

POLYGAMY

IS IT A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

Polygamy—A Blessing or a Curse?

Any study into the subject of polygamy should begin with the Genesis account of Creation. Here we read:

And God said, Let us make man in our image. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. . . . but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 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 (Genesis 1:26–27; 2:19–23).

The creation of woman from the rib of man profoundly indicates the inseparable unity and fellowship of the life of the woman with that of her husband. Woman is the complement of man, the essential to the perfection of his being. Man and woman are endowed for equality and mutual independence. The fact is the Bible gives no sanction for dual or plural marriages. Lamech's polygamy is the first recorded infraction of the divine ideal—monogamy. By the time of Noah in the pre-Flood world polygamy had degenerated into promiscuity of the most incestuous and illicit kind (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Woman").

A number of texts indicate the merit of monogamy. Malachi 2:13–16, for example, clearly shows God never sanctioned polygamy.

And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away . . . therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Christ attested to monogamy when He said, "Wherefore they man and woman are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).

Jesus Christ is the written Word, the God of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 10:1–4), the One who created man and gave the marriage institution (Colossians 1:16–17). He does not change. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). God binds one couple only, not multiple wives to one man. ". . . For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they *twain* shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more *twain*, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:5–6).

The Levirate law of Deuteronomy 25:5–10 is another example of monogamous marriage. Notice what this law states:

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

If polygamy were practiced and the generally accepted custom, this law would be impossible to implement. Which of the wives would the bachelor brother marry? This text does not refer to the dead man's wives but wife.

Christ, the God of the Old Testament, set the example. He married one wife—the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:8). Later, He put away Israel but pleaded with her to return (Jeremiah 3:8, 14). Christ had to die to end the marriage to physical Israel. When He returns, He will marry one wife and one only—spiritual Israel (Revelation 19:7).

Polygamy Enters the World Scene

The first recorded example of polygamy is found in Genesis 4:19: "And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah." But, notice verses 23–24, "And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

Something happened here. We can only surmise. Whatever occurred involved a murder (possibly self-defense) and two women. Was this the first recorded instance of jealousy and a love triangle? Whatever the case, polygamy is depicted here as contributing

to a killing. It is true nowhere in the Bible does God *directly* condemn polygamy, but man must live by every word of God (John 4:4). Polygamy is *never* shown in a favorable light in God's Word. Lamech was a descendant of Cain. Lamech's descendants developed music and metallurgy. Along with the rest of the world they entered into adulterous marriages. "[T]he sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Genesis 6:2). "Sons of God" in this context simply refers to men who were God's sons by creation (Luke 3:38). God warned, "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3). They brought upon themselves destruction by the Flood.

What we see at Creation is that God made for Adam one wife, not two or more. God bound Adam and Eve as one flesh. The Bible states: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). When Christ referred to His law of marriage, He said, ". . . Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Matthew 19:4–5).

The divine ideal in marriage was one man and one wife, not two or more wives. The twain were to be one flesh.

There is hypocrisy underlying the word polygamy. Its usage is an attempt to cover up the term "plural marriage" which from the Biblical viewpoint is not marriage and cannot mean marriage. Polygamy really means *polygyny*, which is the taking of many wives. In the matter of wrong sex relations man has all the advantage. He holds all the cards and often covers his deeds with the word polygamy. Man is the master and the woman is the victim. In reasonably modern times polygamy is largely the result of the outcome of tribal wars. The chief or bravest warrior often asserted his right to the choice of captives with the resulting concubinage (polygamy). To the sheik or king came the palace and harem. Prisoners of war become property passing from hand to hand by gift or sale. The woman, the weaker vessel, must endure what comes to her as a slave or concubine. No longer is she the "help-meet" God intended—"bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"—who was to leave father and mother and cling to her husband for life (Genesis 2:18; Matthew 19:5–6). Monogamy with its unity of labor, thought, and feeling, with its immeasurable modifying influences of morality, idealism, and spirituality, is lost. The woman is reduced to the position of service to fulfill man's immoderate sensuality (*ISBE*, s.v. "Woman").

Polygamy generally occurs when conditions are *abnormal*. An example is when there are a disproportionate number of females, as in tribal life or in a state of war. In normal times only those who are wealthy can support multiple wives. Polygamy can be traced to the

following: 1) the desire for numerous offspring, 2) barrenness of the first wife, 3) advantages offered by political alliances, 4) the custom of taking wives as captives in war, and 5) slavery (*ISBE*, s.v. "Marriage").

