of Idaho took the preparatory oath that required them to swear that they neither practiced polygamy nor belonged to any organization that encouraged its practice. Yet, when the men were discovered to be members of the Mormon Church, they were brought to trial and found guilty of procuring voting rights unlawfully—though the defense attorney argued that the oath constituted a “law respecting an establishment of religion” in violation of the First Amendment to the *Constitution*. Neither the District Court nor the Supreme Court accepted such fallacious and historically inaccurate thinking. Instead, they reaffirmed the essentiality of the Christian moral framework as the basis of civil society:

For the courts today, and Americans at large, to tolerate the airing all across the land of television programs that dignify the practice of polygamy is to demonstrate not only the loss of common sense, but also the extent to which moral bankruptcy has become popular. The destruction of marriage and the family, the degrading of women and the debasing of men, are now the order of the day.

Polygamy is simply one more indication of our country’s half-century long venture into decadence and paganism, moving us ever closer to a complete moral, spiritual, and religious breakdown—the inevitable collapse of our civilization.

In still another court case, the State Supreme Court of Pennsylvania declared the attitude of the Founders and the nation as a whole in its utter rejection of pagan morality:

They never thought of tolerating paganism on the ground of liberty of conscience. **They did not mean that the pure, moral customs which Christianity has introduced, should be without legal protection,** because some pagan, or other religionist, or anti-religionist, should advocate, as matter of conscience, **concubinage, polygamy, incest, free love, and free divorce,** or any of them. **No Christian people could possibly allow such things...** Every Christian man is sure, that it is his religion that has suppressed the pagan customs just alluded to, and that to it is due the large advance in justice, benevolence, truth, and purity that belongs to modern civilization; that it has purified and elevated family relations; that it has so elevated the moral standards of society, that the indecencies, and cruelties, and cheats, of paganism are now condemned by custom and by law, as crimes (*Commonwealth v. Nesbit*, 1859, emp. added).

Little could a mid-nineteenth century Supreme Court have realized that their vivid description of **paganism** would someday serve as an accurate depiction of the present moral condition of America! They could not have imagined that a federal judge would one day ridicule opposition to raw paganism and moral depravity by characterizing it as racism and an unjustified sense of “superiority.” Yet, incredibly, here we are. “Gay” marriage, now polygamy, with incest, bisexuality, pedophilia, polyamory, polyandry, group marriage, transvestism, transsexuality, bestiality and a host of additional degraded, horrifying perversions in tow.

Be assured, this ongoing, headlong rush down the precipice of moral decay is hastening the demise of the Republic. It beckons brazen encroachments of additional anti-Christian religion—like Islam with its full-fledged sanction of polygamy (*Surah 4:3*). It opens even further the floodgates of the sea of sexual corruption that continues to erode the foundations of civilization and drown men in perdition.

We Have Been Here Before With ~One-Fourth Of New Englanders Buying Bigamy Marriage Licenses

POLYGAMY IN NEW ENGLAND(1882)

It is only a careless student of American society who would allow himself to be misled by the mere use of the word *polygamy*, in application to the social usages of New England and of Utah, into supposing that these usages are alike in all particulars.

But on the other hand, in some striking particulars the two forms of polygamy, that of New England and that of Utah, depart from each other. In the first place, polygamy in Utah is unlawful. In the New England States, on the contrary, polygamy is distinctly instituted by act of legislature; and the polygamous marriages, instead of being "sealed" in some private sacristy of a religious sect, are authorized by the highest judicial officers of the State under the seal of its Superior Court, a dignity which is not bestowed by these commonwealths on ordinary Christian wedlock. The concubinage thus authorized is usually blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and declared to be Christian marriage, by a minister of the Christian religion, which (as it can hardly be necessary to inform the reader) is the prevailing religion of the New England States. This singular rite is frequently made the occasion of a good deal of social festivity and merry-making. The perfect solemnity of visage with which the ecclesiastic goes through his part of declaring that, in the name of the Lord, to be Christian marriage which the Lord himself declares to be adultery, tends to impart to the affair a *buffo* aspect that may naturally minister to the hilarity of the guests and spectators.

