



**MAN AND WOMAN  
IN BIBLICAL LAW**

***A Patriarchal Manifesto***

**Resurrecting the Biblical Family  
Part 1  
by Tom Shipley**

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Part 1

**Tom Shipley**

Institute for Christian Patriarchy  
Baltimore, Maryland

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This book is dedicated to

**John Murray**

who brought into focus most clearly the  
unity and continuity of the biblical ethic.



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# Preface

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. Isaiah 45:18*

It is most common, to our humanistic mindset, to think that God will bend to our ways and accommodate our prejudices, especially if they are based on our best man-made piety, couched in common sense, and ensconced in centuries of tradition and custom. But we are mistaken when we think so. God made us, owns us, paid the price for our sins, and insists on taming the shrew within us until we become the tamed of God, meek and lowly in heart,

those harnessed to His law-word and calling, who shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:6) . The blessed meek are those who submit to God's dominion, have therefore dominion over themselves, and are capable of exercising dominion over the earth. They therefore inherit the earth.<sup>1</sup>

What this book does is lay down a rock solid case for a Biblical definition of marriage. A definition given to us by God, the definer of all things, Who is Himself beyond definition. This case is solid and well built. The author answers all challengers, builds on true exegesis and exposes his opponent's eisegesis.

This book does not tell you how to successfully live this kind of marriage or even how to transition into a culture where it would be acceptable to your fellow believers. Most of those who call themselves Christian today care nothing for God's Law; why should they care what God has to say about marriage? Furthermore, this book is only one of a series that will go on to make the cases for arranged marriages (the father is responsible with the consent of all), the Biblical dowry (three years wages paid by the man for a virgin), patriarchy (it is not just for the Old Testament after all), and the one-flesh nature of marriage (the disestablishment of church and state from marriage). Just documenting the reformation of marriage is a big project.

Our current "monogamy-only" definition of marriage was first called Christian, in defiance against all of Scripture, by the Nicene church fathers who carried over a large amount of baggage from their pagan Greek education and culture into the church. Thus the church had not been around for more than a few hundred years before Biblical teaching and law on the subject of marriage had been completely undermined. We are only now starting to recover from these errors and reform our thinking on marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* [Vol. I] (Phillipsburg, N.J.: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1984 [ 1973], p. 450.

Tom Shipley, the author of the book, has built on the work of VanTil, Rushdoony, and Bahnsen who laid the ground work for a presuppositional, theonomic, and apologetic (defense of) understanding of Scripture. Their work will not be shaken either.

It is beyond me to fathom the response of today's church to this doctrine of marriage. I cannot imagine anything but wholesale rejection by way of preemptive dismissal of this case. The pietistic element, having been kicked around by the humanists for so long, will, no doubt, take glee in kicking around those who teach and stand by this doctrine. In fact, you can almost define this doctrine by its opposition in our humanist culture; anything is acceptable but this. Nonetheless, God has raised up Tom to set it forth and nothing can resist the moving of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is out of faith that I believe in this work. Although the timing is God's, the things revealed are ours.

What I can see more clearly are the benefits that will accompany this doctrine when it is finally realized. A Christian marriage of one man and more than one wife will present a microcosm of Christ and the church. We, as Christians, are betrothed to Christ and yet we do not get along very well. We are like the wives of one husband who do not get along. The high priestly prayer of Christ in John 17 is the model for the oneness that we should have and that oneness can be best modeled in a Christian household with one husband and multiple wives. Likewise, tyranny and anarchy can best be modeled in a non-Christian household with one-husband and multiple wives. As in the world, so in marriage: tyranny and anarchy are the only alternatives to submission to Christ in all things.

So Biblical polygyny successfully entered into and practiced according to Scripture will be a model of cooperation, loving service, giving of one's self for another, harmony, division of labor, bearing one another's burdens, submission to all Godly authority based on a mature understanding of God's LawWord, fulfilled lives, and mutual ministry for all other spheres of society such as nations, tribes, cities, and denominations and churches. How can a marriage with only one wife be such a model? How can a non-Christian polygynous marriage be such a model? Neither can.

Satan has been fearing the outbreak of this doctrine and its practice for a long time. He will no doubt inspire opposition to it everywhere and in every way he can. But that too will serve God's plan. Misunderstandings, false accusations, persecutions, propaganda campaigns, misrepresentations, guilt by association with non-Biblical forms of polygyny - all these and more will no doubt come. Nonetheless, the gates of hell will not be able to withstand the expansion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ as we, his bride militant, bring every thought captive to Him.

Wayne McGregor

March 2004

## Introduction

The book you hold in your hands is a doctrinal manifesto. Its aim and purpose is to produce what many modern writers are fond of referring to as a *paradigm shift*. The goal is to lay the foundation for the establishment of a truly *biblical* social order, especially within the community of Bible-believing, Christ-honoring families. The subject matter is *patriarchy* and the biblical exposition contained herein is devoted to establishing the proposition that it is patriarchy which is and was mandated by God ever since the original creation of man and woman.

This work is vulnerable to being misperceived as a work primarily about polygamy since the bulk of the exposition centers around that subject. But read carefully. Note the flow of the argumentation. The biblical exposition on polygamy here serves a *supporting* role to the fundamental proposition of God-ordained and mandated patriarchy. In terms of this thesis, it is a *secondary* and *subsidiary* point—which is not to say that it is not important as a subject in its own right.

There are a multitude within the ranks of the Evangelical churches who are rightly and justifiably dismayed at the encroachment of feminist ideology as a subversive factor within Christendom and who are formally in favor of the biblical mandate of male headship within the Family and the Church. Sadly, almost all of the responses and reactions to this encroachment are fundamentally compromised with feminism in one way or another. This present work rejects all such compromise.

This book was conceived in nascent form in the Spring of 1985 while studying Rousas J. Rushdoony's massive and landmark volume, "The Institutes of Biblical Law." It was that work which persuaded me for the first time of the lawfulness of polygamy under God's moral law as an aspect of Divinely mandated patriarchy. There is an irony in this inasmuch as Rushdoony was formally making a case *against* polygamy and for the usual "monogamy only" doctrine. I say "formally" because I harbor the suspicion that Rushdoony actually believed in the lawfulness of polygamy (more technically, *polygyny*, multiple wives) but could not come right out and say so explicitly because of being so totally vested in the institutions of traditional Calvinistic Evangelicalism. (I have a like suspicion about John Murray.) This issue is not like taking a post-mil, pre-mil, a-mil prophetic position, which, though hotly debated, is not likely to get anyone branded as a heretic or excommunicated from one's church. The antipathy towards the biblical doctrine of polygamy *bequeathed to us historically by pagan Roman mores and custom*, on the other hand, is deep, visceral, profound. It was not possible in 1973 (the publication date for "The Institutes of Biblical Law" ) for Rushdoony or anyone else to get a fair hearing for a biblically-based *pro-*

polygamy argument, and for the most part, it still is not today. But the times they are a-changin' and the wind blows where it will...

This book, which consists of a series of articles, was refined, refined again, and then refined some more over a period of 14 years, though the bulk of actual writing was accomplished in the 1989-1992 timeframe. This work has been a deliberately long term project. I wanted it to be seasoned with the perspective of many years and interaction with other Bible believing Christians, as well as to answer the more astute commentators who have had something to say about patriarchy, monogamy and polygamy. It was also very important to me that this work be a *systematic*, thorough, no-stone-unturned kind of project. It is also important to me that this work adheres to scholarly rules of argumentation while at the same time being readable and understandable to the average reader. I *think* I have accomplished that goal. For the last five years now the case I am making here has been put forward for the scrutiny and comment of several Bible believing patriarchalist groups. I have been gratified to receive very much positive reaction.

Biblical patriarchalism which allows for polygamy has come to be an identifiable movement within the Evangelical churches with somewhat of a short history now behind it but, to my knowledge, there is no one else in the patriarchal Christian community who has endeavored to produce a work of this breadth and depth. The reader will find biblical exegesis and argumentation here which is completely original and taught to me by no one except the Holy Spirit. I hope the reader will not think of me as indulging in too much braggadocio when I say that this work constitutes at this time *the* standard doctrinal reference work of the patriarchal Christian movement. For the critics of this movement to be taken seriously and not regarded as vacuous propagandists, they are going to have to come to terms with *this* work. That is the challenge and gauntlet I am throwing down to the naysayers, and the clarion call and standard I am raising to those who say "Amen."

This movement is like a mustard seed planted to which the Lord *will* give the increase. I find it amazing how many there are who are open and receptive to these truths of Scripture. Truly light vanquishes darkness. And now, let's get down to business. May the Lord edify you through this work as you study the following pages.

## Article 1: How Feminism Denies the Gospel

*Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was created first and then Eve.—I Timothy 2:11-13 NAS*

One of the recurrent claims in “Christian” feminist literature is that the order of creation of Adam and Eve has no bearing upon the mutual relation of men and women, that Adam’s *temporal precedence* to Eve, and her being made “*for him*” (Gen. 2:18; I Cor. 11:9), in no way institutes an authority relationship between them. In this connection, it should be noted that Revelation 4:11 makes it clear that the fact that “all things” were created *for* God means that there is an authority relationship instituted *thereby* between God and all things. As I shall presently show, this claim of feminists implicitly involves a denial of the biblical doctrine of redemption and, therefore, of the Gospel itself.

All Bible believing Christians believe they are saved on the basis of Christ’s *imputed* righteousness made possible by his *substitutionary* sacrifice on the cross. Though we still sin at times by practice (I John 1:8) yet, in turning to Christ by faith, we are given the gift of eternal life on the merits of Jesus. Though we still sin, we are *accounted* to be wholly righteous. Christ’s substitutionary, capital punishment on the cross, and our regeneration by grace through faith, is the heart of the Gospel. One of the most important passages on the doctrine of redemption in the Bible is Romans 5:12-21;

*12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. 17 For if, by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man’s*

*disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

Please, study this passage very carefully and take especial note of the highlighted phrases. It is immediately clear that the apostle Paul is making a parallel between Christ and Adam (vs. 14). The parallel is of two *opposite* things: the imputation of *sin*, on the one hand, and the imputation of *righteousness*, on the other. Though there is this contrast of the *things* imputed, there is a parallel *in the fact of imputation*. The *one sin* of the *one man*, Adam, is accounted as the sin of all others who come from him (i.e., original sin). The righteousness of the *one man*, Jesus Christ, is accounted as the righteousness of all who believe in him. It is the *representative character* of the imputation that Paul is emphasizing here. Verse 16 makes it clear that the *manner* of the imputation of sin is parallel to the manner of the imputation of righteousness: both are based upon the action of *one* other man. Equally important is that the emphasis is placed upon the *one sin* of the first man (“the offense”—singular, vs. 15; “by one man’s offense”—singular, vs. 17; “by the offense of one”—singular, vs. 18). Adam and his descendants were immediately plunged into depravity (i.e., original sin) by the one sin of the one man. We are all accounted sinners because of Adam’s first sin. In regard to the present topic, what is to be noted is that Eve is conspicuous by her *absence* in these remarks. Eve, by Divine purpose and action, was also one of Adam’s *descendants*, being formed *after* Adam and *from* Adam’s own substance (Gen 2:18, 21-22). Eve herself is included in the words of Romans 5:18, “by the offense of one judgment came upon *all*.” There is none, except Christ, who escapes the imputation of Adam’s sin. This includes Eve, *even though chronologically she was the first to sin!*

Even feminist commentators acknowledge that it is *Adam’s* sin, and not *Eve’s*, which is imputed. Ruth Tucker, for example, states:

“For all the blame that Eve has endured over time for being the first sinner, the Bible clearly states, in Romans 5:12-14, that by one man—Adam—sin entered the world. If Eve was the first to eat the fruit, as Genesis 3:6 reports, then why did Paul emphasize in Romans that sin entered the world through Adam?” (from “Women in the Maze,” pg. 47)

Another feminist commentator has this to say:

“(I Timothy 2:14) does not exonerate Adam as innocent of responsibility in the fall, and it does not say that Adam did not become a transgressor also. In fact, Paul places the responsibility for the fall *upon Adam only*. (Rom. 5:12-14, 18-19; I Cor. 15:22) — Gilbert Bilezikian,” “Beyond Sex Roles,” pg. 297.

Paul *does indeed* “place the responsibility for the fall *upon Adam only*.” But these two feminists are so zealous in their cause to place Adam in a bad light next to Eve that they fail to see that the significance of this fact runs counter to their contention that there was no authority/subordinate relation between Adam and Eve prior to the fall. Romans 5 conclusively *proves Adam’s authority over Eve prior to the fall*. If there had been an *equality* of authority between Adam and Eve prior to the

fall, instead of a hierarchy, the sin imputed to all of their descendants would logically have been attributed to *both Adam and Eve*; or, since Eve was the first to sin, attributed to Eve alone. But—as Tucker and Bilezikian correctly note—it is attributed to Adam alone. Eve sinned first. Afterwards, Adam joined in her sin. But the imputation is not reckoned against *the first sin*, nor to their *mutual sins*, but to the *one sin of the one man*.

If Adam was not the lawful authority over Eve *before* the fall, then Adam’s sin could not logically be imputed to Eve or his other descendants. If Adam’s authority over Eve is denied, then the imputation of Adam’s sin to his other descendants is denied as well. And if the imputation of Adam’s sin to his other descendants is denied *then what was the point of Christ’s death on the cross?!!! It would have been to no avail!* There would have been no imputed sin to atone for! *If the doctrine of Adam’s headship over Eve is denied, then we are left logically without a Gospel!*

Thus, the doctrine of patriarchy, of the man’s headship over the woman, cannot be repudiated without repudiating the doctrine of redemption, as well. This reveals the fundamental foundation of heresy from which feminism operates. Tamper with the doctrine of patriarchy, and you tamper with the Gospel. There is no rational way around this fact. Patriarchy and the Gospel are bound together like the twin strands of the double helix.

Feminist doctrine is, therefore, a veritable witches’ brew of satanic poison aimed right at the heart of Christianity. How true it is that “a little leaven leavens the whole loaf.” We must be aware of the extent to which the Christian revelation is perverted by the tenets of feminism and we should not hesitate to call feminism a grievous heresy and blasphemy.

## Article 2: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 1

In the previous article, we examined how the logic of feminism (that is, the denial of the biblical doctrine of patriarchy) ultimately winds up denying the Gospel itself. We examined Romans 5:12-21 and saw how it refutes the feminist denials that the man is the head of the woman, and demonstrated that this actually involves a denial of the biblical doctrines of original sin and redemption.

Much of feminist argumentation today has the aim of convincing Christians that patriarchal hierarchy is *not* a part of God's creation purpose for mankind; that patriarchy is even a *sinful* departure from "God's intended egalitarianism between the sexes;" and there is especially an emphasis that *before the fall* there was no hierarchy between man and woman and that, hence, Christ actually died partly to overturn the "sin" of patriarchy.

This theme turns up over and over again in almost every book by so-called "Christian feminists," — an oxymoron if ever there was one. It will be beneficial to examine the biblical material which focuses on the *pre-fall* establishment of patriarchal hierarchy by God.

There are at least six very powerful aspects to the creation record in Genesis 1 and 2 which teach us that patriarchy is God's will. Feminists, however, deny this truth explicitly:

"But what do the Scriptures actually say about male headship prior to the fall? The fact of the matter is, there is no reference to headship in the creation account...If such an organizational structure had been established between Adam and Eve, it would be hard to imagine that it would not have been mentioned."—Ruth Tucker, "Women in the Maze," pg. 34

Tucker's book is appropriately named, for her work leads the biblically unlearned into a labyrinth of distortions of the Word of God. Contrary to Tucker and other "Christian" feminists, the teaching of male headship is *pervasive* in the creation account. As mentioned above, there are at least *six* aspects of the creation account which teach patriarchy:

1. Genesis 2:18, which tells us that the woman was made “*for* (the man).”
2. Genesis 2:21-23, which tells us that the woman was made *from* the man.
3. The temporal *sequence* of the creation of the man and woman.
4. Adam’s naming authority and his naming of woman, both in her generic and personal aspect.
5. God’s act of bringing the woman unto the man.
6. The name of “Adam” itself.

Each of these aspects of Genesis teaches God-ordained patriarchy. As we will see, the first three are explicitly and unambiguously proclaimed and exegeted in Scripture itself. The other three are, in my view, equally clear in their significance though not made the object of exegesis by other Scripture. In this article, we will consider Genesis 2:18. The explicit declaration of God’s *purpose* in Genesis 2:18 that the woman was made *for* the man *intrinsically* involves the creation of a *hierarchy*—with the man as the head and the woman as the subordinate. In *effecting* this purpose, God differentiated the woman from the man in a *manner* that was appropriate to serve this purpose. That is to say that the sexual differentiation of Eve from Adam served God’s purpose of creating the woman *for* the man—an inherently *hierarchical* concept. Feminist commentators despise this truth, but there is simply no rational denial of it. It is an elementary, basic, fundamental fact of our creation as man and woman. That this ordinance *did not cease* with Adam and Eve is obvious in that sexual differentiation continues to manifest itself in us, their descendants. There is no reasonable way to restrict the hierarchy here to just the first husband and wife. Since sexual differentiation itself served the purpose of effecting the first patriarchal hierarchy, the same is therefore true with *all* husbands and wives. We may conclude, therefore, that Genesis 2:18 is sufficient in and of itself to establish the doctrine of God-ordained patriarchy.

But Genesis 2:18 does not exist by itself. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul refers to Genesis 2:18 in I Corinthians 11:9: “Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.” It is clear from Paul’s language that Genesis 2:18 is the referent. Paul’s summary, based upon this passage, is “the head of every man is Christ, and *the head of the woman is the man.*” *This is an explicit declaration of hierarchy between man and woman—a patriarchal, not a matriarchal hierarchy.* Feminists have gone to utterly ludicrous and ridiculous extremes to repudiate the plain teaching of God’s word here. Suffice to say, anyone with a modicum of common sense can understand the plain meaning of Paul’s words. Tucker’s statement cited above is representative of how feminists put on the blinders when the Bible presents truths they do not want to see. Genesis 2:18 *is* a reference to male headship prior to the fall, explicitly exegeted by Paul, and only a rebellious heart and uncircumcised ears prevent Tucker and other feminists from hearing what God says here. The “organizational structure”—let’s call it “patriarchy”—*is* mentioned in the fact that the *explicit* language of Genesis 2:18 is that the woman was made “*for* (Adam).”

Feminists try to evade the plain significance of this fact, but the apostle Paul in his *divinely inspired commentary on this passage*, in I Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, declares what feminists, in slavery to their sin, cannot bear to acknowledge—that the woman was made for the man, who is the head of the woman. This same fact Paul reiterates in Ephesians 5:22-24:

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church...Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

As is clear from I Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, these truths are grounded in *God's creation purpose*. If the *implicit significance* of Genesis 2:18 is not immediately clear to feminists, Paul's *explicit* commentary on it *ought* to settle the question once and for all. But—alas!—hearts in rebellion against God are deaf even to the explicit testimony of God's word. Feminists resort to all manner of equivocation and scripture-twisting to reject the Bible's plain teaching about this subject.

God did not merely make a replica of Adam, a clone. God made a woman, a being from Adam's own substance; the same as himself in many crucial ways (most importantly, being also in the image of God), yet different. Through an act of sexual differentiation, God created a being *suited* to be an appropriate helper *for* the man and subordinate to him. Inherent in this differentiation and appointed function is the creation of patriarchal hierarchy.

## Article 3: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 2

### The creation of Eve

*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 2:21-23*

*For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. **For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.** —I Cor. 11:7-8*

Before exploring Eve's creation from the body of Adam, it will be helpful to note something very interesting about Adam's creation, and the significance of this regarding the authority of God. I would presume that the vast majority of those who call themselves Bible-believing Christians would intuitively appeal to the creation as validation of God's own authority. This validation of God's authority is appealed to in many places in Scripture both directly and indirectly. For example, Revelation 4:11 states, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: *for thou hast created all things*, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

*The ethical imperative to obey God is inextricably bound up in the fact that He is the source of all things else.*

One aspect of God's role as creator and source of all things that is unique among all of God's creations is recorded in Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and *breathed into* his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul." There is a very profound question with many implications to be asked here: Was the breath that God "breathed into" Adam a *created* substance? Did it come into existence *ex nihilo*? There are many who believe so, but the evidence is decidedly against this view. Note first of all the contrast between the creation of plants and animals and of man.

***Let the earth bring forth** grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind.—Gen. 1:11*

*And God said, let the waters bring forth* abundantly the moving creature that has life...after their kind.—Gen. 1:20-21

*And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing.*—Gen. 1:24

Plant life and animal life were all derived from the *earth* or the *waters*. Likewise, man's *body* is of the earth. In this respect, there is no difference between man and the animals. But when Scripture declares that God "breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life," it says something different about man and man is *distinguished* by this from the animals. Man's soul (or spirit, the terms are synonymous) comes *immediately* from God through *derivation*. This breath is said neither to be "brought forth" from that which already existed nor to be "made" or "created." It is simply "breathed into" the body of the man and is, therefore, spoken of as *already existing*. It is the very life essence of God Himself which He *communicated* and *propagated* to Adam.

I don't want to digress too much from my main point here, but upon Genesis 2:7 stands the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul, and the statement in the New Testament about God alone possessing immortality must be understood as qualified by the teaching of Genesis. Genesis 2:7 refutes the doctrine of "annihilationism" taught by several denominations, because that which is derived from *God's own essence* simply *cannot* be destroyed. Truly, eternity is in the heart of man.

Adam, then, was *derived immediately from God* in his spirit, but from the earth in his body. Rousas J. Rushdoony, in his massive and landmark volume, "The Institutes of Biblical Law," notes Simpson's observation that "God Himself is the Archetype of parentage," (pg. 339). It is clear from Genesis 2:7 that God's fatherhood of the human race is more than a mere archetype or metaphor. His fatherhood is quite *actual* and *substantive* in nature. God gave of *His seed* to the human body of Adam, His life essence. God, in effect, *reproduced*. God *propagated* a being after his own image. God is truly the Father of the human race. Thus it is that the genealogy of Luke 3 places God Himself in the human genealogy: "which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David...which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham...which was the son of *Adam, which was the son of God.*" Adam was the son of God as truly as Seth was the son of Adam:

*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; 2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. 3 And Adam...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth. —Genesis 5:1-3*

Note the parallelism to God's own creation of Adam in Genesis 1-2. Adam assuredly knew of the *mode* of his own creation; and he assuredly knew that there was a father/son *authority* relation between himself and his father, God, instituted thereby. The point I wish to stress here is that there is a direct connection between Adam's *mode* of creation and his subordinate status to his father, God. Everything about Adam's creation stressed God's *authority* over him, including the *derivation* of his soul from Him. Now Genesis 2:21-23 informs us that Eve's creation was not *ex nihilo*, but from the

man, as a result of Divine action, even as the man was from God. Obviously God is primary in all of this. Yet it is also clear that this *mode* of creation, being an analog of Adam's own creation from God, *stresses Eve's subordination to Adam, her own immediate source of existence, as Adam's mode of creation stresses his subordination to God.*

God's creative actions here are not just utilitarian in nature but *meaningful*. They do not just illustrate His power but His *purpose* and *will*, as well. The apostle Paul's citation and explication of this passage in I Corinthians 11 is clearly to the effect that the *mode* of Eve's creation institutes an authority relationship between the man and the woman, with the man as the head and the woman as the subordinate.

Now again, as I said concerning Genesis 2:18, if the implicit significance of Genesis 2:21-23 is not immediately clear to feminists, Paul's *explicit* explanation of its meaning *ought to* settle the question once and for all. Feminists, however, in slavery to their sin, cannot bear to acknowledge that the woman is *of the man* who is, therefore, the head of the woman.

And, again, it is to be noted that all of this occurred *before the fall*. Patriarchal hierarchy is inherent in the creation itself.

## Article 4: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 3

### Adam's temporal precedence to Eve

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.—Gen 1:1*

*These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son...glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.—John 17:1, 5*

One of the most fundamental of all truths given to us in Scripture is the authority of God over all of heaven and earth. I pointed out in the previous article that Scripture appeals to God-as-creator as a defense of His authority, He being the *source* of all things else. Not quite so widely recognized is that the scriptures also appeal to His *prior existence* to man as a basis of His authority. As God said to Job in Job 38:4, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Colossians 1:15-18 is also relevant in this regard:

*15 Who (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth...all things were created by him and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

Note that Paul, in stressing Christ's authority, cites him as “the firstborn of *every* creature,” (indicating his preexistence before the creation), and the “firstborn from the dead.” This passage clearly affirms the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. A similar appeal is made by John the baptist in John 1:27-30:

*27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose...28 John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith...29 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: **for he was before me.***

Since John was conceived and born six months prior to Jesus, this can only refer to his pre-incarnate existence in heaven. Another appeal to God's authority, based upon His prior existence, is Jeremiah 51:19; "The portion of Jacob is not like them (idols): *for he is the former* (prior, previous) *of all things...*The LORD of Hosts is His name."

It is a patent fact of the Divine revelation that Adam was created first. Afterwards, Eve was created *for* Adam (Gen. 2:18) and *from* Adam (Gen. 2:21-23). It is an oft-repeated argument among feminists that if temporal precedence should confer authority on Adam over Eve, then the animals would have authority over man because, after all, the animals were created first. The force of this assertion is nullified by at least two factors: first, the actual substance of the human soul is *derived from God*, had *no beginning*, is *eternal* in nature, and existed *prior* to the creation of the animals. Man, therefore, has temporal precedence over the animals and not vice-versa; second, even granting the factual accuracy and logical force of this feminist argument (which we do not), this consideration is overshadowed and outweighed by the more fundamental fact of man's creation in the image of God. Man is a different *kind* of being than the animals, a *superior* kind. Temporal precedence is not the only factor relevant to the question of authority. In the case of Adam and Eve, the Divine image inheres in both. On this basis, neither Adam nor Eve had any priority of authority. But Adam's temporal precedence as a discreet being is a fact; and Scripture bases its apologetic for God's authority partly on His temporal precedence. Indeed we see this as a basic principle in Scripture: rise up before the grey head—respect for elders; the right of the inheritance of the firstborn is his—priority in inheritance, etc.

Since temporal precedence is a basis of God's authority, then there is a good reason to believe that God is stressing Adam's authority over Eve by creating her subsequent to Adam rather than simultaneously. We learn also from Genesis 2:16-17 that God also communicated His commandment to Adam prior to Eve's creation, the implication being that Adam afterwards passed this commandment along to Eve, thus placing Adam in the position as teacher and instructor of the woman.

What is implicit in these Divine actions is the stress on the authority of the man over the woman. Again, the distinguishing of the male and female in their descendants logically implies that this fact applies to future husbands and wives after them.

*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence, for Adam was first formed, then Eve.*—I Tim. 2:11-13

In the apostle Paul's Divinely inspired comments here, we see *explicitly* that temporal precedence of Adam, indeed, has significance—in this instance in the church (Paul is instructing Timothy *as an ordained elder* in the church). Thus, there is significance in Adam's temporal precedence in the relation of men and women *in general* beyond the scope of marriage, at least in the church.

The inference the apostle Paul draws here from the order of creation of Adam and Eve as pertaining to the church assuredly means that it has significance in the marital relation, as well—indeed even *more* so. To reiterate what was said in the previous articles, if the implicit significance of the man's

temporal precedence in Genesis 2 is not obvious to feminists, Paul's *explicit* and Divinely inspired exegesis of the fact *ought* to settle the question once and for all. But—alas!—on this point also, feminists, in bondage to their sin, cannot bear to acknowledge even the explicit testimony of the holy Scriptures, preferring instead to twist the Scriptures unto their own destruction.

## Article 5: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 4

### “She Shall Be Called Woman”

In Genesis 1, we learn that God created man to be the ruler over the animals and to exercise dominion over them. Adam, in following his Divinely appointed function to exercise dominion over the animals, proceeds to *name* them, even as God had named much of the creation Himself. This naming function is clearly an extension of Adam’s rulership function, acting as God’s vicegerent over His creation.

As we are told, Adam names not only the animals, but Eve as well, giving her both her generic designation as “woman” and her personal name of “Eve.” What is significant in Genesis 2 is that the creation of the woman and the animals, and the naming of the animals and the woman, is treated as a *single subject*. Consider the sequence:

- vs. 18: God declares His intention to create *woman*.
- vs. 19a: God brings the *animals* to Adam to *name them*.
- vs. 19b: Adam names the animals.
- vs. 21-21a: God creates the *woman*.
- vs. 22b: God brings the *woman* to Adam.
- vs. 23: Adam *names her* “woman.”

It is quite clear, not only from the *content* of this passage, but from the *sequence* — i.e., the *alternating* back and forth from the woman to the animals, that the *focus* is upon Adam’s naming authority, his function of dominion in this regard. This whole alternating sequence clearly constitutes the conceptual particulars, a sub-unit, of the main topic stressing Adam’s authority—not only over the animals, but over Eve, as well. I am aware of no other biblical commentator who has noted this alternating back and forth sequence, yet it stares us plainly in the face.

To approach this from a slightly different angle, let us note that verse 19 *seems logically discontinuous* with verse 18. Since verse 18 introduces us to the topic of God’s intent to create the woman, *why* does verse 19 immediately digress (seemingly) to the altogether different topic of the naming of the animals, and only *then* revert back to the creation and naming of the woman? Have we

found here an example of incoherence and blatant lack of conceptual organization in the biblical text? No! It is the focus and implicit stress upon Adam's naming authority which preserves the logical coherence of verses 18-23. Once we see this, then we can see that there is no real incoherence in the biblical record here.

There is no commentary in the New Testament on this facet of the creation, as there is concerning 1) the woman's mode of creation (I Cor. 11:8), and as there is concerning 2) her being made *for* the man (I Cor. 11:9), and as there is concerning 3) the temporal precedence of the man (I Tim. 2:11-13). Yet, since these other aspects clearly reveal the centrality of the concern of authority in Genesis 2, it should come as no surprise that *yet another* aspect of creation contains logical inferences about Adam's authority over Eve. Just because the significance of this is not explicitly stated does not mean that it is not being inferred. In the case of the naming of Eve, and the relevance of this to the issue of authority, the concern of authority is even *more* apparent than in the other cases from which the apostle Paul derives this inference.

By mixing the accounts of the creation and naming of the animals and the creation and naming of the woman, Moses makes the issue of authority apparent even if not verbally explicit. And the inference is that Adam possessed authority over Eve from the very beginning *before* the fall.

Now I have no delusions about the denials from feminists that this analysis will engender. They have gone to great lengths to deny even the explicit commentary of the apostle Paul on this topic, so they are not about to acknowledge a logical inference not backed up with explicit exegesis in the New Testament. Feminists fall into the negative category of people of whom Messiah spoke when he said, "Blessed are the eyes and ears of you, for it has been given unto you to know the mysteries (i.e., the spiritual truths) of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it has not been given. Their eyes have they closed, and their ears are waxed shut, and their hearts are hardened." Let us not be of those who harden their hearts against the revealed truths of God.

## Article 6: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 5

“And brought her unto the man...”

The patriarchal significance of this aspect of the creation narrative goes unnoticed by almost all Westerners except those who already understand the patriarchal nature of biblical law and revelation, and, perhaps, those with a little knowledge of how marriages were actually formed in the ancient world. Marriage in nearly the entirety of the ancient world, and certainly in biblical Israel, was a family affair. Almost all marriages entered into by virgins were *arranged by the parents, especially the fathers*.

The bringing of Eve unto Adam paralleled the reality of everyday family life that every Israelite would have immediately recognized. God acts in a dual role, both as a father to his son/groom (Adam) and as a father to his daughter/bride (Eve). As Israelite fathers would arrange marriages for their sons and daughters, and *give a daughter* to a man to marry, so God gave his daughter, Eve, to His son, Adam; secondly, as an Israelite father would *get a wife* for his son, so God got a wife for His son, Adam.

As among Israelite families there was a *transfer of authority over the woman from the father to the husband*, so it was with Adam and Eve. The transfer of authority over the woman is so basic here, so fundamentally presupposed, that no Israelite in Moses' day would ever have conceived of this incident in any other light. It is part of the “warp and woof” (as the late Francis A. Schaeffer used to say) of the biblical text.

This same insight is expressed by Stephen B. Clark in his book, “Man and Woman in Christ”:

“Luke 3:38 provides further insight...Luke 3:38 falls at the end of a genealogy...continuing back to...‘Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.’ God appears in the genealogy along with all of the other fathers...In Genesis 2, *God is treating Adam as His son*. He creates him and gives him a place in life, especially by providing an occupation for him *and getting him a wife*...God places the man (Adam or *Human*) over his creation, just as a Jewish father would place his only

son over his house. The man, (Adam, Human) is descended from God, his creator, and represents him.—pg. 17, “Man and Woman in Christ.”

The parallel to the usual Israelite marriage is, of course, no mere “coincidence” but God’s prescription of the way things are *meant* by Him to be. This aspect of Genesis is, therefore, yet another prescriptive endorsement of patriarchy by God *prior* to the fall.

As a postscript to this article, I highly recommend Clark’s book. It contains a lot of good material for those of us who believe in patriarchy. Clark’s book is very thorough, scholarly, and clearly in deference to scriptural authority. The surprise is that Clark is Catholic. As a rather strong proponent of Reformation Christianity I hate to admit it, but, of all the Christian literature dealing with feminism and related subjects, Clark’s is, in my estimation, the best in print.

## Article 7: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 6

### The Name of Adam

A sixth element of Genesis 1 and 2 which infers a Divinely instituted patriarchal order from the very beginning is the very name of “Adam.” Stephen B. Clark observes:

“It is the man who is called ‘Man’ or ‘Human’ and not the woman. He bears the name which is the designation of the whole race, and...he keeps that name even after the woman is formed and he is no longer the only human. What we meet at the end of Genesis 4 is Human and his wife. Feminists today strongly object to using “male” terms to refer to groups that include men and women or to an individual of intermediate gender (for example, using ‘Man’ or ‘Mankind’ as the term for the human race). Here there is a similar linguistic situation: The term for the human race in Genesis is the proper name of the man who is half of the first human couple. Some object to such usage on the ground that it makes men seem more important than women, or at least makes men the part of the human race that is the most important to take into account...Part of this interpretation involves understanding the significance of the document’s language. Genesis clearly uses the word ‘Man’ or ‘Human,’— the term for the race—as a name for the male partner (Adam). He is the embodiment of the race. The woman (Eve) is the mother of all human beings, but she was not the embodiment of the race. Rather, she was the woman (wife) to the man who was the embodiment of the race. That too indicates a kind of subordination.” — “Man and Woman in Christ,” pg. 25

Indeed it does. Adam individually is called “Adam.” Adam and Eve collectively are called “Adam.” Eve individually is *not* called “Adam.” But no individual after Adam is called Adam in the generic sense.

Consider now what we have examined thus far in the way of biblical evidence to the effect that patriarchy was God’s original intended order. There are three facets of Genesis 1 and 2 which are explicitly exegeted by the apostle Paul in which he infers God-ordained patriarchy: 1) that the woman was made *for* the man, 2) that the woman was made *from* the man, 3) that Adam was formed *first* and

*then* Eve. I have now pointed out three other facets which also logically infer a God-ordained patriarchal order: 4) Adam's *naming* of Eve, 5) God's act of bringing the woman unto the man, and 6) the very name of Adam.

What shall we say, then, to the feminists' contention that there is no indication in Genesis of any God-ordained patriarchy before the fall? Quite simply, it is a satanically inspired lie. Patriarchy *permeates* the creation narrative. It is there at virtually every turn. The problem (from the feminist perspective) is not that there is so *little* evidence of God-ordained patriarchy, but that there is *so much*.

I pointed out in the first article on feminism that the doctrine of original sin provides a seventh (theological) basis for the doctrine of patriarchy. There is one final observation on this issue which I believe provides one more indication that patriarchal authority was in effect *prior* to the fall, this one in the area of typology. In Genesis, we are told that Eve was seduced by the lies of the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit. Note well that, *at this point*, nothing happens. Next we are told that Adam also ate of the fruit: "*then*," the scripture says, the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked. *Why* were not Eve's eyes opened immediately upon eating the fruit? *Why* was not Eve enlightened about her nakedness until *after Adam* also ate of the fruit? Because, as long as Adam, *her head*, remained sinless, a "covering" was provided for Eve. Covenantally, Eve was "in" Adam, who was sinless before God. That changed immediately when Adam also sinned and darkness flooded the souls of them both.

We see here typology and allegory of the Church in Christ, *with her sin not imputed unto her* because of the righteousness of her head, Jesus Christ.

As I said in the first article on feminism, patriarchy and the Gospel are bound together like the twin strands of the double helix. Tamper with the doctrine of patriarchy and you tamper with the Gospel.

We have now seen *eight* separate exegetical or theological factors which prove that God instituted patriarchy for the human race from the very beginning prior to the fall into sin. Patriarchy, therefore, is neither sin nor the result of sin but the righteous order of God. It is an inherent aspect of His creation and *deviations* from patriarchy are either sin or the result of sin. I would not doubt that there are yet more aspects of Genesis 1-2 proving God-ordained patriarchy that your present writer has failed to discern, yet these are sufficient to conclusively establish the point.

Today feminism pervades our culture and deep inroads have been made even into the believing Church. These inroads have been accomplished through the persistent proclamation of feminist propaganda. *We also* need to speak up and make our collective persuasion felt. The eight aspects of patriarchy delineated here provide potent source for this persuasion and should be proclaimed and taught to the Lord's people that the light of God's truth may shine among us.

## Article 8: In Defense of Patriarchy and Polygamy

“In the beginning”

“We should not assume that our ways are normal and that God’s ways are an abnormality which needs vindication.” —Greg Bahnsen, “Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” pg. 580

“The continued obligation of the Levitical law on this subject is also recognized in the New Testament. This recognition is involved in the constant reference to the law of Moses as the law of God. *If in any of its parts or specifications it is no longer obligatory, that is to be proved...If God gives a law to men, those who deny its perpetual obligation are bound to prove it. The presumption is that it continues in force until the contrary is proved. It must be hard to prove that the laws founded on the permanent social relations of men were intended to be temporary.*” —Charles Hodge, “Systematic Theology,” Vol. III, sect. 11, pg. 411-412

There is nothing which so strikingly illustrates the patriarchal nature of Israeli society under the Divine Law and commandments, and which so powerfully maintained it, as the simultaneous approval of polygamy (i.e., polygyny) and utter rejection of polyandry (multiple husbands), which was, and is, defined as adultery.

The unbiblical monogamy-only doctrine is in irreconcilable conflict with the Bible’s teaching of the headship of the father and husband. Male headship, when legally enforced monogamy is in effect, is delusive fiction. Legally enforced monogamy is, in operation, a logical and *de-facto* negation of the hierarchy of the Biblical family. A “patriarchal” law-order without polygamy is patriarchal in name only.

Understand that I am speaking of whole societies, communities, and not necessarily of individuals within a society. The oft-cited fact that the majority of Israeli men were monogamous, because of the numerical distribution of the sexes, is irrelevant. Israeli *society* was patriarchal because *every man was potentially a polygamist, but no woman potentially a polyandrist*. As the great John Murray has

observed, “Polygamy we have in the Old Testament, but not polyandry,” (“Principles of Conduct,” pg. 250).

The early Church, under the legal reforms of Justinian in the late fifth century A.D. (Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” pg. 786), missed the mark when it outlawed polygamy. For, in principle, by doing so the doctrine of male headship within the family was implicitly rejected. The subordination of the wife to her husband logically *necessitates* the validity of polygamy (more technically, polygyny). This is true because of the very *nature* of authority. Consider this observation of St. Augustine:

“For by a secret law of nature, *things that stand chief love to be singular*; but things that are subject are set under, *not only one under one*, but, if the system of nature or society allow, *even several under one*, not without becoming beauty. For neither hath one slave so several masters, in the way that several slaves have one master. *Thus we read not that any of the holy women served two or more living husbands; but we read that many females served one husband*, when the social state of the nation allowed it, and the purpose of the time persuaded it: *for neither is it contrary to the nature of marriage*. For several females can conceive from one man: but one female cannot from several men (such is the power of things principal) as many souls are rightly made subject to one God.” —from “A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,” Ed. by Philip Schaff, Vol. III, pg. 407-408

Polygamy, according to St. Augustine, is *not* contrary to the nature of marriage because of the logical relation of “things principal” to those things which are subordinate. That this was not merely an inadvertent remark on Augustine’s part may be seen in his explicit comments on the polygamy of Jacob:

“Jacob, the son of Isaac is charged with having committed a great crime because he had four wives. But there is no ground for a criminal accusation: for a plurality of wives was no crime when it was the custom; and it is a crime now because it is no longer the custom. There are sins against nature, and sins against custom, and sins against the laws. In which, then, of these senses did Jacob sin in having a plurality of wives?...*The only reason of its being a crime now to do this is because custom and the laws forbid it.*” —same source, pg. 289.