The Biblical record subsequent to the Flood attributes marital infidelity and the corruption of marriage to sin. The dual marriages of the patriarchs were due, chiefly, to the desire for children and cannot be traced to divine consent or approval. The law of Moses regarding chastity protected the sanctity of marriage and revealed a higher regard for women than was found in the surrounding Gentile nations. The law of Moses safeguarded women from the sensual abominations found so prevalent among the Egyptians and Canaanites. Concubinage or polygamy in Israel was an importation from the heathen nations (*ISBE*, s.v. "Woman").

Examples and Results of Polygamy

Monogamy is implicit in the account regarding Adam and Eve, since God created only one wife for Adam. It is believed by some authoritative sources, the *New Bible Dictionary* for example, that polygamy is not forbidden in the Scriptures, that God left it to man to discover by experience that His original institution of monogamy alone was the proper relationship. The Bible clearly reveals that polygamy was not approved by God. God permitted it but it brought only trouble and sin. Polygamy was practiced in the Old Testament period as witnessed in the lives of Abraham, Jacob, the judges, David, Solomon, etc. It was also popular in the tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 7:4). In the Old Testament polygamy is treated as incompatible with the divine ideal. Kings are warned not to become involved in it. Domestic harmony and happiness is associated with monogamy alone (*ISBE*, s.v. "Marriage"). The complications brought into the realm of morality as a result of polygamy are seldom considered, but the Bible makes them plain. The result of Abraham taking Hagar for a concubine led to the following: "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was *very grievous* in Abraham's sight because of his son" (Genesis 21:9–11). Abraham was a kind man and he suffered a great deal of pain by this experience. A look at Jacob's domestic life in Genesis 29 and 30 leaves much to be desired. There was much competition between his wives for his affection even to the point of inducing him to accept two concubines. The family concept of affection was such that Joseph was unblushingly sold into slavery by his brothers.

During the period of the judges Gideon had many wives (Judges 8:29). After his death one of his sons by a concubine murdered all of the other sons of Gideon, except one who escaped. This wicked son, Abimelech, made himself king. His evil reign did not last long but what a tragedy is associated with multiple children by multiple wives.

Elkanah's two wives were at constant odds with one another.

Now there was a certain man . . . And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat (1 Samuel 1:1–7).

Look what happened to David's family. The retribution that befell David was extensive. There was competition among his sons in claiming the throne. One son raped his half-sister. Another son had the rapist son killed. This son then fomented a rebellion against David which almost succeeded until he was killed in battle. This same son slept with David's concubines in the sight of all Israel. David was used to having many wives and was unhindered in conscience when he took Bathsheba to bed and later had her husband killed. These accounts are found in 2 Samuel 11–13, 15–18. David suffered much mental agony and pain from all these events.

Solomon was even worse. Like his father David he disobeyed the command to not multiply wives to ones self.

But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father (1 Kings 11:1–4).

Solomon was the epitome of overindulgence and loss of self-control. In his old age he went to pieces under the wiles of the women he loaded into his harem. His polygamy and attempts to build temples for his many wives contributed to the bankruptcy of his nation. The

end result was that his kingdom was divided, never to be united again. Polygamy can certainly be regarded as contributing to these terrible results (*ISBE*, s.v. "Polygamy").

What Do Bible Texts Say?

The idea that God sanctioned and/or approved of polygamy in the Old Testament is a false assumption. The above paragraphs demonstrate the results of polygamy. God's law is not designed to bring about misery and suffering (Romans 7:12). Human misery and suffering are a result of sin. Attempts to read into Bible passages preconceived ideas regarding polygamy need an examination. Take for example 2 Samuel 12:7–8. Some believe God sanctioned polygamy when He "gave" Saul's wives to David. The text reads:

. . . Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

God does not contradict Himself. Deuteronomy 17:17 clearly states regarding kings: "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." Nathan told David God had given him Saul's kingdom, his house and his master's wives into his bosom. Does this mean David was given approval to cohabit with Saul's wives? Notice what the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Vol. I, p. 273, Harris, Archer, and Waltke) has to say about the word "bosom." "A variety of abstract, figurative ideas are expressed by the term . . . Giving the old king's wives into the new king's bosom showed the new king's authority. . . ." In other words the term bosom does not always mean sexual relations. To apply this meaning to 2 Samuel 12:8 is an assumption. It makes God's *clear* instruction for a king not to multiply wives to himself *contradictory*. Polygamy never appears in a positive light in the Old Testament. The Bible never describes a truly happy polygamous marriage (*Bible Knowledge Commentary* on Deuteronomy 21:15–17).

