

POLYGAMY AND UNLAWFUL COHABITATION

Deseret Evening News

8 Jan. 1900

From the reading of the various editorials and articles of the public press it is evident that there is much misconstruction and misunderstanding as to the present attitude of our Church respecting the subjects of polygamy and unlawful cohabitation; and, believing that many good and conscientious people have been misled and much adverse criticism occasioned thereby, I feel it but just to both "Mormons" and non-"Mormons" to state that, in accordance with the manifesto of the late President Wilford Woodruff, dated September 25th 1890, which was presented to and unanimously accepted by our General Conference on the 6th of October, 1890, the Church has positively abandoned the practice of polygamy, or the solemnization of plural marriages, in this and every other State, and that no member or officers thereof has any authority whatever to perform a plural marriage or enter into such a relation. Nor does the Church advise or encourage unlawful cohabitation on the part of any of its members. If, therefore, any member disobeys the law, either as to polygamy or unlawful cohabitation, he must bear his own burden; or in other words, be answerable to the tribunals of the land for his own action pertaining thereto.

With a sincere desire that the position of our Church as to polygamy and unlawful cohabitation may be better understood, and with best wishes for the welfare and happiness of all, this statement is made, and is respectfully commended to the careful consideration of the public generally.

LORENZO SNOW

President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints. Salt Lake City, Jan. 8, 1900

PRESIDENT SNOW'S DECLARATION: Deseret Evening News, Jan. 8, 1900

The foregoing announcement from the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is entitled to respectful consideration. Not only should it be heeded by members of the Church, but by all people, everywhere. Its promulgation is necessary in view of the charges that are made that the "Mormon" Church seeks to become "a law unto itself" and sets itself above the civil government. It is not expected that it will have any particular effect on persons who desire, wilfully, to misrepresent the Church and its authorities, its doctrines and its purposes. But there are hosts of good people who have been deceived by false reports, and it is for their information as well as to place the Church in its true position before the world that this official declaration is made.

The President's statement is gratifying to us because it authoritatively asserts what the Deseret News has advanced editorially. The Church teaches obedience to secular law. It does not advise nor encourage any species of lawlessness. It supports the Constitution of the United States and the constitution of Utah and all laws passed in pursuance thereof. It has its own sphere, which is ecclesiastical. While it gives counsel and promulgates rules for the guidance of its members as to individual conduct in all the affairs of life, it does not interfere in any way with the free agency of men and women, dictate to them how they shall vote or to which political party they shall belong, or hinder them in any lawful course as to business or other personal affairs.

There are persons in all religious bodies who act contrary to the faith they profess. The church or society with which they are connected is not accused of such derelictions by just and sensible people; they are charged only to the erring individuals.

The Latter-day Saints should ponder well this declaration from the Pres. It is of great importance. If there is any deviation from the path which he defines, it will be on the personal responsibility of the individual that pursues that way, and he must take the consequences whatever they may be.

We believe the permanent, reasonable residents of this State, "Mormon" or not will be pleased with the announcement by Pres. Snow, and will accept it in the spirit that prompted its publication. And we hope that it will aid in the establishment of that abiding peace that is necessary to the harmonious action of all classes, creeds and parties, without which Utah cannot achieve the status as a commonwealth that its best people desire to secure.