

16. PLURAL MARRIAGE

The Mormon writer John J. Stewart made this statement: "...there are at least two points of doctrine and history of the Church about which many LDS themselves—to say nothing of non-members—feel apologetic or critical. One of these is its doctrine and history regarding plural marriage. There is probably no other Church subject on which there is so much ignorance and misunderstanding and so many conflicting views." (Brigham Young and His Wives, page 8)

On pages 21 and 22 of the same book Mr. Stewart states: "So gross have been the falsehoods circulated against it, and so strong the feelings created over it, that it may be an under-statement rather than an over-statement to say that within the Church itself misunderstanding and lack of understanding about it are more nearly universal than a correct understanding of it. This despite the fact that SEVEN of our nine Church presidents have lived plural marriage, and that this principle still is and always will be a DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH."

The revelation sanctioning the practice of plural marriage was given by the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith on July 12, 1843. This revelation is still printed in the Doctrine and Covenants—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. The following is taken from this revelation:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, JUSTIFIED my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and DOCTRINE of their HAVING MANY WIVES AND CONCUBINES—

"Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

"Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

"For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damed; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory....

"And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, ... they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation....

"Then shall they be gods, because they have no end;...

"God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife....

"Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it....

"Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness,....

"David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, ... 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,....

"And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure,

and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God....

"Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him;...

"And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—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 is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

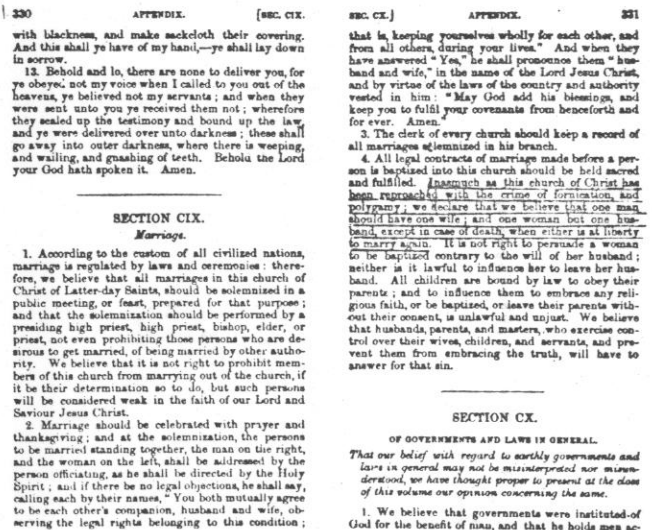
"And if he have TEN VIRGINS given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified."

(The Doctrine and Covenants, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966, section 132, verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 19, 20, 34, 35, 38, 39, 52, 60, 61 and 62)

To begin with the Mormon Church did not believe in the practice of plural marriage. In the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, printed in 1835, there was a section which denounced the practice of polygamy. In section 101:4 it was stated:

"Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the CRIME of fornication, and POLYGAMY: we declare that we believe, that ONE man should have ONE WIFE; and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."

Below is an actual photograph of this section as it appeared in the 1854 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.



This section was printed in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until the year 1876. At that time the Mormon leaders inserted section 132, which permits a plurality of wives. Obviously, it would have been too contradictory to have one section condemning polygamy and another approving of it in the same book! Therefore, the

