PILLARS
OF
MORMONISM

by Douglas V. Pond

A Kindly Review of Mormonism
in a Careful Comparison
With the Bible

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Chapter 15

MORMONISM'S TEMPLES

The 6-million-dollar Mormon temple near Los Angeles, California, and other imposing temples in various parts of the world have caused people to wonder, "Why such costly structures? What beliefs of Mormonism call for such an outlay of funds?" We shall endeavor to answer these, and other, questions in this chapter.

Joseph Fielding Smith throws some light on the above questions:

"PURPOSES OF TEMPLES. Why do we build temples? It is because the Lord commands it. For what purpose are they built? In order that sacred ordinances and covenants necessary to the exaltation in the celestial kingdom may be bestowed upon all those who are worthy of the exaltation."—Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, p. 243.

We have already discussed some of the temple procedures, one being baptism for the dead taken up in chapter 10.

Another of Mormonism's "sacred ordinances" performed in LDS temples is celestial marriage. Celestial marriage, or marriage for eternity, as the LDS Church teaches it, has no validity outside a Mormon temple:

"KEYS REQUIRED FOR CELESTIAL MARRIAGE. Now marriage for eternity can be performed only in the temples. It cannot be performed anywhere else. Au-
thority by which such marriages are solemnized must be vested in the one who performs the ordinances, by virtue of appointment by the one who holds the keys.

"There is but one man living on the earth at a time who holds the keys of this binding or sealing power. No other man has the right to officiate in a marriage, or sealing ceremony, for time and all eternity, unless he has obtained the direct appointment from the one who holds the keys of this power."—Ibid., pp. 73, 74.

To Mormons, the man who has this authority is, of course, the successor to Joseph Smith. This man is always the president of the church.

Further expressing the importance of celestial marriage as performed in the temple, Joseph Fielding Smith explains:

"Marriage: the Covenant of Exaltation. Marriage, as understood by Latter-day Saints, is a covenant ordained to be everlasting. It is the foundation for eternal exaltation, for without it there could be no eternal progress in the kingdom of God. . . .

"There is no ordinance connected with the gospel of Jesus Christ of greater importance, of more solemn and sacred nature, and more necessary to the eternal joy of man, than marriage. . . .

"Marriage is a principle which, when entered, presents more serious problems than any other. It should be received in the spirit of patience and love, even that greater love which comes through the power of the Holy Spirit."—Ibid., p. 58.

Note this declaration from the pen of Mormonism's chief doctrinarian:

"Marriage is the grandest, most glorious, and most exalting principle connected with the gospel. It is that which the Lord holds in reserve for those who become his sons and daughters; all others are servants only, even if they gain salvation. They do not become members of the house-
hold of our Father and our God, if they refuse to receive the celestial covenant of marriage.”—Ibid., p. 59.

Consider again that last sentence: “They do not become members of the household of our Father and our God, if they refuse to receive the celestial covenant of marriage.” But we fail to find anywhere in the Bible that we become members of the “household of our Father” through such a marriage covenant. The apostle Paul points out the scriptural way: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. . . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:13-19).

Is it, then, through a celestial marriage that we become members of the “household of God”? No; it is through Jesus Christ. Jesus cares for our every need, and we are “complete in him” (Col. 2:10). It is through Him that we are reconciled to God. Christ is the One “in whom we have redemption” and “the forgiveness of sins,” thus establishing us as “sons and daughters” of God. The Lord has no other way (Col. 1:14; 2 Cor. 6:18).

According to these Biblical statements, marriage—or unmarriage—has nothing to do with believers’ condition in eternity and becoming “members of the household of our Father and our God.” That access is through Christ in this life! He has said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). All of God’s promises to the redeemed come through Christ (Gal. 3:28). The only condition is to accept the gift of Christ’s righteousness, and “follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

As we continue with our study of this subject we shall discover the why of “celestial marriage” in Mormonism’s temples.
Joseph Fielding Smith continues: "It fills my heart with sadness when I see in the paper the name of a daughter or a son of members of this Church, and discover that she or he is going to have a ceremony and be married outside of the temple of the Lord, because I realize what it means, that they are cutting themselves off from exaltation in the kingdom of God."—Ibid., p. 60.

Furthermore, Mormonism holds that any marriage consummated outside an LDS temple keeps the contracting parties from becoming "gods." They will remain "angels" and "ministering servants" for eternity: "Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven; which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

"'For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever' (Doctrine and Covenants, 132:16, 17)."—Ibid., p. 61.

On the other hand, Mormonism teaches that celestial marriage performed in a temple makes man and wife gods for all eternity:

"Celestial Marriage Makes Gods in Eternity. But if we are married for time and for all eternity and it is sealed upon our heads by those who have the authority so to seal, and if we then keep our covenants and are faithful to the end, we shall come forth in the resurrection from the dead and receive the following promised blessings:

"'Then shall they be gods, because they have no end: therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.'