The Bible makes it clear that in no sense did God ever give more than one wife to man in the marriage state. What men do outside that sanctioned state is another matter. It was many years before Hebrew society completely abandoned polygamy. Josephus tells us Herod had nine wives at one time (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XVII, i, 2). Justin Martyr criticized the Jews of his day with having "four or five wives" and for "marrying as many as they wish." It was not until around A.D. 1000 that polygamy was finally forbidden among the Jews (*ISBE*, s.v. "Marriage"). The aristocracy were the ones practicing polygamy. The school of

Shammai permitted polygamy while that of Hillel rejected it, so polygamy was a moot point even among the Jews. It is believed the high price fixed in the marriage contract made divorce prohibitive; the result being polygamy (*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, 578–579).

Deuteronomy 21:15–17 is another text that needs to be examined. It reads:

If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

This particular text illustrates the kind of results polygamous marriages can bring if indeed polygamy is the intended meaning expressed in the text. In a society where polygamy is tolerated there was the ever-prevalent practice of supplanting the firstborn on the grounds of aversion to one or other of the wives (*Jerome Bible Commentary*). According to Matthew Henry, the text shows the great mischief of having more than one wife. If a man has two wives, it is a thousand to one that one of them will be beloved and the other loved less. This effect cannot but lead to strife, jealousies, envy, confusion, and every evil work. Nothing but a state of constant uneasiness, and vexation would ensue, involving both sin and trouble for the husband. Furthermore, it teaches us that we do better by adhering to the Law of God than adhering to the indulgence of lust (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*).

But does Deuteronomy 21:15–17 deal with the subject of polygamy? If it sanctions polygamy God has violated His own divine ideal given in Genesis 2. There is a very logical explanation—which does not contradict God's instruction—found in the *Critical and Experimental Commentary*, by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.

In the original, and in all translations but ours, the words are rendered 'have had' referring to events that have already taken place. . . . That the 'had' has, by some mistake, been omitted in our version, seems highly probable, from other verbs being in the past tense—'hers that was hated' not 'hers that is hated,' evidently intimating that she (the first wife) was dead at the time referred to. Moses, therefore, does not here legislate upon the case of a man who has two wives at the same time, but on that of a man who has married twice in succession, the second wife after the decease of the first; and there was an obvious necessity for legislation in these circumstances; for the first wife, who

was hated, was dead, and the second wife, the favorite, was alive; and with the feelings of a stepmother, she would urge her husband to make her own son heir. This case has no bearing on polygamy, which there is no evidence that the Mosaic Code legalized.

In other words, this commentary is telling us that Deuteronomy 21:15–17 is not concerned with polygamy but with the law of inheritance.

An examination of the text in Deuteronomy 21:15–17 shows that both the words "beloved" and "hated" are in all cases, except one, passive participles. The only exception is "hated" at the end of verse 15, where it is an adjective. "Have born" in verse 15 is in the perfect tense in the Hebrew, which means a completed action. Tenses of the passive voice are formed with the past participle in combination with forms of the verb "to be." The entire verse, as the *Critical and Experimental Commentary* points out, is referring to a past event. That is why it is translated in the past tense in the English and concerns itself with the law of inheritance, not polygamy.

Compare this text with Abraham's assignment of his wealth. Abraham had two "wives"—Sarai and Hagar. Sarai was beloved while Hagar was loved less. Ishmael was the firstborn son, yet God said to listen to Sarai and cast out this bondwoman and her son because Isaac, the second son, was to receive the inheritance. If Deuteronomy 21:15–17 refers to polygamy, then God did not follow His own statute!

The instruction to the priests of Israel—the Aaronic Priesthood—was as follows: "They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God" (Leviticus 21:7). Notice, the priest was to take a wife (not wives). So, priests were forbidden to practice polygamy. There is the example in Judges of a Levite who had a concubine. She played the whore against him and then went home to her father. The rest of the account in Judges 19–20 shows the convoluted series of events that led to the death of the concubine and the near extirpation of the tribe of Benjamin. All this would not have happened had not a polygamous marriage taken place initially.

In Genesis 16 Sarai asked Abraham to consider the wrong she had done. "And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee" (Genesis 16:5). Sarai knew she had done wrong; the fruits revealed it. She had given Hagar to Abraham as a second wife, and her wrong was now upon Abraham. While Sarai gave Hagar to be Abraham's wife, Hagar was not really his wife. This was, no doubt, the reason God gave the inheritance to Isaac, not Ishmael. Sarai knew the wrong she had done

by the fruits that were born from this illegal liaison. "When she [Hagar] saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes" (Genesis 16:4). This was the fruit of polygamy; it is typical of any triangle relationship that occurs whether one is married or not. To give polygamy respectability by calling a second woman a "wife" does not erase the penalty that must be paid for violating the divine ideal God established at Creation.