Another and perhaps more important point of difference between the New England and the Utah—perhaps it would be better to say the Puritan and the Mormon—polygamies, is this: that the Mormon polygamy is simultaneous, and the Puritan polygamy is consecutive. The Mormon polygamy is quite after the old patriarchal pattern. It does not require one to be “off with the old love” as a condition of being “on with the new.” The fresher youth and beauty of the latest acquisition to the harem may indeed crowd out her predecessors from a proportionate share in the husband’s affections. But the Mormon usage still permits, if it does not require, a support and a place of honor in the family to be conceded to the senior wife. And herein the Mormon usage would appear, to a superficial observer, to have the advantage, in point of humanity, over the Puritan institution, which requires ordinarily, under severe penalties, that the first wife, with or without her children, and with or without provision for her support, as the case may be, shall be put out into the street before the new wife is received.

The discussion has already brought before us a *third* characteristic of the Puritan, as distinguished from the Mormon polygamy—its impartiality. The system in vogue at Salt Lake City has many historical precedents and contemporary examples. It is the patriarchal or the Turkish polygamy, which constitutes the household with plurality of wives under the headship of one husband. It looks down, no doubt, with scorn on the usages of some of the most undeveloped tribes of savages, in which that condition prevails which is known as polyandry—the marriage of one woman to a plurality of husbands. It is such a common device of a guilty conscience to comfort itself by finding some lower type of degradation than its own on which it can look down!

It is well for Mormonism to have that conceit taken out of it by finding that the polyandry which it delights in despising is really an organic part of that civilization which claims to be the foremost in Christendom.

The laws of the different States with reference to this general subject differ, of course, in detail and phraseology. Practically the substance of them may be stated thus: 1. Simultaneous polygamy is interdicted. 2. Consecutive polygamy is interdicted except by license from a magistrate. 3. When the two parties to a marriage consent to ask a license to marry again at their discretion, there is no difficulty in obtaining it. 4. Even when one of the parties is reluctant, the fact is not ordinarily a practical hindrance to the other party to get from the court the desired license for bigamy. 5. **The bigamous or polygamous marriage, if duly licensed, is held by the State to be in all respects equally honorable with Christian wedlock.** It must be conceded to the honor of these laws that they are not chargeable with favoritism towards any class in society. There is no indication in them of that blemish upon the usages of Turkey or of Deseret—that they make polygamy the luxury of the rich. The license-fees are trifling, and for the slight professional work involved there is so lively a competition among gentlemen of the bar that the expense is kept down to a moderate figure. The most serious cost of bigamy is one not really necessary—the increased fee paid to the officiating clergyman in consideration of the awkwardness of his position and the strain upon his feelings. But this is a mere matter of compliment, or perhaps religious zeal, on the part of the bridegroom; for the case is rare indeed when five or ten dollars will not procure, for such an occasion, the services of a minister of the gospel, of unimpeached orthodoxy and good and regular standing.

The question will be raised by some reader, to what extent the facilities for polygamy thus offered by the law are actually utilized by the people,—to what extent the people of New England are actual polygamists, as compared with the population of other polygamous countries. An off-hand answer, given from general impression, is that actual polygamy prevails among the New-Englanders to a greater extent than among the Mohammedans, but to a less extent than among the Mormons. But the basis for an exact comparison is wanting, for lack of statistics from Turkey and from Utah. Even in the New England States the statistics are defective. They give us the number of permits for bigamy issued by the courts in each year; and they give us the total number of marriages.

According to these figures, the annual issue of bigamy permits in the State of Connecticut (which is a fairly representative State, in this respect) is something like one tenth of the total number of marriages. But a considerable proportion of the marriages in New England take place among a class of foreign population the large increase of which is looked on by the representatives of the original Puritan stock with much solicitude as dangerous to morals and religious purity. The people of this class do not easily keep pace with the rapid march of civilization among the population generally, and are obstinate monogamists. Leaving these out of the calculation, the number of permits for bigamy annually issued is to the total number of marriages in the proportion of about one to eight—varying in different States, and fluctuating from time to time, with a general and rapid tendency to increase. Each one of these permits, however, is good for two persons, so that practically where this ratio exists there is one permit for every four marriages.

