

MORMON SCRIPTURE

Doctrine And Covenants, Part VI

By Marvin W. Cowan

Polygamy in Utah has been in the news a lot recently in spite of Mormonism's claim that it ended in 1890 when Latter-day Saints President Wilford Woodruff's issued his "Manifesto." His "Manifesto" is now known as "Official Declaration-1" and follows immediately after Section 138 in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. In his first paragraph Woodruff said there were reports that Latter-day Saints leaders "have taught, encouraged and urged the continuance of the *practice of polygamy*." After claiming that such charges were false, his last sentence declared, "I now publicly declare that *my advice* to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land." The same federal law that makes polygamy illegal today was also the law in 1890. Obviously, some Mormons were breaking that law or there would have been no need for Woodruff's "Manifesto." Both Mormon and non-Mormon writers have shown that polygamy continued to be practiced even among Latter-day Saints leaders long after 1890. All of the Mormon Presidents up to and including President Heber J. Grant were polygamists. He died May 14, 1945 about 55 years after the "Manifesto" was given.

Gordon B. Hinckley, the current Latter-day Saints President, claims that those who practice polygamy today have no connection to the Mormon Church. But some polygamists, who are also known as "Mormon Fundamentalists," are members of the Latter-day Saints Church as well as their Fundamentalist group. The connection between Mormonism and the various Mormon Fundamentalist groups is obvious since they all claim Joseph Smith was their founding Prophet, and he was a polygamist! Furthermore, Joseph Smith claimed that he received a revelation from the Lord on July 12, 1843, which commanded plural marriage (polygamy). That "revelation" is still in the current Latter-day Saints edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* as Section 132, and it is accepted by both Mormons and Fundamentalists as *scripture*. It declares: "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 everlasting covenant*; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory" (verses 1-4.) The choice is simple once this law is revealed to you: obey it or be damned! Anyone who reads the 66 verses of *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 132 has that law revealed to them. Is it any wonder polygamy is still practiced among the followers of Joseph Smith today?

Notice that Smith's "revelation" in *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 132 begins, "Verily, thus saith the Lord" while Woodruff's "Manifesto" declares, "*My advice* to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land." Which message sounds like it has more authority to those who believe Joseph Smith restored God's truth? Smith's "revelation" says a worthy Latter-day Saints man can marry many

wives in this life and they will be his for eternity if they are sealed to him by the proper Latter-day Saints priesthood authority and that will qualify him to be a god in the next world (verses 19-20, 61-62.) Although this “revelation” doesn’t mention temples, Latter-day Saints call this kind of marriage “temple marriage” or “sealing” because they believe marriage for time *and eternity* can only be performed in Latter-day Saints temples. Smith’s revelation indicates that no matter how worthy Latter-day Saints men are, if they are not married by the proper priesthood authority (in an Latter-day Saints temple), they can’t get married in eternity. They will therefore “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*” (verses 15-18.) While this last statement sounds like such men will remain single forever, that is not what Mormons actually believe and practice. President Heber C. Kimball, who was in the First Presidency with Brigham Young, said in the next life Joseph Smith will say to those without wives, “Here are thousands, have all you want” (*Journal of Discourses* vol. 4, p. 209.) One of the Mormon temple rites is proxy marriage for the dead. When a living person fails to get married in a Mormon temple, they can be married or sealed by proxy after death which makes it possible for them to become gods instead of angels. Most Mormons men don’t practice polygamy now, but they must believe in it since they marry multiple wives to one man for eternity in their temples! For example, ten women were married by proxy (sealed for all eternity) to Ivan the Terrible on October 13, 1989 in the Provo, Utah temple. This kind of information is available in the International Genealogical Index records at the Latter-day Saints Family History Library across from Temple Square in Salt Lake City or at any Latter-day Saints genealogical center.

Polygamy was very important to Mormons in the past. Brigham Young even declared, “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 269.) If they don’t believe or practice polygamy now, why don’t Mormon leaders delete or change Section 132 like they did other Sections in the *Doctrine and Covenants*? It is because Section 132 is the only Latter-day Saints scripture that teaches celestial (or eternal) marriage which Mormonism claims is essential to achieve godhood. Polygamy and Celestial marriage are so interwoven in Section 132 that they cannot be separated. Mormonism has no scriptural basis for celestial marriage for the living or the dead without Section 132. But with it still in their scripture Mormonism can never completely separate itself from polygamy!

Our next article will discuss some other unique teachings in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. For more information on Mormon polygamy, we suggest *Mormon Polygamy, A History* by Richard S. Van Wagoner, published by Signature Books in Salt Lake City in 1989.