There is no *biblical* ground for disallowing polygamy. (Please, indulge my lack of technical precision in using the more general “polygamy” for “polygyny,” as I shall continue throughout this article.) The tradition of exclusive monogamy is a carry-over from pagan Roman law and custom. To cite Augustine one last time: “Now indeed in our time, *and in keeping with Roman custom*, it is no longer allowed to take another wife, so as to have more than one wife living,” (again, same source, pg. 428).

Genesis 2:18 (which, correctly understood, is a patriarchal mandate) and the New Testament commentary upon it (I Cor. 11:3, 9) have *decisive* implications concerning polygamy. The essential

principle in the creation of Adam and Eve relevant to polygamy is the *headship and authority of the man*; *the implication concerning polygamy flows immediately from this fact*. A woman cannot have multiple husbands because this would entail installing two heads in the marriage, a logically unacceptable result. Manifestly, polyandry is rejected on the basis of the creation. Polyandry is a perversion of God’s express purpose of creating the woman for the man. Unlike polyandry, polygamy involves no confusion of authority.

Most Evangelical commentators have misinterpreted the implications of the creation narrative as establishing monogamy as the exclusive norm and standard for Christian marriage; most understand it to prohibit polygamy altogether. These assertions represent a superficial and misguided reading of the creation account and overlook the more fundamental aspects of the text (the concern of authority and its implications) brought out explicitly by Paul in the New Testament.

An enormous amount of significance has been read *into* the *example* of Adam’s monogamy, asserting it to be a normative “pattern”—in the same sense that the pattern of the Tabernacle given to Moses by God was to be copied in every particular.

Even a little bit of reflection, however, should make it manifest that the Bible’s *explicitly stated purpose* of the woman’s creation (to be a helper *for the man* in his task of dominion) conflicts with the man-made doctrine that the specific example (monogamy) is a normative rule, *rather than the explicitly stated purpose*. Those who propose a mandate of monogamy in the creation narrative *deny the headship of the man*, on the one hand, and/or implicitly assert the existence of a contradiction within God’s Word.

We see, therefore, two contrary interpretive principles here: the first draws its inference from Adam’s specific *example* of monogamy and *universalizes* the example as a *prescriptive* norm for *all* men; the second *begins* with a universal principle, patriarchy, and applies that principle. The first interpretive method clearly involves the basic logical fallacy of reasoning from the particular to the universal based *solely* on the example alone, a clear non-sequitur; not only this, but it does so in the face of a universal principle with exactly the *opposite* logical inference. One cannot validly reason on the basis of an example alone because the logical possibility exists that the specific example may be one *form* of expression of a more general principle which admits of *more* than one form of expression. And that is what we see in Genesis: we see an example of patriarchy in Adam’s monogamous headship over Eve; and we see *examples* of patriarchy in the Biblical examples of polygamy. Polygamy *cannot* be logically repudiated on the basis of Adam’s example. Patriarchy is the valid, categorical determinative principle here.

*If* Adam and Eve had been created simultaneously (see I Tim. 2:11-13) and *if* the Bible did not explicitly tell us that the woman was made *for the man*, the doctrine of monogamy might have some validity. But Adam was created first, and Eve *for* Adam, hence the man is the head of the woman. *This —this—* is the crucial pattern presented to us in the creation account, for every man partakes of the “manness” of Adam and every woman partakes of the “womanness” of Eve. The necessary validity of polygamy flows immediately from this fact. The creation account not only does not

prescribe monogamy as the exclusive extent of the marital norm, *it positively establishes polygamy as part of the norm and acceptable for the man.*

So, to emphasize, *the validity of polygamy is based upon the creation account in the Bible.* This sounds strange to the ears of Evangelicals who have been taught that the creation account invalidates polygamy. “After all, did not God give Adam only *one* woman?” This rhetorical question has a certain immediate appeal to “common sense” but it fails upon scrutiny. There was no *inherent* reason why Adam could not be a polygamist. There was simply no opportunity; and any subsequent women were his daughters. Reading a “law” of monogamy into the example of Adam’s monogamy is eisegesis, not exegesis, inductive, not deductive reasoning. Monogamy was no *law* for Adam. It was a *circumstance*. Augustine, to his credit, was not deceived by the sophistries of the naysayers.

The fallacy of the “monogamy-only” doctrine consists in the attempt to reason from the particular to the universal, which is turning proper reasoning and logic on its head. A specific *example* of something cannot, by itself, establish a *universal* rule. The reason being that an example does not necessarily exhaust a *category*. This is logic 101, an elementary principle. The *category* under discussion here is marriage; even if God had created a thousand men in the beginning and gave them all only one wife, this could never, by itself, establish a universal rule. To logically invalidate polygamy, an express prohibition would be necessary.

Let me now turn to some of the objections I have received from fellow Christians that are urged against polygamy as “deduced” from the creation.

One of those objections is that patriarchy does not *necessarily* involve the lawfulness of polygamy. I must demur. The appropriate response to this objection is to ask the following questions, over which I hope the reader will linger long and consider prayerfully:

- 1) Does polyandry (multiple husbands) logically negate and violate male headship?
- 2) Does polygamy (i.e., polygyny) logically negate matriarchy, female headship?
- 3) Would not polyandry affirm female headship?
- 4) Does not polygyny embody the principle of patriarchy, male headship?

If polygamy (polygyny) is a logical *affirmation* of male headship, then the denial of the legitimacy of polygyny constitutes a denial of the legitimacy of patriarchy. Moreover, if polygyny affirms male headship, then male headship must entail the legitimacy of polygyny. Polygyny is one of the “modes” by which the law of patriarchy is expressed and manifested.

It is no accident that the propaganda of feminism is frequently coupled with condemnation of polygamy. The feminists understand that *there is an inexorable logical flow from patriarchy to polygamy.* In assailing the institution of Biblical polygamy, the feminists are logically repudiating patriarchy. In this regard, feminists are more logically consistent than orthodox Evangelicals. It is an unfortunate fact, but a fact nonetheless, that the Evangelical church has begun its counter-offensive

against "Biblical (yeah, right!) feminism" with a *major*, inherent, logical concession to feminism by its repudiation of polygamy.

In the Bible there are numerous examples of men with multiple wives but *no* examples of women with multiple husbands. *Why?* What is the distinction? Upon what principle? This difference can be accounted for *only* on the basis of the lawful hierarchy of the Biblical family. Polygamy could exist in Israel because polygamy is consistent with Divinely ordained patriarchy. Why was there no polyandry in Israel? This also is explained by the Biblically ordained family hierarchy. Polyandry could *not* exist in Israel because polyandry logically negates male headship.

Another objection I have encountered against Biblical polygamy is the *conjectural* assertion that, "If there had been no sin, there would have been no polygamy." Or, expressed in other words, "In a *perfect* world, there would be no polygamy." The flaw in these assertions is that this speculation *assumes* that polygamy is less than morally perfect. But, of course, anything less than perfect (Mat. 5:48) is *sin*. This speculation, therefore, cannot escape the charge of *a priori* reasoning, assuming as a premise the point under contention. Secondly, as already pointed out, polygamy finds its validation in patriarchy, a *pre-fall* ordinance (Gen. 2:18, etc.). It is inconsistent to maintain that polygamy would not have existed in an unfallen world because polygamy is consistent with a *righteous* patriarchy.

Another similar objection I have encountered is the claim that, "Though the Bible *permits* polygamy, monogamy is the *ideal*." This argument is not so much an "objection" against polygamy *since it concedes the essential point*, as it is a *subversion of the biblical concept of morality*. Morality is that which is permitted by Divine Law; immorality is that which is forbidden by Divine Law (see 1 John 3:4). The gradations of "good," "better," and "ideal" are contingencies of individual circumstances. Morally speaking, monogamy and polygamy are *both* ideal and perfect since both are consistent with Divine Law. To smuggle a practical, utilitarian concern for good, better and ideal into the question of Biblical ethics is to undermine the categories of sin and righteousness.

## Article 9: “Contradictions” Between Genesis and the Law of Moses, Part 1

*What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. —Romans 3:1-2, NIV*

In any doctrinal study of the theme of Man & Woman in the Bible, the book of Genesis, and particularly the record of the creation, must inevitably assume a prominent place in the discussion. In addition to Genesis, the laws given to Moses by God on Sinai must be considered foundational. This raises an extremely important question which, as far as I am aware, only one other commentator has ever asked heretofore (and then only peripherally): *What is the relationship of Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch?*

What *is* the relationship of Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch? It is very commonly asserted by Biblical scholars (Evangelical and otherwise) that the Mosaic provisions on divorce, marriage, male headship, polygamy, bondservice, the levirate, arranged marriages, etc. ...it is *commonly* asserted that these Mosaic provisions are “contradictory to God’s creation purpose revealed in Genesis.”

Now, stop right there. Is not this assertion absolutely astonishing? Ought not a rigorously reasoned defense be made to establish the theological and exegetical foundation for such a monumental assertion? But commentators make such assertions without, apparently, so much as an inkling that they are asserting an outrageous heresy. Such an assertion—that God’s creation *purpose* is at odds with *His own* positive Law—impugns the consistency and unity of the scriptures, and of God Himself!

Examples of such assertions can *routinely* be found all the way across the wide spectrum of theological opinion. In attempting to explain what is *erroneously* perceived as “contrary ethical norms” between the Old and New Covenants, or even within the Pentateuch itself (“Genesis vs. the Law”), commentators have often resorted to the “explanation” that the patterns of conduct necessitated by the creation were substituted with “concessions to sin” under Moses. The Mosaic provisions are thusly relegated to the dung heap of “tolerated evils.”

What *all* of these assertions have in common is the evasion (or, usually, dismissal) of a gargantuan theological difficulty, to speak metaphorically, the size of Mount Everest: namely, *the holiness of God*, (“Be ye holy, for I am holy”). For the holy God to mercifully forbear transgressions of His holy Law and grant space to sinners to repent (based upon Christ’s anticipated or fulfilled atonement on the cross) is one thing. But to assert that the holy God has *instituted permission to commit evil* via the provisions of the Law He Himself gave is to make God the author, validator and encourager of sin. The claim that the laws of Moses (which, after all, came directly from the mouth of God) institute “toleration of evil” is, in effect, to accuse God of sin and unrighteousness. There is the further logical and exegetical dilemma posed by the claim of *Scripture itself* that the Law is “perfect,” and “right” and “pure” and “righteous altogether,” (Psalm 19:7-9).

John Murray is about the only theologian to face this difficulty squarely in the face. Given the fact that Murray, who was assuredly one of *the* best theologians in the history of the Church, ended up admitting that he could not resolve all of the “difficulties” of this issue (see, “Principles of Conduct,” pg. 18), it is not likely that other theologians will meet with any better success. Murray’s admitted failure to resolve this dilemma should serve as a cue to the rest of us *to re-examine some of our fundamental premises* on this issue.

That the reader may get a better grasp on exactly what it is that I am refuting, let us make an extended survey of some specific statements of commentators who allege, in one form or another, contradictions (contrary ethical norms) between Genesis and the laws of Moses or between the Old and New Testaments, and the notion that God tolerated (permitted) sin via the provisions of His Law. As we shall presently see, the issue of *divorce* is at the heart of this view because of exegetical considerations.

The statements quoted below reflect a wide range of theological and denominational backgrounds including Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, Dispensational, Pentecostal and Charismatic. I have selected thirteen commentators’ writings as examples.

### **1. Walter C. Kaiser**

“Permission and toleration may exist for something that is basically evil and wrong” (“Toward Old Testament Ethics,” pg. 201). Kaiser also states: “Deuteronomy 24:1-4...provided for the *regulation* of divorce without thereby either condoning it or relinquishing God’s original, monogamous purpose in marriage” (pg. 94).

### **2. James B. Hurley**

“A second historical observation relates to Jesus’ assertion that either the man or the woman may commit adultery against the other...

“Jewish law recognized adultery as an offense against a husband which could be committed only by or with a married woman. Jesus says that a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against his wife (Mat. 19:9). This moves beyond the formal legal categories to the moral issue (a procedure which was followed in the sermon on the mount, Mt.5). This step is radical in its

historical context, placing husband and wife on the same level, but...springs naturally from Jesus' view of marriage and divorce" ("Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective," pg. 97). On page 101 of the same book, Hurley says, "Genesis 2, in Jesus' opinion, shows the Creator's intent that marriage should produce a new and indivisible unity, 'one flesh.'...Why then, they asked, did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce...?...Jesus responded by interpreting Moses in a fashion which overturned *both* sides of the Rabbinic debate: Moses did not command divorce, he permitted it because of the hardness of your hearts...Thus whereas the Pharisees had taken Moses' concession of divorce as God's design, Jesus took it as a regulatory measure to deal with the result of sin. Moses did not command divorce or lay down conditions under which it was legitimate. Moses suffered and regulated divorce." Hurley makes the most emphatic statements on page 104: "Jesus' teaching, as we have seen, does away *entirely* with the Mosaic divorce provision (Dt. 24:1)...Mosaic divorce provisions were dismissed."

### 3. Werner Neuer

An even more extreme statement is expressed by Neuer. Under the heading of "The Oppression of Women," (!!!), Neuer states:

"The generally high place given to women in the Old Testament was spoiled by legal rules...

"Legally the man counted as 'owner' of the wife (cf. Exod. 21:3,22; Deut. 24:4; 2 Samuel 11:26)...Although this point must not be overrated, as other laws do maintain the wife's dignity as a person, it is obvious that such classification of her as property does totally contradict her valuation as the equal partner of her husband in Genesis 2. The same goes for polygamy, which was legally permitted in Israel (cf. Lev. 18:18; Deut. 21:15). It clearly contradicts Genesis 2:24...

"Another example of legal disadvantage of being a woman is seen in the rules about divorce and adultery...(T)he woman had no right to divorce. Whereas a man was guilty of adultery only when he had intercourse with a married or betrothed woman (cf. Deut. 22:22-29), any wife having sex outside of her marriage counted as adulterous. A husband could not therefore commit adultery against his own marriage partner, only against someone else's...All these examples show the undervaluation of women and discrimination against them in the Old Testament" ("Man & Woman in Christian Perspective," pg. 86-87).

### 4. Susan T. Foh

Speaking on Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Foh states: "God through Moses is regulating a sinful procedure (divorce)." — ("Women and the Word of God," pg. 76)

## **5. John Murray**

In his classic masterpiece, “Principles of Conduct,” Murray writes: “The only thesis that appears to me to be compatible with these data is that polygamy and divorce (for light cause) were permitted or tolerated under the Old Testament, tolerated in such a way that regulatory provisions were enacted to prevent some of the grosser evils and abuses attendant upon them, and tolerated in the sense that they were not openly condemned and censured with civil and ecclesiastical penalties, but that nevertheless they were not legitimated...they were violations of a creation ordinance...which had been established by God at the beginning. They were really contrary to the revealed will of God and rested under his judgment.” (pg. 16)

On page 119 of the same volume, Murray writes, “Our Lord instituted divorce for adultery (Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:9); by implication he abrogated the death penalty.”

## **6. Charles Hodge**

Princeton’s Charles Hodge had this to say: “In the first place, God can no more allow evil than he can command it. An act otherwise evil, ceases to be so when he either allows (i.e., sanctions) it, or commands it. If he commands a man to be put to death, it ceases to be murder to put him to death. There are two principles of morality generally accepted and clearly scriptural; one of which is, that any of those moral laws which are founded, not on the immutable nature of God, but on the relations of men in the present state of existence, may be set aside by the divine law-giver whenever it seems good in his sight; just as God under the old dispensation set aside the original monogamic law of marriage. Polygamy was not sinful as long as God permitted it. The same principle is involved in the words of Christ, God loves mercy and not sacrifice. When two laws conflict, the weaker yields to the stronger.” (“Systematic Theology,” Vol. III, pg. 410)

## **7. Noel Weeks**

Noel Weeks states, “There is an element in Old Testament legislation which is normative for us as well as Old Testament saints...There are elements which are valid only for the time before Christ’s coming. Finally, there are cases in which the Old Testament legislation, because of the hardness of men’s hearts, sought to regulate an abuse rather than to eliminate the crime. This last is a particularly difficult issue. The one clear case has to do with the Old Testament’s failure to enforce enduring monogamous marriage. (Matt. 19:3-9).” — (“The Sufficiency of Scripture,” pg. 151-152)

## **8. J. Carl Laney**

“Jesus explains in Matthew 19:8 and Mark 10:5 that the Mosaic concession with regard to divorce was due to the hardness of the Israelite hearts. Their hearts were hardened by their sinful rejection of God’s original plan for marriage.” — (“The Divorce Myth,” pg. 32)

And: “Jesus encourages inner conformity to the spirit of the law rather than mere outward conformity to the letter of the Law. In Matthew 5:31-32 we find that while the Pharisees allowed divorce on the basis of the Mosaic concession (Deut. 24:1-4, Jesus disallowed it but for one exception” — (pg. 63).

## 9. Stanley A. Ellisen

Ellisen comments, “To reconcile these passages, various approaches have been taken. Most writers have recognized the dispensational nature of the Mosaic legislation and have handily relegated its significance to the pre-Christian era.” — (“Divorce and Remarriage in the Church,” pg. 22)

## 10. M. G. McLuhan

“Another important fact to be observed about God’s marital standards for His people is that they have changed significantly through the ages. His requirements in the patriarchal age were less stringent than under Mosaic law. Now, the revelation of His marital standards for His children in the church far transcend both the patriarchal and Mosaic regulations in every way.” — (“Marriage and Divorce,” pg. 27)

## 11. Gordon Wenham

“In certain respects, then, Old Testament marriage is less strict than that of the New Testament. Infidelity by the husband does not count as adultery in the Old Testament. It does in the New Testament. ‘Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery’ (Lk. 16:18 parallels Mt. 19:3-12; Mk.10:2-12).

“These Gospel sayings also explicitly rule out remarriage after divorce and, by implication polygamy as well, equating them with adultery. Thus at three points—polygamy, remarriage, and a husband’s adultery—the Old Testament laws plainly conflict with the New Testament ideal of life-long monogamous marriage.” — (“Law, Morality and the Bible,” Ed. by Bruce Kaye and Gordon Wenham, pg. 37)

## 12. Stephen B. Clark

In his seminal and masterful work, “Man and Woman in Christ,” Clark writes: “The matter of interest at this point is not Jesus’ position on divorce, but the way Jesus approaches the question. He begins his reply by referring to the creation account in Genesis 1 and then adds a verse from the account of the creation of woman in Genesis 2. From these two verses he concludes that a man and his wife are no longer two but one and that divorce violates the unity that God establishes when he joins a man and woman together. When Jesus’ questioners object that Moses allowed divorce and refer to a passage from Deuteronomy to prove their point, Jesus replies that the law they quoted was only given because of “your hardness of heart,” that is, as a concession to man’s obduracy and therefore as a protective measure for situations where hardness of heart is what can normally be expected.” (pg. 4)

## 13. John Piper and Wayne Grudem

“We recognize that scripture sometimes *regulates* undesirable relationships without *condoning* them as permanent ideals. For example, Jesus said to the Pharisees, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it

was not this way from the beginning’.” — (“Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” pg. 66)

There are countless other statements, hundreds and thousands, similar to these that could be cited. With the lone exception of John Murray, these sentiments are expressed with little or no thought of the logical and theological difficulties inherent in the notion that God permitted sin via His laws. The same may be said concerning the notion that there are two antithetical sets of moral stipulations within the Old Testament and between the testaments.

As against all of this nonsense, the position taken in this present work is that there is *no difference whatsoever* between Old and New Testament morality, nor are there contradictory elements *within* the Old Covenant. Let the reader carefully consider Greg Bahnsen’s response to the prevailing notions. Commenting on the meaning of the word “suffered” or “allowed” in Matthew 19:8, Bahnsen, like a bright ray of light penetrating the darkness, comments thusly:

“Some commentators have mistakenly viewed this word as indicating deprecated toleration of a positive evil (i.e., reluctantly forbearing something against which you have strong scruples or detest). Such a connotation must be read *into* the word. It is used quite simply for the giving of candid permission (without overtones of disapprobation). When ‘*epitrepo*’ is used elsewhere in the NT there is no reason to think that the person using it intends to approve of something that he considers definitely improper. It is primarily used for the gaining of *authorization from a superior*...Jn. 19<sup>43</sup>...Acts 21:39-40...Acts 26:1...Acts 27:3...Acts 28:16...Mat. 8:21...I Cor. 16:7...Heb. 6:3...Gen 39:6 (LXX)...Est. 9:14...Job 32:14... Therefore, it is unwarranted to maintain that, in Matt. 19:8, Jesus represents the Mosaic law as ‘tolerating with disapproval’ an immoral activity, viz. divorce. The verse simply reports that Moses *authorized* the use of divorce. One should note, in passing, that the commentators who read the connotation of disapproval-of-an-immoral-activity into the word ‘*epitrepo*’ fail to justify their view that an all holy God could enact an immoral law. *How*, one must ask in astonishment, could the God who is ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity’ (Hab. 1:13), the just Lord who ‘will do no iniquity’ (Zeph. 3:5), tolerate the legislation of immorality in His law, which is itself perfect, right, pure, and righteous altogether (Ps. 19:7-9)? Even leaving *linguistic* considerations aside this *theological* difficulty with the view is insurmountable.” — (“Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” n. pg. 102)

*Insurmountable, indeed!* Thus, like a thunderbolt and an irresistible juggernaut, Bahnsen completely vaporizes the whole “tolerated evils” doctrine in a single stroke. But the vast majority of the Evangelical church is on the other side of the mountain from Bahnsen on this point, riding (to mix metaphors) a different bandwagon, which bandwagon is stranded in an exegetical no-man’s land and a theological waste howling wilderness. Unfortunately, those who are inclined to agree with Bahnsen and myself on this point are going to experience some very acute discomfort as they grapple with the specific provisions of God’s Law. This discomfort may be avoided by shutting one’s eyes to Bahnsen’s insight and the implications thereof. In one sense, this whole work is all about facing those implications. Those on the other side of the mountain will, no doubt, dismiss the conclusions of this

work with a wave of the hand. But for those on the same side of the mountain as Bahnsen, the issues I am raising in this work are inescapable.

I will pick up on this theme in the next article.

## Article 10: “Contradictions” Between Genesis and the Law of Moses, Part 2

*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew...to them that are under the law, as under the law...to them that are without law as without law (**being not without law to God but under the law to Christ...**)—I Corinthians 9:20-21*

*For sin shall not have dominion over you; **Ye are not under the law but under grace.** What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid!—Romans 6:14-15*

The subject of this work is the respective place and roles of men and women under God’s Law. Unfortunately, the central topic, Man & Woman, cannot be properly understood without a prior resolution of *the place of the Law in biblical ethics*. A thorough, “no stone unturned,” systematic treatment of this issue is not possible in this present work. The reader is urged to obtain a copy of Greg Bahnsen’s, “Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” and Rousas J. Rushdoony’s, “The Institutes of Biblical Law.”

“Theonomy in Christian Ethics” is a formal, systematic, scholarly treatment of the subject and is, in my opinion, far and away, *the* best work in print on the topic. “The Institutes of Biblical Law” is a systematic statement and *application* of virtually every Biblical law. I share many, if not most, of the doctrinal presuppositions of those two authors. (They are of a Reformed, Calvinistic persuasion, as am I.)

It is necessary in this present work to at least give an outline of the basics of some of the central features of the theonomic (“theos”-God, “nomos”-law) approach to Biblical ethics. Perhaps the best place to begin is to contrast the presuppositions undergirding this present work with the *opposite* view:

“It was a tragic hour when the Reformation Churches wrote the Ten Commandments into the creeds and catechisms and sought to bring the Gentile believers into bondage

to Jewish law, which was never intended either for the Gentile nations or for the Church.” (Donald Gray Barnhouse, quoted by Gary North in “Tools of Dominion,” pg. 16)

I believe the writing of the Ten Commandments into the creeds of the Protestant churches was a *glorious* hour, hardly a tragic one. The Ten Commandments are certainly foundational to New Testament ethics as well as Old Testament ethics. I ask the reader, just how many of the Ten Commandments are you willing to violate?

In the quotations of Romans 6:14-15 and I Corinthians 9:20-21 cited at the head of this article, we see two statements which might seem, upon a superficial examination, to be exact opposites, contradictions. However, one of the most fundamental and bedrock of all Christian doctrines is the inspiration, inerrancy, preservation, and authority of the scriptures. The Bible is not merely another great human book. It is the very word of God. The *origin* of the Bible is God Himself (II Peter 1:20-21). The human authorship of the Bible came at Divine direction, as countless passages attest. The preservation of the Bible is guaranteed by Divine oath (Isa. 59:21). From all of this, it follows that there are *no contradictions* in the Bible, *no contrary principles* or “antinomies” of any kind.

It is necessary, therefore, when we see two statements which *appear* on their face to conflict, to not be content with a superficial interpretation. When the apostle Paul says in one place that he is “*not* under law,” and in another place that he *is* “under the law to Christ,” we must, of necessity, conclude that both statements are qualified. We *are* under the law in one sense and *not* under it in another.

Because of common opinion which circulates among many Christians regarding the meaning of being “free from the law,” it is necessary to point out, first of all, that Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 9:21 is a clear assertion that he, *as a Christian*, is emphatically “*not without law, but under the law to Christ*.” Clearly, the Law is not antithetical to being a Christian nor to Christ himself. Being in Christ involves, in some sense, being “under the law.” Therefore, the wholesale, indiscriminate repudiation of the Law (as in the example of Barnhouse) is contrary to Christ. Paul clearly asserts harmony between Christ and “the law.” To reject the Law *in toto* is most definitely anti-Christ. We, as Christians, are “not without law, but under the law to Christ.”

Let us, therefore, approach this subject in fear and trembling lest in rejecting the Law we reject Christ also. For it is clear that Christ is the administrator of the Law: the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son (Jn. 5:22). We *are* “under the law to Christ.”

“The antinomian believes that faith frees the Christian from the law, so that he is not outside of the law but is rather dead to the law. There is no warrant whatsoever in Scripture for antinomianism. The expression ‘dead to the law’ is indeed in Scripture (Gal. 2:9; Rom. 7:4), but it has reference to the believer in relationship to the atoning work of Christ as the believers’ representative and substitute; *the believer is dead to the law as an indictment, a legal sentence of death against him.*”—Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” pg. 23

Christ paid the penalty of the Law (death) to redeem his people from its curse—not so they might repudiate the Law but to *obey* it: “What then? *Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid!* Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey: whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness,” (Rom. 6:15-16). Not being *under* the Law (i.e., under its condemnation) is no warrant to *disobey* the Law.

There are three main prepositional phrases found in the New Testament which antinomians and libertarians have seized upon to advocate a doctrine of lawlessness: 1) “*free from*” the Law, 2) “*dead to*” the Law and 3) “*not under*” the Law.” It is crucial to the thesis of this present work that the reader understands what these statements mean—and what they do *not* mean. The citation from Rushdoony explained one of those meanings. Bahnsen also gives a nice summary of what virtually every NT passage means which uses these phrases.

“The apparently negative passages basically fall into three groups: 1) those which renounce the law as a means of justification, 2) those which point to the death-dealing nature of sin in relation to the holy law, and 3) those pertaining to the ceremonial law.”—Bahnsen, “Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” pg. 217

What the negative passages do *not* mean is that the Law has been done away with as the standard of righteousness. The New Covenant most emphatically does not abolish the distinction between good and evil, which distinction is *defined* by the Law, as attests this *New Testament* declaration: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: *For sin is the transgression of the law*,” (1 John 3:4). That which *was* good under the Old Covenant is *still* good, and that which *was* evil under the Old Covenant is *still* evil under the New Covenant. Good and evil, sin and righteousness, holiness and wickedness are still *defined* by the Law of Moses.

If we are not permitted to sin, then, *ipso facto*, we are not permitted to transgress the Law. In fact, our heavenly Father chastises us *in accordance with* the holy demands of His Law “that we might be partakers of his holiness” (see Heb. 12:7-10). The *standard* of that holiness is *the Law*, as 1 John 3:4 makes perfectly plain. The Lord Jesus himself declared:

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, **till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.***—Matt. 5:17-19

Jesus declares here in this passage that the *entirety* of the Law remains authoritative until heaven and earth shall pass away—that is, until the resurrection. We have in this passage something Bible students are very familiar with from countless other passages, that is, *synonymous parallelism*: the phrases, “till heaven and earth pass away,” and, “till all be fulfilled,” express the same concept. Many attempts to interpret this passage are flawed by the failure to recognize this simple fact and to attach a different referent to the two phrases. In point of fact at the time that heaven and earth pass away all things will be fulfilled: the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection, and the day of

judgment. Moreover, the word “fulfill” in the first clause is a completely different Greek word than the word “fulfill” in the second clause; in the first clause, it has the meaning of “ratify.” To wit, “I am not come to destroy the law but to *ratify*.” There is no valid way to escape the conclusion that the Law remains in force throughout the entire period of the New Covenant.

This, of course, raises the issue of the ceremonial law (i.e., the Levitical priesthood, the sacrificial system, dietary and separation ordinances, observances of new moons and sabbaths, the called-out status of Israel as a separate nation and such like), as distinct from the moral law proper. I cannot here go into all the issues raised by this question. For our present purposes, what needs to be recognized is that *the distinction between the ceremonial law and the moral law was a feature of the Old Covenant itself, and not at all introduced for the first time by the New Covenant*. We see this very clearly, for example, in Isaiah 1:10-18:

*10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom (i.e., Jerusalem, metaphorically); give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: for they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. 15 And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear you; your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil. 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

The alert reader will note that God makes a *distinction* in this passage between ceremonial ordinances and moral law. It will be beneficial to highlight the two sets of laws which are contrasted here. The ceremonial ordinances referred to are:

1. sacrifices of animals
2. offerings of oblations
3. incense
4. the calling of assemblies
5. new moon observances
6. sabbaths

Contrasted with these ceremonial ordinances are *moral* laws:

1. judgment (that is, *justice* in court)
2. relieving the oppressed
3. judging the fatherless and widow
4. murder
5. debasement of the currency (i.e., fraud)
6. dishonesty in business
7. theft
8. bribery in court
9. idolatry

Let the Pietists (those who believe God’s commands have no application outside of a purely *personal* realm) among us note well that the *social, political* and *economic* concerns enumerated here are prominent in this text. These areas of concern are *contrasted* with the purely ceremonial ordinances. The political order, economics, and social concerns are all presented as *moral law*, and definitely *distinguished* from the ceremonial law. It is to be noted that Isaiah’s list of ceremonial ordinances corresponds closely with Paul’s list in Colossians 2:16 and elsewhere in the epistles. Similar Old Testament passages are I Samuel 15:22, Hosea 6:6-7 and Psalm 40:6-8. Indeed, in Psalm 40 sacrifices are explicitly *contrasted* to “thy law:” “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire...burnt offering and sin offering *hast thou not required...I delight to do thy will o God yea, thy law is within my heart.*” New Testament passages such as Hebrews 7:12 (which speak of the abolition of the Law) do not speak of the Law *in toto* but of the cultic aspect of the Law. The moral laws governing the relations of individuals to one another, and of relations with the State, remain authoritative as *moral law*. We ignore this fact at our peril.

Concerning Jesus’ pronouncement of the continuing binding nature of the *entirety* of the Law in Matthew 5:17-19, we must of necessity include even the ceremonial laws in this statement, including all the blood sacrifices of animals for sin. *How can this be?* Quite simply, the ceremonial ordinances *never did* have as their primary reference and meaning the *outward* form they were given under the Old Covenant; their inward, spiritual meaning was *always* their fulfillment at the coming of Messiah and the New Covenant. So while there is an *alteration* of these laws in their *application*, there is certainly no *abrogation* of them.

One of the more telling of Old Testament passages revealing the distinction between moral and ceremonial laws is Leviticus 20: 22-26:

*22 Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spew you not out.*

*23 And ye shall not walk in the manner of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.*

*24 But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, **which***

***have separated you from other people.***

*25 Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean: and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.*

*26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.*

Note that we are explicitly given a reason by God Himself for the cleanliness and dietary laws of the Old Covenant: to effect a *national separation* between Israel and the other nations. With the cutting off of Israel effected by the New Covenant and the expansion of the scope of the kingdom of God to a global scale under the New Covenant (see Daniel 7:27) the purpose of these laws becomes obsolete in their outward form. God now commands all men everywhere to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ. The dietary and separation laws are thus revealed to be *typological* of the call to be separate *from sin* — not from nations other than national Israel. This is their true character.

This treatise, therefore, begins upon the presupposition that the Law of God, every jot and tittle thereof, remains in force as the authoritative *standard* by which the relations of Man and Woman are to be judged. This means that *the entire exegesis and commentary upon the Old Testament passages concerning patriarchy and polygamy in the following parts of this work carry over to the New Covenant without any alteration*; in dealing with marriage, we are most clearly dealing with *moral* law.

I am aware that this very brief treatment of the Law does not address every conceivable pertinent question. But I am convinced that it does provide a Biblically faithful synopsis and foundation for our analysis of patriarchy and polygamy in the New Testament.

## **The Heart of the Issue**

Anyone who studies the Bible in any depth at all is inevitably confronted by the pervasiveness of the theme of *authority*. Authority is a central aspect of Biblical doctrine. Perhaps it is justifiable to say that authority is *the* central aspect of Biblical doctrine (Gen. 2:16-17; Eccl. 12:13-14). This presents a serious problem for modern readers, even Christians who believe the Bible to be the word of God; namely, both the modern concept of the nature of authority and the modern attitude toward authority are radically different from ancient views and attitudes. This assuredly affects how the reader will interpret the text of Scripture. The inferences and implications which Moses or the other writers of scripture could confidently expect his contemporaries to infer are often missed entirely by the modern reader. Ancient cultures, virtually *all* of them, were extremely circumspect concerning authority. Questions and issues of authority pervaded virtually every area of life. This is not true today, especially in the West. Modern readers, imbued as they are with the ethic of individualism (if not nihilism) and the spirit of secular scientific inquiry tend to view the book of Genesis and the record of creation (and all of Scripture) from a primarily phenomenological perspective: the *what* and *how* of creation. This was undoubtedly not the primary concern of Moses, the human author of Genesis, nor of God Himself who inspired the words Moses wrote. Moses was the *Deliverer* of Israel, the

undisputed leader of the whole congregation. For Moses, Genesis was a book of *Law* first and foremost; the entire history of Genesis, including the account of creation *is subordinate to that end*. This is what modern interpreters, almost to a man, are blind to.

God did not inspire Moses to write Genesis primarily to satisfy the epistemological curiosity of the modern reader, *but to lay down the theological, cosmological and historical apologetic for the establishment of a covenantal law-order*. This is the answer to the question posed in the last article of this work, “What is the relationship of the book of Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch?” The first readers and hearers of Genesis would have understood this implicitly. For Aaron and the other leaders of Israel, no other perspective would have been possible. Whatever other knowledge or insight was to be gained from Genesis was secondary. Knowledge of God *and of his covenant-law* was first and foremost.

*The book of Genesis is a book of law; it is the prologue, the preamble to the giving of the prescriptive Law in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Genesis is the apologetic, the logical validation and foundation of the Mosaic ordinances. The laws of Moses are the what, the record of Genesis is the why. The Ten Commandments and the case laws of the Pentateuch elucidate and make explicit the inherent principles within the creation account. The Law of Moses (including the provisions for polygamy in Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17) is absolutely consistent with God’s purposes as revealed in the creation account and other history in Genesis. There are no antithetical principles in God’s dealings with men. There are no “contradictions” between the purposes of God revealed in the creation account and the purposes of the laws given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. With God “there is no variableness or shadow of turning.”*

So the concern of Genesis is authority and law first and foremost. From the very beginning submission to authority has been a part of the Divine plan. This submission is implemented via verbal and/or written commands. God created a man and gave him a commandment, a law. Dispensationalists should note that law antedated the Fall. The imposition of authority *is* law; Law *is* the imposition of authority. In Romans, the apostle Paul tells us, “The *Law* is holy and the *commandment* holy and just and good,” (Rom.7:12). Modern Evangelicals will often commendably endorse obeying God’s “commands” and yet *cringe* at the suggestion of keeping the “law.” This is gross shallowness of mind. “Law” and “commandment” are synonymous terms as Romans 7:12 incontrovertibly proves.

These considerations, let it be noted, militate powerfully against an antinomian interpretation of the Gospel. Since law and authority are central to all of God’s dealings with men, it is no surprise that law is central to the Gospel as well. For if there is no law, or if the Law has been nullified, then there can be no transgression of the Law. And if there can be no transgression of the Law, then there is no *need* of deliverance from the penalty of the Law. *Therefore a denial of the continuing validity of the Law constitutes a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Let the reader keep this ever in the forefront of his mind as we proceed to examine the Law of God concerning, and the biblical examples of, polygamy.

## Article 11: The Laws of God, Part 1

### Exodus 21:7-10

As we examine the laws of the Pentateuch on polygamy, we will see that the Law that Moses gave to Israel from the hand and mouth of God *institutes polygamy* as part of the social structure God intended His people to live by. We will see *conclusively* that polygamy is permitted. And we will see that *there is no law which prohibits polygamy anywhere in the Bible*. In fact, as we shall see, sometimes under certain circumstances polygamy is even *mandatory*. And, as even casual readers of the Bible are aware, many righteous men of God were polygamists.

The first biblical law we shall examine is Exodus 21:7-10:

*7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out (that is, to be freed from her servitude) as the menservants do. 8 If she please not her master, who hath **betroted** her to himself (note that marriage is the objective of selling one's daughter as a maidservant—T.S.), then he shall let her be redeemed: to sell her to a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. 9 And if he hath betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. 10 **If he take him another wife**, her food, her clothing, and her duty of marriage he shall not diminish.*

This law addresses three possible situations in which a concubine could find herself. (This passage does not use the term, “concubine,” but that is what a daughter *sold* for marriage is.) *First*, if the man who bought her decides not to marry her, he is to let her be redeemed, by her family again or another Israelite, but not to a foreigner. *Second*, if the man who bought her did so for the purpose of giving her to his son to marry, he is to treat her as a daughter. This provision enunciates the principle that a concubine is not mere chattel, despite the economic reality involved in concubinage. *Third*, and immediately relevant to our topic, if the man who buys her takes “*another wife*,” that is, an *additional* wife (whether free or bond), “her food, her clothing, *and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish.*”

That a polygamous situation is in view here is explicit and manifest on its face. The “duty of marriage” refers to sexual relations. The man who takes a second wife is commanded by God to

continue having sexual relations with the first wife. Moreover, he is not commanded to repent of the second marriage. Nor is there any command here to punish the man for such an arrangement. This passage of Scripture constitutes Divine approval of polygamy and removes it from classification as adultery.

Now, if some Christians had their way, verse 10 would read, “If he take him another wife, he shall be stoned to death for committing adultery.” Or, those more forgiving would say, “If he take him another wife, he shall repent and divorce the second wife.” This law, as it *actually* exists in the Bible, is an offense and an outrage to most modern Christians, especially those who call themselves “Christian feminists,” which term is an oxymoron. Ironically, even Gary North, that staunch defender of biblical law as in force under the New Covenant, does not take this law seriously:

“The Bible is silent regarding the execution of an adulterous husband who commits adultery with an unmarried woman. It is clear, however, that the wife is the primary earthly victim. It seems to me that the wife, as the primary earthly victim, then gains the legal authority to prosecute the two adulterers to the limit of the law. She can require the execution of both partners if they are convicted of adultery by a civil (?) court.”—Gary North, “Tools of Dominion,” pg. 305

Gary North is no slouch when it comes to biblical law, and is well aware of Exodus 21, so let this be stated as plainly as possible: *Exodus 21:10 gives approval to polygamy*. The command of God in verse 10 is *to continue in the polygamous situation*. Polygamy cannot constitute adultery, as North presupposes, because this law, in a case of polygamy, stipulates that the husband treat his concubine equally to a second wife who is subsequently married to her master. If the man (and woman) in Exodus 21 were guilty of adultery, the law would mandate the execution of the two “adulterers.” Instead, this law *regulates* polygamous marriage even as it does monogamous marriage.