But these facts must not be hurried too fast to a conclusion. Not all the permits are used by both parties. According to the common testimony of practitioners in this sort of law, the permit is generally sought for with a view to immediate use, either by one party or by both. But *how* general this is, and what proportion of the permits are followed by a double bigamy and what proportion only by a single one, the State governments take no interest in inquiring. The permits are issued in a very off-hand way by the courts, and what is done with them is a matter of indifference to the public. Another element of doubt affecting the statistical question consists in the frequency of interchanges of partners. When permits are issued to Mr. and Mrs. A. and to Mr. and Mrs. B., and A. marries B.'s wife and B. marries A.'s wife, it is obvious that this mutual arrangement (which is entirely honorable in the eye of the law) reduces the number of bigamies from a possible four to two. Still another element of uncertainty arises from the occasional and not very unfrequent remarriage to each other of the same parties.

The permits are so cheaply, easily, and expeditiously obtained that married persons who have not definitively made up their minds as to their future intentions are known to apply for them as “convenient to have in the house;” altho parties receiving the bigamy permit are not expected to live with each other thereafter without a new ceremony corresponding to marriage. This curious ceremony of marrying over again persons already married is one of the most interesting and characteristic usages of this peculiar people. The rite is generally celebrated by a minister of the Christian religion, but sometimes by a magistrate. One of the most striking instances of this kind is that of a worthy couple in a rural town in the Connecticut valley, to whom the Superior Court, with indefatigable good-nature, has three times over issued unrestricted license to enter into bigamous relations with other parties, and who, from no motive but a beautiful constancy, have declined to avail themselves of the liberty, and are still living together after having been four times married to each other. But cases like these, however delightful to the philanthropist, are annoying to the statistician, for they confuse the figures.

Altogether, the nearest that we can safely come to a statement of the ratio of polygamies to the total number of marriages, among the New England population of native stock in the State named, is that it is somewhere between one to eight and one to four. This estimate includes only the legal polygamies. The unlicensed or criminal polygamies are a class by themselves, and are generally regarded in good society as not only unlawful but immoral. Rarely, if ever, can an acknowledged bigamist maintain his position in society and his good standing in the church, unless he can show his authorization from the Superior Court.

In view of the facility with which such authorization is granted, it is felt, not unreasonably, that a person desiring to indulge in bigamy is without excuse for not complying with the prescribed formalities. In nothing is the peculiarity—one might almost say the eccentricity—of Puritan society more oddly illustrated than in the procedure to be followed by a man wishing to be authorized by the court to exchange wives.

By all means the first thing to be done, when practicable, is to secure the first wife's consent; and when he is indeed enamored of another, this is often an easy matter. Consent obtained, by far his best course is to present his claims on the favor of the court, not in his own person, but in the person of his wife. The drollest thing about the procedure is this: that as a condition of this favor he is required to plead, by the mouth of his wife, not that he is a person of good moral character, nor that his conduct as a husband and father has been unexceptionable, but that he has been guilty of adultery, or of intolerable cruelty towards his wife, or of habitual intemperance, or of some other very reprehensible conduct in the family relation. To be sure, the allegation and proof required are hardly more than formal, the refusal of a petition thus presented being almost unheard-of; but the form is rigorously exacted. An intending bigamist who should send his wife into court with the representation that he was a man of blameless character whose conduct as a husband was above reproach, so that, having fallen in love with another woman, he might be reasonably expected to make her happy, and that therefore the customary permit ought to be issued,—would find his case turned out of court in a very unceremonious manner, perhaps with some strong expression of horror from the bench. Let him now, being better advised, send back his wife to certify, with some show of proof, that he has complied with the requirements of the law by criminal intercourse with his intended future wife or with some other woman, or by inflicting violence on his present wife, and his wishes will be promptly complied with. The court will issue its decree to the effect that, having been found a faithless, cruel, or otherwise worthless husband, he is accordingly authorized to marry at his discretion any other woman that will take him, subject to none of the pains or penalties of bigamy.

