



The Shame of America's Polygamy Rites

There are actual harems in this modern USA of ours—disgraceful "families" who believe in the weird, shameful Sanhedrin cult . . .



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State Atty. Gen. Ross F. Jones questions mother and three daughters. The Mormon Church vigorously denounces the strange Sanhedrin cult.

By L. MacKAY PHELPS

RECENTLY an outraged America was again shocked into the realization that polygamy still thrives in these supposedly civilized United States.

This—despite the determined and continuing efforts of law-enforcement agencies to stamp out the brutal and pagan practice—as vicious and degrading to the female sex as the harem horrors and concubinage of Mohammedan lands and the Orient.

Only two years ago, 45 persons were rounded up in a mass raid on Utah polygamists (not Mormons, since the Mormon Church or "Latter-Day Saints" officially abandoned polygamy in 1896, when Utah became a state).

This most recent raid, in which 346 persons—men, women, and children—were taken into custody, occurred just prior to dawn on July 26 in the isolated village of Short Creek, Arizona.

It was not the first time that Short Creek has been the object of attention by horrified officialdom. There have been polygamy raids there before, but prison sentences imposed on some of the cult leaders have had little effect on stopping



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this degrading practice. For twenty years some of the cult members have operated in brazen defiance of civilized principles of morality.

One of the most hideous practices has been the flagrant "loan" or "swap" of young girls for the purpose of temporary—not even polygamous—gratification of lust. Some of the elderly "patriarchs" with attractive daughters of thirteen years or so loaned their own tender flesh and blood to equally depraved oldsters, receiving the loan of their daughters in return. Sometimes the fathers who exchanged their teenager daughters for this nefarious purpose were in their fifties and sixties.

Little wonder that the moral element of the Short Creek area looked upon the cultists with revulsion! And recently Gov. Pyle of Arizona himself termed the cult "an insurrection against the state" and "the foulest conspiracy you could possibly imagine." He added significantly that it was run by "a hard core of greedy and licentious men."

Reason the Arizona lust colony has been able to operate with relative impunity is due to its extreme

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isolation. Located in the "Strip Country" desert, surrounded on three sides by deep canyons and hundreds of miles from the nearest railroad, it is almost impossible to raid by surprise. Similar polygamist colonies are believed to exist in other remote and almost inaccessible areas of Arizona and other western states.

Despite elaborate provisions, surprise was not achieved in the recent raid. The raiders—100 strong—advanced in two motorized columns at 4:02 A.M. from a forest base where they had remained all night. Their vehicles moved at top speed with sirens wailing. Immediately warning signals were noted—a flaring light on a hillside and explosions, perhaps gunshots.

When they reached Short Creek, they found no men in the primitive homes—only women and children. The men—and a few of the women—had assembled in the schoolyard, decorously dressed in their best garments. They had hoisted the American flag, and defiantly they sang "America" and religious hymns.

But the charges that were brought against the ringleaders belied these phony pretensions of Americanism. They included:

Contributing to the delinquency of a minor female.

Statutory rape.

Open and notorious cohabitation.

Bigamy.

Marrying the spouse of another.

And a number of offenses of non-sexual nature, such as:

Falsification of public records.

Income-tax evasion.

Failure to comply with corporation laws.

Misappropriation of school funds.

Improper use of school facilities.

Of the 346 persons taken into custody—comprising practically the entire population of the village—33 were adult males, 50 were women, while the remainder were children, 263 of them!

BAIL for the leaders of patriarchs of the cult was set at \$2,500, for others it ranged downward in accordance with the gravity of the

offense. At least two men were charged with having half a dozen wives, while "numerous others" were charged with having two or more mates.

Most pitiful were wives of fifteen and even younger in girlish pigtails who presumably had been born and reared in the polygamous philosophy of the cult. Some of these, according to the Governor, had been compelled to marry men "of all ages."

Governor Pyle castigated the cultists as being "dedicated to the production of white slaves who are without hope of escaping this degrading slavery from the moment of their births."

This was denied by one of the alleged "patriarchs" of the cult, 65-year-old Leroy S. Johnson, who declared, "We have done no wrong. We just practice our religion according to our beliefs."

"The women don't have to marry us if they don't want to, I defy anyone to prove that any girl was ever forced into a marriage."