Another text used by some to show God sanctions polygamy is Exodus 21:7–11. This text reads:

And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money (Exodus 21:7–11).

The "he" in the context of this section beginning in verse 7 and ending in verse 10 refers to the master. Notice the options: 1) She was not to be treated as a common laborer; 2) If during her tenure the master betroths her to himself and changes his mind, she is to be redeemed; he cannot sell her to a foreigner; 3) If she is betrothed to his son, she shall be treated as a daughter; 4) If he take another "wife" her duty of marriage shall not be reduced, and; 5) If he does not comply with the above rules she is to be freed without any payment to the master. Does this text sanction polygamy?

Notice first of all the word "wife" is in italics. That means it is not found in the original Hebrew. The text simply reads, "if he take him another." Another what? A wife or a maidservant? Notice also "and her duty of marriage." This word is found only one other time in the Bible in Hosea 10:10. There it is translated "furrows." The marginal rendering is "their habitations." The authoritative *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* renders it in Volume 2, p. 654 as "dwelling, habitation." "Her duty of marriage" in verse 10 is a poor translation. It means "her lodging." The master must sufficiently provide for her. As noted, "wife" in verse 10 is not found in the original; it is an added word to supposedly make the meaning clear. What it does is to confuse the issue. "If he take him another." Another what? The answer should be obvious if the Bible means what it says when it states it does not contradict (John 10:35). The answer is: He took another maidservant! This text does not condone polygamy. By statute the master was liable for the necessities of life for the first maidservant should he opt to take another maidservant. If he failed to make the necessary provision for her, she was freed.

Take a look at Leviticus 18:18. "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time."

This text is taken to mean one should not engage in polygamy with two sisters who are alive at the same time, but it is permissible to marry two or more unrelated women. Notice what the *Critical and Experimental Commentary* has to say about this verse.

This passage has been interpreted in two very different and indeed opposite ways: one class of commentators, taking the words in the idiomatic sense, consider the law a prohibition of polygamy—'Neither shalt thou take one wife to another.' Another, accepting the words in their natural meaning—'Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister'—view the statute as forbidding an imitation of Jacob in marrying two sisters, and understand it thus:—'Thou shalt not marry the sister of thy present wife, to vex her in her life-time; although thou mayest take a stranger, and even her sister after her decease.' The subject has provoked much discussion, and whether viewed as a question of Scriptural interpretation or of social polity, is of great interest and importance.

The commentary then calls our attention to the marginal rendering which gives the phrase "a wife to her sister" as "one wife to another." Then it states, "We believe the marginal rendering to be the true one, and that this statute does not bear upon the *questio vexata* of marriage with a deceased wife's sister." Of the word "sister" *Vine's Expository Dictionary* says, the word "sister can refer to the daughter of one's father and mother, or to one's half-sister. It may refer to an aunt on the father's side or mother's side. It more generally refers to female relatives. It may be used metaphorically, for example, as the nations of Judah and Israel. It is also translated 'beloved.'" The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* states the word "sister" used in Leviticus 18:18 can be a woman of the same nationality, or a close friend. Also, since "sister" is used in the expression "one to another" in Exodus 26:3, some scholars interpret Leviticus 18:18 to be a condemnation of polygamy. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* goes on to say the context argues against this, though. What this all means is that the interpretation of Leviticus is open to question. It has been interpreted differently depending on the viewpoint of the reader. To remain faithful to the divine ideal of marriage established by God at Creation and accepting the fact God does not change or alter His law, there is one interpretation only that is consistent with the Law of God. The marginal rendering of Leviticus 18:18 is the correct translation and does not impugn the character of God. This text offers no support for polygamy.

There is one other text that must be considered—1 Timothy 3:2. Also found in Titus 1:6 where we read that the qualifications of a bishop or elder include being "the husband of