A much more painful case arises when the wife, for sentimental, or moral, or other reasons, declines to accede to the proposed arrangement. It would seem as if the polygamy laws of New England had failed to provide adequately for this contingency. For they seem to impose upon the person contemplating bigamy a course of serious severity as a *conditio sine qua non*. It says, for substance, to the candidate, "It will be necessary for you to make your home a hell upon earth for a certain time, until the endurance of your wife is exhausted;

if you can add to intolerable cruelty some flagrant evidence of your adultery, it will strengthen your case with the court; if your wife will not consent, like a reasonable woman, to bring your case into court in an amicable way, she certainly will have to do it, sooner or later, in a hostile way; and you will do well to furnish her with the materials of a good case." Persons unacquainted with the course of New England practice might be apprehensive that the course thus indicated as the only way, in the case described, to a lawful and peaceful bigamy might bring one (as it certainly would under some governments) into collision with the civil or criminal law. A man of ordinary nerve may well brave the mild form of popular indignation which prevails in an orderly New England community, when he comes out of court triumphantly bearing the prize which he all along has had in view—the permit for bigamy—and which the indignant hostility of his wife has procured for him just as effectively as her friendly collusion could possibly have done. The exacting of these cumbrous conditions of the favor of the court is not found to be really a hindrance to the institution of polygamy; for they are such as can in almost all cases be complied with. But it seems to be felt by many that they are not only unnecessary but absurd.

Let it be remarked, before passing to the next topic, that one advantage that might accrue from mitigating the excessive rigor of the law in this particular would be to obviate the legal fiction under which, according to the present system, the person who wants the bigamy permit is, in many if not most cases, not the person who applies for it. It makes a strong appeal to the gallantry of the average legislator to be told that two thirds of the petitions for permits come, not from husbands, but from wives. He fails, no doubt, to see that a provision of doubtful expediency **imposes on the polygamously disposed party the necessity of making life unpleasant to the other party; and imposes on the latter the *onus* of seeming to be the petitioner for the polygamy papers.**

The rank in which the polygamy of New England most prevails is to be found in the great middle-class stratum.

It is in this strong, educated, intelligent middle stratum that the polygamous laws and usages of New England are found to be most deeply intrenched. But it is safe to say that its position here would be less strong if it were not for the outposts which it holds in the very highest circles of influence. One would suppose that the last circle of society for it to reach would be the church, and the last region in the church would be the faculties of theology, and the last point in the theological faculty would, for obvious reasons, be the chair of New Testament interpretation. But until within a few months this chair in an orthodox theological seminary of the dominant Christian sect of New England has been occupied by a man who during the period of his incumbency sued for separation and bigamy permits for himself and wife, and (of course) secured them. The fact did not interrupt his tenure of his professorship nor the course of his official duties—unless, perhaps, that he would glide a little lightly, in the course of his expositions, over the nineteenth chapter of Matthew and the parallel passages. So far as known, he continues still in good standing with the clergy of his State, and the clergy of his State with the clergy of the order throughout the country. And this is a clergy exceptionally jealous of deviations from right. If the person in question has been proved unsound on the definition of *αἰωνίος*, something energetic would have been done about it. **The same clergy are unanimously and conscientiously opposed to polygamy—in Utah.**

There is some reason to fear that the entirely dispassionate consideration of polygamy in New England may be hindered by sectional jealousy toward that highly favored region and people. For whatever view may be taken of the merits of **this institution of consecutive polygamy** as established by law, there is no doubt that they are mainly to be accredited to the New England people of Puritan stock. And when the New England people migrate, they carry with them the cherished usages of their home. Their orators and preachers delight to dwell on the distinguishing glories of the “New England zone” over which the tide of emigration has flowed due West, marking its course everywhere with churches, schools, and colleges.

It is not only that they fix the legal guaranties of these liberties in the statute-books of the new States: they set to the less favored people round about the example of using their liberties. **In the Western Reserve, peopled almost exclusively from New England, polygamy of the identical Puritan type is rife.** We find in Wayne County, Michigan, according to a recent estimate, for every six marriages one application for a double bigamy permit. It is often boasted that the qualities of the New England stock are intensified by transplant into the Western soil.