But he was flatly contradicted by at least one weeping "bride" of seventeen, who declared to police:

"I was told that I had to marry a 70-year-old man. I told them they could kill me first. They finally gave me a second choice of marrying a 45-year-old man. It was so hopeless I gave up. I was his fourth wife."

Let us hope that the ringleaders of this foul cult—who describe themselves as the "Sanhedrin"—receive the same short shrift given some of their ilk in a previous trial involving Short Creek patriarchs. They were convicted and went to jail.

Far from being accepted members of the Latter Day Saints, the polygamists who were formerly Mormons are immediately excommunicated as soon as their polygamy becomes known.

"People who are members of the cult are rearing families illegitimately," the late and greatly respected head of the Latter Day Saints, Heber J. Grant, declared following an earlier polygamy scandal. "They know they do this to

satisfy their own passions. Seeking to indulge their lusts, they are living in adultery. We are anxious that such offenders should be punished as the law provides."

Mormons themselves signed complaints against the polygamists. In a fairly recent instance in Maricopa County, Arizona, the complaint was signed by Mormon bishop Wendel A. Davis against a man alleged to have six wives in Arizona—four of them living under the same roof—and two more in Utah.

THE Sanhedrin polygamists claim to have in the neighborhood of 20,000 members and that their numbers are increasing at about 3,000 a year. While Short Creek might be defined as polygamy's American "capital," there are other colonies, almost invariably in remote regions that are difficult of access.

The cult puts out various publications, including a magazine named *Truth* and various books which seek to justify polygamy. Some of the statements appearing in these publications are:

"Today there are not enough men who are capable of assuming the responsibility of marriage to care for all of the women. And so women are forced to remain single."

"Women have a right to marry... And if a man is attractive to more than one woman and is attracted by them and is willing to assume the responsibility, and the women are agreed and pure, whose business is it?"

Actually the preponderance of women over men in the United States is nowhere near as great as the cultists would seem to imply, while in numerous areas—such as Alaska—men outnumber women heavily. It is also true that a great many women, under present-day economic and political tensions and uncertainties, prefer not to marry, thus reducing the preponderance. The Sanhedrists ignore these facts in their arguments.

Yet they assert that "the only heaven-blessed marriage is the relation of one man with many women" and that every man should be entitled to "many wives and concubines..."

Entirely aside from the fact that there are nowhere near enough women for this harem conception of marriage to be even remotely feasible—and entirely apart from the moral factors involved—the cult has a philosophy of male superiority repugnant to modern theories of the basic equality of the sexes.

For example, female virginity at

the time of marriage is highly stressed in these words:

"If any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then he is justified . . ."

For that matter, he may continue to marry as many virgins as he pleases, provided only that he can house, feed, and clothe them. When it is recalled that these cultists are predominantly agricultural, working primitive farms with a dearth of modern equipment, and that the women generally work just as hard as the men, the advantages of a harem of slave-labor becomes apparent.

Jealousy exists even in the Oriental harems. But the Sanhedrists enjoin their wives against refusing to consent to new feminine additions to the household, even though they theoretically have this right.

Though the Sanhedrists claim that their form of polygamy is a safeguard against male promiscuity; a deterrent to prostitution, birth control, and divorce; and even a health advantage to their polygamous husbands, it is noteworthy that many responsible authorities disagree.

For example, they found little evidence of true religious fervor in these cultists, insofar as the approach to sex was concerned. Husbands were found who visited their numerous mates on "circuit" schedules much as traveling salesmen cover their territories. This was necessary because wives were often housed in separate homes in order to conceal evidence of cohabitation.

"These polygamists," declared the late E. Elmo Bollinger, who as county attorney prosecuted Short Creek polygamists a few years ago, "are out to destroy all of the fineness and tenderness that there is in the love of one man for one woman, and to bring into this country all of the viciousness that was associated with the old Turkish harems. They propose to enslave women to the desires of men."

Using religion as a guise, he declared, ". . . a man would cohabit with any pretty girl he found to his liking and take her as a wife. I never found any tangible evidence of religion."

He was also of the opinion that the polygamists ". . . hoped to build an empire by mating with many women and rearing many children."

THE authorities have often been frustrated in their attempts to break up polygamist colonies by the

unwillingness of the wives to testify against their husbands. This is due to the fact that many of them were raised in the cult, and consider polygamy perfectly moral. Furthermore, in their isolated farm areas, they feel economically secure even though they work hard, and the thought that they are actually being exploited never occurs to them.

