

CHAPTER 4

PLURAL MARRIAGE

The author of "Mormonism and Masonry" declares that among other reasons why members of the Mormon Church are not eligible to admission to the "Mysteries of Masonry" is that they believe in the principle and practice of plural marriage. He admits that the practice has been discontinued, but insists that the Church still believes and teaches, indirectly if not openly, that the principle as formerly practiced and taught in the Church is a scriptural doctrine which has the approval of the Lord.

In justification of his attitude he calls attention to the fact that the revelation on the eternity of the marriage covenant, which refers to plurality of wives, and defines the conditions under which plural marriage may be justified, still holds its place in the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church, never having been expunged.

Without entering into any argument in regard to the doctrine or practice of plural marriage, the writer desires to make some brief observations which it is hoped will result in better understanding of the question under discussion.

Plural marriage was introduced into the Church at a very early period of its history. It was believed at that time, there being no civil law prohibiting the practice, to be a proper form of marriage.

Under the system family ties were established and relationships entered into which were held sacred and binding, not only by those who accepted and entered this relationship, who were but a small minority of its membership, but by all who had become members of the Church.

Laws were later enacted by Congress prohibiting the practice of plural marriage, and providing means for their enforcement. The Church resisted the enforcement of these laws believing them to be unconstitutional. The question was carried to the local courts, and finally to the Supreme Court, the last tribunal to which the Church could apply for relief. The court declared the laws to be constitutional and enforceable.

The Church, always committed to the doctrine that its members must honor and obey the civil law and uphold the officers who administer it, undertook without delay to adjust itself to the changed condition.

That this could only be accomplished by patience and the exercise of great wisdom will be obvious to all right-thinking people. Only a fanatic or a pronounced enemy of the Church would expect or exact more.

Every honest man knows that the practice of plural marriage has been discontinued, and that any person entering into such relationships, or teaching others to do so, is excommunicated from the Church. But it appears that the fact that the Church has discontinued the practice and that the doctrine is no

longer taught, is not sufficient to satisfy the author of "Mormonism and Masonry." He fears that there may be somewhere in the Church those who believe in plural marriage, and because of this would exclude all members of the organization, regardless of their protestations, from the fraternity.

Does he mean by this that a Mason may not have ideas of his own, that if he has discovered a truth unknown to others he must banish that truth from his mind and say it is error? Has it reached a point in this land of free thought and free speech where a man may not believe a truth even though he do not express it? God forbid.

II

THE BIBLE AND PLURAL MARRIAGE

The following is quoted from "Mormonism and Masonry", Book 1, page 43:

"Masonry directs the attention of its initiates to the Bible, the inestimable gift of God to man, for the rule and guide to his faith and conduct. The great light in Anglo Saxon Masonry occupies a prominent and well known position in the Ritual and Lodge room."

In this one respect Mormonism and Masonry are in accord. Mormonism also directs the attention of each of its votaries to the Bible and urges them to become personally familiar with its contents, to make it the rule and guide for their faith and conduct, and to live in harmony with its teachings. No person can retain his fellowship in the Church who re-

fuses to accept and live by the teachings of the Bible.

The Bible comes to us through the Hebrew race, the descendants of Abraham, who was the founder of the house of Israel, through his sons Isaac and Jacob. It is generally conceded that the Book of Genesis was written by Moses, of the tribe of Levi, the son of Jacob. So far as the writer is aware there is not a chapter in the book which was not written by a member of this race.

No one will deny the fact that the Lord declared Israel to be his chosen people. No one will deny that the Israelitish people from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to King Solomon practised plural marriage. No one familiar with the Bible will deny that the Lord placed the seal of his approval on such family relationships. The Bible furnishes no instance where plural marriage is forbidden.

Every student of Bible history knows that the Lord made fornication and adultery capital offenses. If it were proved that a married woman had lost her virtue before marriage she was stoned to death. If a man associated with a paramour both were put to death. A man and woman who were guilty of adultery suffered the same fate.

Christ, our Lord, classes adultery and fornication with murder. Paul the Apostle tells us that neither adulterers nor fornicators shall inherit the kingdom of God. (Genesis, chaps. 17, 46; Leviticus, chap. 20: 10-16; Matthew, chap. 19:18; and 15:19; I Corinthians, chap. 6:9-10.)

Every member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is taught to hold purity of the fountains of life sacred as his own existence, and that there is no circumstance under which sexual relationship can be justified except in the holy bonds of matrimony.

The writer has never practised plural marriage, neither in the marriage relation or outside of it; neither before he married his present wife, nor after. He has been with the Church seventy-five years and more, and knows the peace, happiness, and purity of life which prevailed during the period when plural marriage was practised by a comparatively small minority of Church members, a condition which was far above that which openly prevails in the world at the present time. The writer is only one of thousands of men who have lived as he has and who know that he speaks the truth.

To question the divine approval of this doctrine is to question the divine authorship of the book which Masonry declares to be—"The great light, the inestimable gift of God to man, the guide to his faith and conduct."

This is not in advocacy of the doctrine or practice of plural marriage, but a plain statement of fact which any man who is familiar with the contents of the Bible knows to be true, and which can be proved if necessary.