At a hearing before the Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut Legislature, several distinguished lawyers gave their views on bigamy permitting. The Honorable George Sumner, ex-mayor of Hartford, took high ground against any reduction of existing facilities. He depicted out of a feeling heart the wretchedness of life to one restricted by a rigorous system of monogamy to one wife, and she uncongenial to him; and the comfort and delight afforded by the liberal laws that enabled one who had had bad luck with one experiment in marriage to discontinue it in favor of a second or third. **He quite derided the idea of any judgment to come or punishment in another world, and grew absolutely hilarious as he remarked that "this life was the only life that he knew anything about;" and so far as enjoyment in this life was concerned, he was confident that the laws were not a particle too easy.**

Polygamy as a legal institution has existed in New England for much less than two generations, and the present *per annum* and *per cent* of polygamous marriages represents an irregular but rapid increase which is continually going on. **The leaven has only begun to work. Old traditions and prejudices do not disappear at once. The old-fashioned law and gospel conspired to repress with severe and solemn sanctions, in the mind of husband or wife, the risings of mutual anger or dislike, or the first wanderings of adulterous lust. The new institution has changed all that. The traditionary phrase "until death shall part you" still lingers, by force of habit, in most marriage formulas; but from the wedding-day, and from before it, the statute-book whispers intelligibly in the ear of bridegroom and of bride, "If you find that you don't like each other, or if you find that you like some one else better, there is a cheap, easy, quiet, and perfectly respectable way out of it."**

Withal the genial gospel preached so persuasively and amid so much applause in the new State-House of Connecticut by the Honorable Mr. Sumner, ex-mayor of Hartford, in which he disposed with such easy jocularly of the notion of future punishment for sin, and extolled the superior delights of what the New Testament somewhat harshly characterizes as adultery, in comparison with Christian wedlock, is a gospel sure of making converts, even from the lips of a less enthusiastic preacher. The carnal mind has no enmity to it whatever. The friends of progress, in the direction in which progress is now tending in New England, may count with confidence on the future. The time is not far distant when the ratio will be not, as now in some parts of New England, two bigamy permits to every eight marriages, but a much higher ratio. Progress in this direction is so rapid as naturally to alarm timid minds. But a calm faith in evolution, a well-grounded confidence in the perfectibility of human nature, a serene and abiding trust in Stuart Mill, can witness unappalled the change that shall make polygamy the rule in New England, and Christian wedlock the exception. Even minds unfriendly to the change may comfort themselves in view of the incidental resulting benefits. Whether it result happily or disastrously to New England, the experiment will be one of great value to social science, and the conservative and theological folk who are shocked at it as both sinful and ruinous ought to be able to find comfort for themselves in the favorite New England dogma concerning “willingness to be damned for the glory of God.”

LEONARD WOOLSEY BACON.²

² Bacon, L. W. (1882). [Polygamy in New England](#). *The Princeton Review*, 2, 39–57.

THE CASE AGAINST POLYGAMY

John Witte Jr. argues that the sexual revolution will not overturn monogamy.

The Hebrew Bible counts more than two dozen polygamists among the heroes of the faith. The Mosaic law countenanced polygamy in cases of seduction, enslavement, poverty, famine, or premature death of one's married brother. The New Testament does not contain an explicit prohibition of polygamy, though it implies one in Jesus's talk of two becoming one flesh in marriage and in Paul's instruction that a church leader should be "the husband of one wife." But it was the pagan Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. who first clearly denounced polygamy to be a form of "domestic tyranny." And it was a pagan Roman emperor who first criminalized polygamy in 258 A.D., more than a century before the establishment of Christianity and nearly a millennium before church authorities issued comparably firm proscriptions of their own.

Arguments against polygamy based on the generative end of the sexual act do not at all apply to polygamy, however. Procreation is *enhanced* by having multiple wives. A single male having many mates is not only known in nature but is the predominant form of reproduction in most animals, including more than 95 percent of all higher primates. St. Augustine and later Western sages such as Hugo Grotius thought that, even if proscribed, one man with many wives is a "natural" form of procreation.

The arguments against polygamy based on nature have a foundation other than the procreative end of the sexual act. Nearly eight centuries ago, Thomas Aquinas put forward what would become a commonplace of Western thought and law thereafter, especially among Enlightenment liberals and common-law jurists. Human beings, Thomas argued, are distinct among the animals in having perennial sex drives rather than annual mating seasons. They produce vulnerable babies who need the support of both their mother and father for an extended period. Women bond naturally with children; men do so only if they are certain of their paternity. Humans have learned by natural inclination and hard experience that monogamy best accords with human needs.