Others, often of meagre education and low earning power, were easily converted to polygamy because it offered a certain primitive security. Still others accepted polygamy because they were afraid of being "old maids."

The polygamists attempt to justify their practices by assertions that the Old Testament sanctioned poly-

gamy—that Solomon and David, for example, had numerous wives. By doing so they ignore the fact that Western culture has condemned polygamy for many hundreds of years, while it is now dying out in the Orient as well.

Polygamy has been tried many times, and sooner or later it has always doomed itself or it has been maintained only by the exercise of brutal force. It is basically contrary to female dignity and to the male spirit of fairness; even Oriental potentates, educated to believe that women were the inferior sex, had their "Number One" or "favorite" wives. The human species, anthropologists have found, is by nature monogamous.

There have been several attempts to institute polygamy in this country. It is, not generally known that the Mormon experiment was not inaugurated until many years after founding of that faith by Joseph Smith, but this is a fact. And even then, despite the fact that polygamy was officially enjoined following a "revelation" experienced by Smith in 1843, the great majority of Mormons refused to take more than one wife. At no time were more than *two or three percent* of the Mormons practicing polygamists.

Another experiment in polygamy was the "Oneida Perfectionists," a cult originally founded in Putney, Vermont in 1838 by John Humphrey Noyes. Polygamy was practiced by both sexes, and included in theory the entire adult community, so that every woman was the wife of all the men and vice-versa.

In 1847 the group removed to Oneida, in upstate New York, where they built an elaborate and com-

plex agricultural - manufacturing culture which became known as the Oneida Community. One of their practices was for the younger girls to mate with the older men, the theory being that they would gain wisdom thereby.

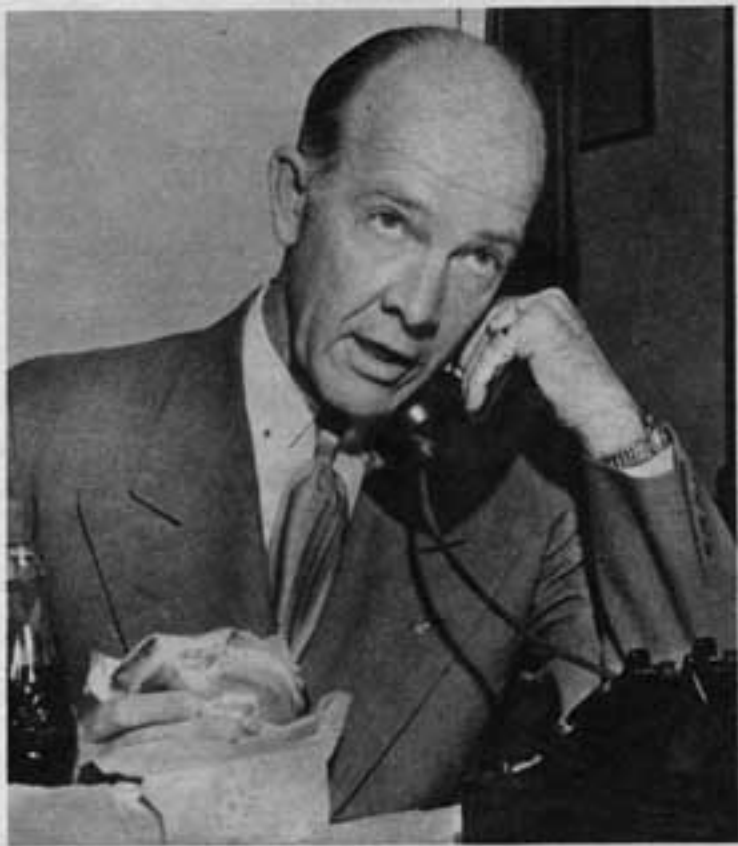
However, frictions developed and the New York State Legislature did not look kindly upon the sexual freedom practiced. Polygamy was officially discontinued in 1882. To this day, the name Oneida Community is retained by a famous manufacturer of silverware.

Other examples might be given, but these should be sufficient to show that polygamy is not only obsolete but socially destructive. The sooner the last lingering remnants of this degrading form of marriage are wiped out in our western states, the better for all concerned, particularly for the polygamists themselves, their deluded wives, and their hapless offspring.

THE END



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