"Who are the angels? Those who would not abide the law.

"'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.'

"Abide what law? The law of the new and everlasting covenant, which is all the covenants.

"'For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

"'But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.'"—Ibid., pp. 62, 63. These LDS teachings are based on Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, verses 20-23.

We read further: "MARRIAGE AND BECOMING SONS OF GOD. The gift promised to those who receive this covenant of marriage and remain faithful to the end, that they shall 'have no end,' means that they shall have the power of eternal increase. Only those who have this power will truly 'know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.' Others may see the Lord and may be instructed by him, but they will not truly know him or his Father unless they become like them.

"Who desires to enter the eternal world and be a servant, when the promise is held out that we may be sons and daughters of God? Yet there will be the vast majority who will enter into the eternal world as servants, and not as sons, and this simply because they think more of the world and its covenants, than they do of God and his covenants; simply because in their blindness of heart, they refuse to keep these sacred and holy commandments. Oh, what bitterness there will be in the day of judgment, when every man receives his reward according to his works!

"NO EXALTATION WITHOUT MARRIAGE. Since mar-
riage is ordained of God, and the man is not without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord, there can be no exaltation to the fulness of the blessings of the celestial kingdom outside of the marriage relation. A man cannot be exalted singly and alone; neither can a woman. Each must have a companion to share the honors and blessings of this great exaltation. Marriage for time and all eternity brings to pass the crowning glory of our Father's kingdom, by which his children become his heirs, into whose hands he gives all things."—Ibid., pp. 64, 65.

If there can be "no exaltation without marriage," and no "marriage for eternity" without temples, we must inquire, How many Mormon temples are there around the world to care for these requirements? As of 1963, the answer was fifteen, according to the LDS Church publication The Improvement Era (November, 1963, p. 957). According to the weekly Church News, March 19, 1977, published by The Deseret News of Salt Lake City, "There are 16 [temples] in use, with four more either under construction or in the planning stages."

Does this mean that celestial salvation has been and is mainly for the select few—mostly for people within easy access to the United States and Canada where thirteen of the eighteen existing temples are situated;"

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* A list of Mormon temples, given in a recent (probably 1976, as no date is given) special magazine issue titled Temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, page 20, are: Kirtland, Ohio; Hawaii; Nauvoo, Illinois; St. George, Utah; Salt Lake City; Los Angeles; Oakland; Logan, Utah; Alberta, Canada; Idaho Falls; Washington, D.C.; Manti, Utah; Mesa, Arizona; Ogden and Provo, Utah; Switzerland; New Zealand; London, England; São Paulo, Brazil; Tokyo, Japan.

Of the fourteen Mormon temples built in the United States, one, in Kirtland, Ohio, is the property of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the one built in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1848 "fell prey to the wanton act of an incendiary. A tornado in May, 1856, blew the walls to the ground" (The Improvement Era, November, 1955, p. 820).
and for those who have the means and time to make a pilgrimage to some perhaps distant LDS temple?

Think of the hundreds of millions of human beings in the world who, if these teachings of Mormonism were true, would be almost certain to end up with a salvation more dependent on the performance of someone other than Jesus Christ, either in this present life or during the coming millennium. (See chapters 9 and 10.) All of Europe presently has access to but two temples, one in Switzerland, and the other in London, England. The other four existing temples outside the U.S.A. are in Alberta, Canada; New Zealand; Brazil; and Japan, as of this date (1977).

We now see the reason for Mormonism's temples and the connection between its doctrine of "celestial marriage" and "exaltation," which is the basis for its claim to attain to godhood. For the church declares that if the followers of Joseph Smith "are married for time and for all eternity," and keep the covenants of the LDS Church in implicit faithfulness "to the end, ... [they] shall come forth in the resurrection." And, "then shall they be gods, because they have all power . . . ."

But in contradistinction to this is the plain Bible teaching that "the children of the resurrection" shall be "equal unto the angels," and shall be "the children of God," but never equal with God, nor shall they ever "have all power." Said Jesus: "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34-36).

Therefore, how can a "covenant of marriage" entered into within Mormon temple walls give the "power of eternal increase"?
Mormonism claims that "outside of the celestial kingdom there is no family organization." Following this statement Joseph Fielding Smith continues:

"We believe that the family will go on. I get a great deal of comfort out of the thought that if I am faithful and worthy of an exaltation, my father will be my father, and I will be subject to him as his son through all eternity; that I will recognize and know my mother and she will be my mother in all eternity; and my brothers and sisters will be my brothers and sisters for all eternity; and that my children and my wives will be mine in eternity. I don’t know how some other people feel, but that is a glorious thought to me. That helps to keep me sober."—Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, p. 67.