Later Protestant writers argued that polygamy violates not only the natural law but also the natural rights of wives and children. Calvinist theologian and jurist Theodore Beza stated this argument clearly almost five centuries ago. Taking the Ten Commandments as his guide, he argued that polygamy violates the commandments against adultery, theft, false testimony, and coveting all at once.

Each of these natural duties has a correlative natural right that polygamy breaches. It violates the first wife's natural rights to marital fidelity and trust, to ongoing marital property and material security, and to contractual expectations and reliance on her husband's fidelity to the marriage contract. It runs counter to the children's natural rights to proper support, inheritance, and the undiluted care, nurture, and education of their father and mother together. And polygamy breaches a neighbor's rights to have an equal opportunity to marry without having most of the eligible women hoarded in one harem. Polygamy was thus doubly unnatural, Beza concluded—a violation of natural law and natural rights alike.

Enlightenment liberals and common-law jurists from the seventeenth century onward drew directly on these traditional arguments, even if they rejected Christianity. Most liberals posited natural rights as “inherent” in human nature or the state of nature rather than commanded in the Bible or the order of creation. But they came to the same conclusion: **Polygamy violates the natural rights of women and children.**

Seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke, for example, regarded polygamy as a violation of the natural-born equality of men and women, as well as the natural rights of children to be properly nurtured and fully supported by both their mother and father. **For Locke, the natural laws favoring monogamy trumped any religious arguments for polygamy, and he would allow no religious liberty exemptions from criminal bans of it.** A century later, leading common-law jurist William Blackstone condemned polygamy as a “singularly barbaric” violation of the reciprocal natural rights and duties of husbands and wives. Polygamy, for him, was a grave offense against public health and public order.

Scottish philosophers Henry Home and David Hume argued that polygamy would breed servile submissiveness in children. Children of polygamy—whose mothers are deprecatd, whose stepmothers are hostile, and whose fathers are distant and distracted—simply cannot learn the healthy balances of authority and liberty, equality and respect, and property and responsibility that they need to survive, let alone thrive, in a democratic society. For Home and Hume, and many American writers who echoed them, polygamy undermines the common good.

The Western tradition developed another line of argument against polygamy that turned on its potential to do unjust harms. Some 1,800 years ago, ancient Jewish rabbis and early Church Fathers alike warned that polygamy was **“trouble”**—the literal meaning of the Hebrew term for a **“second wife”** (*tzarah*). They observed that it brought grief to the most noble and God-fearing men and women of the Bible—Abraham with Sarah and Hagar, Jacob with Rachel and Leah, Elkanah with Hannah and Peninnah. **These biblical polygamists suffered bitter rivalry between their wives, bitter disputes among their children over inheritance, deadly competition among the half-siblings that ultimately escalated to incest, adultery, kidnapping, enslavement, banishment, and more.** Think of the great King David who lustfully murdered Bathsheba’s husband to add her to his already ample harem. Or think of King Solomon with his thousand wives and concubines who led him into idolatry, and whose children ended up raping, abducting, and killing each other, precipitating civil war in ancient Israel.

A millennium later, Bishop William of Auvergne, commenting on Middle Eastern Muslim polygamy, argued that this **“bent love”** harmed women, because they are **reduced to rival slaves** within the household, exploited for sex with an increasingly sterile and distracted husband, sometimes deprived of the children they do produce, and forced to fend for themselves and their children when other women and children are added to the household against their wishes. Children are harmed because their chances of birth and survival are diminished by their calculating fathers who might contracept, abort, smother, or sell them, and by their mothers who sometimes lack the resources, support, and protection to bring them to term, let alone to adulthood.

Men are harmed because they do not have the time, energy, or resources to support their polygamous households and because their minds and hearts cannot rest if they are always on the lookout for dangerous men abroad who might abduct their women. Finally, societies are harmed because polygamy results in too many unattached men who become menaces to public order and morality. Moreover, the complex extended families create ad hoc seats of domestic power based on numeric superiority rather than legitimate political succession or election.