Exodus 21 *gives approval to polygamy* and removes it from the sphere of adultery. North presumes to advocate the death penalty for an act upon which the Bible is supposedly “silent.” The presumption, however, which is *not* silent but is *explicitly* given us in the text, is that *the man should continue in this polygamous relationship*, treating *both* of his wives fairly, that is, he should maintain sexual relations with both wives. Exodus 21 proceeds on the basis of the validity of polygamy, assumes this as its logical premise, and commands the *continuation* of polygamy in this example.

There is no rational way to deny the validation of polygamy (i.e., polygyny) here. Exodus 21:10 presupposes that the man will have sexual relations with his *new* wife; as a matter of moral principle, this law *commands* the husband to not set aside his first wife (i.e., de facto divorce) but to continue having sexual relations with her *in addition to* the sexual relations he will be having with his second wife.

This commandment is totally inconsistent with the view that polygamy constitutes adultery.

## Article 12: The Laws of God, Part 2

### Deuteronomy 21:15-17

Some commentators have concocted an imaginary “exception to the ordinary law of monogamy” in Exodus 21:10, proposing that the concubine’s legal bondservant status somehow creates a basis for the husband to take a second, free wife. I am aware of no commentator, however, who has undertaken to propose an exegetical and logical *basis* for such an exception. In any event, there can be no such “exception” when the “law of monogamy” is an illusion to begin with. As pointed out before, *there is no law in the Bible which prohibits polygamy.*

The considerations which apply to Exodus 21:10 apply not only to concubines but to *free* women, as well. This is well-attested in Deuteronomy 21:15-17:

*15 If a man have two wives, one beloved, and one hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated: 16 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: 17 But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated 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 law obviates any difficulty that could be imagined by any consideration of a concubine’s legal standing in Exodus 21:10. Clearly, it is *free* women and their sons who come under the purview of this law, because under the Law of God, *concubines and their children possess no inheritance rights.* Indeed, this is the chief characteristic of concubinage.

We are told in Proverbs 30:21-23:

*21 For three things the earth is disquieted and for four which it cannot bear. 22 For a servant when he reigneth: and a fool when he is filled with meat: 23 For an odious woman when she is married: **and a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.***

Note that all four of these things are “disquieting” and “unbearable,” that is, they are inappropriate. The point of verse 23 is that the free wife is childless and a second wife, a concubine, has borne children to her husband. In other words, Proverbs here is discussing a polygamous marriage situation.

One immediately thinks of Abraham, his concubine Hagar and her son Ishmael, and his wife Sara and her son Isaac. According to this passage in Proverbs, Hagar and Ishmael *ought not* to have been heir to her mistress, Sara. Consequently, Ishmael had no claim on the inheritance, either.

This legal fact is brought out sufficiently clear in Genesis 21:9-12:

*9 And Sara saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: **for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.** 11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman: **in all that Sara hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.***

Ishmael's lack of lawful inheritance rights was the basis and justification of Sara's demand. God's words to Abraham prove this point: “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” that is, a concubine and her children are not counted among the seed as far as inheritance is concerned. But as long as Isaac and Ishmael lived together, there existed the danger that Ishmael would *usurp* Isaac's right by stealth or violence. (Bear in mind here that Ishmael was the firstborn.) As in our Lord's parable, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance” (Matthew 21:35).

This legal fact of the Law of God is also the foundation of Paul's allegory in Galatians 4. As Paul states, “Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but he is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.” Here is a contrast: the heir vs. the servant. The son can inherit but the servant cannot. Ishmael, remember, was the son of the bondwoman. Paul continues this theme in verses 21-31 and asks, “Do you not hear the law?” He then goes on to cite the story of Isaac and Ishmael, in which he points out that the two boys are an allegory of the Old and New covenants, “the one from the Mount Sinai, *which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar...* So then, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.”

Paul calls this “the law.” Clearly, Paul understood that it was unlawful for Ishmael to inherit while there existed a son born of a free woman. This fact stemmed from the legal, economic status of his mother, Hagar, who was a concubine, a bondwife.

All of this establishes that the women in Deuteronomy 21:15-17 are both contemplated as *free* women. I have gone into length on this point to put aside any wrangling that might be raised because of any supposed special circumstances relating to polygamy and concubines. Any appeal to a “special exception” to the “ordinary law of monogamy” in Exodus 21:10 cannot possibly apply in Deuteronomy 21:15-17. The beloved wife and the hated wife are *both* free women.

It needs to be emphasized once again that the tacit *premise* of Deuteronomy 21:15-17 is that polygamy is morally acceptable. *Whichever wife* the man marries first, the firstborn *son* receives the right of the firstborn. This is true whether the son is born to the first wife *or* to the second wife. For example, let us suppose that a man was married for twenty years and his wife bore no children. Then, the man takes a second wife who bares him a son. Let us suppose further that, after this, the first wife subsequently bares a son. This law commands that the son of the *second* wife (whom some would call “illegitimate”) has the right of the firstborn. This would make no sense if the second marriage were considered by God to be illegitimate and constituted adultery. Should the son of “adultery,” a bastard, be granted preference over a “legitimate” son? Hardly! This consideration *proves* the legitimacy of the second marriage.

As with Exodus 21:10, the polygamy which is brought within the purview of this law is *not* classified as adultery. This becomes all the more crystal clear when we examine the standard of the Law with regard to adultery. Consider:

*And the man that comitteth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.—Leviticus 20:10*

And:

*If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. -Deuteronomy 22:22*

And consider one *form* of polygamy that was *not* to be countenanced:

*If a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they: that there be no wickedness among you. —Leviticus 20:14*

As Harcourt Fenton Mudd told Mr. Spock on that memorable episode of “Star Trek:” “The key word, Mr. Spock, in each instance is d...d...d...*death!*” Under biblical law, the adulterer and adulteress both become liable to execution.

Now, put yourself in the position of a judge in Israel under the Law. A woman comes into your court with a complaint: her husband, she says, refuses to give her oldest son, her husband’s firstborn, the inheritance right. Instead, he insists on giving it to *his other wife’s son* because he likes his other wife better. Both the complainants (the hated wife and the firstborn son) and the defendants (the husband and the first wife) and all the relatives testify to the facts of the case, and there is no factual dispute.

Question: now that you, as a judge, have legally acceptable evidence from two or three witnesses (and more!) what do you do? Do you find in favor of the complainant as Deuteronomy 21:15-17 clearly commands? *Or*, do you decree that the defendant and his second wife be taken away and executed for the heinous sin of adultery? After all, “Thou shalt put away evil from among you.”

This scenario reveals just how utterly absurd is the notion that polygamy constitutes adultery under biblical law. Such a decision would clearly conflict with the mandate and purpose of Deuteronomy 21:15-17. Those who wish to maintain that polygamy *does* constitute adultery must explain away both Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17. Explain *away*, not merely explain.

The truth is these two passages of scripture place an utterly insurmountable obstacle in the path of the “monogamy only” doctrine.

## Article 13: The Laws of God, Part 3

**Exodus 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29; Deut. 21:10-14; Deut. 25:5-10**

There are four laws in the Pentateuch which may be classified as “one flesh” laws, that is they lay down the rule by way of case law that upon becoming one flesh via sexual relations, a marriage covenant and obligation then commences. Those four laws are the following:

### **1. Exodus 22:16-17**

*16 And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lieth with her, **he shall surely endow her** to be his wife. 17 If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.*

(The point of the giving of the dowry in this passage is to secure the woman’s status as a *free* wife; that is, a woman seduced into marriage without her father’s consent cannot be a *bond*-wife. “He shall surely *endow* her to be his wife” does not mean he must *marry* her, but *to bestow a dowry* because of the marriage that has already taken place via sexual relations.)

### **2. Deuteronomy 22:28-29**

*28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.*

### **3. Deuteronomy 21:10-14**

*10 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, 11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife, 12 Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; 13 And she shall put the raiment of her*

*captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house and bewail her father and her mother a full month: **and after that thou shalt go in unto her and be her husband** and she shall be thy wife. 14 And it shall be, If thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.*

#### 4. Deuteronomy 25:5-10

*5 If bretheren dwell together, and one of them die, and he 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 a husband's brother unto her. 6 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. 7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; 9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. 10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.*

These four laws have a rather direct bearing upon the subject of polygamy. Numerous commentators have discerned that these laws still apply *even if the man is already married*.

For example, Ralph Gower comments:

“If the wife was unfaithful to her husband and family, she paid with the death penalty (Leviticus 20:10). But when a husband was unfaithful to his wife with an unmarried girl, *the girl became a member of his family* (Deuteronomy 22:13-30; compare v. 22 with vv 28 and 29).” — “The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times,” pg. 63

And more explicitly:

“Marriage was allowed with more than one woman simultaneously.” (Also pg. 63)

Gower is not the only Evangelical commentator to discern this. M. G. McLuhan writes:

“The law applied *whether or not the man was already married* to one or more women. The account in Exodus seems to imply seduction and willing consent on the part of the woman. The Deuteronomy account seems to imply the rape of an unengaged woman. In either case, *the woman in question became the wife of her*

*male partner in the sex act.*” — “Marriage and Divorce: God’s Call, God’s Compassion,” pg. 50

In a similar vein, James B. Hurley writes:

“Jewish law recognized adultery as an offense which could be committed *only by or with a married woman.*” — “Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective,”—pg. 97

And Susan B. Foh comments:

“Many say that marriage laws are entirely in the husband’s best interests. The woman cannot have extra-marital liaisons, but the husband can if he does not trespass on another man’s property, that is, his wife and daughters...

“Was the Old Testament marriage legislation fair to wives?...*(W)e* could question whether the opportunity for extra-marital sex and easy divorce were in the husband’s best interests, as some claim.”—“Women and the Word of God,” pg. 70

In reference to Neufeld’s book, “Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws,” Foh says: “Perhaps in the legislation for divorce and adultery, the woman’s position appears weakest. It has been said that the Hebrew law offers no restraints for the husband regarding extra-marital intercourse. Yet the wife is severely punished for sex outside marriage.”— (ibid., pg. 74-75)

On the same page, Foh states:

“The wife had no law to keep her husband faithful to her. The man is punished only if he lies with another man’s wife (Leviticus 20:10-12). The two principles, the husband’s headship and the one-flesh idea in marriage, may explain the Old Testament adultery laws. The status of the woman, single, engaged, or married, determines the fate of the offenders. *If the woman is unattached, the man, whether married or not, marries her* (Deut. 22:18ff)...The one flesh principle God established (cf. I Cor. 6:16) is taken seriously; violation of it is punished severely. When a man and woman have sexual intercourse they become one flesh.”— “Women and the Word of God,” pg 75-76

Susan T. Foh has truly discerned the two fundamental principles at work: “the husband’s headship and the one flesh idea.” Though Foh incorrectly characterizes such a union as “extra-marital sex,” her conclusion is right on target: “If the woman is unattached, the man, *whether married or not, marries her.*” In other words, polygamy is *mandatory* under these circumstances. Few commentators, including Foh, are willing to acknowledge this so bluntly, but her meaning is unmistakable.

Gordon Wenham, likewise, reads these laws in the same manner:

“In contrast (to adultery) the penalties imposed for other sexual misconduct are lighter. After betrothal...a girl was legally as good as married and intercourse with her by a third party was regarded as adultery and therefore liable to the death penalty (Dt. 22:23-27). But when an unbetrothed girl was caught lying with a man, both escaped more lightly. The man was made to marry the girl and give the appropriate betrothal gift to the girl’s father...

“In certain respects, then, Old Testament marriage law is less strict than that of the New Testament. *Infidelity by the husband does not count as adultery* in the Old Testament.” — “Law, Morality and the Bible,” pg. 37, Ed. by Kaye & Wenham

It is the view of your present writer that Old Testament Law *is* New Testament Law in respect to marriage; the term “infidelity” used by Wenham is a misnomer for the Biblical concept of marriage, in this instance, polygamous.

Let us also consider Deuteronomy 21:10-14, the law of the captive foreign woman. The great Matthew Henry, in his famous “Commentary,” said of this law:

“By this law a soldier is allowed to marry his captive if he pleased. For the hardness of their hearts Moses gave them this permission, lest, if they had not liberty given them to marry such, they should have taken liberty to defile themselves with them, and by such wickedness the camp would have been troubled. The man is supposed to have a wife already, and to take this wife for a secondary wife, as the Jews called them. This indulgence of men’s inordinate desires, in which their hearts walked after their eyes, is by no means agreeable to the law of Christ, which therefore in this respect, among others, far exceeds in glory the law of Moses.” — pg. 192, Zondervan edition, 1978

Henry errs in supposing that this law was given to the Jews as a concession to their sinfulness; among other things, this law has the purpose of bringing the captive woman into covenant with Israel and Israel’s God. Though reflecting the usual anti-polygamy stance, Henry clearly understood that “the man is supposed (i.e., *presupposed*) to have a wife already” and was, therefore, *permitted to take a second wife* under Divine Law. Henry’s grasp of the meaning and status of this law as it relates to polygamy within the Law is discerning, though suffering the usual Evangelical defect concerning the New Covenant.

Before going on to deal with the Levirate in particular, let us pause to summarize what we have discovered thus far in our survey of Biblical material. Under the Divine Law, there is a complete set of interrelated laws all of which, ultimately, are founded upon God’s patriarchal creation purpose *and all of which institute polygamy as a normal part of God’s moral order within the Biblical, hierarchical, covenantal family.*

1. Genesis 1-2 institutes patriarchy, and therefore polygamy, as part of God’s order.
2. Exodus 21:10 permits a man married to a concubine to take additional wives.

3. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 commands a man married to two free women to be impartial in his treatment of his multiple wives and their sons in respect of the right of inheritance.
4. Exodus 22:16-17 *mandates polygamy* in a case of the seduction of an unbetrothed virgin.
5. Deuteronomy 22:28-29 *mandates polygamy* in a case of the rape of an unbetrothed virgin.
6. Deuteronomy 21:10-14 permits an already married man (a soldier) to marry a captive foreign virgin.
7. And the Levirate law (which we will examine next), Deuteronomy 25:5-10, *mandates polygamy*, when the surviving brother of a childless widow is already married.

All of these laws, especially taken as a whole, assuredly do *not* add up to the view that God has disapproved polygamy. Quite the contrary. They show, both individually and in the aggregate, that polygamy is a *good* and *honorable* institution established by God Himself, and upon which He has bestowed His favor and blessing. Polygamy is not to be despised, the wrongheadedness of traditional “orthodoxy” notwithstanding.

Due to consideration of length, we will look at the levirate in our next article.

## Article 14: The Laws of God, Part 4

### Deuteronomy 25:5-10

With the law of the levirate in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 (also called the “law of the kinsman redeemer”) we see yet another instance under God’s law of a situation in which polygamy will often be *mandatory*.

Of all of the laws pertaining to polygamy the levirate is, to me, upon scrutiny, one of the most supremely interesting laws of the Bible. The more it is examined, the broader are its implications.

In his landmark and watershed volume, “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” Rousas J. Rushdoony, in his section on the levirate, comments:

“Mace observed, concerning ‘the true cause of Hebrew polygamy,’ that ‘There can be no doubt this was the desire for an heir.’ This is true if we realize that the desire for an heir was more than simply love of a son. The family was basic to Biblical society and culture; the godly family had to be perpetuated, and the ungodly family cut off...The purpose of Hebrew polygamy, which was usually bigamy, to be accurate, was thus the perpetuation of the family. Moreover, in terms of the facts, as Mace pointed out, ‘we are bound to envisage the community as being in general almost entirely monogamous.’ ”—Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law”, pg. 375

The primary cause of Hebrew polygamy, thus, was *not* autonomous man’s sexual desires, but *the Law of God*. Rushdoony clearly recognizes (though he does not expressly acknowledge it) that the levirate law of Deuteronomy 25:5-10 inevitably *resulted in widespread polygamy in Israel*. Very little attention has been given to this aspect of the levirate by commentators, even though it is manifest that it mandates polygamy when the surviving brother is married. The childless widow is *forbidden* to marry outside of her dead husband’s family rather than an already married brother-in-law. She *must* become the second (or third or fourth...) wife of her brother-in-law. Since Rushdoony is pained to uphold monogamy as the standard, he comments upon the levirate in such a manner as to obscure the necessary implications of this law as it pertains to polygamy. The “desire for an heir” is,

euphemistically, Rushdoony's method of describing *the Divinely mandated way of obtaining that heir*.

The reason that the levirate guaranteed the widespread and regular occurrence of polygamy is because of the statistically assured occurrence of the circumstance of a childless widow in conjunction with married brothers-in-law. In every generation, and in every geographical area, there will be a certain percentage of such situations. Moreover, it is clear from Genesis 38:6-8, Ruth 3, and Matthew 22:23-33 that the levirate law was taken seriously throughout Israel's entire history. Ralph Gower, though admitting the legality of polygamy under Biblical law, has stated: "Polygamy was not common in Biblical times," ("The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times," pg. 63). But the frequent examples of polygamy among men of God, combined with the laws both permitting and mandating polygamy, militate against Gower's assertion here. The law of the levirate, in conjunction with the laws on seduction and rape of virgins, and of foreign captive women, assured the *regular and frequent occurrence* of polygamy in Israel. We are irresistibly persuaded to the conclusion that God's commands in this regard were given for the purpose and intent of keeping the institution of polygamy alive and vital in Israel as a perpetual testimony to the patriarchal nature of the Biblical family. Therefore, polygamy is not merely "incidental" or "tolerated" under Biblical law, but *essential* to the Biblical law-order. Polygamy is *good*. It is part of the law-order God has given us and a fundamental part at that. It is not to be berated as an inferior kind of marriage.

Rushdoony quotes Josephus on the levirate to the effect that:

"The creation and perpetuation of godly families is thus basic to the law. Josephus cited three purposes for the levirate: 1) the continuation of a godly family, 2) the preservation of the property and 3) the welfare of widows."— "The Institutes of Biblical Law," pg. 380

Rushdoony also cites Luther:

"The law that a man should take the wife left behind by his brother and raise up a seed for the deceased brother was established for a very good reason. First...households should not die out but should be multiplied...Secondly, in this way God provides for widows and the pitiable sex, to sustain and support them...He enforces this charity however by means of an outstanding disgrace. Such a man is called shoeless, and people are to spit out before him...He deserves the contempt of all...because he does not cultivate or increase the commonwealth in which he sojourns and whose laws he enjoys. His bared foot is to be a sign of shame and a cause of unending denunciation. He deserves to be naked of foot, that is, without household and dependents which are denoted by the footcovering." "The Institutes of Biblical Law," pg. 377

Rushdoony also quotes John Calvin on the levirate:

“This law has some similarity with that which permits a betrothed person to return to the wife, whom he has not yet taken; since the object of both is to preserve to every man that which he possesses so that he may not be obliged to leave it to strangers, but that he may have heirs begotten of his own body. Unless, therefore, his kinsman should obviate the dead man’s childlessness, this inhumanity is accounted a kind of theft. For, since to be childless was a curse of God, it was a consolation to hope for a borrowed offspring, that the name might not be altogether extinct.” —Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” pg. 378

Rushdoony’s conclusion also deserves to be heeded:

“The levirate is still a better answer to the problem it addresses itself to than any man has been able to devise. Its general disuse today is because the laws of humanism are essentially hostile to the family and its welfare. When the family is restored again to its Biblical place, the levirate will quietly take its place in that framework of law.” — (pg. 381)

Clearly, Rushdoony believes that the levirate is *still law* under the New Covenant, as does your present writer. The purposes which he enunciates for this law are undoubtedly correct and of central importance. We can only pray that Rushdoony and other theologians will not flinch at applying this law in its full extent. I hasten to add that the family will not, and cannot, be restored to its Biblical place without the re-establishment of polygamy as a central pillar and cornerstone of the patriarchal family. It is simply inconsistent to advocate the Biblical levirate and *not* the concomitant polygamy which it involves.

Susan T. Foh also briefly discusses the levirate, but her comments leave much to be desired:

“Scanzoni and Hardesty (so-called “Christian feminists,”—T.S.) criticize the levirate law because it prevents a woman from being her own person; they see it as one more law to keep a woman under the jurisdiction of a man all her life. Scanzoni and Hardesty misrepresent the law when they say that Deuteronomy 25:5-10 *requires* a childless widow to marry her husband’s brother...levirate law emphasizes the duty of the husband’s brother...rather than the widow’s. It’s not just any brother who is involved but a brother who has been living with the deceased. And even he has the option of refusing though that means shame for him. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 is expressly intended to protect the deceased, to give him an heir to perpetuate his name and to inherit the land. These were important matters to the Israelites. Note the intensity of the phrase, “that his name may not be blotted out of Israel” (v. 6). This law assumes that the widow will want the marriage, out of a concern for her dead husband’s name or out of concern for herself...It is the brother-in-law who is more likely to object to the levirate law. The widow has the *right* to bring a reluctant brother-in-law before the elders; it is the widow who performs the ceremony of disgrace if the brother-in-law continues to refuse. If the widow did not want to marry

her brother-in-law, she would not have to exercise her rights.”— Susan T. Foh, “Women and the Word of God,” pg. 72-73

Several observations are in order here. First, I find myself in the unenviable position of agreeing with “Christian” feminists, Scanzoni and Hardesty, concerning the *requirement* of the levirate. The express language of the commandment is in the nature of a *prohibition*: “The wife of the dead *shall not* marry without unto a stranger.” The widow is *forbidden* to marry anyone *except* the next of kin. That the wife is under the jurisdiction of her husband is assumed in the levirate, but that is not the focus of the law. The focus is upon maintaining the family line of the dead brother. The levirate law emphasizes the duty of *both* the brother-in-law *and* the widow to raise up a seed in the name of the deceased.

Foh is off the mark in saying that the brother has the option of refusing. The whole point in verses 7-10 is to drive home the point that he does *not* have that option; and let us not forget that God struck Onan dead when he refused to fulfill this requirement (Genesis 38). The levirate law “assumes” neither that the widow nor that the brother-in-law will necessarily want the marriage. In fact, the levirate is intended to guard against those instances when one party or the other does not want the marriage; the levirate law shuts the door on the option of refusing. Foh attempts to soften the force of this law by characterizing it as “optional.” In fact, it is a commandment. Concerning the brother-in-law, the stipulation is: “Her husband’s brother *shall* go in unto her, and take her to him to wife.” Clearly, this is a commandment, not an option or suggestion. God did not institute this law merely because “these matters were important to the Israelites.” The family and its welfare is important to God, and this importance is imputed to the family via the levirate. Neither the widow nor the brother-in-law has the right to disobey this commandment.

Finally, consider the severity of the punishment to obey the levirate, which severity seems to escape Foh’s understanding. The “ceremony” described here has the significance of making the obstinate brother-in-law an *outcast* and *unclean*. In other words, this is an *excommunication* procedure. When Aaron and Miriam rebelled against Moses, the LORD struck Miriam with leprosy. When Moses intervened for her, God responded, “If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? *Let her be shut out* from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again,” (Numbers 12).

Notice that God equates the spitting in the face with the uncleanness of leprosy. The brother-in-law who will not build up his brother’s house is *cut off* from the congregation of Israel. He becomes “in Israel, the house of him that hath his shoe loosed.” The symbolism here is of being in contact with the ground which is accursed by God, and also of the loss of possessions and inheritance. This is, indeed, a “shame,” as Foh correctly notes, but it is much more than that. He becomes as a leper in Israel—*permanently unclean* and accursed by God. In the light of this, it is simply irrational to characterize the levirate as “optional.”

In conclusion, to return to our main thought, the law of the levirate applies even if the surviving brother already has a wife. The polygamy involved here in this law goes beyond being optional; it is, in fact, mandatory.

## Article 15: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #1: Lamech

Beginning with this article, we now turn to examine all of the actual instances of polygamy recorded in the Bible. There are about forty polygamists mentioned, depending upon how you do the counting. Our main focus will be upon those aspects of the biblical text which bear upon the question of the lawfulness of polygamy. As will be seen, there is actually quite a lot said by the Bible which supports the proposition that polygamy is lawful. We will examine the Bible's polygamists more or less in the sequence in which they occur. They are not listed in the order of importance. Much important material will be covered in later articles.

### #1. Lamech

#### **Genesis 4:19-24:**

*19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. 20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. 21 And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. 22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah. 23 And Lamech said unto his two 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. 24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

Lamech is the first polygamist mentioned in the Bible. (This does not necessarily mean he was the first polygamist, only the first *mentioned*.) It is not my purpose here to examine the precise meaning of Lamech's much-disputed words to his wives. What is important is that Lamech is a perverse character no matter which view of his words one takes. In comparing his crime to Cain's, we may safely conclude that his act was murder and not merely self-defense or an accidental killing. Lamech was a true son of Cain.

It is often claimed by biblical commentators that the perverseness of Lamech's character "proves" that his polygamy was evil, as well. Polygamy, we are assured, is a result of the Fall. God, we are told, manifested His way to the sons of men by providing only one woman for Adam, but perverse Lamech "corrupted God's plan for holy matrimony."

I pointed out in the previous article, "In Defense of Patriarchy and Polygamy," and in the series of articles, "Patriarchy Before the Fall," that the relevant and determinative principle concerning polygamy arising out of the creation is *the headship of the man*. There can be legitimately only one head but *many* subordinates. I also pointed out the logical fallacy of reasoning from the particular (Adam) to the universal (all men). Monogamy was no "law" for Adam; it was a circumstance. The standard explanation of Lamech's polygamy is also logically fallacious. The syllogism goes like this:

Major premise: Lamech was evil.

Minor premise: Lamech was a polygamist.

Conclusion: Polygamy is evil.

The logical fallacy lies in the *a-priori assumption* that *all* of Lamech's acts were evil. But good men and evil men have many activities in common; eating and drinking, working and resting, laughing and crying, sleeping and rising, marrying and raising children, etc. The fact that Lamech was evil does not, and *cannot*, prove that his polygamy was evil, as well. Thus, we see that the above syllogism is "*reductio ad absurdum*."

And really, men who are Biblical scholars should set a much higher standard of argumentation for the rest of the Church than this all-too-typical and shoddy approach to Lamech's polygamy.

A more likely explanation to account for the inclusion of the fact of Lamech's polygamy in the biblical text is *to show the contrast* between God's goodness toward Lamech and the utter unthankfulness of Lamech toward God; God in His providence *blessed* Lamech with two wives and children by them both, yet Lamech, instead of rendering thanks and praise to God, violates a fundamental law against taking human life. Looked at in this light, we can see the true magnitude of Lamech's perversity.

In any event, the standard approach to Lamech's polygamy by Christian scholars is not worthy of their profession. The "logic" behind the typical commentary is utterly without merit. It is amazing that those who make this argument are not called to task by other scholars for the "dumbing down" of their profession. But because the anti-polygamy stance within Christian circles is so monolithic, shoddy commentary such as dealt with above is bypassed with hardly a blink of the eye. This constitutes toleration of the practice of "handling the word of God deceitfully," something Christian commentators should not tolerate, either on their own part or others.

## Article 16: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #2: Abraham

### #2. Abraham

#### *Genesis 16:1-4:*

*1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. 3 And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived...*

Of all the examples of polygamy in the Bible, Abraham's is one of the most relevant to the question of the *lawfulness* thereof. John Knox, the great Reformer, once argued that the Biblical incidents or *examples* of polygamy cannot inform us of the issue of *law*:

“The men that object the same are not altogether ignorant that examples have no strength when the question is of law. As if I should ask, what marriage is lawful? And it should be answered that lawful it is to a man, not only to have many wives at once, but it is also lawful to marry two sisters and to enjoy them both living at once, because that David, Jacob, and Solomon, servants of God, did the same. I trust that no man would justify the vanity of this reason...*for examples may establish no law* (emph. supp.-T.S.), but we are bound to the law written and to the commandment expressed in the same.” —John Knox, “The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women,” pg. 63-64

I have no qualm with Knox's logic here. It is sound. An *example* of conduct certainly does not *justify* the conduct or establish any kind of norm. I trust that the reader will perceive that such is *not* the argument being advocated here. It is to be wished that the monogamy-only proponents would be

rationally *consistent* in advocating this point when it comes to the *example* of Adam's monogamy, and confess that "examples may establish no law."

Knox's comments, however, treat the subject of polygamy as if it exists in isolation, apart from other textual factors which contribute to an understanding of polygamy's legal status. For example, if all we know about the man is that he was a polygamist, then this tells us nothing about the legal status of polygamy. But if we *add* to the fact of polygamy the additional fact that the man was declared by God Himself to be a *righteous* and *obedient* man of God, *then* this certainly *is* relevant to the question of the lawfulness of polygamy. For if polygamy is disobedience against God, then the man who is a polygamist cannot be declared obedient.

If polygamy is nothing but the heinous sin of adultery, then a man's polygamy *must* reflect negatively upon the moral evaluation of the polygamist. But if we know that the polygamist was righteous, then a strong presumption, if not certainty, is created in favor of the proposition that polygamy is lawful.

Adultery is not a peccadillo in God's eyes. It is a "great" and heinous sin. It is a form of wickedness for which the Bible commands the death penalty. Adultery, especially continual unrepented of adultery, cannot be simply overlooked or ignored.

John Knox's valid logical observation that an example of conduct cannot settle a question of law is just too simplistic to answer the question of the relevance of David's, Jacob's, and Solomon's polygamy. David, Jacob, and Solomon (despite later failures) were all righteous men. They were also polygamists. Moreover, when David committed murder and adultery, he was severely rebuked and punished for both of these sins. Yet nowhere was he (or anyone else) ever condemned for polygamy. How is this to be explained *except* by the proposition that polygamy is lawful?

If it be objected that, "If the polygamy of a righteous man implies the lawfulness of polygamy, then why can't we turn the logic right around and conclude that the polygamy of an *unrighteous* man implies the *unlawfulness* of polygamy?" We have already touched upon this question in regard to Lamech. Many aspects of the lives of the righteous and unrighteous are the same. The fact that many of the unrighteous do many of the *lawful* things that the righteous do does not make them righteous. The unrighteous *are* so by virtue of the fact that there remain other sins unrepented of. If, then, polygamy constitutes adultery, or is otherwise unlawful, then he who practices polygamy and does not repent *must* be counted among the *unrighteous*. If a polygamist is otherwise unrighteous (i.e., Lamech), this tells us nothing of the status of polygamy. But if we know *both* that a man is righteous and also a polygamist, then we may rationally conclude that polygamy is lawful.

There is another exegetical factor in regard to Abraham and Jacob which makes the lawfulness of polygamy virtually certain even without any other supporting evidence.

Consider Genesis 18:17-19:

*17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of*

*the earth blessed in him? 19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD.*

And one more relevant statement regarding Abraham:

*Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. —Genesis 26:5*

God's statement to Isaac in Genesis 26:5 plainly shows that His revelation to Abraham of His laws was very *extensive*. Unquestionably, the proper regulation of marriage is included in this statement (e.g. Genesis 20). We are explicitly told directly from the mouth of God Himself that both Abraham and his household would "*keep* the way of the Lord," and then after the fact, that Abraham had in fact done so. Now "keeping" the way of the Lord obviously excludes the notion that Abraham *violated* the way of the Lord, yet if we are to believe the traditional line about polygamy, then Abraham was an egregious unrepentant violator of God's Law. And, indeed, if polygamy constitutes adultery, or is otherwise unlawful, then that conclusion is inescapable. One cannot commit a "great" sin and live in it for many years without repentance, and still be said to be obedient or righteous.

The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is inevitable: if Abraham and Jacob *kept* the way of the Lord and were also polygamists, then it follows by logical necessity that polygamy *must* be lawful.

## Article 17: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #3: Jacob

### #3. Jacob

With Jacob, we come to our third example of polygamy in the Bible.

#### **Genesis 30:1-6:**

*1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children or else I die. 2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who has withheld thee the fruit of the womb? 3 And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bare upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. 4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. 5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. 6 And Rachel said, **God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son:** therefore she called his name Dan.*

We are told in Genesis 29:31 that because of Jacob's partiality towards Rachel over Leah, God closed up Rachel's womb, but opened Leah's to bare children. Rachel complained to Jacob about her barrenness and gave Jacob Bilhah as a third wife.

From the modern, Western perspective, contemporary Christians would wonder how God would *punish* Rachel and Jacob for this arrangement. It is quite clear from our text that this modern perspective was alien to the patriarchal household. Rachel clearly regarded the outcome (the birth of Dan) of her plan to give Bilhah to Jacob as a third wife as the answer and *reward* of God: "God hath heard my voice," said Rachel. Rachel does not intimate a direct prayer to God by this statement: what she means is that God heard her complaint to Jacob and vindicated her plan to obtain children. Rachel saw her act of giving her maid to Jacob as a third wife as *an act of virtue* which God *blessed*.

Was Rachel, the wife of Jacob, horribly misinformed about the basic morality of Jacob's God? Let it be noted in this connection that Rachel's words presuppose the sovereignty of God. In this respect, no modern Evangelical will dispute the correctness of Rachel's opinion. No, we must presuppose that

Jacob, heir of the covenant, communicated his faith and the laws of his God to his wives. If this plan of Rachel's had been seen as sinful or a departure from the "law of monogamy," Rachel would certainly have viewed her plan as merely her own, rather than the answer of God, and liable to the punishment of God. But Rachel saw God's providential hand in the birth of Dan as *God's blessing upon her plan*. There is simply no basis to contradict this opinion.

Let us not forget in this connection what we saw in the case of Abraham. God himself said that Abraham would command his household in the ways of God and that the patriarchal household would *keep* the way of the LORD.

We also saw from Genesis 26:5 that the patriarchal household had a very *extensive* revelation of the commandments, statutes, and laws of God.

Many modern commentators would have us believe that the extensive polygamy in the patriarchal household represents a *departure* from the way of God. This assertion blatantly contradicts God's own statement about their *obedience*.

Moreover, in the very next verses of Genesis 30, we see that Leah also has the same perspective as Rachel about this incident.

*9 And when Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her to Jacob to wife. 10 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son...14 And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. 15 And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy son's mandrakes. 16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, And Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. 17 **And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. 18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire because I have given my maiden to my husband; and she called his name Issachar.***

From the modern perspective this is a truly bizarre episode. But no matter how bizarre it may seem to us, it should be noted that "God hearkened unto Leah."

One cannot help but pity Leah. Jacob was clearly preferential in his affections, and Leah is consigned to bartering with her sister so that her own husband might lie with her. Jacob is surely culpable here. But is he, and Leah, culpable *of sin* in the matter of giving Zilpah to Jacob as yet another wife? Assuredly Leah did not believe so: "God hath given me my hire, *because I have given my maiden to my husband.*"

What is expressed here by Leah is the belief that God renders His judgments among men, good for good, evil for evil. Reaping and sowing. Leah, beyond any shadow of a doubt, regards her act of giving her maid Zilpah to Jacob as a *good* act. This would simply be impossible if polygamy were regarded as a “sinful departure from the creation pattern of monogamy.” Leah believed, and we must concur, that God Himself rewarded her.

So here we have in regard to Jacob a clear perspective expressed about the *morality* of polygamy by both of Jacob’s wives, as well as the perspective of the narrative itself (which is the narrative of Moses) affirming that God heard Leah and Rachel on these matters.

In all of this, there is not so much as a hint or even the appearance that God disapproved of Jacob’s polygamy. Indeed, in Jacob’s case his multiple wives is clearly presented to us as a Divine blessing.

## Article 18: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #4: Esau

### #4. Esau

*And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Which were a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebekah. —Genesis 26:34-35*

*And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? —Genesis 27:46*

*And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife. —Genesis 28:8-9*

Unlike Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, faithful covenant keepers, Esau was, as we know, “hated” of God, and is called a “profane” person by the Scriptures. We, therefore, cannot reach the same conclusions about polygamy based upon Esau’s actions as we can from Abraham’s and Jacob’s. What *is* instructive in regard to Esau, however, is the contrast which is evident on the part of Isaac and Rebekah in their attitude toward polygamy, on the one hand, and intermarriage with the wicked Canaanites, on the other.

Esau certainly knew that his parents would not approve of marriage to Canaanite women. Rebekah was “weary of (her) life” because Esau married “such as these...daughters of the land.” Note well that it is *not* Esau’s polygamy which was grievous to Rebekah but his intermarriage with heathen, Canaanite women. This is quite a contrast to many modern Christian parents who would agonize unto death if their son married *two* godly *Christian* women, but who would not bat an eyelid if the same son married *one unbeliever*. How far astray we have come from Biblical morality!

It is quite clear that Esau knew that the offense to his parents was not that he married *two* Canaanite women, but that he married two *Canaanite* women. We see this clearly because when Esau knew his parents were unhappy with his two wives, he tries to placate them by marrying yet *another wife*! This one, as we see, was the granddaughter of Abraham, and daughter of Ishmael.

So once again, we see another member of the patriarchal household who had not the slightest qualm with polygamy. Indeed, the book of Genesis gives us ample evidence in regard to practically every prominent member of the patriarchal household to the effect that polygamy (polygyny) was totally normal: Abraham, Sara, Hagar, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah and Esau. If polygamy were, as most modern Christians believe, “a violation of God’s creation ordinance,” then we have to wonder strongly why at least eleven members of this righteous and obedient household had no problem with it at all. Bear in mind that all this occurred 400+ years prior to Moses’ giving of the Law; the typical claim of the anti-polygamy adherents is that “concessions to sin” originated with Moses in the allowance of divorce and polygamy in the Law. If this is true, then why do we see both polygamy and divorce (Abraham and Hagar) four hundred and some odd years before these “concessions to sin” supposedly originated with the Law of Moses? Something’s wrong with this picture! The truth of the matter is, those who say such things understand neither the status and nature of polygamy nor divorce. It is *patriarchy* which is “God’s creation ordinance,” and polygamy is a valid and logical expression of that patriarchy.

## Article 19: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #5: Moses

### #5. Moses

*And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.* – Numbers 12:1

It might come as a surprise for some to see the name of Moses listed as an example of Biblical polygamy. Moses is often cited by commentators as an example of *monogamy*. But this is an attempt to marshal support for the “monogamy-only” doctrine where the Bible is ambiguous. Moses married the Ethiopian woman approximately two years after the exodus (see Num. 9:1 and Num. 10:11). The reason this is significant is because Moses’ other wife, Zipporah, was alive two months after the exodus (Exo. 18:2-5).

Nothing more is mentioned of Zipporah in the Bible. It is entirely possible that she was still alive two years later when Moses married the Ethiopian. Of course, it is equally *possible* that Zipporah had died in the meantime. It could even be that this is what occasioned Moses taking another wife. We simply cannot know for certain. There is insufficient information to know if Moses was polygamous or not. And he may very well have had concubines, or even other free wives, who are not mentioned at all. Therefore, it is invalid to cite Moses as an example of monogamy.

This same point should be made about many other men of the Bible about whose families we know little or nothing. Unless the Bible specifically tells us that such and such had only one wife, the possibility remains that he may have had more. Isaac is another man who is cited as a monogamist. But this is merely an argument from silence. Isaac could have had other wives or concubines about whom the Bible tells us nothing. The lack of a *mention* of multiple wives is not a sufficient basis to *conclude* there were none.

Moses, therefore, is counted in this list because it is *probable* that Zipporah was still living when Moses took the Ethiopian woman.

## Article 20: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #6: Gideon

### #6. Gideon

Our next example of polygamy in the Bible is Gideon, also referred to by his other name, “Jerubbaal,” (which means, “let Baal contend.”)