one wife." Catholic exegesis takes the phrase to mean that the office holder may be married, but anyone who has remarried after the death of his first wife or who has remarried after divorce is automatically excluded from the office. This view, of course, is necessary for the doctrine of a celibate priesthood. Later interpretations of this text do not agree with the literal interpretation which states a man should not have more than one wife who is alive. This interpretation is in keeping with the situation of the first century (*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, 563–564). While there are traces of polygamy and polyandry (marriage of one woman to more than one man) in the Greek myths, the fact is that in the historical period of the Greek world monogamy was the only marriage practice (ibid., 575). What, then, is the meaning of Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 3:2—"husband of one wife?" Paul does allow for remarriage after the death of a spouse (1 Corinthians 7:39). 1 Timothy 5:9 places a special class of widows in the same category. They, too, must have been wives of one man or husband. If 1 Timothy 3:2 sanctions polygamy, then 1 Timothy 5:9 sanctions polyandry (marriage of a woman to more than one husband). But the fact is polyandry was virtually unknown in the Hellenistic world. So, clearly, 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 do not support polygamy. The only interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 that is in keeping with the divine ideal established at Creation is that divorce and remarriage of successive mates is forbidden if one is to be a bishop or elder. A minister must be able to rule his own house having his children in subjection with all gravity (1 Timothy 3:4). Not someone else's children. His own house and his own children. Children from different wives in a succession of marriages often leads to chaos and many difficulties.

What Is So Wrong With Polygamy?

Man's historic treatment of women is the culprit behind polygamy. This treatment is due to conceit, ignorance, and moral perversion. Women have been taken for granted, compelled into enslavement and degradation. Sin, both in men and in women has been the universal cause of degradation of women. All history must be viewed in the light of the mistaken estimate of the woman's endowment, worth, and rightful place. The ancient Hebrews never entirely lost sight of this original revelation. More than any other people, they held women in high esteem, honor, and affection. Christianity completed this restoration to equality of opportunity and place. Where the teaching of true Christianity prevails women are made the beloved companions, confidants, and advisors to their husbands (*ISBE*, s.v. "Woman").

Polygamy denies a woman the rights and privileges of a monogamous marriage; it also interferes with the rights of man. Every harem is a denial to men of the right to seek among its women a wife according to the dictates of the heart. A search into history will also reveal

the harm done to those emasculated men who must serve as custodians in harems. What has polygamy done? It has reduced the woman to near zero in all areas of her being. Women have been held to the lowest and most primitive of industrial pursuits, deprived of intellectual development, debarred from society, permitted to stare through a lattice or if abroad to be clothed in body and face. Her bounds are set for life. The highest office granted her is a breeder of children, her daughters having no possible hope or ambition. Where in this degraded condition is the "help-meet" God intended for man and all his problems? (*ISBE*, s.v. "Polygamy"). A look at the tragic fate that befell David's wives after the rebellion of Absalom is a case in point. "And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood" (2 Samuel 20:3).

The ancient Greeks and Romans did not hold the same perspective regarding women as the ancient Israelites. The Hellenic philosophers expressed the idea that the claim of the equality of women with their husbands would radically disorganize the state. Aristotle considered women to be inferior, intermediate between freemen and slaves. Socrates and Demosthenes deprecated women in like manner. Plato advocated a community of wives. These same views prevailed in Rome. Metullus and Care, for example, advocated marriage as a public duty only. More honor was shown to a prostitute than to a wife. Chastity and modesty, the choice inheritance of Hebrew womanhood, were foreign to the Greek concept of morality and disappeared from Rome when Greek culture entered. The Greeks lifted up their hands to public prostitutes when they prayed in their temples. Pagan culture and heathen darkness made women subject to inferior and degrading conditions. Every decline in the status of women in the Hebrew culture was due to the infusion of foreign or pagan influences. Lapses in Hebrew morality occurred by borrowing idolatrous and heathen customs from the surrounding nations (*ISBE*, s.v. "Woman").

Polygamous nations have never been industrial inventors and have contributed little to science. They have been weighed down with the lethargy of a system that appeals to nothing but the most primitive instincts and vices of men. The monogamous nations are the forceful nations. The Mogul and Turk empires of India and Western Asia had the authorization of their religions to exhibit the frenzy of bloodshed and lust so apparent. The enjoyment of lust was, in fact, the hope they had for the life to come. When they possessed a country and the massacres and ravishing were over, what then? Mankind is indebted to these nations for nothing (*ISBE*, s.v. "Polygamy").

What we have seen in this article is that monogamy is the divine ideal God established at Creation. But man is a free moral agent and God did not prevent the introduction of polygamy in the pre-Flood world. Every Bible example of polygamy depicts an unhealthy

and harmful result. There is no Bible justification or license to practice polygamy. Texts that have been brought up to support polygamy are open to misinterpretation and to aver they support it contradicts the righteousness of God. All history gives us the record of the abuse of women and the degrading status bequeathed to them. Polygamy is one of these degrading institutions. Let us recognize polygamy for what it really is—the exercise of the lust and passions of ungodly men who will have much to repent of someday. Let us recognize the glory and purpose of women and truly appreciate their creation as a work of God!