In the following quotation we can better understand the relationship between Mormonism’s teachings concerning preexistence and celestial marriage:

"Spirit Children in the Resurrection. Those who attain to the exaltation in the celestial kingdom shall have the power of eternal increase of posterity, and they shall be ‘above all, because all things are subject unto them.’ Children born to parents who have obtained, through their faithfulness, the fulness of these blessings, shall be spirit children not clothed upon with tabernacles of flesh and bones. These children will be like we were before we came into this world. We are taught in the scriptures that we are the offspring of God in the spirit, Jesus Christ being the Firstborn Son of our Eternal Father in that spirit world."—Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

Now, carefully note these words from the pen of Mormonism’s chief doctrinal authority:

"Teach Law of Eternal Marriage to Children. May all Latter-day Saint fathers and mothers see to it that they teach their children the sacredness of the marriage covenant. Let them impress upon their children that in no other way than by honoring the cove-
nants of God, among which the covenant of eternal marriage is one of the greatest and most mandatory, can they obtain the blessings of eternal lives.

"If they refuse to receive this ordinance and other blessings of the house of God, then shall they be cut off from these higher blessings. They shall wear no crown; they shall have no rule and sway no scepter; they shall be denied the fulness of knowledge and power, and like the prodigal son, they may return again to their Father’s house, but it will be as servants, not to inherit as sons."—Ibid., p. 75.

This conclusion is not in accordance with the story of the prodigal son. It was the son’s intention to say to his father, “Make me as one of the hired servants” (Luke 15:19). However, when he returned home, his father did not give him the opportunity to make the statement, but declared him to be a son, and not a servant: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again” (verse 24).

The great heart of God is filled with love toward every wayward man or woman, and He invites each one to return to His household as a son or daughter. (See John 1:12; 2 Cor. 6:16-18.) It seems clear that all who do return in true contrition, whether married or single, shall receive salvation in the presence of God and of Christ. And with that salvation, they are accepted as “children of God: . . . and joint-heirs with Christ,” finally to be “glorified together” with all the redeemed of earth (Rom. 8:14-17).

The Bible declares that all the righteous shall dwell in the very presence of God after their resurrection. Such scriptures as John 14:1-3 and Revelation 21:1-3, 23-26 are evidence of this. Those who are saved are to “receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

What of Mormonism’s former doctrine of polygamy as it relates to the LDS teachings on preexistence and celestial marriage? The Bible makes it clear that in every
recorded instance of polygamy on the part of any Bible character—Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, and others—sorrow, unhappiness, confusion, and conflict accompanied the practice. These marital or family difficulties were the consequence of disregarding God's original plan for the home as instituted in the Garden of Eden, when He gave Eve to Adam. In the New Testament all elders or bishops—the terms are used synonymously—and deacons were instructed to be men having but “one wife.” “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.” “Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well” (1 Tim. 3:2, 12). It is to be noted that deacons were married men, not boys as young as 12 years of age.

Probably a small library of books has been written over the past century on Mormonism's original stand on polygamy. Therefore, only a few thoughts will be presented here, of which the most important, no doubt, is in answer to the question What was the real purpose behind Mormonism's teaching in favor of polygamy? The answer to this question is not generally understood outside the LDS Church. However, let us first consider the following:

The Book of Mormon condemns polygamy, thus placing it in contrast to Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And now I make an end of speaking unto you concerning this pride. And were it not that I must speak unto you concerning a grosser crime, my heart would rejoice exceedingly because of you. But the word of God burthens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the
things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord."—Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:22-24. (Italics supplied.)

Now note Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, verses 37-39:

"Abraham received concubines, and they bear him children, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness; because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law, as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels, but are Gods.

"David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin, save in those things which they received not of me.

"David's wives and concubines were given unto him, of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me, save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world; for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord." (Italics supplied.)

Those statements are quoted from two volumes declared by the LDS Church to be the scriptures on an equality with the Bible. The one declares the status of polygamy to be "righteousness," while the other declares it to be "abominable before me, saith the Lord."

As already stated, a careful student of the Bible will discover that in each recorded instance of any follower
of God entering into a polygamous liaison the result was unhappiness, sorrow, and misery. For instance, Abraham had been promised seed “as the stars of the heaven” (Gen. 22:17). In his and Sarah’s impatience, and with an obvious mistrust of God’s power to fulfill that promise, the patriarch accepted his wife’s suggestion that he raise up seed by means of Sarah’s handmaid, Hagar. The descendants of Hagar’s son, Ishmael, were the Ishmaelites, who were ever afterwards a thorn in the flesh to Israel. Ishmael is depicted in the Bible as “a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren” (chap. 16:12).