*And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. And Gideon had three score and ten sons of his body begotten: **for he had many wives**. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name is called Abimelech. And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. —Judges 8:29-32*

Although the Bible does not tell us the exact number of Gideon’s wives, we may safely assume, based upon statistical averaging, that he also had about 70 *daughters*. In other words, Gideon probably had about 140 children! If his wives averaged ten children per wife, then Gideon would have had fourteen wives. This is probably a low estimate. His concubine, after all, had only *one* son. If we reduce the average number of children per wife to seven, then Gideon would have had 20 wives. This is probably a fair estimate. In any event, we know for certain that Gideon had “*many wives*.” What is important for our purposes here is not to know the precise number, but to ascertain the significance of Gideon’s polygamy.

As we will see in our next articles, commentator James B. Jordan sees Gideon’s polygamy as “the natural man in him acting up,” that polygamy is a manifestation of the corruption of human nature brought upon us all by original sin. In other words, Gideon’s polygamy represents indulgence in profligacy. It is my contention that Judges 8:29-32 is a kind of tombstone epitaph of *God’s blessings* upon Gideon:

1) “*And Gideon went and dwelt in his own house.*”

This statement is analogous to Micah 4:4 and Zechariah 3:10 which speak of times of blessing from God when a man sits “under his own vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid.” This is a description of peace, prosperity and security.

2) “*And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age.*”

That this is a description of blessing is manifest. It calls to mind the record of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and other men of God whom God blessed with long life. Gideon obeyed the voice of God; in faith he subdued the Midianites in answer to God’s call. Because of his obedience, God blessed him.

3) “*And Gideon had three score and ten sons of his body begotten.*”

One immediately thinks of Deuteronomy 28: “And all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God...blessed shall be the fruit of thy body...” (vs. 2, 4; see also Gen. 15:5 and Deut. 1:10-11). Gideon certainly had a full quiver. And the Bible affirms in many places that many children is a blessing of God.

4) “*And he was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father.*”

In other words, Gideon died *in peace*, in the midst of his family. This is in contradistinction to the ignominious deaths suffered by other *evil* persons the Bible mentions (Jezebel comes immediately to mind).

5) “*For he had many wives.*”

The context of this statement, following on the heels of the four previous declarations, is all in favor of this being a description of *blessing*. Gideon was at ease and peace among his unusually large family, where he died the death of the righteous. His many wives is included in the list of his blessings. This statement in Judges is akin to II Samuel 12:7-8 where God speaks of His blessing upon king David of giving him multiple wives (a passage we will examine later on in this work).

No doubt, some will object to this interpretation by pointing out that Gideon’s seventy sons were slain (Jud. 9:1-5) at the hands of the evil Abimelech, and argue that Gideon’s household must have been reaping the results of Gideon’s “adulterous” polygamy, the sins of the father being visited upon the children. There are numerous commentaries in which it is argued that the problems mentioned in the Bible concerning strife and other problems in polygamous households was God’s punishment upon them for the “sin” of polygamy.

Even if we allow the idea that the slaughter of Gideon’s sons was God’s vengeance on Gideon, it does not follow that his polygamy was the offense being punished. Gideon, after all, made an ephod “which thing became a snare unto Gideon and his house” (Judges 8:27). This act would appear to be a violation of the second commandment. *If* the slaying of Gideon’s sons by the hand of Abimelech

represents God's wrath against Gideon, then this violation of the second commandment is far more likely to be the reason than anything else, especially Gideon's *lawful* polygamy.

But I deem even this explanation to be unlikely, as well. We are told in Judges 8:35, "Neither showed they (the Israelites who were complicit with Abimelech) kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed to Israel." This seems to intimate that the evil of this event is attributed, not to Gideon or his sins, but to Abimelech (Judges 9:7-21, 52-57) whom, we are expressly told, reaped the consequences of *his* evil actions.

Also relevant to this point is the curse of Jotham upon Abimelech which specified that "*if*" Gideon and his sons had received "according to the deserving of their hands," then they (Israel) should "rejoice in Abimelech and let Abimelech rejoice in you," (vs.16,19). Since Abimelech was subsequently slain, this would seem to be conclusive proof that the calamity that came upon Gideon's sons was no work of God, but purely the doing of evil, bloody hands.

With this consideration taken into account, the conclusion we must reach is that the polygamy of Gideon can only be seen as the blessing of God.

## Article 21: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #7: Jair

### #7. Jair

Jair is our seventh example of polygamy in the Bible.

*And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and he judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-Jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon. —Judges 10:3-5*

Though not approaching Gideon's seventy sons, Jair still had too many sons to have had only one wife. It is quite clear from this record that Jair the judge is yet another example of polygamy among men of God in the Bible.

Commenting upon this passage of Scripture, James B. Jordan states,

“Jair judged in Gilead, across the Jordan, for 22 years. Jair means “splendid.” This might be an honorable name, but we see something of self-aggrandizement in Mr. Splendid as well. We are told that he had 30 sons. Therefore, he had more than one wife. We are also told that he appointed his thirty sons over 30 cities, and that they rode honorably on 30 donkeys. Jair, then, in contrast to Tola, is seen as moving in the direction of royal and dynastic privileges.

“An earlier Jair had conquered the towns that were known as “towns of Jair” (Num. 32:41). According to I Chron. 2:22, these only numbered 23. The later Jair expanded the towns of Jair to 30, to accommodate his designs for his sons.

“Jair was a judge. Therefore, the Spirit of God was with him, and he was undoubtedly a wise and godly man for the most part. He had weaknesses, however, and he gave in to the pressures of the time, pressures toward an exalted, humanistic state.” —  
“Judges, God's War Against Humanism,” pg.180

James B. Jordan is a commentator I highly respect, but I must take issue with Jordan's analysis here. Notice, first of all, how Jordan assesses the role of Jair's polygamy. He sees it as giving into a weakness, on the one hand, and playing a vital role in a supposed drift toward monarchy, on the other hand. This colors the rest of Jordan's perspective and commentary upon Jair. Presupposing polygamy to be a carnal sin, he cannot possibly correctly assess its role in these other aspects of Jair's life.

Jordan is in error on three points, 1) that there was "self-aggrandizement" on Jair's part, 2) that Jair was moving towards "royal and dynastic" privileges and 3) that Jair himself expanded the number of towns from 23 to 30.

Keil & Delitsch note that the thirty donkeys were "a sign of distinguished rank," (Commentary On the Old Testament," Vol. 2, Part 1, pg. 372). In other words, Jair's sons were themselves *elders and Judges*. Goslinga likewise notes, "The donkeys they rode on were a sign of their wealth and prominence," (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Bible Students' Commentary," pg. 374).

Matthew Henry's comments are of special note here:

"Quiet and peaceable were the reigns of these two judges, Tola and Jair...But no doubt they were were both *raised up by God* to serve their country in the quality of judges, *not pretending, as Abimelech had done, to the grandeur of kings*, nor like him taking the honor to themselves, but being called of God to it...Jair was a Gileadite...That which is chiefly remarkable concerning Jair is the increase and honor of his family: *he had thirty sons*, that is, *they were judges itinerant*, who as deputies to their father, rode from place to place in their several circuits to administer justice... They had good possessions, every one a city, out of those that were called, from their ancestor of the same name with their father, Havoth-Jair — the villages of Jair...*while these two judges, Tola and Jair, presided over the affairs of Israel, things went well, but afterwards, Israel returned to their idolatry.*" — "Commentary," pg. 257

I would like to add to these comments that there is no reason to suppose that the towns of Jair had not already expanded, either by conquest of the Canaanites or population increase prior to Jair the judge. That Jair himself founded the thirty cities for his sons is just pure speculation. In all probability, they were appointed over thirty existing cities with the complete approval of the elders of those cities. Jair would have been, in essence, a one man Supreme Court and his sons a kind of appellate court(s) inferior in authority and answerable to Jair.

Concerning Jair, then, it can be said, 1) he was a judge raised up by God over Israel, 2) his influence was a *good* influence on Israel, in stark contrast to Abimelech, 3) his 30 sons were also judges under him, 4) the ass colts they rode upon were a sign of their authority in much the same way that our judges today wear black robes, and 5) Jair's numerous sons and multiple wives were in the nature of *God's blessing* upon Jair.

Concerning Tola the Judge, James Jordan assumes that Tola must have been monogamous because no special mention is made of multiple wives or numerous children. But, as noted before, just because

Tola is not *said* to be polygamous does not prove he was not. Gideon's and Jair's sons are mentioned in the Bible because they figured so prominently in their judgeships. Tola may have been just another ordinary Israelite with only two or three wives whose sons merited no special attention.

Jordan, in effect, slanders God's goodness toward his servant Jair by characterizing His blessings upon Jair as Jair's "self-aggrandizement." That Jair's influence kept Israel from apostasy and idolatry during his judgeship certainly contradicts Jordan's assertion that there was a move on Jair's part to "royal and dynastic privileges." Jair honorably fulfilled his role as a *judge* in Israel with a responsible and godly exercise of authority. If he had wanted to be king, he would no doubt have done as Abimelech and asked Israel to anoint him as such.

In conclusion, we have in Jair the judge yet another occurrence in which polygamy plays an integral part in the *positive* portrayal of a man of God. The detail we are told about his 30 sons is in the nature of an *honorable mention*.

## Article 22: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #8: Ibzan

### #8: Ibzan

Our eighth biblical example of polygamy is Ibzan, another judge of Israel and man of God.

*And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem. —Judges 12:8-10*

Before going on to comment on Ibzan, it will be helpful at this point to note something about the organization of the Israeli republic during the period of the judges. The relevance of this will become evident.

Beginning with Moses, the leadership of Israel was divided up between *tribal elders*, who were heads of their households. These were “elders” in the literal sense of the word. The older one was in a family, clan, and tribe, the higher one rose in the hierarchy of Israeli government. This was broken down numerically by heads of tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands, and presumably tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands.

If one meditates upon this arrangement for a moment, it becomes clear that there had to always be a ruling council of tribal elders and a single man who would correspond to our Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Unless specifically called by God Himself at a younger age like Sampson or Gideon, these rulers would almost always be the oldest living people of their respective tribes. This system of rule by tribal elders was firmly in place in Israel for 430 years until the time of Saul, the first king.

Unlike all of the surrounding nations, Israel had, for all practical purposes, no executive branch of government. Israel was essentially a thoroughly participatory democracy. Authority was highly decentralized in Israel, being vested in the heads of families.

The judge, Ibzan, and most of the other judges mentioned in the book of Judges, were old men who became heads of their tribes.

Let us note, once again, what James B. Jordan has to say about this passage of Scripture:

“Ibzan had 60 children, therefore several wives. The text stresses his patriarchal dynasticism by mentioning the careful disposition of his daughters and the careful arranging of the marriages of his sons, each of which would have involved some sort of alliance.” — “Judges, God’s War Against Humanism,” pg. 181

Commentator Goslinga has this to say:

“He was buried in the same place after a seven year judgeship that probably was limited to the tribe of Zebulun and the *bordering regions of the other northern tribes*.

“Ibzan’s successor, Elon, was likewise a Zebulunite and must have reigned in the same area. After leading Israel for ten years, he died...Here again we see that *the judgeship was not hereditary*, but we are not told why Ibzan was not succeeded by his sons...

“(S)ince Elon and Abdon had such large families and brief reigns, they probably *assumed the judgeship at an advanced age*.” — “Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Bible Students Commentary,” pg. 401-402

Note well what Goslinga says about the area where Ibzan judged, the fact that the judgeship was not hereditary, and that these judges assumed the judgeship at an advanced age. This means that the polygamists who became the chief judges were *already* polygamists as they were moving up the national hierarchy. It seems quite clear from this fact that there was no objection on the part of the Israelites to their polygamy, and that they did not see their polygamy as a disqualifying factor.

Matthew Henry’s comments are again worth noting:

“We have here a short account of the short reigns of three of the judges of Israel, the first of whom governed but seven years, the second ten, and the third eight.

“I. Ibzan of Bethlehem...ruled but seven years, but by the number of his children, and his disposing of them all in marriage himself it appears that he lived long. That which is remarkable concerning him is, 1; That he had many children, sixty in all. 2. That he had an equal number of each sex, thirty sons and thirty daughters...3. That he took care to marry them all. The Jews say *every father owes three things to his son: to teach him to read the law, give him a trade and get him a wife*.” “Commentary,” pg. 261

Goslinga's and Henry's remarks are sufficient to dispense with Jordan's contention that there were "royal and dynastic tendencies" inherent in Jair or Ibzan. They were *old* when they assumed the (chief) judgeship, reflecting the normal rule by elders in Israel. They would have moved up the national hierarchy slowly, over tens, fifties, hundreds, etc. as the older rulers died off. Moreover their judgeship was "not hereditary" from their fathers and they were not succeeded by their own sons. There is simply nothing in the text to warrant the conclusion that there was any threat of monarchy here. Concerning Jordan's remarks pertaining to Ibzan's arranging of his sixty children's marriages, it is a simple fact that this was (and *is*) the duty of *every* parent (see Deut. 7:1-5) who is a worshipper of God. The disobedience of modern Christian parents in this regard is so pervasive and monolithic that Jordan sees something extraordinary in what is commanded by God to be the norm.

Jordan also sees some sort of "alliance" in the fact that Ibzan married his daughters to men "abroad." What is intimated here is not "abroad" in the sense of outside Israel, but outside of Ibzan's immediate territory of Zebulun to the other tribes. If there was any alliance here, it was to the Covenant of God. Ibzan would certainly have become acquainted with the other ruling elders of Israel during his rise to prominence, and it would only be natural to find suitable husbands among them. The exchanging of daughters for their sons to marry would simply have tended to unify Israel as a nation rather than as disassociated states.

In conclusion, Ibzan is yet another example of polygamy among men of God in the Bible, whose polygamy is cast in a positive light. It should be clear from our survey to this point that this was a rather *routine* occurrence in Israel.

## Article 23: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #9: Abdon

### #9. Abdon

Our ninth biblical example of polygamy, Abdon, is yet another judge of Israel, and man of God.

*“And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty (grandsons) that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.”* —Judges 12:13-15

Concerning Abdon, James B. Jordan continues in the same vein as with Jair and Ibzan:

“Abdon must have been an old man when he became a judge, for he already had 40 sons and 30 grandsons (not nephews as the AV has it). Abdon means “servant,” but he was obviously not as much a servant as he should have been, because he also was a polygamist. He extended his dynastic activity to his grandsons....” — “Judges: God’s War Against Humanism” pg. 182

Note that Jordan recognizes the advanced age of the judges we have examined. Jordan plainly sees the fact that this is a reflection of the system of rule by elders that existed in Israel. He even says so explicitly:

“It is apparent from these notices that the last three judges were old men when they began to judge, and probably Tola and Jair were getting along in years also. In contrast to Gideon, these were important men in their communities, probably known as wise and responsible citizens, and they were made judges as a result. *It may be simply that they rose in rank from being elders over 50’s, 100’s and 1000’s until they became the judge of all Israel (Ex. 18:21ff.).* Because they were elderly when they came to office, there is no particular message in the fact that they only judged for a short time.” — Judges...” pg. 182-183

Since Jordan acknowledges all of this, it is somewhat mystifying why he argues that these judges' jurisdictions indicate a drift to humanistic kingship. This contention seems to be based *solely* upon their polygamy. The system of elders and judges (elder judges) was obviously firmly in place in Israel, and was nothing like Abimelech's self-exaltation as king. Jair, Ibzan and Abdon were all judges "getting along in years," to quote Jordan, and were thus the natural *inheritors* (not usurpers) of the chief judgeship.

Jordan continues:

"The three polygamists, Jair, Ibzan and Abdon, must have indulged this vice prior to becoming judges over all Israel, for Abdon (for instance) could not have produced 40 sons and 30 grandsons in eight years. What this indicates is that the leaders in Israel were drifting into a position of seeking special honors and privileges, and as viewing themselves as above certain provisions in the Law, (in) particular the prohibition against polygamy. We see the trappings, the effects, the manifestations of kingship but without the name of it. The powerful were beginning to act less like servants of the Lord, and more like an aristocracy." — "Judges, God's War Against Humanism" — pg. 183

Jordan's commentary here is all much ado about nothing or, to use another of Shakespeare's phrases, sound and fury signifying nothing. It is a flight of fancy based upon the illusion of a law against polygamy in the Law in the face of explicit laws permitting polygamy. Jordan's book as a whole is commendable, but sections like this make you stop and question whether the book came out of the fiction section. There is simply no "prohibition" against polygamy in the Law, neither in Deuteronomy 17:17 (which is probably the passage Jordan misconstrues, and which we will look at in #13 in connection with Solomon), nor Deuteronomy 18:18, which are the two most commonly cited OT passages used to support this position—nor anywhere else.

Jair, Ibzan, and Abdon were elderly, distinguished men of God living *ordinary* lives. They were polygamists like many other Israeli men—"wise and responsible citizens," to quote Jordan again, not men indulging in sinful "vice" in *violation* of the Law they were commissioned to uphold (in which case, they would be neither wise nor responsible). The biblical records of these three men—Jair, Ibzan and Abdon, are Divine *honorable mentions*, commendations of righteous men who served admirably in the administration of the Law of God. They were *blessed of God*, and the mention of their multiple wives and large families is intended to stress this fact. James B. Jordan, because of his misunderstanding of biblical polygamy, misinterprets God's goodness as "leaders...seeking special honors and privileges." This condemnation is appropriate for Abimelech, who appointed himself king, but it is a misdiagnosis in reference to Jair, Ibzan and Abdon. They were simply exercising their *lawful* prerogatives as husbands and fathers under the Law of God.

## Article 24: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #10: Elkanah

### #10. Elkanah

With Elkanah, we come to our tenth example of polygamy in the Bible, once again a righteous man of God.

Before going on to deal directly with Elkanah, let us pause and emphasize the obvious: we have now come to our *tenth* example of polygamy in the Bible, eight of whom were righteous men of God, and highly prominent men of God at that: the patriarchs of the faith themselves, Moses the giver of the Law of God which itself provides for polygamy, the chief judges of Israel, and Elkanah the father of the great prophet, Samuel.

Ten examples is a lot of examples of any one thing. It should be obvious to anyone who has read this far with Bible in hand that there has not been so much as a single negative word said in the Scriptures about the polygamy of *any* of these men. And we still have about thirty more examples to go; to give the reader an advance summary, when we have looked at *all* of the examples, it will still be seen that there is no negative word said about the polygamy of any of the forty examples.

I would not want to be arguing an *anti*-polygamy thesis in the face of this overwhelming fact. In the face of this truth, any anti-polygamy thesis must stretch credulity *way* beyond the breaking point. If a thing is a sin, would we not expect to see at least *one* clear and explicit biblical declaration to this effect in roughly forty examples? Indeed, would we not expect to see many *more* than that? I assert that the complete absence of any such negative statement is powerful evidence in its own right of the lawfulness of polygamy. It simply staggers the imagination to think that the Bible, with such a total slant toward the moral and ethical aspect of life, would leave such a “horrible sin” uncommented upon. I conclude that the cumulative weight of all of this evidence is virtually as persuasive as the prescriptive laws explicitly permitting polygamy.

Now to Elkanah...

Due to the length of the chapter, I will not quote the passage, but the reader should now read I Samuel 1:1-28 and I Samuel 2:20-21, the story of Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Penninah.

The overall picture that emerges from I Samuel 1 is of a *godly* household (vs. 3, 8, 11, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 27-28). Although Elkanah is certainly to be faulted for showing partiality toward his wife Hannah over his other wife Penninah, he and his wives were obviously genuine worshippers of the LORD. Elkanah's diligence to attend the yearly sacrifice (which I presume to be the Passover) and Hannah's devotion to her vow to the LORD, as well as the LORD's *answer* to her prayer, all testify to this fact. Penninah's provoking of Hannah may have been unjustified but, as verses 4-7 make clear, it was precipitated by Elkanah's actions over the sacrificial portions. There is no reason to believe that Penninah did not also know the LORD. Eli the priest, who *was* disturbed at Hannah's supposed drunkenness and moved to rebuke her, was not moved to say any negative word at all about the obviously polygamous household before him. Are we to believe that Eli, priest of the LORD, thought that *both* drunkenness at the Tabernacle *and* polygamy were wrong, but that only Hannah's supposed drunkenness was worth rebuking? Eli was certainly aware that the two women with Elkanah were his wives. If he thought Hannah was desecrating the Tabernacle by drunkenness, would he not have had even *greater* objection to an obvious "polygamous adulterer" being there? Admittedly, this line of reasoning is rather indirect. But since many anti-polygamy commentators are very freewheeling when it comes to finding an indirect condemnation of polygamy because of the problems of Elkanah's household, then should we not look at the entire episode for *all* factors relevant to this question? Including Eli's *lack* of consternation over Elkanah's polygamy?

The fact is, what we see in I Samuel 1 is a rather ordinary Israeli household coming to Shiloh to worship the LORD. Elkanah's polygamy was no object of concern to Eli nor to anyone else. Elkanah was just another man with his family. No big deal. What we see in I Samuel 1 concerning Elkanah's polygamy is nothing ado about nothing. It is modern Christians, superimposing the mores and customs of their contemporary culture onto the pages of the Bible, who make much ado about nothing.

If someone would want to object (as some indeed do) that Hannah's barrenness was "God's punishment" upon her and Elkanah's household because of their polygamy, the sufficient answer is that Scripture does not inform us whether Elkanah married Hannah first or Penninah. Moreover, if her barrenness *was* in the nature of Divine chastisement, as many commentators assert, then it was probably for *the same reason that God opened Leah's womb to bear children but left Rachel barren*: because of the favoritism and partiality of their husband Jacob toward Rachel over Leah, as Genesis 29:31 clearly tells us.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17 plainly establishes the principle of impartiality on the part of polygamists towards their wives and children. Elkanah was clearly in violation of this particular command. Since God saw fit to deal with Jacob for this offense by shutting Rachel's womb, then there is no reason to suppose that He did not see fit to deal with Elkanah in the same manner for the exact same offense. Despite Elkanah's failure in this regard, he was, nevertheless, a godly man. He was also a man blessed with two wives. In due time, he was also blessed by God with children by them *both*,

including Hannah's firstborn, Samuel, judge and prophet of God. This *does* imply God's favor and blessing upon Elkanah's polygamous household.

## Article 25: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #11: Saul

### #11. Saul

*And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam. —I Samuel 14:50*

*And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. —II Samuel 3:7*

*And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. 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.** —II Samuel 12:7-8*

The passages above reveal that king Saul had at least *four* wives and probably more. We know this because Scripture tells us that Rizpah and Ahinoam were two of Saul's wives who did *not* become David's wives. The statement in II Samuel 12:7-8, therefore, does not include them, and indicates (at least) two additional wives of Saul. I will show in following articles that the wives mentioned in II Samuel 12:7-8 were indeed wives and that they were given to David as *his* wives after Saul's death.

How do we explain the fact that king Saul's polygamy was "tolerated" by Israel? Scholar and commentator, Walter Kaiser, answers as follows:

"In the next period, moving through the divided monarchy, there are only thirteen single instances besides the children of Uzzi...Of these thirteen instances, twelve (are)...of persons possessed of absolute power." — "Toward Old Testament Ethics," pg. 183

In a footnote to this statement, Kaiser states:

"These are Gideon, Jair, Ibzan, Abdon, Samson, Elkanah (sons of Uzzi), Saul, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Ahab and Jehoram. The case of Joash (2 Chron. 24:2-

3) depends upon the interpretation of ‘for him’ or ‘for himself’ and whether he married these two wives in succession or simultaneously. These statistics are according to S.E. Dwight “The Hebrew Wife” (New York: Leavitt, 1836, 24-29).

Some observations are in order here. Notice first of all that Kaiser indulges in a little hyperbole, saying that these men were all possessed of “absolute power,” a designation that can only be rightly ascribed to God. Do you suppose that Kaiser is trying to bolster a weak logical point by appealing to emotive factors here?

Kaiser’s point basically is that the men in this list were too powerful for anyone to punish them for what Kaiser calls “adulterous action.” There is more rationalizing in Kaiser’s remarks than rationality. None of the judges were exempt from being called to account for their actions under the Law of Moses. This is simply (once again) a radical misrepresentation of the nature of the Hebrew republic on the part of a commentator; power and authority in Israel were greatly decentralized, with nearly total independence from any central bureaucracy. What authority did exist was vested primarily within the tribal allotments in a system of rule by family elders. Anything that deeply offended Israeli sensibilities was liable to confrontation by the elders of one’s tribe, and also by the other tribes themselves. Witness Israel’s confrontation of the entire tribe of Benjamin in the latter part of the book of Judges. The judges of Israel certainly did not possess anything even close to dictatorial power. Concerning the kings, there was undoubtedly centralization which took place under their reigns. However, this does not mean that even the kings were free to do anything they pleased. The system of judges and tribal elders remained intact. There were always those among these who could mount an effective opposition to the kings, if need be. The kings’ power may have been real but it certainly was not absolute as Kaiser claims.

Moreover, even *if* we grant the claim that the judges and kings were immune from human punishment, this still does not enlighten us at all as to why they were not punished *by God* if, indeed, polygamy constitutes “adulterous action,” as Kaiser claims. This is a gaping hole of great magnitude in Kaiser’s thesis. In the case of king David, he *was* clearly punished by God, and severely at that, for his adultery with Bathsheba, but not one word of rebuke was uttered in regard to his plural wives. This particular “explanation” to account for the lack of punishment for polygamy in the Bible is woefully inadequate. The *reason* we do not see any punishment in the Bible for polygamy is because there was *no reason* for the polygamists to be punished.

Finally, one minor note: the citation of Samson as a polygamist appears to be incorrect. With Samson, there was serial monogamy, but no polygamy that is told us in the scriptures. Samson *may* have been a polygamist, but there is no statement to this effect.

## Article 26: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #12: David, Part 1

### #12. David, Part 1 Polygamy and Adultery

With king David, we come to our twelfth and, perhaps, most noteworthy Biblical example of polygamy. We have already of necessity dealt to some degree with the subject of adultery as it relates to polygamy; with king David, however, the issue of adultery comes to the very center of our focus.

II Samuel 12:1-12 reads as follows:

*And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, as the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. 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. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house; because thou hast despised me, and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes,*

*and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*

When we examine the subject of polygamy in the Bible, we must also, of necessity, ponder the question: Does polygamy constitute *adultery*? Strangely enough, this question is very seldom posed by commentators who have addressed the issue of polygamy. *Does* polygamy constitute adultery? Overwhelmingly, commentators begin their inquiry into the subject with the semi-conscious *presupposition* that polygamy does constitute adultery, and then try to incorporate the Biblical data in accordance with this guiding premise. This leads inevitably to the bewildering appearance—or, more accurately, *illusion*—of paradox in the Bible. As Rushdoony notes, “One of the facts which disturbs many persons with respect to Biblical laws concerning marriage is the seeming tolerance of polygamy, of more than one wife, and the total intolerance of adultery, which in the Old Testament called for the death penalty,” (“The Institutes of Biblical Law,” pg. 362). Rushdoony notes this anomaly but then proceeds to *beg* the central question, “Does polygamy constitute adultery?” Rushdoony neither asks nor answers this critical question. Since Rushdoony endorses the usual view that monogamy is the Divine standard, he, like practically everyone else, avoids giving a direct “Yes” answer to this question. The reason is obvious: if polygamy *is* adultery, then it is obviously something which must be *severely* condemned. Rushdoony goes on to argue, following in Charles Hodge’s and John Murray’s footsteps, that polygamy was “tolerated” as an evil under Biblical law (in Old Testament times). Made explicit, what this means is that *God tolerated adultery under the Old Covenant*. (Strange talk from a theologian!) Of course, Rushdoony did not make this thesis explicit. Given the theological and exegetical nightmare it would entail to defend such a thesis, this is understandable. However, I once heard John F. MacArthur, on his popular, syndicated radio program, “Grace to You,” assert unequivocally that David’s and Solomon’s polygamy *did* constitute adultery. I don’t know if MacArthur had any nightmares over making this assertion, but he didn’t undertake an exegetical or theological defense of that assertion either. I hope MacArthur and the readers will now forgive me for being the bearer of a heavy-duty theological and exegetical nightmare.

The penalty for committing the crime of adultery is death.

*And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.—Leviticus 20:10*

*If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor’s wife: so shalt thou put away evil from among you.—Deuteronomy 22:22-24*

This does not mean that the death penalty was mandatory under the law. But it does mean that the offenders were *liable* to execution at the insistence of the complainant.

Moreover, it is commanded:

*Thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her...Defile not yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled: therefore do I visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants...Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations...that the land spew not out you also...For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.—Leviticus 18*

Note the words “defile,” “abomination,” “iniquity.” Adultery is one of the “abominations” listed in this chapter. It is clear, therefore, that adultery was *not* to be tolerated in Israel. Adultery was regarded as an *exceedingly* heinous and wicked sin.

In discussing Leviticus, Walter C. Kaiser observes:

“The issue at stake in every one of these crimes is the holy status of the family. Every assault against an individual here is simultaneously an attack on the existence of the family. Said Kellog: ‘where there is incest or adultery, we may truly say the family is murdered; what murder is to the individual, that precisely, are the crimes of this class to the family.’ In God’s sight, the sins against the seventh commandment are not comparatively less heinous than the apparently grosser sins of bestiality, incest, and sodomy. They all rate the same degree of severity in their punishments. Therefore, we may not treat these attacks on the family as relatively slight and somewhat more trifling than we regard murder or similar crimes. The gravity of the punishment ought, instead, to indicate the importance and the significance of the family in any kind of holy living and responsible system of ethics. Not only was the intrinsic seriousness of these sins against the family indicated by the death penalty, but a signal was also given of the danger such crimes posed to the moral and spiritual well-being of the community.” (“Toward Old Testament Ethics,” pg. 124-125)

Kaiser’s statement here is, of course, quite accurate.

With this overview of the subject in mind, let us now ask the question one more time: *Does polygamy constitute adultery?* It now becomes obvious why commentators are so shy about directly asking this question. To do so entails calling into question an axiom of contemporary Evangelical ethics.

If polygamy constitutes adultery, this makes the words of God to David, via the prophet Nathan in II Samuel 12, enigmatic. *Why* would God single out to David his adultery with Bathsheba but *not* his “adultery” with Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah and his many bondwives? Even

more striking is the statement in verses 7-8. There we have in one breath 1) the enumeration of God's blessings upon David, including the multiple wives of Saul given into David's own bosom and 2) the simultaneous condemnation of his adultery with Bathsheba. One may try, but there is no reasonable way to rationalize away the obvious Divine approval of polygamy here.

That the phrase, "I gave thee thy master's...*wives* into thy bosom," refers to actual marriage can be convincingly demonstrated by several factors. (Walter Kaiser, among others, denies that the women referred to here were actually wives.) First, the phrase, "into thy bosom," is used consistently in this sense throughout scripture.

In Genesis 16:5, Sara, speaking of Hagar, said, "I have given my maid *into thy bosom*; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes." The meaning of Sara's words is manifest.

Deuteronomy 13:6 speaks of "the wife of thy bosom." Deuteronomy 28:54 and 56 speak of "the wife of his bosom" and "the husband of her bosom."

In I Kings 1:1-4, when David was sick, there was found a beautiful young virgin named Abishag for him, and they said to David, "*Let her lie in thy bosom...but the king knew her not.*"

This same phraseology is used in the same way in Proverbs 5:20, Proverbs 6:27, 29 and Micah 7:5. When used of men and women, the phrase always denotes sexual-marital intimacy. There is no basis at all to suppose that it means anything else in II Samuel 12:8.

Even more pertinent is the fact that in Nathan's parable to David, in verse 3 the little ewe lamb, which represents Bathsheba, is said to "lay in his bosom." The "his," of course, refers to Uriah, her husband. The description speaks of the *marital* tie between Uriah and Bathsheba. Now since the phrase "lay in his bosom" carries this obvious marital-sexual denotation in verse 3, it would be particularly incongruous if it carried a different meaning in the same context and same conversation in verse 8. That the phrase, "I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom," does indeed refer to the *wives* of Saul given to David as his wives is also strongly supported by the logical contrast within Nathan's words to David. Remember, the sins for which David was rebuked were 1) murder and 2) adultery. God declares to David:

1. "***I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul and***"
2. "***I gave thee...thy masters' wives into thy bosom***"

The *antithesis* is:

1. "***Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite and***"
2. "***hast taken his wife to be thy wife.***"

God spared David from *being murdered*, but then David *committed* murder. God *multiplied wives* into David's bosom, but then David *violates* the wife of another man. God is here telling David of his

blessings He had bestowed upon him. There were undoubtedly *numerous* and various blessings God could have enumerated to David, but these were specifically mentioned *because they had a direct logical and subject-matter relation to the sins which David committed*. We see this exact same parallel yet again in the punishments God pronounces:

1. ***“The sword shall never depart from thine house.”***
2. ***“I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor...”***

God spared David from death, David committed murder, and now four of his own sons will be slain. God multiplied wives, including the wives of Saul into David’s bosom; David committed adultery and now his wives will be given unto another to defile. The fact that God gave David the very *wives* of Saul as his own *wives* is an integral part of this whole scenario.

Thus the textual support for rendering the Hebrew word in II Samuel 12:8 as “wives” is overwhelmingly strong. The only objection to this assertion that has any weight at all is the lack of a *specific naming* of Saul’s wives. (We’ll eventually get around to this point when we examine Kaiser’s views along with other commentators.) But this is *far* more than compensated for by the phrase “into his bosom,” and the logical considerations inherent within the blessing-sin-punishment sequence we considered above.

The true difficulty with II Samuel 12:8 lies, not in seeing the blessing of polygamy, but in *denying* it. We see, then, that God gave multiple wives to David—and not just the former wives of Saul but all of the others, as well. The Lord’s providence is particularly evident in the case of Abigail.

The question then must be posed: Would God have given multiple wives to David if polygamy constituted adultery? Manifestly not. God is immutable and infinitely consistent with Himself. He would not outlaw adultery on the one hand, condemn it in no uncertain terms, and then, in blatant contradiction to Himself, lead one of His servants into adultery. Thus, II Samuel 12, *by itself*, is quite sufficient to throw the whole “polygamy = adultery” thesis into great doubt. For there we have, in Rushdoony’s words, “the tolerance of polygamy, of more than one wife, and the total intolerance of adultery.”

Out of consideration of length, we will continue this thesis in the next article, in which we will examine the Biblical *definition* of adultery.

## Article 27: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #12: David, Part 2

### #12. David, Part 2: Polygamy and Adultery

In the last article we examined the polygamy of king David, whom the scriptures say was a man after God's own heart, and looked at factors relevant to the lawfulness of polygamy. We saw very, very clearly in the case of David extremely persuasive exegetical considerations showing the validity of polygamy. We saw that II Samuel 12:7-8 does, indeed, refer to the multiple *wives* of Saul given to David by God as his *wives*, and not simply as mere servants to him, as some suggest; that adultery is condemned in no uncertain terms; and that polygamy does *not* fall into the category of adultery.

Since polygamy does not constitute adultery, this raises the question: What exactly is the Biblical *definition* of adultery? Let us survey some representative Biblical passages on the subject.

One of the earliest in the Bible is Genesis 20:

*And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and journeyed in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said unto him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, LORD, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thine heart: for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Now therefore restore the man his wife: for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. Therefore, Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me*

*and my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done...So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.*

The seriousness of the sin of adultery is manifest in this episode, being so serious that God would not allow it to actually transpire in Abraham's household. As verse 6 informs us, to commit adultery is to sin against God. Abimelech was well aware that adultery was a "great" sin. Failure to repent in this instance would have resulted in the infliction of death. If we accept John MacArthur's judgment that polygamy is adultery, then it becomes impossible to reconcile God's dealings with Abraham concerning Hagar and Ishmael with His intervention in the case of Abimelech. In the case of Hagar, God promised His blessing upon Ishmael—a strange way, indeed, to deal with Abraham's "adultery." In the case of Abimelech, the wombs of the women in Abimelech's household were shut up from conceiving, and God threatens further judgment if Abimelech knowingly commits adultery with Sara. In this connection, let us not forget that when David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the child that was born to David and Bathsheba was struck dead (II Sam. 12:14-19).

In Job 31:1-12, Job discusses adultery in terms of "(laying) wait at my neighbor's door."

*1 I made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?  
2 For what portion from God is there? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?  
3 Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?  
4 Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?  
5 If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit;  
6 let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.  
7 If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands;  
8 then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out.  
9 If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door;  
10 then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her.  
11 For this is a heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.  
12 For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.*

Job says that "destruction" will come from the Almighty for he that lurks at his neighbor's door (that is, for when the husband is not at home). Job says that adultery is a heinous crime to be punished by the civil authorities.

Adultery is of more than passing interest in the book of Proverbs. All of chapter 5 is taken up with the subject. The question is asked: "And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?" The man is exhorted in that passage to "drink water out of *thine*

own cistern, and running water out of *thine own well.*” In other words, a man should enjoy his *own* wife (or wives) and not another man’s.

In Proverbs 6, we read:

*For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbor’s wife: whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent...Whosoever committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.—vs. 23-32*

Proverbs 7 is, perhaps, the ultimate Biblical statement on the subject:

*1 My son keep my words, and lay up my commandment with thee. 2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. 3 Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart, 4 Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister: and call understanding thy kinswoman: 5 that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words. 6 For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, 7 and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, 8 passing through the streets near her corner; and he went the way to her house, 9 in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night, 10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtile of heart. 11 She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: 12 now she is without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner. 13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16 I have decked my bed with the coverings of tapestry, and with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. 17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloe, and cinnamon. 18 Come, and let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves. 19 For the good man of the house is not at home, he is gone a long journey; 20 he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. 21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter; or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; 23 till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. 24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend unto the words of my mouth. 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*

The harlot spoken of in this passage was a married woman “moonlighting” for a little extra cash while her presumably unsuspecting husband was away on a business trip.

In Jeremiah 5:7-9, God reproves Israel for such sins:

*How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I fed them to the full, then they committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall not I visit thee for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

There are, of course, more passages that could be consulted, but these are representative. Those just quoted, and every other passage that deals with the subject of adultery, discusses adultery in terms of a *married woman* who has sexual relations with a man other than her husband. *Nowhere* in the Bible is adultery addressed in terms of an *unmarried woman* having sexual relations with another woman's husband.

We have already seen in regard to Exodus 22:16-17 (seduction of a virgin), Deuteronomy 21:10-14 (marriage to a foreign captive virgin), Deuteronomy 22:28-29 (rape of a virgin), and Deuteronomy 25:5-10 (the levirate), that when a *married man* has sexual relations with a single woman *she becomes his wife*. Polygamy is *mandatory* under these circumstances. This fact is widely acknowledged by most Old Testament commentators—usually with the qualifying assertion that this requirement ended with the cessation of the Old Covenant.

*Every* Biblical example or mention of adultery discusses it in terms of sexual relations with *another man's wife*. Always—*always*—in Scripture it is the *married woman* with a man other than her husband. Are we to countenance the notion that there is no significance to this fact? Those who wish to define adultery as *either* spouse having a second sexual relationship with another man or woman must argue their case upon a foundation of scriptural silence.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul speaks about adultery in Romans 7:1-3 and I Corinthians 7:39:

*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. —Romans 7:1-3*

*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.—I Corinthians 7:39*

Why doesn't Paul assert this law in terms of the *man* as well as the woman? It is the normal practice in scripture to speak of, to or about "man" or "men" when speaking of humanity in general. The Bible speaks of "man" and "all men" numerous times in contexts which clearly include all men, women and children—humanity in general. *But*—Paul does *not* speak this way in Romans 7:1-3 or I Corinthians 7:39. It is the *woman* who commits adultery if *she* marries another man. In other words, when discussing adultery, Paul does so in terms of *polyandry* rather than polygyny. Paul did not speak in terms of polygyny because *he could not*. Paul knew that polygamy (i.e., polygyny) does not constitute adultery. If adultery consisted of *either* spouse under any circumstances entering into a second one-flesh relationship, it would have been more appropriate for Paul to speak in terms of a man and thus make his definition universal. *But he did not!* As the master builder of the Church's foundation, we can only conclude that Paul's limitation of adultery to polyandry was conscious, deliberate and precise. Thus, in Romans 7:1-3 and I Corinthians 7:39 we have the very *definition* of adultery.