European critics of polygamy faced a real-life illustration of its dangers in the sixteenth century. In the town of Münster, a group of young men, giddy with lust and **theocratic pretensions**, combined charisma, brutality, and biblical platitudes to force a gullible Christian community to adopt their utopian vision of biblical polygamy. Old couples were forced to end their marriages and start again. Young women were coerced into premature and unwanted marriages. Husbands collected wives like spiritual trophies, measuring their faith by the size of their harems and nurseries. Wives were used and then spurned when they were pregnant or nursing or when the next wife was added to the harem. Polygamous households became filled with bickering wives and children, who were then cowed into silence with threats of the sword. Wives who still objected, or who rejected their husband's sexual advances to protest the unwanted polygamy, were summarily executed. Dissenters and critics were banished or executed.

We can see a similar pattern of dysfunction, albeit less flagrant, in the polygamous communities scattered about the Western world. They feature higher-than-average incidences of arranged, coerced, and underage marriages of young girls to older men; rape and statutory rape; and wife and child abuse. The women and children in polygamous households are often socially and educationally deprived. Young boys and poorer men have to compete for fewer brides. Oversized polygamous families commonly abuse social welfare programs, and polygamous communities are often socially isolated and combine religious and communal authority in coercive ways.

In the non-Western world, most polygamious cultures also feature social dysfunctions. After completing an exhaustive study of polygamy in 170 nations, Brown University political scientist Rose McDermott concludes, regardless of “whether it is practiced in a Western democracy or sub-Saharan Africa, **polygamy produces harmful effects that ripple throughout a society.**” Polygamious communities suffer from increased levels of physical and sexual abuse against women, increased rates of maternal mortality, shortened female life expectancy, lower levels of education for girls and boys, lower levels of equality for women, higher levels of discrimination against women, increased rates of trafficking in women, and decreased levels of civil and political liberties for all citizens. The law’s prohibition of polygamy would seem based on a sound judgment about the harm its practice inflicts on the most vulnerable.

Skeptics of this line of reasoning are quick to point out that monogamous households are filled with many ugly harms, too: wife and child abuse, infidelity, abandonment, welfare abuses, and more. If religious communities isolate their members, making them more vulnerable to abuse, why not make polygamy more mainstream, transparent, and accountable? If *Big Love* and *Sister Wives* can make the polygamious family work, why can’t everyone else be given a fair chance?

But this is to build the law upon the unique resources available to the powerful, not the more typical needs of the vulnerable. We can imagine a legal regime allowing polygamy when three or more well-educated parties—similar in wealth, ability, and opportunity, eyes and doors wide open—choose to enter into a union. They have the wherewithal to calculate and negotiate the costs and benefits, and the advantages and disadvantages. More important still, they can protect themselves through prenuptial and postnuptial contracts and through their own independent means, hiring lawyers, accountants, private investigators, and security guards to help them if their partners betray or endanger them or their children. For these exceptional sorts of people with lots of resources, the state prohibition of polygamy hardly seems necessary.

But the law must answer to the needs of the typical case, not the exceptional one. And throughout Western history and still today, the typical case of polygamy too often involves vulnerable parties who do not have the knowledge, resources, or connections to secure the kind of self-protection and self-help available to a “sister wife.” Every Western nation has general laws on the books against wife and child abuse; coerced marriage and statutory rape of young girls; depriving children of food, shelter, and education; welfare abuse; and more. Yet these laws provide too little support and protection for those made vulnerable by polygamy. **It’s not a sound principle of justice to make vulnerable people more vulnerable just to accommodate the desires of the powerful to undertake experiments in domestic living.**

Traditional laws against polygamy are more than just prudential prophylactics against harm. They also play an important symbolic role and teaching function. Laws against polygamy have been part of a broader set of family laws designed to support the classical Western ideal of the monogamous family. Aristotle and the Roman Stoics called the union of husband and wife, and parent and child, the “foundation of the polis” and “the private font of public virtue.”

According to the Church Fathers, the monogamous household is the “seedbed” of the city, “the force that welds society together.” Early modern Protestants and Anglo-American common lawyers spoke of the stable marital household as a “little church,” a “little commonwealth,” the first school of love and justice, nurture and education, charity and citizenship. John Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers treated marriage as “the first contract,” and the “deepest font” of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

In our time, the law has backed away from many traditional norms for sex, marriage, and family life, reflecting a social consensus that shrinks from moral absolutes and encourages a nonjudgmental attitude toward personal decisions about sex and relationships. Nevertheless, the teaching function of the law remains. We still “nudge” citizens toward certain ways of life. The state does not require its citizens to get married, but it encourages them to do so. And while the state rarely prosecutes polygamy simply on its own, it puts in place powerful deterrents. There is no funding, facilitation, licenses, or welfare support for polygamy. When combined with other crimes, polygamy is still prosecuted.