Yet we read in Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, verses 34, 35: “God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law: and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling among other things, the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.”

Where in the Bible is there a command from God giving Hagar to Abraham to wife? It is true that after Abraham had entered into the polygamous marriage, God graciously kept His promise to bless Abraham’s seed, even though the Ishmaelites became an ungodly people. Verse 34, as quoted above from Doctrine and Covenants, states that “from Hagar sprang many people.” Yes, but what kind of people? Just such as are described in Genesis 16:12, quoted above.

Polygamy was a curse and a sorrow to David, and also to his son Solomon. At the beginning of this world God’s beautiful plan of monogamy, which cannot be improved upon, was instituted in the giving of Eve to the first man, Adam. And Adam said, “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: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:23, 24).

God, through Moses, condemned polygamy: “Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her lifetime” (Lev. 18:18).

Mormonism teaches that Abraham is already exalted and sitting upon his throne somewhere in the kingdom of God: “Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation, and sitteth upon his throne.”—Doctrines and Covenants, 132:29.

Does this agree with the Bible? The Bible says, “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:8-10).

The final verse of the same chapter reads, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they [all the faithful mentioned in Hebrews 11, including Abraham] without us should not be made perfect” (verse 40). Therefore, Abraham is neither in “his exaltation” nor sitting “upon his throne.”

The answer to our major question, What was the purpose behind Mormonism’s teaching in favor of polygamy? reveals a strong connection with the church’s teaching concerning preexisting spirits. We present a statement from Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, in context, made against the practice
of birth control, quoted by Joseph Fielding Smith in his *Doctrines of Salvation*:

"There are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty? To prepare tabernacles for them; to take a course that will not tend to drive those spirits into the families of the wicked, where they will be trained in wickedness, debauchery, and every species of crime. *It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can.*"—Vol. 2, p. 88. (Italics his.)

Doubtless, then, originally the doctrine of polygamy was to hasten greatly the carrying out of the plan "to prepare tabernacles" for those preexistent spirits. However, we have already learned that the Bible teaches that there are no "spirits waiting to take tabernacles." *They simply do not exist.* Therefore the doctrine of polygamy as taught by Mormonism during the nineteenth century was not needed.

Does the LDS Church officially teach or practice polygamy today? No. And the practice probably will not again be officially endorsed. Only a new "revelation" given to the president of the church could reverse the manifesto on plural marriage proclaimed by President Wilford Woodruff in 1890:

"Discontinuance of Plural Marriage.—The official act terminating the practice of plural marriage among the Latter-day Saints was the adoption by the Church, in conference assembled, of a manifesto proclaimed by the President of the Church. The language of the document illustrates the law-abiding character of the people and the Church, as is shown by the following clause:—

‘Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I [President Wilford Woodruff] hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence
with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.' In the course of a sermon immediately following the proclaiming of the manifesto, President Woodruff said regarding the action taken:—'I have done my duty, and the nation of which we form a part must be responsible for that which has been done in relation to that principle' (i.e., plural marriage).”—The Articles of Faith, 1901 edition, p. 440. (See also pages 524, 525 of 1960 edition.)

Here are views of Joseph Fielding Smith as expressed under the heading "Tragedy of Broken Homes," with which we wholeheartedly agree:

“Throughout our land we see the tragedy of broken homes, fathers and mothers separated, children denied the natural affections. Children have a right to the blessings coming from this sacred union. They are entitled to the love and care of faithful parents, and the happiness and devotion which true worship brings.

“When these blessings are lost, the whole community suffers and the integrity of government is weakened. It is a shame and a disgrace that so much evil is coming out of broken homes, and this comes largely because we have forgotten God and our obligations to serve and honor him. Truly we have much room for repentance and a return to the simple worship of true Christianity.”—Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, p. 80.

With President Smith we call upon every family that has broken apart, or that has drawn apart, even in the slightest way, to invite into its family circle Jesus Christ with His great love and healing power. Regardless of the one at fault, whether husband or wife, each should ask forgiveness of the other and discover the peace and happiness that can come from Him. Try Him, for He is the Prince of Peace, and the Healer of all broken hearts and homes.

God's unfathomable love encompasses every soul,
every wrongdoer, every seeker for His righteousness, regardless of circumstances. And let us again remember that His Holy Book portrays the beautiful truth that through Christ we may become “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,” and members, through adoption and sonship, into “the whole family in heaven and earth” (Eph. 2:19; 3:15).

Those who, through the Holy Spirit, learn to hate sin and love righteousness, accepting the Lord Jesus Christ and His gift of never-ending salvation, will have everlasting joy in His heavenly kingdom. For it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). We commend you “unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, [to whom] be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24, 25).