Both married men and single men can commit adultery by having sexual relations with another man's wife; both single men and married men can enter into a lawfully binding marriage by having sexual relations with an *unmarried* woman; a single woman, but *not* a married woman, can enter into a lawfully binding marriage with a married man via sexual relations. While it is possible for a single *man* to commit adultery, this is simply *not possible* for a single woman. A single woman who has sexual relations with a married man *becomes his wife*.

We conclude, therefore, that the thesis, "Polygamy equals adultery," is a false doctrine. We can, therefore, say with confidence that to despise polygamy is to despise God's Law, and to despise God's Law is to despise God Whose laws are essentially a transcript of His own character.

A key factor (or, perhaps, *the* key factor) in the failure to understand the Biblical role of polygamy is the lack of apprehension of the Biblical teaching of the Family as a patriarchal government. The issue of authority is pivotal.

In his massive, 1300+ page book, "Tools of Dominion," Gary North writes:

Capital punishment for both of the adulterers can legitimately be imposed at the insistence of the victim, the woman's husband. Why? *Because the government of the covenantal family was broken by adultery.* (North's own emphasis.) The injured party, meaning the head of the household, is the lawful covenantal representative of God. He is authorized to bring charges against the adulterers as the injured party and also as the head of the family unit. Because the Bible specifies adultery as a civil crime, he also brings lawsuit in civil court.—pg. 301

Note well North's observation that adultery is a violation of *family authority*. North continues:

"If the suspected adulterous male partner is married, his wife can also file appropriate lawsuits against her husband. Biblical law makes it clear, however, *that the wife of the adulterous husband has primary authority to specify the penalty.* (Again, the

emphasis here is North's.) It is his covenantal household office as head of the family that has been attacked by the adulterers." — "Tools of Dominion," pg. 302

Moreover, North goes on to note, "The Old Testament specifies the death penalty for wives who commit adultery. It does not specify the death penalty for a husband who commits adultery (i.e., with a single woman-T.S.). Is this an oversight?" ("Tools of Dominion," pg. 304)

There are, of course, no "oversights" in God's inspired Word. The omission of the death penalty is the logical consequence of male headship in marriage. A married man *cannot* commit adultery with an unmarried woman. This would constitute a marriage and not adultery.

In closing, it will be beneficial to make a note of clarification on a detail which sometimes causes a little confusion. Consider the following diagram:

1. Single man...has sexual relations with a married woman...equals adultery.
2. Married man...has sexual relations with a married woman...equals adultery.
3. Single man...has sexual relations with a single woman...equals marriage.
4. Married man...has sexual relations with a single woman...equals marriage.

What sometimes causes confusion is *perspective*. The above propositions present the relations from the perspective of the man. It is a simple matter of reversing the man/woman aspect of these statements to change the perspective to that of the woman. There are eight possible perspectives but only *four* real-life arrangements between married or unmarried men and women. Biblically, adultery only occurs in the first two sets of circumstances, that is when a married woman is involved. Example #1 may be described as an unmarried man who commits adultery with a married woman *or* it may be described as a married woman who commits adultery with an unmarried man. It is precisely the same circumstance described from two different perspectives.

Article 28:  
All the Polygamists of the Bible, #12:  
David, Part 3

#12. David, Part 3

In our last two articles, we considered the biblical record and relevance of king David's polygamy, especially II Samuel 12:7-8, to the issue of the lawfulness thereof. Next to the positive laws of the Pentateuch given at the mouth of God establishing polygamy as part of the social structure of the people of God, II Samuel 12 is probably the most potent statement proving the lawfulness of polygamy. There remains yet more concerning king David proving the same point.

Let us first cite those passages chronicling David's polygamy, and, as best we can determine, the names and number of David's wives.

*Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And he gave him **Michal** to wife.—I Samuel 18:27*

*And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with **Abigail**, to take her to him to wife...And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her: and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.—I Samuel 25:39, 42*

*David also took **Ahinoam** of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.—I Samuel 25:43*

*And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of **Ahinoam** the Jezreelitess; and his second, Chileab, of **Abigail** the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of **Maacah** the daughter of Talmai king of*

*Geshur; and the fourth, Adonijah the son of **Haggith**; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of **Abital**; and the sixth, Ithream, by **Eglah** David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron. And David took him **more concubines and wives** out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron; and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. And these be the names of those that were born to him in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab and Nathan, and Solomon, Ibhara also, and Ilishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, and Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.—II Samuel 5:13-16*

*Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron: the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess: the third Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith: the fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. These six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four of Bathshua (i.e., Bathsheba) the daughter of Amiel: Ibhara also, and Elishama, and Eliphalet, and Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, and Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet, nine. These were all sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.—I Chronicles 3:1-9*

According to these passages of Scripture, the wives of David can be counted as follows:

1. Michal
2. Abigail
3. Ahinoam
4. Maacah
5. Haggith
6. Abital
7. Eglah
8. Bathsheba
9. & 10. more wives
- 11 & 12. concubines

Whether or not the wives of Saul are included in these lists is not clear. David, therefore, had a bare minimum of twelve wives and concubines, and very possibly many more than this. Actually, we can number the concubines David had at at least *ten*, for as we learn from II Samuel, when Absalom rebelled against David he defiled ten of his father's concubines as a sign of defiance. (Although the biblical record does not say so, I believe these concubines most likely had been the concubines of Saul and are the women referred to in II Samuel 12:7-8. As David "inherited" these women from Saul, so David lost them to Absalom.) The number of David's wives, therefore, should be numbered at at least twenty.

We have already spent sufficient time on II Samuel 12:7-8 and will have occasion to do so again later in this work when we get around to examining what Christian commentators have written about

polygamy. What I would like to focus on in regard to David's sons is God's selection of Solomon, from among all of the sons of David's wives, to be king. As we shall presently see, this fact does indeed have significance concerning the lawfulness of polygamy.

Solomon was, of course, the son of Bathsheba. She was apparently the *last* of David's wives, unless we include Abishag with whom there was no consummation (I Kings 1:1-4). A careful examination of I Kings 2:15, II Samuel 12:24-25, I Chronicles 22:6-9, and I Chronicles 28:5 will show plainly that the choice of Solomon as king was made and determined by the Lord Himself, and not David. Why is this significant? Well, remember, Evangelical scholars such as John MacArthur, and many others, believe that David's polygamy constituted *adultery*. Therefore, the children born to a polygamist's second and subsequent wives must all be classified as bastards, being the children of "adultery." If polygamy is adultery, as John MacArthur has contended, then only the children of the first wife can be considered legitimate. This poses a serious problem for those who believe in the monogamy-only standard: according to the Law of Moses, bastards cannot be granted citizenship until the tenth generation.

*A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to the tenth generation he shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD. —Deut. 23:2*

The footnote in one of my Bibles explains the significance of this verse as "a prohibition against serving as a priest." But the fallacy of this assertion is plainly refuted in the previous and following verses. The same prohibition against "entering into the congregation of the LORD" is also applied to eunuchs, and also Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites. Moreover, not all Israelites were eligible to be priests, anyway, only those from the family of Aaron. Clearly, it is *citizenship* which is in view here. This would mean that bastards could neither inherit, nor serve as civil officials for ten generations. A bastard is accounted as a *foreigner* until the tenth generation.

If, as John MacArthur believes, Solomon was a son of adultery, then he was also a bastard and could not lawfully "enter into the congregation of the LORD"—that is, he could not hold a civil office, he could not be a citizen. He certainly could not be king. But since God Himself appointed Solomon as king, then the *only* possible conclusion is that Solomon was *not* a bastard. Therefore, David's polygamous marriage to Bathsheba (after Uriah's death) was not adultery. Or is God contrary to Himself?

But let us look into this question in a little more depth.

In their "[Commentary on the Old Testament](#)," Keil and Delitzsch correctly subtitle this portion of their commentary, "The Right of *Citizenship* In the Congregation of the Lord."

Matthew Henry, as usual, is also worth noting:

"Interpreters are not agreed what is here meant by entering into the congregation of the LORD, which is here forbidden to eunuchs and bastards, Ammonites and

Moabites for ever, but to Edomites and Egyptians only to the third generation. 1. Some think they are thereby excluded from communicating with the people of God in their religious services. 2. Others think they are hereby excluded from bearing office in the congregation. 3. Others think they are excluded only from marrying with Israelites (in which case the exclusion of eunuchs is nonsense—T.S.). With the daughters of these nations (though not of the nations of Canaan) it should seem, the men of Israel might not marry, *Nor could the men be naturalized*, otherwise than as here provided.” — “Matthew Henry’s Commentary,” pg. 193-194

Rousas J. Rushdoony is not sidetracked by the misconceptions of the commentators:

“With respect to the ban on eunuchs and bastards, i.e., their being barred from the congregation, it is to the tenth generation. According to one editorial footnote in the Talmud, entering into the congregation of the Lord, meant “eligible to intermarry with Israelites,” and, according to another editorial note, the expression “to his tenth generation” meant “the stigma is perpetual.” The ban on intermarriage was probably a real factor; certainly the penalty would work to make intermarriage difficult. But this does not get to the root of the matter. The ban was not on faith; i.e., it is not stated that the bastards and eunuchs, nor in Deuteronomy 23:3, that the Ammonites and Moabites cannot be believers. There is, in fact, a particularly strong promise to believing eunuchs in Isaiah 56:4,5, and their place as proselytes was real even in the era of hardened Pharisaism (Acts 8:27, 28)...There is no reason to doubt that eunuchs, bastards, Ammonites, and Moabites regularly became believers and were faithful worshipers of God. *Congregation* has reference to *the whole nation in its governmental function* as God’s covenant people. G. Ernest Wright defined it as “the whole organized commonwealth as it assembled officially for various purposes, particularly worship.” The *men* of the legitimate bloodline constituted the heads of houses and tribes. The *men* were the congregation of Israel, not the women and children nor excluded persons. All the integrity and honesty required by the law was due to every “stranger” (Lev. 19:33, 44), and it was certainly not denied to a man’s illegitimate child, nor to a eunuch, an Ammonite, or a Moabite. *The purpose of the commandment is here the protection of authority*. Authority among God’s people here is *holy*; it does require a separateness. It does not belong to every man simply on the ground of his humanity.” — “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” pg. 85

Rushdoony is precisely on the mark. The issue in Deuteronomy 23:2 is the rights of citizenship, especially offices of authority such as judge and, without a doubt, king. This consideration places a very heavy burden of proof upon those who would claim that polygamy is adultery or otherwise unlawful. God’s act of selecting Solomon as David’s successor as king places Divine approval upon his union with Bathsheba (after Uriah’s death) and David’s other wives, and constitutes a rather direct Divine validation of polygamy.

It should also not go without notice that *there was Divine enforcement of the law* in the cases of Judah (there were ten generations from Judah to David) and Jephthah. James Jordan comments:

“Judah was the royal tribe in Israel; yet most of Judah were bastards (Gen. 38). Thus, they had to wait ten generations before they could take up full citizenship in Israel, and thus it was ten generations before any Judahite could become king. The genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22 shows that *David was ten generations away from his bastard ancestor*. This fact shows one of the reasons why Israel was not to have a king during the period of the judges. Only someone from Judah could be king, and virtually all of Judah was temporarily excluded.” — (“Judges: God’s War Against Humanism.” pg. 194)

Note that Jordan is clearly premising his commentary upon the view that Deuteronomy 23:2 refers to citizenship.

If anyone should doubt that God Himself providentially enforced this law in the case of Judah’s line, we have more evidence in the case of Jephthah. Consider Judges 11:1-11:

*Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor and **he was the son of a harlot**: And Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead’s wife bare him sons; and his wife’s sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, **thou shalt not inherit in our father’s house; for thou art the son of a strange woman**...And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: And they said unto Jephthah, **Come, be our captain**, that we may fight with the children of Ammon...And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, **If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, Shall I be your head?** and the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, **The LORD be witness between us if we do no according to thy words**. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.*

The irony here is strong and striking. Here we have the elders of Gilead, who had forsaken the LORD to serve other gods (Jud. 10:6-7), which constitutes spiritual harlotry, going to the son of a harlot for deliverance. His brothers had cut him off from their father’s inheritance in a hypocritical deference to the law of Deuteronomy 23:2; in blatant defiance of this law, the elders of Gilead swore an oath to the LORD to make Jephthah their head. Like Joshua and “the princes of the congregation” (Joshua 9:15) who made a forbidden covenant with the Gibeonites, here we have yet another instance in which Israel’s leaders enter into a foolish oath in which they “asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.” Jephthah, no doubt, thought that he had secured a firm place of leadership for himself and his house among the Gileadites in violation of this law.

But God had other plans:

*Then (note this next clause carefully—T.S.) the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah...And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whosoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering (the Hebrew reads will offer it up a hormah, which denotes something totally dedicated to the LORD)...And the LORD delivered them into his hands...And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! **Thou hast brought me very low, and art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.** — Judges 11:29-35*

Jephthah was a man who knew the Law of Moses very well as is apparent by his recitation of Israel's history to the Ammonites from the Law. Despite his primogeniture, he was also apparently personally a godly man, as is evidenced by his high regard for the oath he had uttered.

There are many who incorrectly suppose that Jephthah cut his daughter's throat over an altar and sacrificed her life *in violation of the Law*. In point of fact, Jephthah never intended to take a human life in this way. His vow was to take someone from his household, presumably a servant, and dedicate that person to perpetual service at the Tabernacle—thus, “hormah,” total dedication to the service of the LORD. As the remainder of the chapter reveals, Jephthah's daughter became a consecrated virgin in the service of the LORD. She bore no children. We are told that she and her friends went up and down the hills of Israel bewailing and lamenting her *virginity*—not her impending execution at the hands of her father. Jephthah's plan to advance his own house in Israel was dashed in pieces. His daughter was his only child and he, an old man by this time, lived only six more years (Jud. 12:7). Presumably, he had plans for his grandsons. The Gileadites kept their oath to Jephthah for we are told that he *judged* Israel for six years.

This entire episode clearly hearkens back to Deuteronomy 23:2 and reveals God's superintendence of the enforcement of His Law in the affairs of men.

Returning now to Solomon, a son of polygamy, and God's chosen to lead His people Israel, I emphasize what I said above: the scriptures place a very heavy burden of proof upon those who would claim that David's polygamy is not given God's stamp of approval by His choice of Solomon as king.

## Article 29: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #13: Solomon

### #13. Solomon

With Solomon, we come to the Bible's most well-known polygamist. In this article, we will look at two aspects relevant to Solomon, first, the *typology* of polygamy and, second, the meaning of Deuteronomy 17:17, which is often incorrectly interpreted as a ban against polygamy for the Israelite kings.

Many who have virtually no knowledge of the Bible do know that Solomon had 1000 wives and concubines. With such a notable example of polygamy in the Old Testament, one would think that there would have been many more Biblical scholars and commentators who would have pondered the question of whether or not polygamy might be lawful.

I must confess, however, to having had a blind spot on this issue myself for the first seven + years that I had been saved. Truth is, I don't recall having ever looked into the issue of polygamy prior to coming to see that it must be lawful. Interestingly enough, I was saved only for a short couple of months when I began to discern, without having ever been informed of the existence of such, *types, shadows and allegories* in the Bible. Very early on in my walk with the Lord, the typology in the Bible was one of the things that made me realize experientially the inspired nature of the biblical text. This characteristic of the Bible is absolutely unique in religious literature. Neither Islam, nor Hinduism, nor Buddhism, nor any other religion has anything like it.

One of the types or allegories that I discerned concerned the polygamy of Solomon: Solomon and his 1000 wives are a *type of Christ and the Church*. Why I at that time did not extrapolate this insight any further I do not know. I guess the Lord has His own timing with things.

Exploring this particular type a little further, we see that Messiah and his bride are represented polygamously. 1000 is a number which, allegorically, represents a vast number, perhaps many multiple times 1000 itself. It is a number of *vastness* or *fullness* or *completeness*. We are reminded of Messiah's words, "Of all that the Father has given me I should lose nothing." Thus, in this type, we

discern also the truth of the security of Messiah's elect, of whom he shall lose nothing but shall raise them up at the last day.

Because of the spiritual unity of Messiah's bride, it is proper to see the Church both as *a* bride, and *also* as a multitude of brides. Since marriage so thoroughly and intimately represents the truth of our spiritual covenant with Messiah, it would be peculiar, indeed, if the *lawfulness* of polygamy were not also an aspect of this typology. It seems most irrational to posit the *unlawfulness* of something which the Bible uses as a type of Christ. But, of course, those who deny the lawfulness of polygamy will simply contend that there is no such intended type in Solomon and his wives. But this contention would seem to fly directly in the face of the *ease* with which the type can be applied. From a somewhat different angle, we should discuss Solomon's polygamy in connection with Deuteronomy 17:17, which is routinely appealed to as a biblical law against polygamy. Solomon was, indeed, a violator of this law. The prohibition, however, is not what it seems to be to the modern, Western reader, who lacks knowledge of the ancient world and how the kings conducted the affairs of state. The commandment in Deuteronomy 17:17 prohibiting the king from multiplying wives unto himself is part of a statute beginning in verse 14:

*14 When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the LORD thy God shall choose: **one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee, thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother,** 16 But he shall not multiply horses unto himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth no more return that way. 17 **Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away:** neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites; 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them. 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

This statute sets forth the fundamental polity of Israeli government and is, unless I have overlooked something, the *only* law in the Pentateuch specifically addressing the responsibilities of and prohibitions on the kings of Israel.

Unfortunately, most commentators are not very helpful here. The restrictions imposed upon the kings relate, not to the *personal* affairs of the king, as this scripture is commonly exegeted, but to the king *in his official capacity as king*. To read into these laws a *personal* application is to miss the point.

First of all, as verse 14 shows, this law is addressed to the nation of Israel in its corporate capacity: “When thou art come into the land.” Clearly, it is civil polity being dealt with here. There are four prohibitions. The first is to the nation in general: they may not appoint a king who is not an Israelite, a member of the covenant nation.

The second, third, and fourth prohibitions are directed to the king himself as the representative of the nation:

- 1) he may not multiply horses
- 2) he may not multiply wives and
- 3) he may not greatly multiply silver and gold.

Fortunately, most commentators *do* correctly recognize that the prohibition against multiplying horses has at least some *military* significance. This injunction does *not* forbid the king from owning horses, or even a vast number of them, for his personal industry—as a breeder, for example. What is in view here is the excessive militarization of the nation. It should be observed that this law presupposes the moral validity of a national military force. What it limits is its extent and purpose.

The third prohibition, against greatly multiplying silver and gold, likewise concerns *the State*. It does not prohibit the king from the legitimate acquisition of wealth. It is *not* a violation of this law for the king to have millions or even billions of dollars in his personal bank account. *It is taxation and the royal treasury which is in view here*. It is excessive taxation which is forbidden to the king. The State is to be of modest size and limited jurisdiction. To be more specific, the law of the tithe (whereby God asserts His sovereignty) and I Samuel 8 reveal where the Biblical limit to taxation is to be set. Anything exceeding 10% of the citizens’ increase constitutes tyranny and sin. Taxation of more than 10% constitutes *theft* against the citizenry.

The commandment against multiplying wives is sandwiched in between these two prohibitions. This injunction, like the other two, refers to the *official functions of the king*. It does not outlaw polygamy, *as such*. What is being spoken of here is *treaty marriages*, entering into covenants or alliances with heathen nations *via marriages to foreign officials’ daughters, sisters, nieces*, etc. It is of the same nature as the previous prohibition forbidding the people to appoint a stranger (foreigner) as king; marrying such a woman would involve having a queen (or queens) who were foreign, idol worshippers, precisely what this law speaks against.

This law does *not* forbid the king from marrying more than one *Israelite* woman. Proof of this is in the rationale explicitly given for the prohibition: “that his heart turn not away.” It is not Israelite women (unless they were apostate) who would turn away the king’s heart from following the LORD, but *foreign*, idol worshippers. Moreover, if the object of concern here were polygamy, it would be a straight prohibition against an evil, not a prohibition against something to prevent something else from happening.

It is clear from scripture that Solomon was, indeed, a violator of this law.

*And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David. —I Kings 3:1*

Several chapters later, all of this is related in some detail:

*But king Solomon loved **many strange** (foreign), **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** (i.e., of foreign countries), 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**. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. **And likewise did he for all his strange wives**, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. —I Kings 11:1-8*

The statement repeatedly made, to the effect that Solomon's wives "turned away his heart," is clearly an allusion to Deuteronomy 17:17, where we find precisely this language, and the prohibition there against multiplying wives. This is sufficient to establish that that passage refers to treaty-marriages and not to polygamy. And to make the point absolutely conclusive, verse 4 informs us that David, who was also a polygamist (but only married Israelite women), did *not* have his heart turned away, though Solomon did. If Deuteronomy 17:17 prohibits the king's heart from turning away *unto polygamy*, then there is a clear contradiction in the Biblical text: God would be holding David to one standard and Solomon to another. But the Bible is God's word and God does not contradict Himself. Therefore, it is logically fallacious to interpret Deuteronomy 17:17 as a ban on polygamy. Deuteronomy 17:17 is *irrelevant* to the issue of biblical polygamy.

## Article 30: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #14: Caleb

### #14. Caleb

The mention of Caleb as one of the polygamists of the Bible may come as a surprise for many readers, including knowledgeable Bible students who know Caleb as one of the prominent personalities of the Bible who, along with Joshua, spied out the promised land and encouraged Israel to obey the LORD's command to take the land. Caleb is not, so far as I am aware, mentioned by any other commentator or scholar as a Biblical example of polygamy. This is no doubt due to the fact that his polygamy is not mentioned in the most prominent passages dealing with him, Numbers 13-14, Joshua 15:13-19, and Judges 1:12-20. One has to look in the "obscure" genealogies of I Chronicles to find the record of Caleb's polygamy.

This is a good place to emphasize a point I have already made more than once in this work: the lack of mention in the Scriptures that so-and-so had more than one wife does *not* mean that so-and-so did not have more than one wife. Scholars often assert that this Biblical character or that one is an example of monogamy. These assertions are based upon *silence*, in the absence of any affirmative statement that so-and-so indeed had only one wife. In the case of Caleb, there is no indication at all in the most prominent texts about him that Caleb was a polygamist. Yet in the genealogies of I Chronicles, we learn something that we might not otherwise have known.

There are *two* Calebs mentioned in I Chronicles 2, and there are some obstacles in identifying the second one with the Caleb of Numbers 13. The complicated nature of the genealogies does not encourage confidence in ascertaining the identity of every individual named. Sometimes there are more than one person with the same name; sometimes the same person is known by more than one name. (Gideon/Jerubbaal is a good example of this.) And then there are other oddities, for example, the *two* sets of genealogies for Judah's line (chapter 2 and chapter 4) which don't seem to correspond very well. There is, however, one particular detail that will enable us to positively identify the Caleb of I Chronicles 2:42-49 as the same Caleb mentioned so prominently in Numbers 13.

*42 Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel were, Mesha his firstborn, which was the father of Ziph; and the sons of Mareshah the father of Hebron.*

- 43 And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem begat Shema.  
44 And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat Shamai.  
45 And the son of Shammai was Maon; and Maon was the father of Bethor.  
46 And **Ephah, Caleb's concubine**, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez: and Haran begat Gazes.  
47 And the sons of Jahdai: Regem, and Jotham, and Geshan, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph.  
48 And **Maacah Caleb's concubine**, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah.  
49 She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmanah, Sheva the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibeah: **And the daughter of Caleb was Achsah.**

The difficulty with identifying this Caleb with the spy Caleb of Numbers 13 is the lack of any mention or indication at all in the most prominent texts about him that Caleb was a polygamist. Yet in the genealogies of I Chronicles we learn something that we might not otherwise have known.

There are *two* Calebs mentioned in I Chronicles 2, and there are some obstacles in identifying the second Jerahmeel, his brother. Verse 9 mentions a Jerahmeel who was the son of Hezron and who had a brother whose name was “Chelubai,”—which appears to be a variant of “Caleb.” On this reading, this would make the Caleb of verses 42-49 identical with “Caleb the son of Hezron” mentioned in verse 18. The problem with this is the complete differences in the names of the sons listed for the two Calebs and the obvious connection of the entire genealogy of chapter 2 as a unit. The Caleb of verse 18 is most likely the *grandfather* of the Caleb of verse 42. Therefore, the Jerahmeel mentioned as Caleb's brother in verse 42 is not the same Jerahmeel mentioned in verse 9. To make matters worse, the genealogy in chapter 4 explicitly mentions “Caleb the son of Jephunneh,” positively identifying him as the Caleb of Numbers, Joshua and Judges, but the names of his “sons” do *not* correspond to the list of the sons of Caleb in 2:42-49. How do we explain this? I believe that this can be accounted for by reading the word “sons” in chapter 4 as *descendants*. Chapter 4 certainly appears to be more of an *overview* whereas chapter 2 would seem rather clearly to be concerning itself with immediate descendants. This explanation, if indeed it is the correct one, satisfactorily removes any difficulty or hindrances to identifying the Caleb of I Chronicles 2:42-49 as the famous Caleb who spied out the promised land. It remains to more particularly connect them. This is where the mention of Achsah, Caleb's daughter, is decisive.

In Joshua 15:13-19, we find this record:

*And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he (Joshua) gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak. And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give **Achsah my daughter** to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and **he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife**. And it came to pass, as she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her*

*ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? Who answered, **give me a blessing**; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.*

This same incident is recorded in Judges 1:12-15.

The mention of Achsah in I Chronicles 2:49 is decisive in identifying the Caleb there with the Caleb in Numbers, Joshua and Judges. The *purpose* of the genealogies, remember, is to record *male succession and inheritance*, which normally went to the sons. Normally daughters are not mentioned in genealogies. But in Joshua 15 and Judges 1 we see Caleb bestowing a “blessing,” that is, *an inheritance*, upon his daughter and son-in-law, Othniel. The mention of Achsah in I Chronicles 2:49 is *the recognition of the inheritance given her*, and which is recorded in Joshua and Judges. In view of this consideration, there can be no doubt that the Caleb of I Chronicles 2:42-49 is the same Caleb who, along with Joshua, spied out the promised land and brought back an encouraging report to Moses and the people.

With the identity of this Caleb established, let us return to our main topic.

In the genealogy of I Chronicles 2:42-49, we learn that Caleb had one wife (not mentioned by name) and two concubines: Ephah (vs. 46) and Maacah (vs. 48). We may therefore, safely include Caleb in our list of Biblical polygamists.

What do the Scriptures tell us about the moral character of Caleb? Are we told that he was a horrible adulterer indulging the sinful desires of the flesh? Well, first of all there is the obvious contrast with the ten spies who discouraged the Israelites from taking the promised land.

*And the LORD said...Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it*  
—Numbers 14:20-24

What is to be noted in these verses is that God contrasts the *continual* disobedience of the other Israelites with the *faithfulness* of Caleb. God says that “my servant Caleb...hath followed me *fully*.” Although the immediate issue dealt with in Numbers 13-14 was the commandment to go up and take the promised land, it is the *whole* of Caleb’s life that is distinguished from the other ten spies. The ten times that the others tempted the LORD, Caleb “had another spirit with him,” a spirit of faith and obedience. In Deuteronomy 1:36, Moses reiterates the fact that Caleb “wholly” followed the LORD. Forty five years later, when the promised land was being parceled out, Caleb reminded Joshua that he had *wholly* followed the LORD, the inference being that he had *continued* to do so all of his life (Joshua 14).

Is such a claim consistent with a life of polygamy if, in fact, polygamy is a violation of God's fundamental order of things? If polygamy constitutes adultery, or is otherwise a "violation of God's creation ordinance," as many claim, could it be said that Caleb had "*wholly*" followed the LORD? Would it not have been said that he had *partly* followed the LORD? But we see in Scripture the Divine intent to bless Caleb because of his *continual* consecration to the LORD, and his *wholehearted* obedience. This blessing was carried out by Joshua (and by God in His providence) without so much as an inkling of condemnation for any perceived evil in Caleb's life.

In his book, "Christian Ethics," Norman Geisler states, "Monogamy is taught by punishment. Every polygamist in the Old Testament paid bitterly for his sin," (pg. 281). Geisler's statement is a gross, demonstrable falsehood, and glaringly so in the case of Caleb. God said of Caleb: "Caleb...hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it," (Num. 14:24). This promise was fulfilled, in part, by Achsah, daughter of Caleb's concubine, and third wife. This hardly constitutes proof that "every polygamist...paid bitterly for his sin." This is no punishment but *blessing*; nor is any other incident recorded about Caleb indicative of punishment.

We have, therefore, in the case of Caleb yet more exegetical evidence showing the lawfulness of polygamy (polygyny) and indeed that it is, in fact, a blessing which comes from God.

## Article 31: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #15: Caleb #2

### #15. Caleb #2

In II Chronicles 2:18-22, we read:

*18 And Caleb the son of Hezron begat children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth: her sons are these: Jeshier, and Shobab, and Ardon.*

*19 And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur.*

*20 And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel.*

*21 And afterward Hezron went in unto the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old: and she bare him Segub.*

*22 And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead.*

The Caleb mentioned in this passage, our fifteenth example of polygamy in the Bible, is most likely the grandfather of the more famous Caleb. Very clearly, we have here in this passage the record of yet another polygamist in Israel. There is not much more said of this man other than his place in the lineage of Judah. Standing on its own, we cannot validly draw any inferences from his example of the moral status of polygamy.

What I would like to note, however, is that with every recorded instance of polygamy in biblical Israel, the contention of Ralph Gower and others that polygamy was not common in Israel sinks deeper and deeper into the pit of unbelievability. The truth is polygamy was not seen as *significant* in Israel in terms of distinguishing the polygamists from other monogamous men. Polygamy merely reflected the *normal* patriarchal household. It would not have merited any special attention.

The significance of this observation is that many of the men we are told about in the Bible, but of whose wives and families we are told nothing or little, *may* have been polygamists. For all we know, Isaac, son of Abraham, may have had wives and/or concubines in addition to Rebekah. The same may be said of Joshua, or of prophets like Elijah and Elisha, of whose families we are told nothing at all. It is my own view that the incidence of polygamy in Biblical Israel probably *averaged* about 10%-15%

during times of peace. In times when serious warfare decimated the population of men, this number would, of course, have been higher.

There is a good *theological* reason to assume a minimum of 10% incidence of polygamy under the Old Covenant. I draw this from the analogy of the tithe. God requires a tenth of our incomes to be given back to Him in the form of contributions to the Temple and Levitical priesthood under the Old Covenant, and in the form of contributions to the (true) Church in the New Covenant. The *significance* of the tithe is in the nature of an *acknowledgement of God's authority* over our lives. In other words, the tithe is a *testimony* to His sovereignty. When we fail to tithe, we testify that He is not really God. We fail to give acknowledgement of His authority over us. Another Biblical incident showing the significance of the tithe is in the latter part of the book of Judges. Civil war erupted between Israel and the tribe of Benjamin. When they asked the Lord if they should go up and fight Benjamin, the LORD answered "Yes." When they went up against Benjamin, they were overcome by Benjamin and *lost 10% of their men* in the battle. When they went back and inquired of the LORD, it turned out that they had lacked sacrificing to the LORD with sin offerings. In other words, the guilt of sin was still judicially attached to the nation in its corporate capacity. Since Israel had failed to acknowledge the Lord's sovereignty over their lives thusly, God asserted His authority and took His tithe in the form of men. When they made sin offerings, they went back to the battle and prevailed over Benjamin by God's providence. How does this relate to polygamy? Well, remember, the Biblical family is an authority structure in which the father is the covenantal representative of God. In this scheme of things, polygyny is valid but polyandry (multiple husbands) is *not*, and is defined as adultery. In other words, patriarchy (which "images" the rule of God over His flock) is expressed, in part, by polygyny. A man with multiple wives gives us a manifestation, or image, of Christ over his Church. In the society as a whole (where polygamy is legal and the Lord is truly God) we should expect that God will have *the acknowledgement of His authority* by at least a tenth of it *testifying* to His authority.

Biblical scholars generally estimate the average population of Israel in Biblical times to have ranged from 2-3 million. If we assume that about half of this number were men, there would have been about 1,500,000 men in Israel on average at any given time. If a tenth of this number were, indeed, polygamous, then Israel would have averaged about 150,000 polygamous men in the nation at any given point in time. I think this is a realistic estimate and should constitute our operating premise unless and until someone can show a better reason for a different number.

In conclusion, we can say with some measure of confidence that polygamy *was* common in Biblical Israel. When we consider the number of *recorded* examples of polygamy, in conjunction with the laws *requiring* polygamy (the levirate, etc.), its status as *lawful*, and also the fact that the men were generally significantly older than their wives in Israel, 10% turns out to be, in my opinion, a very realistic or even cautious estimate.

## Article 32: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #16: Rehoboam

### #16. Rehoboam

Rehoboam is our sixteenth example of polygamy in the Bible. II Chronicles 11:18-21 tells us,

*18 And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse; 19 Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shemariah and Zaham. 20 And after her he took Maacah the daughter of Absalom; which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. 21 And Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and concubines: (for he took eighteen wives and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.)*

In the record of Rehoboam in II Chronicles, the issue raised by Walter Kaiser, of the reason for the lack of any punishment of the kings for their polygamy, comes once again to the fore. It was pointed out earlier in this work that the Israeli kings did *not* possess absolute power and that the system of tribal allotments and rule by tribal elders had the effect of greatly decentralizing authority in Israel. Israel was a highly participatory democracy notwithstanding the institution of kingship. Anything highly offensive to the people of Israel on the part of the kings was likely to precipitate a revolt. If polygamy (that is, polygyny) was truly a violation of the Law of Moses, then the act of taking many wives from among the daughters of the people to defile would assuredly have resulted in widespread resistance, if not open insurrection.

I Chronicles 10 relates to us the incidents surrounding Rehoboam's decision to impose a greater burden of taxation upon the people. Was Rehoboam immune from the wrath of the people?

*And when all Israel saw that the king would not hearken to them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and we have none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: and now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king*

*Rehoboam sent Hadoram that was over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. —II Chronicles 10:16-19*

This incident clearly reveals the extent to which the kings of Israel relied upon popular support. The people of the northern tribes exercised their wrath against Rehoboam in the matter of taxation. Are we to suppose that if the matter of polygamy were regarded with dismay, as it is today among Evangelicals, that the Israelites would not have revolted against Rehoboam much sooner than they did? But it was excessive taxation which incensed the people of Israel and not his seventy-eight wives. Rehoboam's polygamy was simply a non-issue in Israel. So, we have here in the record of Rehoboam yet one more example of polygamy in the Bible in which not so much as one negative word is said concerning polygamy.

## Article 33: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #17: Joash

### #17. Joash

*Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. And **Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord** all the days of Jehoiada the priest...**And Jehoiada took for him two wives.** —II Chronicles 24:1-3*

The story of the young king Joash is in many ways the story of Jehoiada the priest. If it had not been for Jehoiada, and his wife Jehoshabeath, all of the royal seed of David would have been slain by the wicked queen, Athaliah. Scripture makes it plain that *Jehoiada was zealous for the Law of the Lord* and for the Davidic monarchy.

Scripture relates that Jehoiada risked his own life by his act of proclaiming Joash king and opposing Athaliah. Joash was the only descendant of David that had escaped. After Athaliah had been deposed and slain, “Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD’s people,” (II Chron. 23:16.) This was followed by the destruction of the temple of Baal, and *the restoration of the Law of Moses.*

Commenting upon Joash’s polygamy—which was the result of Jehoiada getting two wives for Joash at the age of sixteen—Walter Kaiser states:

“The case of Joash (2 Chron. 24:2-3) depends upon the interpretation of...‘for him’ or ‘for himself’ and whether he married those two wives in succession or simultaneously.” — (“Toward Old Testament Ethics,” footnote, pg. 183)

But Kaiser is kicking against the pricks here. It is very evident from the text (and the context) that Jehoiada got two wives for *Joash*, not himself, and that he got these two wives for the young king at the same time. It is also clear that the reason was to replenish the royal seed of David and assure a successor to the Davidic monarchy.

How shall we evaluate Jehoiada's act of getting multiple wives for Joash? Was Jehoiada saying, in effect, "Let us do evil that good may come?" It is pointless to plead necessity. Jehoiada certainly knew of the Divine promise to David to preserve the royal seed. With or without multiple wives, Jehoiada knew that God would preserve the Davidic line. And we must not fail to consider Scripture's portrayal of Jehoiada's zealotry for the Law of Moses; this is *very* prominent in the text. We must certainly presume that *Jehoiada believed himself to be acting within the boundaries of the Law*; if Jehoiada believed that the Law of Moses defined polygamy as adultery, or was otherwise unlawful, he certainly would have feared further Divine punishment for such a course of action. The truth is, however, that Jehoiada anticipated Divine blessing and the prospering of his actions which, in fact, ensued: "and he (Joash) begat sons and daughters" by his two wives. Clearly God was with Jehoiada in his plan to replenish the royal seed.

The example of Joash, therefore, provides us with strong exegetical evidence of the lawfulness of polygamy. We are plainly told that Joash did right in the sight of the Lord. If it had been *wrong* for him to take two wives, this certainly would have been indicated in Chronicles which is specifically focused on characterizing the actions of the kings of Israel as either good or evil.

## Article 34: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #18: Xerxes

### #18. Xerxes (or Ahasuerus)

In the case of King Xerxes (“Ahasuerus”-KJV) recorded in the book of Esther, we consider a pagan king who was truly possessed of near-absolute power. Neither the actions nor opinions of this man can tell us anything substantive about the moral status of polygamy. If the book of Esther contains anything relevant in this regard, it must come from Esther, who was taken as a concubine for king Xerxes (Esth. 2:14) without regard to her wishes (2:1-4, 8), or from Mordecai, Esther’s cousin and stepfather (2:7).

In the case of Esther, Esther was just one of *numerous* young virgins brought to the royal palace to be king Xerxes’ concubines. That woman who pleased the king the most was to replace Vashti, whom Xerxes had divorced. It is doubtful that Esther or any of the women had any choice whatsoever in this matter. The gathering of the concubines was “the king’s commandment and decree.” In the course of time, as we know, Esther was loved by the king above all the other women (Esth. 2:17) and she was made queen.

There are several factors which complicate any attempt to assess Esther’s and Mordecai’s attitude toward being a concubine in Xerxes’ polygamous household. There is, first of all, the fact of intermarriage with a pagan. Secondly, there is the factor of the Jews’ captivity and second-class status in the Persian empire. The question arises: ought Esther and/or Mordecai to have *protested* her marriage to this pagan and polygamous king? It is clear from Mordecai’s charge to Esther to not reveal her people and kindred that protest was not the avenue chosen. As is clear from the rest of the account, Mordecai’s plan was to seek the welfare of his people by using Esther’s position as leverage.

There is really nothing in the story of Esther which validates or invalidates polygamy on its own merits. All that can be said is that God in His providence (Esth. 4:13-14) brought Esther into Xerxes’ harem, and caused the king to favor her above the other wives. The ultimate purpose for this was the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies. This consideration outweighed the fact even of intermarriage and, as has been demonstrated previously in this work, the polygamy involved here was simply a non-issue.

Article 35:  
All the Polygamists of the Bible, #17:  
Belshazzar

#19. Belshazzar

*Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, **his wives, and his concubines**, might drink therein. —Daniel 5:1-2*

In the case of Belshazzar, we consider, once again, a pagan king who possessed almost absolute power. As with Xerxes, we cannot make any inferences about the morality of polygamy from his example or from any opinions he may have had. There is, however, one observation to be made concerning the existence of polygamy among ancient pagan cultures. The further back in time we look, the closer we get to the original creation of man and woman by God; and the closer we come to Noah, the ancestor of all people now living.

Is it not a little bit significant that polygamy was accepted nearly universally among ancient cultures, and polyandry rejected? Do we not detect in this something of the original institution of marriage passed down from Noah and his descendants? We see from earliest times that there was a distinction observed between male and female in this regard. I realize that this line of reasoning is inconclusive and indirect. However, if polygamy was originally instituted by God and polyandry rejected as adultery, then this is precisely the state of affairs we would expect to find. We may conclude, therefore, that the general acceptance of polygamy among ancient cultures combined with the general rejection of polyandry is *supportive*, though not decisive in and of itself, of the thesis advanced in this work.