In the aftermath of *Obergefell*, we can be tempted to think polygamy is inevitable. **The reasoning the Supreme Court majority gave for finding a constitutional right to same-sex marriage could be deployed to find a right to plural marriage.** Our legal systems in the West historically censured homosexuality and polygamy, but for very different reasons, and the reasons against polygamy remain in place. Perhaps this stems from the fact that the Christian culture in the West had to grapple with the role of polygamy in the Old Testament—and that Christian and para-Christian sects have revived it on occasion. Whatever its cause, our legal tradition is not nearly as unmanned in the face of polygamy as it seems to be when it comes to the sexual revolution more generally.

At this point all Western nations continue to proscribe polygamy, even as they have accepted sexual liberty and, in many places, same-sex marriage. There are good reasons for this. Unlike gay rights, which can be portrayed as an expansion of freedom at no cost to others, the ample dangers posed by polygamy, dangers traditional commentators point out, still seem real. **Our collective sense that polygamy is wrong rests on sound intuitions about ways in which polygamy rewards the powerful—men capable of winning the competition for wives—while harming the vulnerable, which includes women, children, and men less competitive in a winner-take-all mating market.**

We have every reason to believe this presumption against polygamy will continue, regardless of how liberalized we become in other matters of sex and family structure. A great deal of evidence shows that most men and women alike are instinctively attracted to long-term, single-partner intimacy and instinctively repulsed and angered if forced to share their bed and partner with a third party. Despite our wide cultural acceptance of sexual liberty in the West, sexual infidelity still breaks marriages and intimate relationships more than any other cause. **Moreover, over the centuries, successful societies have consistently migrated from polygamy toward monogamy, but never in the other direction.** Perhaps I'm wrong, and the modern sexual revolution will yield a polygamist's *Obergefell*. But if so, that will mean that we don't care all that much about protecting the vulnerable.³

³ Witte, J., Jr. (2016). [The Case against Polygamy](#). *First Things*, (262), 43–48.

Acts 17:30

**Therefore having overlooked the
times of ignorance, God is now
declaring to men that all men
everywhere should repent**

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Acts 17:30

**all men
everywhere
should repent**

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ANALYTICAL SUMMATION & INSIGHTFUL CONCLUSIONS

When I was a youngster I enjoyed the occasional Sunday Sermon referencing O.T. Polygamy. This was because - sitting around the Sunday Table in family discussion - I delighted in revisiting my father's fantasies of what he would do if he had been a rich man living under the O.T. Patriarchal System. He would tell us kids - with my mother in close earshot that he would add to his harem two more wives – a blond and a redhead – my mother being a brunette - to round out an extended large family. Mother always took the bait - pretended to get mad – and we all laughed. This was nothing but a private joke with my dad – none of us could have imagined the depths of depravity to which our society has now sunk. The U.S. Supreme Court rationale in a recent case upholding same-sex marriage is having a Petitionary Domino Effect that will inevitably lead to a favorable ruling as regards Polygamous Marriage – the next domino.

THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE DISCONCERTING BECAUSE:

- + Jesus Christ Established A New Normal Of Ontological Equality – A Lifting In Status Of Women & Girls.**
- + Being “Cheaper To Keep Her” Bigamy Will Be The Preferred Option To Divorce**
- + Normalization of Bigamy & Polygamy Would Violate Natural Rights Of Women & Children Replacing Rights & Respect Harming With A Rivalry of “Bent Love”**
- + Since Every Successful Civilization Has Migrated From Pagan Polygamy To Civil Monogamy – Trending Directionally In Reverse Is From Civilized To Primitivism**
- + Congregations Will Need To Be Pro-Active & Develop Contingency Plans. The Rich Person In Polygamous Relationship That Converts Needs To Still Provide For Mothers Of His Children & His Children. Under Those Circumstances - It Is Not The Responsibility Of The Local Church.**



“I FIGURED IT'D BE CHEAPER TO HAVE JUST ONE WIFE WITH MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES...”