## Article 36: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #20-21: Abijah and Jerahmeel

### #20. Abijah

*But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.—II Chronicles 13:21*

King Abijah is condemned in I Kings 15 for not being perfect with the LORD and walking in the sins of Rehoboam. However, it is clear from II Chronicles 13 that Abijah was not totally unmindful of the LORD: “But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him.” —II Chronicles 13:10.

Suffice to say, in the case of Abijah, he *is* condemned for tolerating idolatry in Israel, but *not* for his polygamy. This is something we have witnessed in twenty examples now, that is, the chronicling of men with multiple wives in the complete absence of even so much as a single negative word said about their polygamy, though many other things are said condemning other acts these men committed. This fact stretches the anti-polygamy position beyond credulity. The books of Chronicles in particular are focused upon characterizing the kings as either good or evil and specifically condemning their sins. How is it that amongst the examples of polygamy, polygamy mysteriously got “overlooked” in the cataloging of their sins? How many examples must be cited before the anti-polygamy proponents “get it,” that polygamy simply is not a sin? Indeed, that in God’s scheme of things, it is positively good?

### #21. Jerahmeel

*And the sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron were, Ram the firstborn, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozen, and Ahijah. Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name was Atarah: she was the mother of Onam. —I Chronicles 2:25-26*

Jerahmeel, like Caleb our 14th example of polygamy, was of the tribe of Judah. The short genealogy of I Chronicles 2, which is hardly a comprehensive list of all of Judah’s descendants, contains the mention of three polygamists in all. It is obvious from reading the entire chapter that the concern of the compiler was *not* to include a complete list of the wives of the men listed. It is quite possible that

others of the men mentioned in this genealogy had multiple wives. Even if we assume that these three men were the *only* polygamists in this list, they would constitute a significant presence of polygamy in Israel. That is to say, if the existence of polygamy in this list is roughly proportional to the overall occurrence of polygamy in Israel, then there would obviously have been scores of thousands of polygamists in Israel at any given time. Ergo, polygamy *was* very common in Israel, contrary to the contention of many of the anti-polygamy commentators.

Article 37:  
All the Polygamists of the Bible, #22  
YAHWEH

#22. YAHWEH

With the LORD, Himself, we come to our capstone of the biblical examples of polygamy and, in one sense, beyond argument, the single most significant example of polygamy in the Bible.

*The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were **two women** the daughters of one mother: And they committed whoredom in Egypt; they committed whoredom in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: **And they were mine**, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names: Samaria was Aholah, and Jerusalem was Aholibah. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers on the Assyrians her neighbors...with all their idols she defiled herself...And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms. —Ezekiel 23:1-5,7,11*

*They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lain with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will he reserve his anger for ever? Will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil as thou couldest. The LORD also said unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou again unto me. But she returned not. And her*

*treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery and I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the stranger under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children saith the LORD; **For I am married unto you:** I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. —Jeremiah 3:1-14*

In the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, we find the metaphors of marriage, whoredom, divorce, and polygamy used by God to describe His relationship to His people. It is therefore valid, even if it is “only” a metaphor, to include God Himself in this list of Biblical polygamists. Do we find a vindication of polygamy in this fact? We do, indeed!

It is true, of course, that God is not literally a polygamist. God is a spirit. But throughout both the Old and New Covenant scriptures, marriage is *the* chosen analogy and metaphor of God’s relation to His people. Here in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, *the marital metaphor takes the form of polygamy.*

That it is, indeed, polygamy which is used as a metaphor in these passages is manifest. Verse 2 of Ezekiel 23 explicitly mentions “*two women,*” of whom the LORD says, “They were mine and they bare sons and daughters.” It is also manifest in both examples that Judah and Israel are spoken of as *simultaneously* being married to Yahweh. Judah, called “Aholibah,” is represented as witnessing the whoredom of her sister Israel, called “Aholah,” and yet committing adultery against Yahweh, their husband, also. That a polygamous situation is used to describe Israel and Judah is indisputable. Likewise in Jeremiah 3, verse 8 tells us that Judah, upon witnessing the adultery of Israel, went and played the whore also. The figure of polygamy is used in both cases.

God’s use of polygamy to describe His relation to His people is a *prima facie* endorsement of polygamy as valid. That is, since God is righteous, it is pointedly irrational to assume the *unrighteousness* of that which He portrays Himself as doing. On closer examination, this endorsement turns out to be more than superficial. *The metaphors of marriage, adultery, divorce and polygamy were intended to illustrate the lawfulness or unlawfulness of that which they represent.*

When God compares idolatry to whoredom in order to condemn idolatry, it is manifest that whoredom or adultery is presupposed as evil. When God compares His covenant with Israel to a man

marrying a woman, it is manifest that marriage is presupposed as good. In a metaphor or parable there *must* be a correspondence of that which is good and evil both in the representation and in the thing represented. Without such correspondence, the metaphor or parable is reduced to absurdity and meaninglessness. Therefore, when the righteous and holy God depicts Himself as a polygamist married to two women, the logic of the metaphor *requires* us to presuppose the *goodness* of polygamy.

Jay E. Adams explicitly recognizes this necessity concerning the question of divorce. As the following quotation from Adams is read, mentally substitute the word “polygamy” for “divorce:”

“It is plain from this evidence (i.e., the scriptures which portray God as divorcing His wife, Israel, for adultery.—T.S.) that divorce for adultery by fornication was considered a natural option for God to use in referring to His relationship to Israel. Here we must be careful not to plead that God can do as He pleases and that His actions are not an example to us. The figure of marriage (and divorce) that He uses to explain His actions and His various relationships to Israel would explain nothing, but only confuse the reader, if, indeed, stoning was the only way to deal with adultery. It is inconceivable that God—without some explanation—did that which was contrary to all that He requires of His own people in the same circumstance...The very least we can say is that in these prophets, by His recognition, adoption and (implied) endorsement of the practice, God placed His approval upon it.” — (“Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible,” pg. 73)

To paraphrase Adams, “It is plain from this evidence that *polygamy* was considered a natural option for God to use in referring to His relationship to Israel. The figure of *polygamy* would explain nothing, but only confuse the reader if *polygamy* were unlawful. The very least we can say is that in these prophets, by His recognition, adoption and (implied) endorsement of *polygamy*, God placed His approval upon it.” The same logic that Adams applies to divorce in this metaphor must, of necessity, apply to polygamy. Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3 provide powerful, indeed *conclusive* proof for the thesis that polygamy is a valid option for a man. Echoing Adams, it is “*inconceivable*” that it could be otherwise. What shall we say then to those who condemn polygamy? Quite simply that in doing so they condemn God Himself. There cannot be any stronger proof required for the validity of polygamy than this. The “monogamy only” position is thus utterly devoid of any merit at all and is shown to be the substitution of the word of man in place of, and in defiance of, the word of God.

I summon the Church, therefore, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the presence of the Father, *to repent* of its heresy, to acknowledge its sin in this matter, and to glorify God.

## Article 38: All the Polygamists of the Bible, #23-40

### #23-40

With this article, we come to the remaining biblical examples of polygamists, which are eighteen in number. (Actually, in the case of #35, the sons of Uzzi, *thousands* of polygamists are mentioned at one time.) We cannot *prove* with total certainty that *all* of the men listed below were polygamists. Most of the men listed in the following list are *probable* polygamists because of the number of children they had or other factors.

#### #23. Terah

*And Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor and Haran. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. —Genesis 11:26-29*

*And Abraham said, because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. **And yet indeed she is my sister; She is the daughter of my father, But not the daughter of my mother;** and she became my wife. —Genesis 20:11-12*

We learn in Genesis 11 that Terah is the father of Abraham. In Genesis 20, we learn that Abraham and Sarai are half brother and sister, with the father of them *both* being Terah. Terah, therefore, had *two* wives. This is a case of *probable* polygamy; we cannot conclusively *prove* that Terah was married to both wives simultaneously.

#### #24. Nahor

*And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, **Milcah**, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor; Huz his firstborn, and*

*Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. And Bethuel begat Rebekah; these eight did Milcah bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And **his concubine**, whose name was **Reumah**, she bare Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maacah. —Genesis 22:20-24*

Based upon this record of Nahor, it is pretty certain that Nahor qualifies as another Biblical polygamist. He had two wives, Milcah, and Reumah, a concubine.

### #25. Simeon

*And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and **Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman**. —Genesis 46:10*

*And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and **Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman**. —Exodus 6:15*

Simeon is another *probable* polygamist. The mention of Shaul as being the son of a Canaanitish woman certainly means that Simeon had more than one wife in his life. We are not told whether the Canaanitish woman was a concubine or a free wife.

### #26. Ziba

*Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him (i.e., for Mephibosheth) and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table. **Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants**. —II Samuel 9:10*

Given the number of his sons, Ziba is another probable Biblical polygamist. It is true that some men are prone to produce a disproportionate number of boys to girls, or girls to boys; in most cases, however, the greater the number of births, the greater the likelihood that the numbers will even out. There were almost certainly girls born to Ziba as well as sons. *On average*, Ziba probably had about fifteen daughters. Also, Ziba was of the house of king Saul and, therefore, a man of wealth and means. Given these two facts in conjunction, there is a *very high* probability that Ziba lived polygamously.

### #27. Ahab

*1 And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together...  
2 and he sent messengers to king Ahab...  
3 Thy silver and thy gold is mine; **thy wives** also and thy children...  
7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you,*

*and see how this man maketh mischief: for he sent unto me for **my wives**...—I Kings 20:1-7*

*And Ahab had **seventy sons** in Samaria...—II Kings 10:1*

In the case of king Ahab, his polygamy is certain. We see both a specific reference to multiple wives married to him simultaneously and the mention of seventy sons, far too many to have been borne by one woman.

### **#28. Josiah**

*And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulcher. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him king in his father's stead...And his mother's name was Hamutal....And Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim and took Jehoahaz away...and (Jehoikim's) mother was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiiah...— II Kings 23:30-31, 34, 36*

We see from this record that Jehoahaz and Eliakim, brothers, had different mothers. Therefore, Josiah qualifies as another Biblical polygamist.

### **#29. Jehoiachin**

*And he (Nebuchadnezzar) carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and **the king's wives**... —II Kings 24:15*

Here we see another case of certain polygamy.

### **#30. Shimei**

*And Shimei had **sixteen sons and six daughters**...—I Chronicles 4:27*

With Shimei, a descendant of Judah, we have another case of near certain polygamy. Twenty-two children is a lot of children for one woman to bear.

### **#31. Hezron**

*The sons also of Hezron...Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai...And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old; and she bare him Segub...And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-Ephratah, then **Abiah**, Hezron's wife, bare him Ashur. —I Chronicles 2:9, 21, 24*

In Hezron we find another confirmed polygamist. We see a marriage at the age of sixty, which is highlighted as being something notable, and then the birth of another child after his death. Since the children's names are given us of the respective wives, we have definite proof of multiple wives.

### #32. Ashur

*And Ashur the father of Tekoa had **two wives**, Helah and Naarah. —I Chronicles 4:5*

Here we have another probable polygamist.

### #33. Mered

*And the sons of Ezra were, Jether, and Mered, and Epher, and Jalon; and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. And his wife **Jehudijah** bare Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of **Bithia the daughter of Pharaoh**, which Mered took. And the sons of **his wife Hodiah**...—I Chronicles 4:17-19*

We see from this record two wives of Mered, Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, and Hodiah.

### #34. Ezra

The same record of I Chronicles 4:17-19 also shows us Ezra as having two wives, one unnamed and the other named Jehudijah.

### #35. The sons of Uzzi

*And the sons of Uzzi: Izrahiah; and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five, all of them chief men. And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers, were bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand men; **for they had many wives and sons**. And their brethren among all the families of Issachar were valiant men of might, reckoned in all their genealogies fourscore and seven thousand men. — I Chronicles 7:3-5*

Here in this record we have an indefinite number of polygamists of the sons of Uzzi, certainly *thousands* in number. We are specifically told that they were great in number *because* “they had many wives.” This statement quite clearly means that the practice of polygamy was *widespread* throughout this clan of 87,000 men of the tribe of Issachar.

### #36. Manasseh

*The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare (But **his concubine** the Aramitess bare Machir the father of Gilead...) — I Chronicles 7:14*

Concubines were almost always secondary wives to free wives living simultaneously, so we may list Manasseh as another near certain polygamist.

### **#37. Machir**

*And Machir took to wife the sister of Huppim and Shuppim, whose sister's name was Maacah and the name of the second was Zelophehad, and Zelophehad had daughters. And Maacah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Peresh; and the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons were Ulam and Rakem. — I Chronicles 7:15-16*

Here we see the record of Machir and two or three wives, depending upon whether the “sister of Huppim” is the same person as “Maacah;” it seems most likely that this is a list of *three* wives, and Machir, therefore, another probable polygamist.

### **#38. Shaharaim**

*And Shaharaim begat children in the country of Moab after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives. — I Chronicles 8:8*

### **#39. Heman**

*Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hannaniah, Hanani, Eliathat, Giddalti, and Romamtiezer, Joshbekash, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth. All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. — I Chronicles 25:4-5*

### **#40. Jehoram**

*Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives...— II Chronicles 21:14*

This completes our list of Biblical polygamists. I may have overlooked some names, but I believe that this list is substantially complete. The exact number of men depends upon how you do the counting, whether you include the *probable* polygamists, etc.

In any case, there are plenty of definite polygamists mentioned in the Bible, enough so that it is quite plain that polygamy was no oddity or rare occurrence in Biblical Israel. It was, in fact, clearly quite common. In the case of the sons of Uzzi of the tribe of Issachar, we quite clearly have a record of *thousands* of polygamists in one family line. In their case, it was not their polygamy which was notable but the *extent* of it among them.

In *none* of the examples of polygamists in the Bible do we see even so much as a single negative word said about their polygamy. This fact alone creates a strong presumption of the lawfulness of polygamy.

## Article 39: Polygamy: Miscellaneous Passages and Comments

### 1. The Song of Solomon 6:8-9

*There are **threescore queens**, and **fourscore concubines**, and **virgins without number**. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*

Biblical commentators speaking about the husband and wife relationship often cite the Song of Solomon as the ultimate love story; and it was not lost on Israel, or the Church afterwards, that the Song of Solomon also allegorically portrayed the love of the Lord for His people.

What is generally *omitted* from mention in such commentaries is that the Shulamite woman, Solomon's love interest in the Song, was the *one hundred and forty first* wife. At the point in time of the writing of the Song of Solomon, there were "sixty queens and eighty concubines." As we know from I Kings 11, this number ultimately reached 700 wives and 300 concubines. There were also, at the time of the writing of the Song, "virgins without number," which I presume to be women  *betrothed* to Solomon, but who had not yet had sexual relations with him, who would ultimately be counted among the one thousand.

Now if the word of God can hold up to us an *ideal* example of man/woman love, and that example just so happens to be *the one hundred and forty first wife* of the man, then it is clear that polygamy cannot, from the Biblical perspective, be seen as an offense against marriage. Indeed, it is presented in such glowing terms as to make the thought of impropriety totally without credibility.

### 2. Isaiah 4:1

*And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.*

This prophecy of Isaiah speaks of a time when Israel would be ravished by war and the population of men decimated, leaving a 7/1 ratio of women to men. The “reproach” which is mentioned refers to widowhood and bereavement of children. As is clear from the preceding chapter, that time of judgment against Israel was imminent. It was Assyria that fulfilled this prophecy against Israel in its invasion and decimation of the population of the Northern kingdom of Israel.

“Let us be called by thy name” signifies a request for *marriage* and the chance to begin a new family.

Granted, this prophecy, in and of itself, cannot establish a rule of conduct. It is extraordinary times which are spoken of. Nevertheless, if polygamy constitutes adultery, as is commonly maintained, then we would naturally expect the women in this time to be competing for the *sole, exclusive* right to have their reproach taken away. There would be no “let *us*,” but “Let *me* have *my* reproach taken away.”

### 3. Leviticus 18:18

*Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her lifetime.*

Leviticus 18:18 is quite clearly a ban on a *particular type* of polygamy, in the context of a law-order which permitted polygamy in general. The specific ban here would make no sense if there were a general prohibition against polygamy. (The same thing may be said about the ban on taking both a woman and her mother.) Therefore, this prohibition proves the proposition of the lawfulness of polygamy generally.

Moreover, of all of the prohibitions in Leviticus 18, this is the *only* prohibition which is *qualified* in any manner; it bans taking a wife in addition to her sister “to vex her.” What is the meaning of this? Is it that there is an *inherent* “vexing” of the sister in marrying two sisters simultaneously? If so, why is only *one* of the sisters vexed in this situation? Why are we not told to not take a wife to her sister to vex “*them*?” Why is the *one* sister vexed in this situation and *not both*?

All of Leviticus 18 concerns proper relationships pertaining to near kin. Leviticus 18:18 is of a slightly different nature than the preceding prohibitions, in that it is *not* banning an actual sexual relationship with near of kin but a sexual relationship with the near of kin to one’s wife, and then qualified by the qualifier, “to vex her.”

In order to comprehend what is being talked about in Leviticus 18:18, it is necessary to remember the Hebrew mindset about marriage. If a woman was *childless*, this was seen as a *reproach*. What would vex a woman in a polygamous situation more than anything else would be to be *childless* (see Genesis 16, Genesis 30:1, and I Samuel 1). Because of its focus on maintaining the integrity of families, what Leviticus 18:18 is referring to is taking a blood sister *to bear children* in the presence of a barren sister. This law is *not* a general ban on marrying sisters, but only on marrying sisters in a certain prescribed situation. If a man has a barren wife, he is not to seek a woman capable of having children among his wife’s kin. He must find a second wife from a woman unrelated to her. The concern of this

law, therefore, is neither polygamy in general, *nor* of marrying two sisters simultaneously, but of maintaining the stability and good relations among family.

Context, in biblical interpretation, is everything, or almost everything. Linguistic analysis, as I have pointed out elsewhere, has value as well, certainly, but is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Some scholars have tried to advance the case that this law has reference to two women in general, based upon the linguistic use of the word “sister” as allowing for a more generic sense. John Murray, a consummate scholar, did about as good a job as anyone examining this possibility on linguistic grounds, but was never willing to commit conclusively to the proposition, and, indeed, cited strong reasons against such an interpretation (see Appendix B in “Principles of Conduct”). Leviticus 18:18, must be interpreted in its own context. I cited Rushdoony’s quotation of Mace before and now return to the same quotation:

“Mace observed, concerning ‘the true cause of Hebrew polygamy,’ that ‘There can be no doubt this was the desire for an heir.’ This is true if we realize that the desire for an heir was more than simply love of a son. The family was basic to Biblical society and culture; the godly family had to be perpetuated, and the ungodly family cut off...The purpose of Hebrew polygamy, which was usually bigamy, to be accurate, was thus the perpetuation of the family. Moreover, in terms of the facts, as Mace pointed out, ‘we are bound to envisage the community as being in general almost entirely monogamous.’ ”—Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law”, pg. 375

While I would not go so far as Mace to say that barrenness and childlessness was the occasion and cause of Hebrew polygyny, there can be little doubt that it was a major and, perhaps, the primary occasion, with the exception of the wealthy. In Scripture, children and inheritance are always in view when it comes to marriage and especially where it concerns polygyny. I have been accused of “importing an outside idea” into the passage by asserting that childlessness is the occasion of the concern here. But if we understand with Mace that the most common reason in Israel for the taking of an additional wife is childlessness of the first wife, then we can understand the prohibition here. The occasion is implicit and understood in light of the overall context of Hebrew society under the Law.

Finally, we must not forget Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3 in this connection. In those two passages of Scripture the LORD metaphorically portrays Himself as a man married, not only to two women, but *married to two sisters*. This is logically sufficient to refute the notion that Leviticus 18:18 is a *general* ban against marriage to two sisters simultaneously. (I refer the reader to “All the Polygamists of the Bible, #22: YAHWEH” in this work in which I comment upon the use of the metaphors in Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3.)

## Article 40: Patriarchy and Polygamy in the New Covenant

In a previous article of this work, I made the point that the Law of Moses, every jot and tittle thereof, remains as much authoritative under the *New Covenant* as it was under the Old Covenant; the *only* alteration of law under the New Covenant concerns the ceremonial law, and even there there is no *nullifying* or *abrogation* of the Law, only a change in *application*. Therefore, *all* of the exegesis and commentary about patriarchy and polygamy in the preceding parts of this work applies directly and without alteration to the New Covenant. My defense of patriarchy is, therefore, formally complete.

The problem is that much, if not most, of the Evangelical church is committed to various forms of Dispensationalism, that is, the belief that God has fundamentally different standards of morality in different time periods (dispensations) and for different peoples. Even those who dispute Dispensationalism tend to adopt it in regard to many specific provisions of the Law.

Dispensationalism is *heresy*. It proposes and defines a fundamentally different God than the God of the Bible Who declares unambiguously, “I change not,” and that there is “no variableness or shadow of turning” with God. Dispensationalism is, therefore, a form of idolatry. Dispensationalists have worked out the logical implications of their basic proposition by proposing “contradictions” between the testaments; by proposing “contradictions” *within* the Old Testament scriptures, indeed even *within* the Pentateuch itself. This point is integral to Dispensationalism. Without these propositions, Dispensationalism ceases to be. Dispensationalists have also been *compelled* by their premises to propose a God who indulges *sin*, nay even *institutes the practice of sin* by establishing permission to commit evil according to His commands. It is my contention that the theonomic premises upon which this work is based provide a *far* more superior foundation with which to interpret Scripture than the obviously flawed system of Dispensationalism. There is no *need* to propose “contradictions” upon a theonomic hermeneutic. *Indeed, a theonomic hermeneutic demonstrates the harmony and consistency of Scripture and of God himself.* The burden of proof is upon those who would deny the applicability of the Law of Moses to the question of marriage under the New Covenant. In order to do this, they must deny the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:17-19.

Consider this statement of Charles Hodge:

“The continued obligation of the Levitical Law on this subject is also recognized in the New Testament. This recognition is involved in the constant reference to the law of Moses as the law of God. *If in any of its parts or specifications it is no longer obligatory, that is to be proved...*if God gives a law to men, those who deny its perpetual obligation are bound to prove it. The presumption is that it continues in force until the contrary is proved. It must be hard to prove that the laws founded on the permanent social relations of men were intended to be temporary.” — “Systematic Theology,” Vol. III, pg. 411-412.

Hodge’s remarks here are in reference to the incest laws, but it is clear that the principle he is proclaiming is fully applicable to the laws on polygamy.

This whole work began with the demonstration that *patriarchy* is God’s *purpose* in the creation of man and woman. I further demonstrated that the validity of polygyny is an immediate logical consequence of *patriarchy*. Polygyny is patriarchy in action.

The question is: Has God repudiated patriarchy under the New Covenant? It is, after all, one of the contentions of “Christian” feminists that Jesus actually gave his life on the cross partly to overturn the “sin” of patriarchy. Is this proposition defensible according to the word of God in the New Testament? Hardly!!!

*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God...For the man is not of the woman but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. —I Corinthians 11:3, 8-9*

*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be unto their own husbands. —Ephesians 5:22-24*

*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives...For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord —I Peter 3:1, 5-6*

This *ought* to be the end of any debate on this matter. Patriarchy clearly carries over to the New Covenant; Paul bases his argument here, let it be noted, upon the authority of the *Old Covenant* scriptures, as does Peter. If Dispensationalists are correct that we are “not under the Law” in the New Covenant (in blatant contradiction to I Cor. 9:21, Rom. 3:31 and Mat. 5:17-19), and that the whole system of Law from the Old Covenant has been overturned, then *why* does Paul *appeal* to the Law in defense of patriarchy? According to Dispensationalist hermeneutics, this is an invalid principle. Yet, this is what Paul and Peter do!

These passages of Scripture prove that patriarchy is the will of God under the New Covenant. Since the *same mandate* exists now under the New Covenant as under the Old, then the same *consequence* must hold true, as well: a man may lawfully have more than one wife. It is really that simple and elementary.

## Article 41: The New Covenant and Polygamy, Matthew 19:3-12

“From the beginning it was not so.”

Matthew 19:3-12 (and parallel Mark 10:2-12) is the most commonly cited passage appealed to by those who propose a “monogamy-only” ethic as being the ethic endorsed and mandated by the Bible. The reason that this passage is particularly important is because, first of all, it is a *New Testament* pronouncement of the Lord; and secondly, because the Lord appeals to the authority of the creation purpose of God in Genesis (which is, remember, an *Old Covenant* scripture).

“Monogamy only” adherents assert that there is in Matthew 19 *an abolition and annulling* of at least three Old Covenant laws, in reference to 1) *divorce*, 2) the very *definition* of *adultery* and 3) *polygamy*. That is a very *presumptuous* path to be cutting in view of Jesus’ own warning in the same Gospel to *not* think that he had come to destroy/nullify the Law, even to the least of the commandments. I refer the reader back to what I said in the two articles, “ ‘Contradictions’ Between Genesis and the Law.” And I exhort the “monogamy-only” crowd to get their theology square with Matthew 5:17-19. I reiterate once again, we are not dealing with ceremonial ordinances but with *moral law* when we discuss marriage.

*3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*

*4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.*

*5 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?*

*6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

*7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

*8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

*9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put*

*away doth commit adultery.*

*10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.*

*11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.*

*12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

It is to be pointed out, first of all, that *the subject matter is divorce* and not polygamy. If there is anything here in this passage which is relevant to polygamy, it must be by way of *inference, implication and deduction*. Now there is nothing wrong with drawing valid logical inferences, but many commentators treat Matthew 19 *as if* it is an explicit teaching on polygamy, which it manifestly is *not*, and *as if* Christ is asserting a fundamental *change* in the Law of Moses regarding marriage law, which is a proposition impossible to reconcile with Matthew 5:17-19.

I have already quoted Greg Bahnsen's rock-solid commentary on Matthew 19:8 and now do so again.

“Some commentators have mistakenly viewed this word as indicating a deprecated toleration of a positive evil (i.e., reluctantly forbearing something against which you have strong scruples or detest). Such a connotation must be read *into* the word. It is used quite simply for the giving of candid permission (without overtones of disapprobation). When ‘*epitrepo*’ is used elsewhere in the NT there is no reason to think that the person using it intends to approve of something that he considers definitely improper. It is primarily used for the gaining of *authorization from a superior*...Jn. 19:38...Acts 21:39-40...Acts 26.1...Acts 27:3...Acts 28:16...Mat. 8:21...I Cor.16:7...Heb. 6:3...Gen. 39:6 (LXX)...Est. 9:14...Job 32:14...Therefore it is unwarranted to maintain that, in Matt. 19:8, Jesus represents the Mosaic law as ‘tolerating with disapproval’ an immoral activity, viz. divorce.

“The verse simply reports that Moses *authorized* the use of divorce. One should note, in passing, that the commentators who read the connotation of disapproval-of-an-immoral-activity into the word ‘*epitrepo*’ fail to justify their view that an all holy God could enact an immoral law. *How*, one must ask in astonishment, could the God who is ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity’ (Hab. 1:13), the just Lord who ‘will do no iniquity’ (Zeph. 3:5), tolerate the legislation of immorality in His law, which is itself perfect, right, pure, and righteous altogether (Ps. 19:07-9). Even leaving *linguistic* considerations aside this *theological* difficulty with the view is insurmountable.” — (“Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” n. pg. 102)

Bahnsen's comments are more than sufficient to refute the notion of God “tolerating sin” via His laws. But what about the notion that the New Covenant brings with it a *redefinition* of sin and *change*

of standard? *Is* what Christ taught in Matthew 19 about divorce *different* than the Old Covenant standard? (Again, reference and consult Matthew 5:17-19).

### “Except it be for porneia”

In the Hebrew, Deuteronomy 24:1 states that a husband must find “*nakedness* of a thing” (“uncleanness” in the KJV) as a basis for divorcing his wife. What else can this phrase, “nakedness of a thing,” refer to other than that which men and women *do* when they are naked, that is, engage in sexual relations?

It is manifest, therefore, that the Old Testament requirement for a man to divorce his wife was an act of *fornication* on the part of the wife. Is not this *precisely the same standard* that Jesus proclaims? How, then, do so many commentators perceive an alteration of Old Testament law in these words of Jesus? *Where* is the *basis* for such a contention? Jesus simply *reasserts* the Old Covenant law.

What, then, does Jesus mean by “from the beginning it was not so?” Quite simply, that from the beginning, *when there was no sin*, there was no provision for divorce. *But*, man fell into sin, and subsequently hard-hearted men commit adultery with other men’s wives and hard-hearted women commit adultery and other acts of fornication against their husbands. Divorce comes in on the heels of sin because it is necessary to punish sin, which is what divorce is, a *punishment*, a *sanction* (in essence, a *disinheritance*).

We see in Matthew 19 *zero* evidence for any allowance of evil by God, and we see here *zero* evidence for any alteration of divorce law from the Old Covenant, Mosaic standard. And is this not precisely what we should have expected to find given Jesus’ pronouncement in Matthew 5:17-19 that he had *not* come to abolish/nullify the Law but ratify it?

So what of the supposed inference from this passage that there is a change of law with respect to polygamy? Since the law on divorce is the same, *why* would there be a change of law with respect to polygamy?

But some will reply, “Does not Christ’s pronouncement that putting away a wife and marrying a second constitutes adultery invalidate polygamy?” To which I reply, *no*, that is a comparing of apples and oranges. Polygamy is *not* the circumstance addressed, but the *substitution* of one wife with another *and* the dissolution of the one-flesh marital bond with the first wife in so doing. Serial monogamy and divorce is the scenario. *Where* is the offense against the first marriage and the first wife when a man takes a second wife but does *not* put away the first wife but maintains the one-flesh relation with her? The putting away of the first wife is *essential* for the adultery to occur.

We see a virtually identical factual circumstance described in Exodus 21:10-11a: “if he take him another wife her...duty of marriage shall he not diminish. And if he do *not* (this) unto her...”

Note the *context* described by verses 10-11a: here we have a man who takes a second wife and a de-facto putting away of the first wife in the desertion of the marriage bed. This is the same factual

situation described by Christ in Matthew 19. What is the *consequence* of these actions of the man? “If he do not (this) unto her (i.e., maintain sexual relations) *she shall go out free* without money.”

The first wife described in this scenario, a concubine/servant wife, has the right to *divorce* her master. But note well: it is *not* the addition of a second wife which occasions this right but the failure of the husband to maintain “the duty of marriage” with the first wife. In other words, according to Exodus 21:10-11, the man must be guilty of *adultery* by these acts in coordination. This is not stated explicitly, but note that the *redress* for the woman is *divorce*, so are we not, therefore, redressing *adultery*, an offense against the marital bond?

If someone would take exception to the proposition that verse 11 is a divorce provision, consider that concubinage is a package deal. The *objective* of selling one’s daughter as a maidservant (concubine) is *marriage*. Exodus 21:3, pertaining to male servants, stipulates that in the seventh year they shall “go out free” from their master, the same language used in verse 11 pertaining to the concubine. Verse 7 states, “If a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, *she shall not go out as the menservants do.*” The *reason* that the female servants do not “go out free” from their masters is because *marriage* is involved in concubinage, and “going out free” would involve dissolving the marriage. It becomes clear when comparing verses 3, 7 and 11 that verse 11 is unquestionably a divorce provision.

The *consistency* of Christ’s teaching in Matthew 19 with Exodus 21:10-11 is so tight, and the factual circumstances described so identical, that it is hard to believe that he was not in fact reiterating precisely the law of Exodus 21:10-11 there, but with the additional circumstance of polygamy factored in in Exodus 21:10-11. Without the *cessation* of sexual relations, there is no basis to “go out free” from the marriage. The invalidation of polygamy, therefore, must be read *into* and superimposed upon Matthew 19.

Finally, what about Jesus’ pronouncement, “From the beginning it was not so?” Is this not an endorsement of a basic principle, and since what we see in the beginning is God’s act of giving *one* wife to Adam, is not Christ thereby endorsing monogamy as the standard for marriage? This question has already been sufficiently answered in the introductory article to this work, “In Defense of Patriarchy.” What we see from the beginning is *patriarchy*. And patriarchy involves the validity of polygyny. One cannot reason *solely* from the basis of an example that the example is fully normative in *all* of its aspects for *all* men. An example occurs in a *context* and may very well be one *form* of manifestation of a more general principle with more than one form of expression. And that *is* what we see in Genesis: we see an *example* of patriarchy in the monogamous marriage of Adam to Eve. And we see *examples* of patriarchy in the polygamy of other men in the Bible. The general, universal principle is patriarchy; *both* monogamy and polygamy fulfill this mandate.

## Article 42: Martin Luther and Polygamy: The “Strange” Case of Philip of Hesse

The starting point of the Protestant Reformation is usually dated at Martin Luther’s act of nailing the 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg. This act, and his famous speech before Eck and Charles V at the Diet of Worms, are widely known by almost all Protestants. The overwhelming majority of those who are the heirs of Protestantism are certainly assured that Martin Luther, founder and spearhead of the Protestant Reformation, would never have given his approval to a case of polygamy. Would he? After all, multitudes of readers of Charles Hodge’s “Systematic Theology” have been assured that the monogamy-only doctrine “has been the doctrine of the Christian Church in all the ages in every part of the world” and that this has been the conviction of “the whole Church,” (“Systematic Theology,” Vol. III, pg. 380). The idea of Martin Luther approving of a case of polygamy seems too farfetched to entertain. But farfetched or not, it is a fact. The fact of the matter is, Hodge states a falsehood in this assertion concerning the two men who occupy the #1 and #2 positions of Protestantism’s “most esteemed list:” St Augustine (as we have already seen) and, indeed, Martin Luther.

Kenneth Scott LaTourette relates the incident in summary form:

“Charles V succeeded in dividing the Protestants. In this he was aided by what became a notorious affair in which Philip of Hesse, a leader in the Schmalkaldic League, and Luther were both unhappily involved. At the early age of nineteen Philip, for political reasons, had been married to the daughter of one of the German princes. Although he had seven children by her, he engaged in the promiscuity which was common to men of his rank and day, including Charles V himself. After his conversion to Lutheranism his conscience troubled him so badly that only once in thirteen years did he take communion, for he found himself powerless to desist from his adulteries. He felt that a second marriage might help him to continence. With the consent of his first wife and of the girl’s mother *and also of Bucer, Melancthon, and Luther* (emph. supplied), he contracted a bigamous marriage with a seventeen-year-old maid. Luther opposed divorce and held monogamy to be the form of marriage endorsed by Christ, *but cited the polygamy of the Old Testament patriarchs as precedent* (emph. supplied). He advised that the second marriage be kept secret, for

being bigamous it was against the law of the land. The marriage was performed by a court preacher, and when the news leaked out Luther advised ‘a good strong lie.’ To this Philip would not agree, especially since the bride’s mother would not consent to having her daughter regarded as a concubine. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant princes professed themselves shocked.” (“A History of Christianity,” pg 728.)

Heiko A. Oberman goes into more detail about this incident, of which I will quote from liberally. But first, I would like to draw the reader’s attention to a few noteworthy aspects of Latourette’s account. First, Philip’s astounding request of Luther was decided upon based upon a sincere desire to avoid fornication. Second, note well that Philip, his new bride, and her mother were joined in their consent to this bigamy by *Luther, Bucer and Melancthon* themselves. And third, that Luther “cited the polygamy of the Old Testament patriarchs as precedent.” I will return to this shortly.

Oberman also gives us an enlightening account of this incident:

“Luther’s counsel as father confessor to Landgrave Philip of Hesse on December 10, 1539, could not so easily be condoned. Philip was one of the most forceful princely supporters of the Reformation. And it was he, of all people, who—with Luther’s approval—made himself guilty of the crime of bigamy! The scandal arising from the Landgrave’s bigamous marriage had far reaching political consequences. The strongman of the protective alliance of the Protestant estates of the empire, the Schmalkaldic League, was at the emperor’s mercy. According to imperial law as promulgated by Charles V in the rules of the criminal court in Regensburg in 1532, bigamy could result in the death sentence...

“But Philip was not the only one compromised. Luther’s reputation suffered lasting damage as well. Even today the fact that he advised Philip to enter into a bigamous union is—in good ecumenical harmony—interpreted by Protestants as ‘the greatest blot on the history of the Reformation’ and by Catholics as the act of a devious scoundrel.

“Before Philip was nineteen (1523), he had wed Christina, daughter of Duke George of Saxony (1539)...through Philip’s marriage to his daughter, he was allied with the militant Protestant prince. This was the political side of the marriage, but the decisive reasons for the couple’s estrangement were personal...But she could not have been quite as repulsive as Philip made her out to be since the couple did, after all, have ten children, the last three of them after March 4, 1540, the date Philip married his second wife, Margarethe von der Sale.

“He had already considered taking a second wife besides Christina in 1523. Had not the patriarchs of the Old Testament taken more than one wife? When he sought Luther’s advice on the matter in the autumn of 1526 (perhaps he was already trying to gain support in Wittenberg), he received a disappointing reply: no one, and above

all no Christian, should have more than one wife. The example of the patriarchs of the Old Testament proved nothing, for what God had permitted them as an emergency measure in a polygamous world did not automatically apply ‘to me.’ Not only would an additional marriage cause a scandal, it could not be vindicated by the Word of God either. Only ‘great need’ could overrule the ‘no.’

“Luther did not deviate from this line. When Henry VIII, who had since 1509 been married to Catherine of Aragon, the emperor’s aunt, procured expert opinions in Germany and Switzerland in 1531 in support of his plans to marry Anne Boleyn, Luther indicated once again that marriage was sacred: ‘Before I should approve of such a repudiation, I would rather let him marry a second queen...

“Luther’s ‘confessional counsel’ of December 10, 1539, which will forever link his name with Philip’s bigamy, ended with a remarkable statement, one that seems incomprehensible today: the public will regard Margarethe as one of the prince’s ‘not unusual’ concubines, so the scandal and talk will remain within limits. The remark, undoubtedly not bereft of irony, is elucidated by the frank advice Philip’s sister Elisabeth...gave him. When her brother revealed his predicament to her, she suggested that he ‘take *one* bedmate instead of the *many* whores.’ Elisabeth knew what she was talking about...

“The Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer had assured Luther that the Landgrave had already been avoiding the Lord’s Supper for years because of his moral dilemma, as Philip himself related...for nearly fifteen years. It looked as if only an additional marriage could keep him from further excesses. The statement Luther had once made regarding the marriage of the English king now also became his counsel to Philip: divorce was out of the question; in case of emergency, the only alternative was a second marriage. Philip’s first wife, Christina agreed to the solution. She retained all her rights as a landgravine, and children from her husband’s second marriage (seven sons were born) were to have no claims to power Philip had to continue rendering her ‘friendliness,’ which he did: Christina bore him three further children.

“Not a concubine but a second wife: that could have put an end to the whole affair. From a modern vantage point the solution was not a milestone, but it was no scandal either. Luther’s stubborn insistence on the inseparable nature of the first marriage is particularly striking in light of our—from the perspective of other culture’s, hypocritical—acceptance of successive marriages while indignantly condemning simultaneous ‘polygamy.’ Then should the pastoral counsel given to Philip be extended to others as well? Absolutely not, said Luther; that is precisely why he insisted that his ad hoc advice was to be confidential: that it not create a legal and moral precedent, ‘let it remain secret’.” (Oberman, “Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,” pg. 284-287)

In view of the overwhelming forces militating against Luther giving his approval to Philip's request, Luther's decision to consent to a bigamous marriage is truly astounding, indeed. Bigamy was a capital offense. Luther clearly knew from the outset in 1526 that such a thing could cause a great scandal. And he knew that it would have far-reaching political consequences, and could result in a setback to the cause of the Reformation. Fully aware of these things, Luther consented anyway. What in the world was going on in Luther's mind? Had he gone mad? And how can we account for Bucer's and Melancthon's complicity in this affair (as well as several other officers of the church)? One thing is certain: Luther did *not* act upon expediency. This raises a more central question: Did Luther act upon *conviction*? Did Luther believe his decision was Biblically justifiable? Did Luther believe his consent to Philip's second marriage was defensible according to the Word of God? Philip's initial request of Luther in 1526 and Luther's response (in context with his suggestion of legal bigamy for Henry VIII) are both far more significant than they may seem at first glance. Luther himself may not have realized it in 1526, but he had *already* cast the dice in the direction of *consenting* to Philip's polygamy. Luther's eventual consent to Philip's polygamy in 1539 was *implicit* in his original answer to Philip in 1526. His "confessional counsel" to Philip in 1539 was but the logical development and outworking of his original response. *In principle*, Luther said "yes" to Philip. How? By failing to *categorically* denounce Abraham's and Jacob's polygamy *as sin*, Luther thereby opened the door, however slightly, to the eventuality that *other men* (including Philip) might commit polygamy and be equally blameless before God.

Luther probably did not consciously grasp the logic of this in 1526, but in 1539 the logical implications *forced* themselves into action. Luther could not evade an authoritative decision one way or the other. He had to apply the principle he had proclaimed. Luther was confronted face to face, *as a pastor*, with the question of *how to apply what the Bible taught about polygamy in a real life, New Covenant setting*. Anyone who doubts that this is precisely what Luther did should meditate at length upon the entire episode. Luther's own unwillingness to let the incident serve as a precedent for others ought not to obscure this remarkable—and incontrovertible—fact. (By *what logical or rational basis* could Luther restrict his judgment in Philip's case to Philip alone?) Luther's inconsistency here, which was based upon *practical* considerations, tends to obscure the fact that Luther faithfully applied what he believed in all sincerity to be the *biblical* solution to Philip's dilemma.

This is a roundabout way of answering the question posed above, "Did Luther act upon conviction?" The bottom line answer is, "Yes." Luther himself was not happy about being forced to make this decision, but there is not the slightest reason to conclude that Luther deviated one iota from what he believed to be *biblically justifiable*. Note well what Latourette observes: Luther "cited the polygamy of the patriarchs as precedent." And Oberman, "great need could overrule the 'no'." And: polygamy was "what God permitted them as an emergency measure." Luther concluded that *Philip* had a great need and that his consorting with "many whores" constituted an emergency. The polygamy of the patriarchs was his Biblical defense of his consent.

I am not defending Luther's "exegesis" here. I think it leaves much to be desired, though there is the seed of truth in it. What I wish to emphasize is that Luther's consent to Philip's polygamy was based upon his views of the Bible—not on expediency, personal whim, political considerations (after all,

Luther remained steadfast in his “No” to Philip for thirteen years), or what have you. Luther’s *theology* was the driving force here. To fail to recognize this fact is to fail to comprehend the entire episode.

Further evidence that Luther allowed for polygamy *upon principle* is noted by Rushdoony: Henry VIII’s problem in England. As Rushdoony notes: “Both Luther and Melancthon were ready to see the answer to Henry’s plight in a legal bigamy, and Pope Clement VII made a like suggestion,” (“The Institutes of Biblical Law,” pg. 202). Luther’s suggestion concerning Henry VIII was no secret, unlike his involvement with Philip’s bigamy. Philip of Hesse was immediately and personally involved with Luther. Perhaps it could be speculated that he prevailed upon Luther by virtue of his influence. But Henry VIII? In England?

It seems clear, in light of Luther’s counsel to Philip, and his suggestion concerning Henry VIII, that Luther viewed polygamy as acceptable under *some* circumstances—even if not the ideal. Stating that Christ endorsed monogamy as the standard is not quite the same thing as a categorical rejection of polygamy under any and all circumstances—a fact Luther dramatically confirmed himself by his capitulation to Philip’s request.

Modern Evangelicals might not like to admit it, but Luther was rigorously consistent in his handling of Philip’s dilemma. From the traditional Evangelical perspective, where Luther “went wrong” was in not *categorically* denouncing *as sin* the polygamy of such giants of the faith as Abraham, Jacob, Caleb, Gideon, David, Solomon, Joash and others. *Only* on this basis could Luther have consistently denied Philip’s request. Modern Evangelicals would rather believe that Luther was inconsistent, or radically in error concerning Philip. They would rather believe that his consent to Philip’s polygamy was “the greatest blot on the history of the Reformation” than to admit that Luther was at his pastoral peak on December 10, 1539. In other words, the kind of subordination of one’s own wishes to the demands of Scripture Luther exhibited is not found among one pastor in 10,000 among the heirs of Protestantism! *It took a Luther* to consent to Philip’s request. Can you imagine an Evangelical pastor today rendering like advice to a member of his church? Why think of the *scandal* it would cause! The blot on the reputation of the church! I can hear it now: “Consistency be damned! I have a retirement pension to think about!” How easily we are diverted from the only question that really matters: “Is it consistent with Scripture?”

Let us now conclude with Oberman’s assessment of this incident.

“Wherever blame is placed, the fact remains that Luther came to a decision which, contrary to his own opinion, is genuinely exemplary. There is Christian counsel which bursts the seams of moral convention, whether unwritten or codified in law. Luther himself insists that the Gospel teaches a higher law, the law of love—however dangerous in practice—which is to be directed to the unique needs of the “neighbor,” who may well encounter dilemmas which no law can foresee. Luther gave his advice unwillingly and hesitantly, but he did not shirk his pastoral responsibility, for example, by referring Philip to experts in civil law.

“In this case as well, Luther had distinguished between the inflexible law and the Gospel of grace. Though public law is a precious gift, it is subject to the blind legal code of generalized regulations, which cannot differentiate between precedence and exceptions, between normal cases and emergencies. But the Gospel sees the individual and seeks his welfare in the maze of moral obligations. The law was not thereby abrogated, and that is why Luther’s ministerial advice was to remain secret. The Gospel risks unconditional love, and that is why such counsel could be given. Here Luther is different from the Reformation in the cities, and from Calvin’s Reformation: Biblical counsel is not to be confused with bourgeois morality.” (Oberman, “Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,” pg. 287-288)

Oberman is quite correct that Luther’s decision is “genuinely exemplary” and that Luther did not shirk his pastoral responsibility. Concerning Luther’s rationale behind his decision, Oberman is more subversive than accurate or helpful. Oberman gives no evidence that Luther’s decision was based upon a supposed distinction between “inflexible law and the Gospel of grace,” which resulted in “counsel which bursts the seams of moral convention.” It was precisely *the moral convention of biblical polygamy* which persuaded Luther and which he cited as precedent and *not* the “law of love.” What we see in Luther’s counsel to Philip, both in 1526 and 1539, is Biblical casuistry at work, that is, the application of Biblical principles (law) to concrete, real-life circumstances. Oberman’s remarks constitute a complete repudiation in principle of the Bible’s authority—a result Luther would assuredly not have approved. On Oberman’s premises, *anything* can be condoned with “love” and “necessity” as the defense. This is antinomianism, pure and simple. Whether or not there was incipient antinomianism in Luther’s theology, the fact remains that it is not apparent in his handling of Philip’s polygamy.

## Article 43: The Commentators, #1: Rushdoony

### The Commentators

In answering the commentary of Biblical scholars about polygamy, I should point out, first of all, that I am only really interested in the comments of orthodox, Bible-believing Christians. It is pointless to argue a case of this nature to non-Christians (this is a “family argument”) or to those false, make-believe “Christians” who have no regard for the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

Secondly, I am not interested in commenting upon the innumerable, tangential, ad hoc remarks to be found in countless commentaries; the focus here is upon those who have commented upon the subject, at least to some degree, systematically, and with some degree of intelligence and logic behind their remarks.

Most of the arguments advanced by the “monogamy-only” crowd have already been sufficiently addressed in the preceding parts of this work. In that sense, most of what is to follow will be in the nature of redundancy. However, for the sake of making a formal case to the “monogamy-only” crowd, their specific writings should, and will, be answered here.

### #1. Rousas J. Rushdoony: “The Institutes of Biblical Law”

Rushdoony comments: “First of all, very clearly the purpose of God in creation was that monogamy be the standard for man...one woman for Adam...The normative marriage is clearly monogamous” (pg. 362).

This argument, more than any other, is *the* quintessential defense of the monogamy-only doctrine. Rushdoony, and others who advance this argument, draw an invalid inference from the creation narrative of Genesis. In Matthew 19, Jesus’ remarks indeed show that the creation is normative for marriage (“from the beginning it was not so”), but normative of *what* exactly? *How* do we get from the monogamy of Adam (the particular) to the conclusion that it is God’s will for *all* men (the universal) to be monogamous? Does not this syllogism violate the fundamental logical rule that *examples* establish no rule of law but that the general principle must be established *first*?

Certainly the lifelong nature of the marital bond may be deduced for Christ deduces this from Genesis himself. But the reason is clear. Adam and Eve, and *all* husbands and wives afterward, become “one flesh.” How can a marriage be severed without doing damage to that relationship? And certainly the creation narrative of Genesis nullifies the despicable practice of bestiality for, after Adam’s naming all of the animals, “there was not found a helper fit (appropriate) for him.”

Rushdoony’s premise is: Since God gave only one wife to Adam, polygamy is outlawed for *all* men. This is faulty logic, pure and simple. It proceeds from the particular to the universal without establishing any rational basis or supporting evidence for doing so, and it does so in the face of a universal principle (patriarchy) with precisely the *opposite* implications.

Rushdoony’s argument also suffers from being an argument from silence. Rushdoony assumes that because God did not specifically and explicitly permit polygamy in Genesis 1 and 2, that therefore it is forbidden. The sufficient answer is to point out that neither did He specifically and explicitly *forbid* it.

Drawing inferences in the lack of explicit statements is certainly legitimate; express, explicit statements are not needed for every proposition; but in doing so, let us be studious to draw logical and rational inferences with defensible premises. This is what Rushdoony has failed to provide us here.

Moreover, if the creation narrative establishes monogamy as the standard then, assuredly, we should expect to see this implication plainly set forth in those sections of the Law of God where the commandments are specifically spelled out, would we not? Would we not expect to see an explicit prohibition against polygamy? Why, then, do we see precisely the *opposite* in God’s Law of specific ordinances *permitting* polygamy (Exo. 21:10; Deut. 21:15-17; Deut. 21:10-14) as well as specific laws *mandating* polygamy (Exo. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29; Deut. 25:5-10) as well as the numerous examples of men of God taking multiple wives and the abundant exegetical evidence connected with them supporting the lawfulness of polygamy? Why would God institute that which is *contradictory* to His Law in the *revelation* of His Law? Does not the contradiction here go to the very core of Rushdoony’s argument? Ought we not to expect consistency from God “with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning?”

I pointed out earlier in this work the fallacy of those who attempt to pit “Genesis vs. the Law of Moses.” The book of Genesis *is* a book of law, God’s Law. Genesis serves as a kind of prologue to the positive laws of the Pentateuch and provides the logical validation and foundation upon which those positive laws are based. Genesis is the apologetic and premise upon which the Laws of Moses are based. In other words, Genesis gives us the *reason* why the positive laws of the Pentateuch are what they are.

Concerning polygamy (polygyny) the *reason* why the Law of Moses permits polygamy is because God made the woman for the man (Gen. 2:18) and not the man for the woman; in other words, God’s creation purpose is to establish *patriarchy*. To echo St. Augustine, “as *many souls* are rightly made subject to *one God*,” so too, in marriage *many women* may rightly be made subject to *one man*. The

necessary validity of polygyny flows immediately from patriarchy. *This is* the "creation pattern" relevant to the question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of polygamy; the *example* of Adam's monogamy by itself is insufficient to inform us of the question of Law, as John Knox, the Reformer, so clearly stated in arguing against examples of polygamy being used to defend polygamy.

"The men that object the same are not altogether ignorant that *examples have no strength when the question is of law*. As if I should ask, what marriage is lawful? And it should be answered that lawful it is to a man, not only to have many wives at once, but also it is lawful to marry two sisters, and to enjoy them both living at once, because that David, Jacob, and Solomon, servants of God, did the same. I *trust that no man would justify the vanity of this reason...for examples may establish no law, but we are bound to the law written...*" ("The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," pg. 63-64)

Monogamy was no "law" for Adam; it was simply a circumstance. John Knox, like so many other anti-polygamy proponents, rightfully argues against the notion that examples of polygamy, by themselves, can establish a rule regarding polygamy. Those who contend for the "monogamy only" position should be willing to be *consistent* in their proclamation of this principle that examples establish no rule of conduct, and admit that Adam's example of *monogamy* cannot, therefore, be rationally and logically extended as a normative rule to *all* men. While certainly validating monogamy, it does not, and cannot, *invalidate* polygamy.

Rushdoony himself admits concerning polygamy in the Bible: "One of the facts which disturbs many persons with respect to the Biblical laws concerning marriage is the seeming tolerance of polygamy, of more than one wife, and the total intolerance of adultery" (pg. 362). (This statement is Rushdoony's opening remark in his section on polygamy.) Clearly, this fact disturbs Rushdoony too, and well it ought; for if polygamy (as distinct from polyandry) constitutes adultery, then it *must* be severely condemned with *all* adultery. The logic of this is inescapable.

The "seeming tolerance of polygamy" in the Bible is more than "seeming" and it is more than "tolerance." Nowhere in the Bible do we see God tolerating sin! *All* sin must be atoned for by blood sacrifice. On the contrary, God punishes sin without exception, and, of course, forgives it on the basis of Christ's propitiation who takes the punishment for his people. But *tolerance* of sin? *Never!* We are told that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. 2:13) the specific point of this statement being that God cannot, and will not, tolerate sin but punish it.

Rushdoony himself is constrained to admit that polygamy is more than "seemingly tolerated." He states, "...polygamy is a recognized and *accepted* fact...The law did *recognize* and regulate concubinage and polygamy...Polygamy, thus, is tolerated in Biblical law...polygamous marriages are still marriages" (pg. 363). In view of the passages which explicitly permit polygamy, the usage of the terms "tolerate" and "recognize" in connection with polygamy must be regarded as disingenuous. We humans "tolerate" that which is offensive to us; and to "recognize" something gives us no hint of its moral, legal status. As for the Lord, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). To postulate that God, for some inscrutable

reason, overlooked this one sin and allowed it to be a part of His revealed Law, is simply not a defensible proposition.

Rushdoony's second argument for monogamy and against polygamy is the conjectural assertion that polygamy is a result of the fall of man into sin. Rushdoony cites Lamech (pg. 362), a descendant of Cain, as "proof" (Gen. 4:23). One might as well argue that architecture (Gen 4:17), tentmaking (Gen. 4:20), husbandry (Gen. 4:20), musical skill (Gen. 4:21) and metallurgy (Gen. 4:22) are evil and a result of the Fall since these things originated from Cain's line as well. The fact that polygamy postdates the Fall and occurs among the reprobate "proves" nothing at all. Righteous men and evil men are *both* spoken of in the scriptures as taking multiple wives. One cannot logically hold the proposition that *every* act of an evil man constitutes a violation of God's Law. The citation of Lamech as an argument against polygamy involves a non-sequitur.

Rushdoony's third argument is from what he admits is from only *one* translation of Leviticus 18:18, "Thou shalt not take a wife to another," which is universally translated elsewhere, "Thou shalt not take a woman to her *sister*." Rushdoony's preferred translation is dubious and, if allowed to stand, would stand in direct contradiction to the balance of the Law of Moses touching upon this subject and involve us in irreconcilable contradiction. Rushdoony does not defend this translation with argument and it is admittedly a *unique* translation. Refuting this third point is to belabor the obvious.

Rushdoony's fourth argument is based on I Timothy 3:2 which appears (in English) to forbid polygamy to ordained church officers. What Rushdoony does not inform his readers of is that there is an *ambiguity* in the original Greek. The Greek text says that ordained officers of the Church should be a "*mia* wife man."

The Greek word "*mia*" is properly translated as *either* "one" *or* it can also be, and *is*, translated elsewhere as "*first*," (see Titus 3:10—"A man that is an heretic after the first—Gk., 'mia'—and second admonition reject;" and John 20:1—"The first ... —(Gk., 'mia')—day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene..."). Rushdoony makes no mention of the ambiguity of the word, nor does he undertake a defense of its translation as "one." His defense of this translation is, therefore, based upon an *a-priori* assumption as his premise.

It bears pointing out, first of all, that if the proper translation is "*first* wife man," then we have a rule concerning *divorce* and not polygamy; moreover, if this *is* the proper translation, then it is obvious that this *includes* the possibility of church officers having more than one wife, else the qualification "first" is pointless. The point is that church officers must not be guilty of putting away their wives. Their *first* wives should *still* be their wives. The logic of this statement allows for monogamy *or* polygamy among ordained church officers.

Since there *is* an unquestionable ambiguity in the Greek word, "mia," and since the immediate context cannot authoritatively resolve the question, then the interpretation and translation of this verse cannot be resolved without consulting the Biblical context as a whole. This is where the translation of "mia" as "one" breaks down. What we have seen in the Biblical testimony as a whole is that there is

no prohibition at all against polygamy *anywhere* in the Bible; and there is the positive *establishment* of polygamy in the Law of God; and numerous men of God were polygamists with not so much as one negative word said about their polygamy. In view of these considerations, we are *compelled* to translate the word “mia” as *first* instead of as “one.” If not, then this commandment stands all alone and utterly unique among all of the relevant passages on the subject—to say nothing of standing in stark *contradiction* to them.

Rushdoony’s fifth argument is based upon a misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 17:17: “(T)here is at least an implied condemnation of polygamy in Deuteronomy 17:17, which forbade the king to ‘multiply wives to himself’.” The full answer to this assertion is to be found in Article #29 of this work pertaining to Solomon. Briefly, this is *not* a prohibition against polygamy, *per se*, but a prohibition against *treaty marriages* with heathen nations and is, therefore, irrelevant to the subject. Rushdoony himself is aware of this fact, which is why he only goes so far as to say that Deut 17:17 *implies* monogamy as the standard, rather than claiming it is a straightforward prohibition: “In Solomon’s case, most of his wives and concubines represented foreign alliances” (pg. 364). Rushdoony clearly recognizes this prohibition as being against treaty-marriages, yet he attempts to squeeze more meaning out of the verse than can be rationally defended.

Rushdoony’s sixth argument is, “It is clearly stated by Jesus Christ that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, and that this is the meaning of Genesis 2:24; it is the *two* or *twain* who are ‘one flesh,’ i.e., a true marriage” (pg. 363). But this is equivocation on Rushdoony’s part and a failure to use discrimination of terms. I could not agree more with the strict form of Rushdoony’s words. What Rushdoony is implying here is that Christ asserted that Genesis means that a true marriage consists of one man and one woman to the *exclusion* of any additional marriages for the man. But Christ did not say that and neither does Genesis. Rushdoony simply asserts his beginning premise as his conclusion and indulges in a tautology.

A marriage *is indeed* “the union of one man and one woman.” This does not logically exclude the possibility of multiple and *separate* marriages on the part of the man with other wives. It means that the other wives are not party to one another’s marriage covenant with the man.

Seventh, and last, Rushdoony cites I Corinthians 7:2, “Let every man have his own wife, and...every woman...her own husband,” and concludes from this that, “Paul spoke of marriage in monogamous terms” (pg. 363). There are two points to be made in response to this. First, in establishing the desirability of marriage (to avoid fornication), Paul does not logically disallow polygamy. Paul is simply reiterating the exhortation of the book of Proverbs here that a man should enjoy sexual relations with his *own* wife (or wives) and not *another man’s*. It is not logically *necessary* to state this rule in the plural to cover the exigency of polygamy. Polygamists are certainly instructed by this exhortation to find their sexual gratification in their *own* wives, and not in the wives of other men. Again, Rushdoony gives us a non-sequitur.

The second consideration here is linguistic. Since Rushdoony’s argument here is linguistic in nature, one has to wonder why Rushdoony did not go to the actual Greek text of the New Testament to bolster his case. Rushdoony does not inform his readers of a very significant *variance* in the actual

Greek *words* translated as “own” in the two separate clauses, even as he does not inform his readers of a variance in *translation* of the word “mia” in I Timothy 3:2. Yet the different words used are certainly significant and seem to be directly relevant to the question at hand.

“Let every man have his *own* (Grk., “*heautou*”) wife and...every woman her *own* (Grk., “*idios*”) husband.” So here we have two different words: “*heautou*,” and “*idios*.” Why use two *different* Greek words here for “own” in the two clauses of the same sentence and what is the significance? Quite simply the Greek word “*heautou*” signifies *exclusive* possession, as for example I speak of my *own* body, or my *own* soul. A Biblical example of the use of “*heautou*” is where Paul admonishes a man to eat his “own” (“*heautou*”) bread, the point being that we should not be *sharing* the bread spoken of.

The Greek word “*idios*” signifies actual or potential *corporate* possession, a Biblical example of which is the passage which says that Jesus returned to his “own” (“*idios*”) country. There were others who lived in *his own* country because it was *their own* country, also! Far from implying the *unlawfulness* of polygyny, the usage and signification of the two different terms here for “own” seems to have been employed precisely because of an awareness of the *lawfulness* of polygyny. Far from speaking “in monogamous terms,” it seems quite clear that Paul spoke in *polygamous* terms—for the man, but not the woman. Thus, the linguistic considerations give support for exactly the *opposite* conclusion Rushdoony makes!

I find it fascinating that Rushdoony is also aware of the relevance of the doctrine of patriarchy to this issue, though he just does not seem capable (or willing?) to draw the logical conclusion: “the law tolerated polygamy while establishing monogamy as the standard. The reason for this toleration was the fact that the polygamous family was still a family, a lower form of family life, but a tolerable one (*whereas polyandry is not, since it violates the basic centrality of the man and his calling*) [emphasis supplied—T.S.]. Biblical law thus protects the *family* and does not tolerate *adultery*, which threatens and destroys the family” (pg. 364).

Rushdoony clearly sees that polyandry violates the Biblical mandate of patriarchy, whereas polygyny does *not*. He also clearly sees that polygyny is “tolerated” by the Law, which, as I pointed out above, constitutes *permission* to engage in polygyny (see also I John 3:4) and it, therefore, cannot possibly be a *violation* of the Law. And Rushdoony clearly recognizes, though he refrains from stating it explicitly, that polygyny does *not* constitute adultery.

I cannot help but wonder, given the soundness of Rushdoony’s premises and his keen gift of logical thinking, whether Rushdoony believed polygamy to be lawful but consciously refrained from a full blown endorsement of polygamy simply because he did not think the Church was ready for it yet. Perhaps there is deliberate subversion here on Rushdoony’s part: bringing his readers to the verge but not opening the door lest his readers recoil in horror and repudiate the ground he has gained? He could not have come any closer to endorsing polygamy while remaining formally in denial of its validity. Rushdoony adds *nothing* to the already-existing stock arguments against polygamy; but he *does* go significantly further towards validating polygamy by clearly implying it is *not* adultery and affirming that a polygamous family is still a family. Perhaps Rushdoony’s intent was to lay down the

foundation, to bring the Church to the threshold, knowing that the premises to which one is committed have a tendency to work their way out in time to their logical conclusions.

I speak autobiographically: it was reading Rushdoony’s “The Institutes of Biblical Law” that first persuaded me of the lawfulness and validity of polygamy. Think about it.

## Article 44: The Commentators, #2: Archer

### #2. Gleason L. Archer: “Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties”

The purpose of Gleason L. Archer’s book, “Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties,” is to examine supposed “contradictions” in the Bible and other difficulties and demonstrate to the reader the coherence and consistency of the Scriptures. Keep this point in mind as we examine what Archer has to say about Biblical polygamy.

Archer turns to the subject of polygamy under the subsection, “Why were there multiple marriages in Israel after the giving of the Ten Commandments?”

Archer’s question is an excellent one. The answer, of course, is that the Law of God makes provision for polygamy, a fact upon which Archer remains silent though he does comment upon Exodus 21:10, one such passage which permits polygamy. Unfortunately, Archer does not fare any better in his attempt to answer the question than did Rushdoony. According to Archer, “The whole problem of polygamy in the Old Testament is not easy to handle.” This will become embarrassingly manifest as we see what else Archer has to say. He continues, “Yet it really should not be equated with adultery so as to make it a technical violation of the seventh commandment,” (pg 123).

What, may we ask, does Archer mean by a “technical violation?” Is there a distinction between a “technical” violation of the Law and a “real” violation? If polygamy does not “technically” violate the seventh commandment, does it still *really* violate the seventh commandment?

A couple of pages earlier (pg. 121) Archer intimates that it *does*:

“The seventh commandment says, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ (Exod. 20:14). How did this affect the patriarchs like Abraham, who was given Hagar by his own wife, Sarah, to serve as her proxy in the marriage bed? Or Jacob, who not only married Leah and Rachel but also had children by their maids Bilhah and Zilpah? Perhaps the fact that the Decalogue was not given to Israel until five centuries later may have lessened the guilt of their multiple marriages. But how about king David,

who lived four centuries later? Second Samuel 12:7-8 states that 'God gave Saul's wives into David's arms' (cf. NIV) as if God Himself condoned this polygamy."

Clearly, Archer believes that there was "guilt" involved in polygamy, *on the basis of the seventh commandment*, and, therefore, *sin*, the sin of adultery. He contrasts the "guilt" of Abraham with the "guilt" of David and concludes that David's "guilt" was greater, because David had the greater revelation of the seventh commandment. Does this mean that Abraham and Jacob did not know God's Law (see Gen. 18:17-19 and Gen. 26:5)? Archer goes on to cite 1) the creation account, 2) Matthew 19:9 and 3) Ephesians 5:23 (which we will comment upon below) and concludes, "Polygamy is *absolutely excluded*." A strange conclusion considering his observation about II Samuel 12:7-8.

So, obviously, Archer believes that polygamy *does* constitute adultery. This is confirmed again by his statements about Hagar and Sarah: "Sarah is always represented as being Abraham's only legal wife as long as she lived...Hagar became a concubine to Abraham, not his lawfully wedded wife." This, of course, plainly contradicts what the Bible says about concubines elsewhere (Exo. 21:7-10, etc). Indeed, given the fact that the Biblical text itself calls Hagar "his wife" (Gen. 16:3), Archer's conclusions on this point are inexcusable and constitute the substitution of Archer's word for that of God's. Archer tries to dilute the plain meaning of this statement by calling Hagar Sarah's "proxy" in the marriage bed. But was Hagar *merely* a proxy? Is this the view of the relationship as recorded by Moses under Divine inspiration in Genesis 16:3 when it says, "And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid...and gave her to her husband *to be his wife*?"

I am not saying that Archer deliberately sets out to deny God's Word but he denies it nevertheless because he is irresistibly forced down the path of logical conclusions by his premise. Archer tries to have it both ways: polygamy is a violation of the seventh commandment against adultery, but it is not "technically" adultery, a totally meaningless distinction. I have read and re-read Archer's statements numerous times; he is without question trying to classify polygamy as a violation of the seventh commandment, and, therefore adultery. He is, *at the same time*, arguing that polygamy does not "technically" violate the seventh commandment.

What are ordinary Christian laymen to think (to say nothing of non-Christians) when learned Christian scholars engage in such egregious contradiction and Orwellian double-think? The whole point of Archer's book is to prove the thesis that the Bible is not contradictory. Does not "exegesis" such as this convey to the reader the impression that there are, indeed, irreconcilable contradictions in the Bible?

Archer might have easily argued that polygamy is *fornication* rather than adultery in order to avoid such blatant contradiction; yet, upon analysis, it is apparent why he does not choose this course of argumentation: polygamy involves *married* men who have sexual relations with a second woman. To argue in this way would make the inherent logical inconsistency of his argument manifest.

Archer is caught on the horns of a dilemma. If he argues that polygamy is fornication but not adultery, he faces the retort that polygamists are *married* men. If he plainly states that polygamy is adultery, he winds up right back where he started from: why did polygamy continue after the giving of the Law?

The logical circle of his reasoning becomes evident. If the “problem” of Biblical polygamy “is not easy to handle,” then why does not Archer question the fundamental premise that polygamy is a sin? Like so many other commentators, Archer blindly clings steadfastly to this premise without questioning its veracity. He simply cannot stomach the Bible’s own declaration that Hagar, like Sarah, became the “wife” of Abraham. The explicit declaration of Scripture is denied and a premise with no Biblical support whatsoever is made a definitive interpretive guide. This is the *reason* why “the whole problem of polygamy in the Old Testament is not easy to handle.”

Archer is likewise confused by Matthew 19:9 (“from the beginning it was not so”), Genesis 2 (“one flesh”) and Ephesians 5 (the Church, singular, being the bride, singular, of Christ). Do these passages forbid polygamy as well as divorce? Archer is emphatic:

“How do we reconcile this (that is, II Samuel 12:7-8, God’s declaration that *He* gave the multiple wives of Saul to be David’s wives—T.S.) with the monogamy that Jesus so clearly taught in Matthew 19:9 and which he asserted to have been God’s intention from the very beginning?

“Genesis 2:23-24, as Christ pointed out, teaches monogamy as God’s will for man...The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh’...For this cause a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.’ Now there is no possibility of a husband’s constituting a unity with one wife if he has another wife—or several others.”

But, of course, I Corinthians 6:16 makes it very clear that even in the case of prostitution a man becomes one flesh with the prostitute. How much *more so* with a single, marriageable woman? If Archer’s statements above are true, then it is likewise true that it is impossible for Christ to constitute a unity with more than *one believer*. Abraham would have been the only person ever saved on Archer’s principle! But, in fact, the one body of Christ is made up of “many members” (I Cor. 12:12), many “brides” with whom Christ is in covenantal unity. There can be only *one head*, but there can be *many subordinates*. So it is in marriage. There can be only *one man*, the head, but there can be *many women*. In any event, regarding the one-flesh concept, it is to be noted that sexual relations is the *manner* in which husband and wife become one flesh, so we are clearly speaking about a *functional* and *dynamic* concept of becoming one flesh, not a static concept as of squishing two, then three or more lumps of clay together—which concept, also, does not eliminate the possibility of becoming one flesh with more than one wife. Either way you look at it, functional or static, Archer is simply mistaken.

“This,” says Archer, “is made very clear by the analogy in Eph. 5:23 ‘For the husband is the head of the wife’...The implication here is that there is but one church...in a relationship to the heavenly bridegroom...Christ is not the head of many different Churches; he has but a single mystical body—not several bodies.”

Exactly! And this is true *despite the fact that the body is made up of many members*. So it is in a polygamous household. The man's multiple wives are members of a single family, each united covenantally to their head, their husband. Thus, the marriage analogy provides a very powerful argument in *favor* of polygamy and utterly refutes Archer's contention that "there is no possibility of a husband's constituting a unity with one wife if he has another wife." Since the marital covenant and the Divine covenant are so inextricably linked in Scripture, it is clear that if Christ can be joined to many in a covenant of salvation then so, too, can the husband be joined to many in a covenant of marriage. We should not fail to note at this juncture the relevance of Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3, both of which passages use a *polygamous* metaphor to describe Yahweh's marriage to Israel. Archer passes over these passages in silence as if they don't even exist despite their obvious relevance to the point at hand.

The passages from Matthew 19 and Mark 10, as I pointed out in my last article on Rushdoony, concern *divorce*. Archer asserts that Jesus "clearly" taught about monogamy in these passages and that Christ "asserts (it) to have been God's intention." Is Archer inventing another distinction here? Is there a distinction between "clear" and "technically clear?" The clarity in these passages concerns divorce. And, clearly, if I may use the word, Christ made no such pronouncement such as, "The creation of Adam and Eve makes it unlawful to have more than one wife at a time."

But, turning back to the passages in question, Christ's words do not prove an exact and mirror-image correspondence of male and female roles and rights. Nor would any orthodox Evangelical claim that they do. Marriage involves a *hierarchy*. Polygamy and polyandry are not the same. A woman cannot take a second husband while her husband lives (Rom. 7:1-3). The same law is *not* laid down for the man. Divorce is another matter. *Both* husband and wife are bound to one another by the Law. If a man or woman divorces a spouse, adultery is the result. But what if a man *does not* put away his first wife and marries *another, in addition to* his first wife? Would this *also* constitute adultery? No: because the adultery in this passage is committed by *the violation of the marriage bond* by means of substituting one wife in place of another. In the case of polygyny, the man's union with his first wife remains *intact*, and there is no violation of the lawful hierarchy of the marriage.

Archer, like Rushdoony, is forced into the unhappy position of claiming that polygamy is "tolerated" (pg. 123), which proposition we have dealt with sufficiently previously.

Archer ends his treatment of polygamy by citing the summary statement of Norman Geisler in Geisler's book, "[Ethics: Alternatives and Issues](#)." Geisler's summary treatment of polygamy is almost point for point identical to Rushdoony's which we examined in the last article. There is one non-sequitur, however, which Archer quotes which Rushdoony did not indulge in: "When polygamy is referred to, the conditional, not the imperative, is used. *If* (Geisler's emphasis) he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marital rights" (Exo. 21:10).

But, of course, if polygamy is a sin, then there cannot be a lawful "if." Archer's implicit premise here is, once again, the notion of toleration of sin on God's part. Archer is saying that since Exodus 21:10 does not *command* a man to be polygamous, ergo, it is *forbidden*. I trust that no one will succumb to the futility of this "logic." God did not *command* anyone to drink papaya juice either; that doesn't

logically make drinking papaya juice a sin. But *if* I am set on drinking papaya juice, then certainly I should do so in a lawful way, to wit, I should not steal and drink someone else's papaya juice. Geisler's inference is that the regulation of a practice implies disapproval of it. The opposite is true. If polygamy is to be practiced in a certain way, then clearly *approval* of the practice is involved.

## Article 45: The Commentators, #3: Hodge

### #3. Charles Hodge: “Systematic Theology”

Charles Hodge is widely regarded among Evangelicals as being the best of all American theologians. His “Systematic Theology” has been widely read and very influential. At least some of the credit (or blame, as the case may be) for the transmission and prevalence of the traditional “monogamy only” doctrine among Evangelicals must be attributed to Hodge. It behooves us, therefore, to examine what Hodge had to say on this subject.

Hodge alleges in “Systematic Theology” that the monogamy-only doctrine has been the *universal* stance of the Church and that this is the “(strongest) proof” possible that monogamy is “the law of Christ.”

“Such has been the doctrine of the Christian Church in all ages and in every part of the world. There has never been a church calling itself Christian which tolerated a plurality of wives among its members. There could hardly be a stronger proof than this fact that such is the law of Christ. It is morally certain that the whole Church cannot have mistaken, on such a subject as this, the mind and will of its divine Head and Master.” — “Systematic Theology,” Vol. III, pg. 380

It hardly needs to be pointed out that nearly the whole Church lived in Romish ignorance and darkness for centuries, and that in regard to the very issue of salvation itself, a proposition Hodge would surely have assented to. Such being the case, Hodge’s appeal to tradition, on an issue of *lesser* importance, is baseless and carries no weight at all. The Church, sometimes the *whole* Church, has been in error on a variety of doctrines. Why should polygamy necessarily be any different? If we are to say “amen” to Church tradition, we must do so on the basis of whether or not the tradition adheres to or departs from the scriptures. Let us affirm “*Sola Scriptura*” as our operating premise and not trust in the arm of flesh.

Hodge’s placement of the argument from tradition *first* in his list of defenses of the “monogamy only” doctrine betrays the Protestant principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Moreover his appeal to tradition, *to justify*

*the tradition*, underscores the nature of his argument as a tautology. After all, it is the tradition which is being scrutinized here.

It is also to be noted that Hodge, as a capable historian of the Church, certainly knew that Martin Luther (along with Bucer and Melancthon and several other officers of the Church) sanctioned, *and arranged*, the polygamous marriage of Philip of Hesse. With no less than about eight or nine prominent founders of the Protestant Reformation all involved in this incident, Hodge's appeal to tradition is somewhat overblown. In the incident with Philip of Hesse there certainly *was* "tolerated a plurality of wives among its members." Moreover, Hodge was certainly aware that Luther had suggested publicly that king Henry VIII in England take a second wife as a means of providing Henry's need for a male heir. These facts certainly vitiate Hodge's contention that "monogamy only" has been at *all* times and *all* places "the doctrine of the Christian Church." Luther is an exception to the tradition and, given his pivotal and premier place in Church history, can hardly be legitimately dismissed and ignored as Hodge does.

And then there is Augustine. We have already considered Augustine's views on this subject and saw that he defended the polygamy of Jacob against Jacob's accusers and defended the validity of polygamy itself based upon the principle of patriarchy, saying about polygamy, "Neither is it contrary to the nature of marriage," ("A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church," Vol. III, pg. 407-408, Ed. by Philip Schaff). Augustine maintained that "the *only* reason of its being a crime now to do this is because custom and the laws forbid it," (ibid. pg. 289) and that "Now indeed in our time, *and in keeping with Roman custom*, it is no longer allowed to take another wife, so as to have more than one wife living," (ibid., pg. 428). As a good Biblicist, and man of the book, Augustine's inference is clear: there is no *biblical* argument against polygamy.

We see, therefore, two *very* prominent Christians in Church history who cannot be included in Hodge's appeal to Church history.

Hodge's second line of reasoning concerns, not surprisingly, the creation of Adam and Eve and the original "creation pattern." The logical fallacy of this doctrine has already been pointed out: it attempts to universalize on the basis of a particular example and assumes, in the absence of any explicit statement, that the specific example of Adam's monogamy expresses God's universal purpose for all men. This is unlike the principle of patriarchy which is based upon God's expressed purpose of creating the woman for the man (Gen. 2:18). It bears emphasizing that the argument for monogamy from creation is an argument from silence and is antithetical to the doctrine of male headship. That God gave only one wife to Adam can never, by itself, demonstrate that monogamy is "the law of creation" any more than the fact that God gave multiple wives to king David can prove that God wills all men to be polygamous. Such is the fallacy of reasoning from the particular to the universal. What is needed to demonstrate monogamy as a *law* is either an explicit prohibition against polygamy (which exists nowhere in the Bible) or a declaration of purpose concerning monogamy (which also exists nowhere in the Bible).

The creation narrative provides the most basic and profound refutation of the "monogamy only" doctrine: "Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man," (I Cor. 11:9). It is precisely because the man is the head of the wife that polygamy must be lawful. Marriage is a hierarchical institution. *The denial of the legitimacy of polygamy is an implicit denial of male headship.*

Hodge's next appeal is to Mark 10:8 where Christ proclaims that "the *two* shall be one flesh." This statement is not, however, an affirmation of monogamy nor a rejection of polygamy. Christ is there refuting divorce-on-demand. Polygamy and monogamy are simply not addressed in that passage directly or by implication. When Christ says that "the *two*" shall be one flesh, this applies to the polygamist (as well as the monogamist) in regard to *each* of his wives. The admonition that a man should not put away his wife informs the polygamist that each of his wives ought not to be dealt with treacherously (Mal. 2:14).

Hodge's third defense of monogamy is: "Although this original law was *partially disregarded* in later times, it was *never abrogated*. Polygamy and divorce were in a measure tolerated under the Mosaic law, yet in all these ages among the Hebrews, monogamy was the rule and polygamy the exception..." (pg. 381, *emph. supplied*). When Hodge says that the "law" of monogamy was "partially disregarded," he is referring, of course, to Exodus 21:10, Deuteronomy 21:15-17, and other Old Testament laws which permit (or even mandate) polygamy.

Hodge sees polygamy as merely "tolerated" under Biblical law. As I have noted previously, this notion of God tolerating sin is not Biblically defensible. Hodge's argument is refuted on this basis alone. Beginning with the affirmation that monogamy is a veritable "law" of creation (nowhere specifically enunciated), Hodge was forced to conclude that this illusory law was "partially disregarded" by Moses, the law-giver of God! Hodge, impelled by the worship of tradition, was compelled to indulge this nonsense. How can a specific law ("Polygamy is unlawful.") be "partially disregarded" and "never abrogated" at the same time? If monogamy was "the law of creation," but polygamy was "tolerated" under the Mosaic law, then is it not clear that the law of monogamy *was* abrogated under Moses?

If Hodge is correct in his thesis here, then God Himself must be pitifully confused. First, God makes monogamy a "law" at creation; then, God, by the instrumentality of Moses, permits (excuse me, tolerates) polygamy; then, God changes His mind yet once more and outlaws polygamy all over again! Stop! This is making me dizzy!

Hodge's formulation of the doctrine of monogamy, which is indeed representative of the Church as a whole, reveals how seriously defective the "orthodox" view is. The idea that God tolerates sin, especially in the sense of instituting the practice of sin via the provisions of His *holy* Law, represents a low (and unbiblical) view of God. It is a view of God as weak and waffling, a God Who cannot decide what is righteous and unrighteous. In the end, the logical terminus of Hodge's treatment of polygamy ends in the god of Process Theology rather than the immutable God declared in the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

Hodge continues,

“Numerous passages of the Old Testament go to prove that monogamy was considered the law of marriage, from which plurality of wives was a departure. Throughout the Proverbs, for example, it is the blessing of a good wife, not of wives, that is continually set forth. Prov. xii. 4; xix. 14; xxxi. 10ff.”

Two things seem to escape Hodge’s notice here. First, the author of most of the Proverbs, including the passages Hodge cites, is Solomon, a man who had more wives than any other known polygamist in the history of the world. How does Hodge come to the conclusion that Solomon, a polygamist *par excellence*, is advocating a monogamy-only doctrine? Hodge also does not seem to grasp the elementary fact that summary statements such as those in the Proverbs speak to the *category* of marriage, not to the sub-categories of monogamy and polygamy. It is simply not necessary to speak in the plural to cover the circumstance of polygamy. Hodge’s conclusion is a non-sequitur.

Consider also the extremities to which Hodge is forced by his premises:

“With regard to toleration of polygamy under the Mosaic law, it is to be remembered that the seventh commandment belongs in the same category as the sixth and eighth. These laws are not founded on the essential nature of God, and therefore are not immutable.”

Hodge errs greatly here and gets it backward. The creation itself is a reflection and manifestation of God’s essential nature and character. God’s law is not founded upon the creature or the will of the creature or anything else external to Himself. The distinction of laws under the Old Covenant is not reflective of the two tables of the law (upon *both* of which were written a *complete set* of the Ten Commandments—one each for both parties to the Covenant, God & Israel), but upon the distinction between moral and ceremonial laws. Hodge says that these laws “are founded upon the permanent relations of men in their present state of existence,” (pg. 381). Hodge does not merely allege that these laws *apply to* men in their present state. His thesis is far more radical than that. Hodge is explicit. These laws are *founded on* the creature rather than the Creator. Does the reader begin to discern where a denial of the legitimacy of polygamy leads us? Charles Hodge, as great a theologian as he was, could not avoid this fatally heretical conclusion once he premised monogamy as the law of God.

Hodge also says,

“If God, therefore, at any time and to any people granted permission to practice polygamy then so long as that permission lasted and for those to whom it was given, polygamy was lawful, and at all other times and for all other persons it was unlawful.” —pg. 381-382.

So, apparently, Hodge is acknowledging that monogamy is not an absolute and universal law, after all. God permitted polygamy to Abraham and his offspring for nearly 2,000 years but forbade it to the rest of us? The obvious difficulty here is more than superficial.

Not surprisingly, Hodge couples his observation about polygamy with the law on divorce:

“This principle is clearly recognized in what our Savior teaches concerning divorce. It was permitted the Jews under the Mosaic law to put away their wives; as soon as that law was abolished, the right of divorce ceased.” —pg. 382

But, as we have already seen, that law was *not* abolished. Christ *reasserts* precisely the law of Deuteronomy 24:1, requiring fornication as a basis for divorce. So Hodge’s defense here of monogamy falls impotent to the ground.

Hodge’s fourth defense of monogamy is as follows:

“Monogamy, however, does not rest exclusively on the original institution of marriage...but mainly on the clearly revealed will of Christ...When the Pharisees came to him and asked him whether a man could lawfully put away his wife, He answered, that marriage, as instituted by God was an indissoluble union between one man and one woman; and, therefore, that those whom God has joined together, no man could put asunder. This is the doctrine clearly taught in Matthew xix. 4-9; Mark x. 49; Luke xiv. 18; Matthew v. 32. In these passages our Lord expressly declares that if a man marries while his first wife is living he commits adultery.”

But, of course, anyone who can read can consult those passages and see that this is *not* what Christ said. If Christ *had* said this, I never would have begun writing this work. Here we have Charles Hodge, who assuredly understood the distinction between overt affirmation and implication, telling us that Christ “expressly” made a pronouncement about monogamy and polygamy in the above-cited passages. Hodge overstates the facts, when what he is really contending for is that there is an *implied inference* against polygamy in these passages.

Contrary to Hodge, the situation which Christ *does* address is the *coordination of two things*, 1) a married man who illegitimately *divorces* his wife 2) *and* marries another woman. The subject under discussion, and the point upon which Christ *expressly* pronounced his sentence, is the *illegitimate dissolution* of a marriage by the man and the *substitution* of her with a second wife. Hodge *assumes* that polygamy comes within the purview of this pronouncement. Is this assumption valid?

Well, no. It does not logically follow that if 1) a married man who 2) does *not* put away his first wife and 3) marries another *in addition to* his first wife commits adultery. The offence, the sin, that Christ repudiates in Matthew 19:4-9 and parallels, was not the *addition* of a second wife but the *divorce* of the first wife. No such dividing asunder occurs on the basis of polygamy alone. The inference Hodge draws from these passages is invalid.

Hodge then goes on to cite Romans 7:2-3 and I Corinthians 7:39. We dealt at some length with these passages concerning King David in Article #27 of this work and saw that the apostle Paul is *enunciating the very definition* of adultery, a definition which explicitly forbids polyandry, multiple husbands, denominating it as adultery, but which does *not* forbid polygamy. Again, Hodge reads *into* the text of Scripture more than can be rightly drawn out of it.

Hodge's fifth argument is based upon "the providential law" of "the numerical distribution of the sexes," (pg. 383). Hodge says, "Had polygamy been according to the divine purpose, we should naturally expect that more women should be born than men." Once again, Hodge departs from the "*Sola Scriptura*" rule. The truth is, had polygamy been according to the Divine purpose, we should naturally expect that we could find patriarchy as God's will in the Scriptures and we would moreover expect to see polygamy provided for in the express commandments in His Law. Since we *do* find *both* patriarchy and provision for polygamy in the Law, then we must refute Hodge's appeal here to an extra-Biblical interpretive method. What percentages of births are male and female is simply irrelevant to the question at hand.

Hodge's sixth argument is, in my mind, utterly amazing:

"As all the permanently obligatory laws are founded on the nature of his creatures, it follows that if He has ordained that marriage be the union of one man and one woman, there must be a reason for this in the very constitution of man in the nature of the marriage relation." —pg. 383

But Hodge's argument here, if true, would have resulted in polygamy being outlawed for the Jews under the Law. Was "the very constitution of man in the nature of the marriage relation" any different for Abraham's children than everybody else?

Hodge also has it backwards again concerning the origin of the Law and what it is founded upon. Is it not rather true that the constitution of man was made in accordance with and pursuant to the already-existing character of God, which character His laws are an expression of? If God's laws are founded upon the creature, then God can hardly be sovereign and immutable. The reasons for God's laws inhere in Himself and not something external to Himself.

Hodge then comes at length to the analogy of Ephesians 5:22-33. He observes:

"From all this it follows that as it would be utterly incongruous and impossible that Christ should have two bodies, two brides, two churches, so it is no less incongruous and impossible that a man should have two wives. That is, the conjugal relation, as it is set forth in Scripture, cannot possibly subsist, except between one man and one woman." — pg. 385

But Hodge has already admitted that it *could* for the Jews! How can he now *categorically* reject the possibility? This is a glaring contradiction in Hodge's treatment of this subject and undermines his whole argument.

Moreover, even leaving this contradiction aside, the Church is not an individual person with an independent, sentient existence of its own. There are innumerable individuals united covenantally to Christ, our Head, and metaphysically by the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is one Head, but *many* subordinate members. Since *each* of us is individually united to Christ, Christ is therefore married to an innumerable company of brides.

In any event, I reiterate yet again that in Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3, the Lord portrays Himself as a polygamist married to *two* women. This is sufficient to refute any supposed inference against polygamy in Ephesians 5.

Hodge then comes to his conclusions.

"If such be the true doctrine of marriage, it follows, as just stated, that polygamy destroys its very nature. It is founded upon a wrong view of the nature of woman; places her in a false and degrading position; dethrones her; and is productive of innumerable evils." — pg. 386

Joining in with Augustine, I am asserting here that polygamy is *not* contrary to the nature of marriage. To reiterate, polygamy is a logically necessary concomitant of male headship, patriarchy. If polygamy places the woman "in a false and degrading position," then, by inexorable logic, so does her subordinate status. Moreover, Hodge's remarks constitute an inadvertent accusation against God: on Hodge's principle, since the Law God gave Israel through Moses provided for polygamy, then it would follow that it was God Himself Who placed Israeli women in a false and degrading position, and God Who stirred up "innumerable evils" in so doing. Did God make a horrendous *mistake* which he corrected in the New Covenant?

Finally, Hodge turns to casuistry (the application of law and principles to concrete everyday circumstances). How do we handle converted polygamists?

"The question has been mooted, whether a polygamist, when converted to Christianity, should be required to repudiate all his wives but one, as a condition of his admission into the Christian church...It seems plain that no man should be received into the communion of the Church who does not conform to the law of Christ concerning marriage. The only question is, Whether Christ has made a special exception in favor of those who in the times of their ignorance, contracted the obligation of marriage with more than one woman?...Those who assume that such an exception has been made, are bound to produce the clearest evidence of the fact...to justify a departure from a plainly revealed law of God." — pg. 387-388

But, of course, no one needs to produce a “special exception” to a law that never was, an *illusory* “law of monogamy” which is nowhere to be found in the Bible. Moreover, are not Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17 “plainly revealed law(s) of God” which permit polygamy? How does Hodge “justify a departure from (these) plainly revealed law(s) of God?” Fact of the matter is, Hodge never even tried.

So concludes Hodge’s treatment of the subject of polygamy. It should be as clear as the light at this juncture that the “monogamy only” doctrine is as riddled with holes as the moon is pockmarked with craters. It is a defective doctrine in its fundamental formulation. Though asserted with much confidence by Hodge and the Evangelical church as a whole, the doctrine is in reality a crumbling ruin. It begins from a false premise and ends with tautologies, non sequiturs, and absurdities. As it presently stands, the “orthodox” doctrine commands the respect of no thinking person, and is adhered to more out of a knee-jerk adherence to cultural conformity and majority opinion than to commitment to the Bible as God’s revealed Word.

It must be pointed out that the commentators’ views examined so far are by no means inferior specimens of human intellect. Hodge is widely regarded as the best of all American theologians. Rushdoony was clearly a towering intellect, Archer a consummate scholar, and much the same can be said of the commentators’ views I will be examining in the next articles. If the reader is not well versed in Christian literature, he might perhaps entertain the notion that I have selected those writings that were the easiest to refute. I can assure the reader that more articulate and thoughtful defenses of the doctrine of monogamy are not to be found. This being the case, if such a flawed and utterly deficient defense of monogamy is the best that the best can offer, then the doctrine of monogamy is in serious trouble, and is a powerful testimony in its own right in favor of polygamy.

I believe that I have definitively demonstrated in this work that the anti-polygamy arguments are an utter failure. If the doctrine of monogamy is going to stand, then completely different premises and lines of reasoning are required for its support. (I cannot imagine what those premises and lines of reasoning could be.)

The present dogma has stood for so long only because it has not been seriously challenged from a consistently Biblical basis on the conviction of “*Sola Scriptura*.”

## Article 46: The Commentators, #4: Murray

### #4. John Murray: “Principles of Conduct”

*Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jehoram, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: **And he had two wives**; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other was 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. —I Samuel 1:1-3*

I regard Scotland’s John Murray as the best theologian of the twentieth century, and his book, “Principles of Conduct,” as a true masterpiece of doctrinal commentary. “Principles of Conduct,” though not generally known by the Christian community at large, is largely responsible for the present surge of interest in Biblical law. He is certainly a prime influence on those who promote “Christian Reconstruction,” via the influence of his book, on men such as Rousas Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, and others. Like a boulder dropped into the water, the influence of his book has radiated outward affecting many who are unaware even of the book’s existence.

John Murray’s polemic on monogamy and polygamy is particularly interesting and relevant from the standpoint of a believer in the continuing validity of the Law of God as revealed in the Old Testament. Unlike most modern Christian commentators, Murray was no antinomian, but he proceeded from the same theonomic premise shared by myself. J. I. Packer, in the introduction to “Principles of Conduct,” sums up Murray’s proposition nicely:

“Principles of Conduct,” first published in 1957, is in fact Murray’s masterpiece. It is best read as an exploring and fleshing out, and thereby a testing and verifying, of three hermeneutical hypotheses:

“(1) that a single, perfectly coherent divine-command ethic (the law of God) is taught from Genesis to Revelation, and thus remains in force from history’s beginning to its

anticipated end...that law-keeping belongs to the purest expression of pure religion.”  
—pg. 5-6

Murray himself, in the “Preface,” expressed it thusly:

“One of the main purposes of this volume is to seek to show the basic unity and continuity of the Biblical ethic...

“The ten commandments, it will surely be admitted, furnish the core of the biblical ethic...And it will also be seen that, as they did not *begin* to have relevance at Sinai, so they did not cease to have relevance when the sinaitic economy had passed away.”  
—pg. 7

What a breath of fresh air Murray is! Whatever may be said about his conclusions, his lucidity is refreshing. Murray obviously had a crystal clear view of the issues at stake involved in the question of Biblical polygamy. Murray at least sees the difficulties and clearly and plainly articulates the problems. It is apparent almost from the first sentence that this is a superior and extraordinary mind at work.

Murray’s thesis has some knotty problems for traditional Evangelical “orthodoxy,” as Murray and others readily admit. One of those problems, if not the chief problem, is the subject of polygamy. Indeed, virtually every commentator who has undertaken to comment upon the Biblical ethic has had to deal with this issue sooner or later, at least in passing. Murray quickly gets to the essence of the problem:

“Is there one coherent and consistent ethic set forth in the Bible? Is there not diversity, and diversity of a kind that embraces antithetical elements? Are there not in the Bible canons of conduct that are contrary to one another? To be specific: Is there not an antithesis between the canons of conduct sanctioned and approved of God in the Old Testament and those sanctioned and approved by God in the New Testament in respect of certain central features of human behavior?” —pg. 13

Clearly Murray realizes what is at stake here, unlike the vast majority of modern commentators who seem oblivious to these questions. *The integrity of the Scriptures hangs on the resolution of these questions.* Are there contradictions in the Bible? Is God Himself self-contradictory? Is God immutable or changeable? Murray, thankfully, maintains a high view of God and His revelation. Murray contends that God is immutable, and that His moral Law is unchangeable, being a reflection of His own character.

But the issues of polygamy and monogamy were a rock upon which Murray stumbled. For Murray, and for Evangelicals as a whole, this issue has been like the sword Excalibur, intractably embedded in the Rock of Holy Writ, stubbornly defiant to the efforts of men to withdraw its contents. The problem

lies in the *premises* to which the Evangelical Church has been committed. To wit, in the words of Murray:

"It is a patent fact that the behavior of the most illustrious of Old Testament believers was characterized by practices which are clearly contradictory of the elementary demands of the New Testament ethic. Monogamy is surely a principle of the Christian ethic. Old Testament saints practised polygamy. In like manner, divorce was practised on grounds which could not be tolerated in terms of the explicit provisions of the New Testament revelation. And *polygamy and divorce were practised without overt disapprobation* in terms of the canons of behavior which were recognized as regulative in the Old Testament period." —pg. 14, emphasis supplied

This is Murray's *premise* from which the rest of his argument proceeds. His assertions about polygamy and divorce are *both* in error. It is not a good conceptual and logical place from which to begin one's thesis. Murray acknowledges as much:

"These are questions which must be faced, remembering that in these instances of polygamy and divorce *we are not dealing with deviations from the explicitly revealed provisions of Old Testament law* as, for example, the adultery and murder committed by David for which he was so sharply reprov'd in terms of recognized law." —pg. 14, emphasis supplied.

Unfortunately, Murray is about the *only* theologian to face these questions which must be faced. I would insist, supplementing Murray's exhortation, that these questions must not only be faced, but *answered definitively*. The subject of adultery is the Achilles heel of Murray's argument. *Does polygamy constitute adultery?* Yes or no? (As is evident in the above quote, Murray plainly does not categorize it as such.) This is the essential question. If it does, then David's marriage to Abigail, etc., etc., etc. was just as much adultery as his adultery with Bathsheba. How can one case of adultery be worse than another case of adultery? If it does not constitute adultery, then what is the ground of its condemnation? Was adultery (sometimes) tolerated under the Old Covenant? If so, what is the point of the seventh commandment?

Murray continues:

"Our study is not empirical ethics but the biblically approved ethic. The polygamy and divorce with which we are now concerned would meet with the severest reproof and condemnation in the New Testament; but in the Old Testament there appears to be no overt pronouncement of condemnation and no infliction of disciplinary judgment." —pg. 15

Again, I ask: did not the Decalogue outlaw adultery? Is polygamy adultery or not? But to continue with Murray:

“Are we not compelled to recognize that the New Testament not only marks a distinct development in the progress of revelation, but also, in some of the basic particulars of human behavior, institutes a change from one set of canons to another, and that therefore there is not only development and addition but reversal and abrogation? Is the case such that it was perfectly consonant with the law established and revealed by God in the Old Testament for a man to have more than one wife at the same time...whereas in the New Testament it is unequivocally wrong and severely censurable for a man to have more than one wife...*we are required to face squarely the question of the relation of the Old Testament to the New* in respect of the criteria of upright and holy living.” —pg. 15

Murray *rejects* the idea that the New Testament reverses and abrogates Old Testament morality. What other explanatory alternatives are there? Murray answers:

“It would be easy to say that, under the Old Testament, the principle of monogamy had not been established...It could also be argued that the law of monogamy is not one that springs from the nature and perfections of God, but is positive, and receives its sanction simply from the sovereign will of God. In terms of this line of thought it might be God’s will to institute monogamy as the rule for one period of time and in one set of circumstances while the institution of polygamy had been perfectly proper at another time.” —pg. 15-16

Though Murray does not mention him by name, Murray is responding here to Charles Hodge’s treatment of this subject in his “Systematic Theology.” What is Murray’s judgment on Hodge’s approach to solving this dilemma?

“However appealing and plausible such a notion might appear to be, it is faced with the difficulty that it does not fit the pertinent revelatory data in both testaments...The only thesis that appears to me to be compatible with these data is that polygamy and divorce (for light cause) were permitted or tolerated under the Old Testament...but that nevertheless they were not legitimated...they were violations of a creation ordinance. They were really contrary to the revealed will of God and rested under his judgment.” —pg. 16

Murray cites Matthew 19:3-8 and Mark 10:2-9, “for the hardness of your hearts,” in support of this assertion pertaining to divorce. But does Murray correctly apprehend Christ’s meaning here? And even if he does, do these observations about divorce necessarily apply also to polygamy? It is my contention that Murray misunderstands this clause; Christ does not mean, “Because of the hardness of your hearts, God permitted you the sins of divorce and polygamy.” He is saying, “Because hard-hearted men and women commit adultery, it is necessary to institute divorce *as punishment* upon the adulterers. But God’s creation purpose is for marriages to be permanent. The divorce provision of the Law is not meant to be exercised upon whimsical demand.” *That* is the true meaning of Christ’s words in Matthew 19. But even allowing Murray’s interpretation of “for the hardness of your hearts”

to go unchallenged, we are *still* left with some deep, deep difficulties. Murray was aware of this, but came to a conclusion that even he was uncomfortable with:

“If Jesus could enunciate this position in reference to divorce, there is no good reason why the same principle should not be applied to polygamy. The position would be that because of perversity they were permitted to take more wives than one. Polygamy was not penalized by civil or ecclesiastical censures, even though in terms of the creation ordinance it was a violation of the divine institution.” —pg. 17

Murray admits the contradiction involved here:

“The *tension* which appears in this interpretation is something which must be recognized. *It is not ours to resolve all difficulties* in our understanding of God’s ways with men. It is not ours to understand some of the patent facts of God’s providence.” —pg. 18, emphasis supplied

The word “tension” is, of course, a polite euphemism for “contradiction.” One can only commend Murray for his honesty on this point. Despite the best that he could do, his premise and resulting syllogism conclude with a contradiction, an inconsistency, and *unresolved* questions which we simply *cannot* understand. The proper understanding of “for the hardness of your hearts” involves no “tension” or contradiction with Old Testament morality.

Murray is essentially asking the reader at this juncture to surrender to irrationality. The severity of punishment continually inflicted upon the Israelites for various offenses, including adultery, argues volumes against Murray’s thesis that God, in His Law, “tolerated” the supposed sin of polygamy. Murray makes no attempt at all to defend the notion that polygamy is a sin but yet does not constitute adultery. Adultery, let me emphasize, was *not* tolerated under the Law of God in Israel. The penalty was death at worst, and divorce at best.

Such is where we wind up when we premise that monogamy is “the law of creation.” In Chapter Three of his book, Murray discusses the polygamy of Lamech:

“The first recorded deviation from the law of monogamy is the case of Lamech. ‘And Lamech took unto him two wives’ (Genesis 4:19). The context *suggests...*that the taking of two wives is coordinate with the other vices which appear so conspicuously in this case...And we can scarcely suppress the *inference* that the reference to Lamech’s digamy is for the purpose of *intimating* to us that his departure from monogamy goes hand in hand with these other vices and is intended to carry an *indirect indictment* of its wrong.” —pg. 45-46, emphasis supplied

Murray insists that Genesis 2:23-24 implies monogamy as a “law.” We have already seen that Genesis 2:18 involves the necessary approval of polygamy and that Genesis 2:23-24 applies to a polygamist, as well as a monogamist, in regard to *each* of his wives. Obviously, both Murray’s thesis and mine rely upon implication in this regard. In an attempt to resolve this dispute, appeal must be made to

other portions of Scripture which are more direct and explicit; it is precisely when this is done that the “monogamy-only” position breaks down. There is *no* express prohibition against polygamy anywhere in the Bible, Old or New Testament. *All* assertions that polygamy is unlawful rely upon inference. The strength of the pro-polygamy position rests upon the *explicit permission* of the Scriptures, the most notable examples being Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17—which examples are supplemented by laws which *mandate* polygamy under certain circumstances in Exodus 22:16-17, Deuteronomy 22:28-29, and Deuteronomy 25:5-10. In addition to this is the explicit statement of God to David in II Samuel 12:7-8 that He, God Himself, had given the wives of Saul into David’s own bosom, the metaphor of polygamy God applies to Himself in Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3, and all the exegetical evidence we have previously covered in regard to the polygamists.

Evangelicals have allowed borrowed, pagan Roman mores to cloud their apprehension of the Biblical text. *How* can indirect inference be credited with more weight than explicit Biblical assertion? And *why* should it? Murray and the Church as a whole have allowed human speculation and sentiment to supplant the explicit testimony of the Scriptures.

This is Murray’s approach to Lamech: “the context *suggests*.” This is the best that Murray (or anyone else) can do with Genesis 4:17. “We can scarcely suppress the *inference*.” “This,” he says, “is an *indirect indictment* of its wrong.” Following Murray’s own interpretive method here, let us apply this rule to the story of Elkanah. Unlike Lamech, Elkanah was a worshipper of the LORD. This is our *context*. Like Lamech, Elkanah had two wives. To paraphrase Murray, “I can scarcely suppress the *inference* that the reference to Elkanah’s polygamy is for the purpose of *intimating* to us that his adherence to polygamy goes hand in hand with his other acts of piety and is intended to carry an *indirect approval* of its righteousness.” Clearly, Murray’s interpretive approach to Lamech is faulty.

What does the polygamy of Lamech prove? Nothing. One cannot validly propose that *every* act of a wicked man violates God’s Law. What does the polygamy of righteous Elkanah prove? Well, more than Lamech’s, for if polygamy constitutes adultery, or is otherwise a sin, then Elkanah was guilty of violating a fundamental law and, *ergo*, he was *not* a righteous man after all, but a wicked sinner. Conversely, the blessing of Samuel’s birth implies God’s approval upon Elkanah’s polygamous household.

As with the other commentators examined, Murray sees the creation account as necessitating monogamy:

“The *prima facie* sense of Genesis 2:24 is that one man is to be joined to one woman and that the *two* become one flesh...It we interject the thought of digamy, not to speak of polygamy, we bring such complication into the situation and the relationship described in verse 24 that we should have the greatest difficulty in reconciling the terms of verse 24 with a digamous relationship of either the man or the woman.” —  
pg. 29

But this “difficulty” and “complication” is easily resolved by observing that the verse applies to the man in regard to *each* of his wives. Why is this so complicated? Is this not superbly elementary? And it is to be reiterated that I Corinthians 6:16 makes it plain that even in the case of prostitution a man becomes one flesh with the prostitute:

*What? know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*

Murray continues his apologetic on monogamy thusly:

“The fullest revelation we possess on the question of marriage, that by our Lord and the apostle Paul, appeals to Genesis 2:24 as the definitive word of institution (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:3-9; Ephesians 5:31). It will surely not be questioned that these New Testament passages enunciate the principle of monogamy...” —pg. 29-30

But, of course, I am not only questioning this assertion but refuting it as completely untenable. And I cannot help but wonder here, as I did with Rushdoony, whether there is more going on here than is stated on the surface? Is Murray drawing attention to the fact that he is not questioning his premise in hopes that future commentators *would*? Is he laying a foundation here for pro-polygamy adherents who are not so totally *vested* in the institutions of traditional Evangelicalism? There seems to me to be a disingenuous approach on the part of Murray, both in this statement and also in explicitly informing the reader on page 18 that he is leaving the reader and concluding his thesis with a “tension,” a contradiction, (and much the same can be said for his treatment of Leviticus 18:18 in his Appendix). Murray *must* have known that that was not going to sit well with those who are zealous to defend the Divine inspiration and integrity of the Scriptures, that is to say, virtually *all* orthodox Evangelicals. This makes me strongly suspect that Murray believed polygamy to be lawful, but could not say so overtly. Formally, he denies the validity of polygamy; but logically, he crafts his polemic in such a manner as to open the door for a pro-polygamy argument.

Those who would wish to cite and refer their readers to Rushdoony and Murray as defenders of monogamy better be careful here; the logical terminus of their arguments is *not* what they are formally advocating. In my own case, it was Rushdoony’s polemic against polygamy that succeeded in persuading me of its lawfulness. (In connection with this speculation of mine, I would be interested in knowing whether Rushdoony and Murray ever had any personal acquaintance or correspondence with one another.) In Matthew 19:9, Jesus states, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” This statement is commonly cited as refutation of polygamy. But is it? Is it not rather a refutation of divorce on demand? What if a man does *not* put away his wife and marries another? If the one flesh relationship, that is the “duty of marriage” (Exo.21:10), with the first wife remains intact, then the marital bond has *not* been divided asunder. Is this not, in fact, precisely what Exodus 21:10 informs us? The adultery in the example given us by Christ consists of *the dissolution of the marital bond with the first wife* and the *substitution* of her with a second wife.

Exodus 21:10-11 commands, “If he take him another wife, her...duty of marriage shall he not diminish. If he do *not* (this) unto her, *then* she shall go out free without money.” It is the failure of the husband to continue providing sexual relations with the first wife, not taking a second wife, which releases the first wife from her marriage. In short, taking a second wife does not constitute adultery, but doing so to *replace* the first wife does.

Since the concubine is permitted to divorce her master on grounds of failure to provide sexual relations, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the master has violated the marital union. What word best describes the violation of the marital bond? Is it not *adultery*? We see, then, that this law both permits polygamy and at the same time does not permit the putting away of the first wife. If, however, the master *should* put her away via desertion of the marriage bed, the concubine is then given the right of divorce. How else are we to categorize the offense of the master other than as adultery? I see no plausible escape from this conclusion. *This is directly relevant to whether or not Christ's words in Matthew 19 invalidate polygamy* because Exodus 21 addresses the exact same scenario as does Christ, that is, the putting away of a first wife, substituting her with a second wife, *but* it explicitly permits polygamy in the same context. There is, therefore, no valid way to conclude that Christ's words in Matthew 19 invalidate polygamy.

Ironically, one of the stronger indications of the lawfulness of polygamy is commented upon by Murray, but he misses the implication:

“We have striking examples in patriarchal times of the recognition of the sanctity which guarded the institution of procreation. Undoubtedly the most signal instance is the profound sense of the demands of chastity in the case of Joseph. When plied with alluring and persistent temptation to violate the sanctity of conjugal intercourse he said: ‘How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God’ (Genesis 39:9). In the face of such sensitivity and nobility of character we must infer that in the patriarchal circles there was an intense cultivation *by both precept and practice* of the sanctity of sex and of the properties by which its urges are to be regulated. Chastity in its grandeur is written across the history of Joseph. The inculcation of the demands of chastity must have been a feature of patriarchal religious instruction.” —pg. 47

How could Murray *not* perceive that this fact provides a strong defense of the validity of polygamy? While we would not expect total sinless perfection from Abraham and his household, it is hardly consistent with righteousness to flagrantly and continually violate these laws. If polygamy were truly a violation of a fundamental creation ordinance, then we would expect that Abraham and his household would have been monogamous; and if not, we would surely expect to see explicit censure and condemnation by God. Yet we do not. (I cannot help but wonder again, is Murray handing over a Trojan horse to the Church here? It looks outwardly like an anti-polygamy thesis. Yet when you open it up, out comes a rather potent fighting force of pro-polygamy soldiers.)

In an extended footnote, Murray sets forth the divorce-polygamy analogy; amazingly, this is how Murray, along with J. D. Michaelis whom he quotes, attempts to dispense with all of the positive laws of the Pentateuch:

“With reference to divorce in the Old Testament this thesis is argued by the present writer in the volume “Divorce” (Philadelphia, pp. 3-8, 13-16, 29-33, 43-45). The same line of thought applies to polygamy. In a later chapter in the present volume monogamy as the original creation ordinance is established from Gen. 2:23, 24 and the relevant passages from the New Testament.

“J. D. Michaelis in his “Commentaries on the Laws of Moses”...contends that the Mosaic laws permitted more than one wife. The following quotations will provide the gist of the argument. ‘How much soever may be denied it, nothing is more certain than that by the civil laws of Moses, a man was allowed to have more wives than one...It is certain that *before* the time of Moses, polygamy was in use among the ancestors of the Israelites, and that even Abraham and Jacob lived in it’ Vol. II pg. 1). ‘As then, Moses, adhering to established usage, nowhere prohibited a man’s taking a second or third wife, along with the first, it is clear that, as a civil right, it continued allowable; for what has hitherto been customary, and permitted, remains so, in a civil sense, as long as no positive law is enacted against it’ (ibid., p. 4). ‘The law of Deut. xxi.15-17 presupposes the case of a man having *two* wives, one of whom he peculiarly loves, while the other, whom he hates, is the mother of his firstborn’ (p.5). ‘The law of Exod. xxi. 9,10...expressly permits the father, who has given his son a slave for a wife, to give him, some years after, a second wife, of freer birth; and prescribes how the first was then to be treated...When Moses in Lev. xviii. 18 prohibits a man from marrying the sister of his wife, to vex her while she lives, it manifestly supposes the liberty of taking another wife beside the first, and during her lifetime, provided only it was *not* her sister’ (p.6).

“This treatment of the relevant evidence is about as strong a case as can reasonably be made for the sufferance of polygamy under the law of Moses. It is to be noted that he has spoken of the ‘civil right’ of polygamy or ‘the permission of polygamy on civil grounds’ (idem.). It is significant that Michaelis, in the final analysis, takes the position that this permission, in terms of civil right, is in the same category as divorce, to wit, that it was tolerated because of hardness of heart. ‘I am therefore of opinion,’ he says, ‘that in regard to the polygamy allowed among the Israelites, we can say nothing else than what Christ has said on the subject of divorce. Moses tolerated it on *account of their hardness of heart*, and because it would have been found a difficult matter to deprive them of a custom already so firmly established.’ ”  
—pg. 16-17

I cannot help but quote Genesis 18:14: “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” a sentiment echoed in Numbers 11:23, Isaiah 59:1, Jeremiah 32:27, etc. Also, the hardness of the Israelites’ hearts did not prevent the LORD from enacting the *rest* of the Law, *all* of which in one way or another restrained

the wickedness of the natural man. To claim that the LORD, for some inscrutable reason, exempted polygamy, overlooked this one particular “sin” (along with divorce) is sheer absurdity. The LORD called Israel to be a holy nation, and the precepts of His Law gave them a *perfect standard* of that holiness (see Ps. 19), lacking in absolutely nothing. Moreover, “ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it” (Deut. 4:2). The *addition* of a prohibition against polygamy to the word of God is a violation of this commandment. It is disobedience.

Concerning Michaelis’ observations that “nothing is more certain” than that polygamy was allowed, and that this is something which the Law “expressly permitted,” more heed ought to have been given to this fact than either Michaelis or Murray were willing to concede. If polygamy is morally acceptable, then we would expect to find it permitted in the positive precepts of the Law, and this is what we *do* find. The conclusion is inescapable: polygamy is morally good. The evil lies in its prohibition and denunciation.

Finally, it is to be noted that “the relevant evidence” of the Law not only gives us a “strong case” for polygamy but constitutes conclusive, demonstrable *proof* of its acceptability—and not merely as a “civil right,” but as the enunciation of the standard of righteousness.

The last text which Murray comments upon, in an Appendix, is Leviticus 18:18. There is more in Murray’s observations to vindicate polygamy than to condemn it in these remarks.

Murray begins by quoting Leviticus 18:16: “Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother’s wife: it is thy brother’s nakedness.” Murray then notes the levirate law of Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and comments to the effect that Leviticus 18:16 might well apply if there were children. This is clearly a possible conclusion. This is not directly relevant to polygamy, however.

Concerning verse 18, Murray says, “The main thought is that a man may not take his wife’s sister to uncover her nakedness during the lifetime of the other.” Murray notes Michaelis’ comments on this verse:

“As to his doing so in the lifetime of the first, I cannot comprehend how it should ever have been imagined that Moses also prohibited marriage with a deceased wife’s sister...What Moses prohibited was merely *simultaneous polygamy* with two sisters.”  
—pg. 252

S.H. Kellogg comments to the same effect:

“No words could well be more explicit than those which we have here, in limiting the application of the prohibition to the life-time of the wife.” quoted by John Murray in Principles of Conduct—pg. 252

While not decisively advocating the view, Murray proposes the possibility that the word “sister” may be meant to have a wide signification, namely, *any* other woman, and thus be referring to polygamy.

In other words, the possibility that Leviticus 18:18 is a prohibition against polygamy, *per se*. This is an interesting conjecture. Does the context of the verse support this interpretation? Murray comments:

"There is also much to be said in favor of the view that (Murray gives the actual Hebrew for "sister" here) in this verse is a sister, literally understood. In the passage (Murray gives the Hebrew again) is used in this sense in verses 9, 11, 12, and 13, and we should reasonably expect that it would be used in the same sense in verse 18. Only strong considerations to the contrary would carry weight in support of another conclusion." —pg. 252

That the reader may see the full import of this, let us quote the verses from Leviticus 18; verse 9: "The nakedness of thy *sister*, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother..." Verse 11: "The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy *sister*..." Verse 13: "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's *sister*," etc.

Clearly, the context does *not* support the view that the word "sister" in verse 18 is to be understood loosely. The *specificity* of these provisions is manifest. Moreover, because each of these provisions concerns "uncovering of nakedness," it is clear that the *topic* remains unchanged, of proper relations with near of kin. There is no dramatic change of the object of discussion in verse 18. Therefore the view that the word "sister" in verse 18 changes its referent to women in general is simply unfounded.

Murray goes on to cite the fact that the Hebrew idiom, "one to another," or "a man to his brother," is used in Scripture without necessarily implying that the men are brothers in the literal sense. This is all well and fine, but we cannot simply dismiss the context of Leviticus 18. When Leviticus 19:19 tells us that "thou shalt not hate thy *brother* in thy heart," we have no problem understanding that it is humanity in general that we are not to hate, and not merely the literal son of our father or mother. The fact that the word "brother" or "sister" can be used in a broad sense is no obstacle to our understanding of Leviticus 18:18 as a literal sister in the strict sense. Why? Because the chapter is dealing with proper relations to near of kin. Thus, this observation does *not* constitute a "strong consideration" that the word should be understood loosely in verse 18. When we give all due deference to the Biblical usage of "sister" we still have the reasonable expectation that the word is used in the strict sense in verse 18.

Murray notes:

"There are difficulties encountering this interpretation. If it is such an express prohibition of digamy or polygamy, why were digamy and polygamy practiced subsequent to the time of Moses without overt condemnation in terms of this statute? If digamy is here expressly forbidden we should expect a penalty in terms of the Pentateuch itself. And why should there be at Leviticus 18:18 such a sudden transition from prohibitions concerned with marriages within certain degrees of kinship to a provision of an entirely different character?" —pg. 254

Amen. Thus the “strong considerations” which Murray saw as *necessary* to undercut the traditional understanding of Leviticus 18:18 as being in the category of kinship relations are absent. Indeed, all of the “strong considerations” favor the view that this is *one kind* of polygamy which was outlawed, in the context of a law-order which permitted polygamy *per se*. Murray, however, stood on the fence on the interpretation of this verse. It is clear that it is only the traditional view on monogamy and polygamy which impelled him to consider the possibility that this might be a general prohibition against polygamy. If there *had* been an express commandment against polygamy elsewhere in the Bible, no one would have ever tried to find such a prohibition in this verse. In short, the ambiguity in Murray’s mind resulted from factors *external* to Leviticus 18:18. A loose interpretation of the word “sister” in Leviticus 18:18 must be *read into* the passage and cannot be legitimately exegeted from it.

## Article 47: The Commentators, #5: Kaiser

### #5. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.: “Toward Old Testament Ethics”

If John Murray’s rigorously logical treatment of polygamy dead-ends in an admitted contradiction because of his premises, Walter C. Kaiser’s approach to Biblical polygamy is the theological equivalent of Custer’s Last Stand. It is a Last Ditch Effort of a commentator who understands that the exegetical Indians are about to acquire the scalps of the monogamy-only fort. The reader should understand that the scholarly commentators are well aware of the commentaries which have preceded them, and are not commenting in a vacuum or upon a clean slate. Kaiser is clearly aware of the things Hodge and Murray wrote. From some of his other writings, it is clear that he is familiar with Rushdoony’s writings as well. Kaiser is apparently unhappy with the end-result of Murray’s thesis and the insufficiency of the train of thought promulgated by Hodge, Archer, Rushdoony, etc. He seems appalled by the logical implications inherent in their arguments.

Kaiser fights his Battle For Monogamy as if it were an all-out war (“All is fair in love and war,” that is). Kaiser, unlike Murray, is not about to content himself with a stalemate or a “tension” as the outcome of his thesis. His M.O.? Change the rules of the game. Or, more accurately, dispense with the rules altogether. Kaiser’s treatment of polygamy is an object-lesson on kicking against the pricks, and a proof that even orthodox Evangelical scholars can be every bit as devoted to tradition (as opposed to *Sola Scriptura*) as any Thomist in the face of Biblical testimony to the contrary.

Kaiser self-consciously begins where John Murray leaves off. Quoting Murray in “Principles of Conduct,” we can see exactly what it is that disturbs Kaiser:

“How could God allow his people, in some cases the most eminent of Old Testament saints, to practice what was a violation of his preceptive will...Our Lord...tells us explicitly that it was the hardness of their hearts.” —pg. 35-36

Kaiser is enough of a logician and well-read scholar to know that Greg Bahnsen, in “Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” has utterly devastated this idea of God “tolerating evil” via the provisions of His Law. He knows that this line of thought is a dead-end. Kaiser is clearly appalled by the implications

and logical terminus of where that whole train has arrived. How does Kaiser, standing upon the shoulders of Hodge, Murray, Rushdoony, Bahnsen, etc., deal with the mess that has been handed to him by his scholarly forefathers? Well, quite bluntly, Kaiser is willing to give up his pawns (scholarly integrity, textual fidelity, and logical analysis) but not his king (monogamy-only). No way! Apparently, Kaiser never expected anyone to take him to task—at least not on *this* issue. Kaiser was mistaken. Lest the reader suspect that I am giving Kaiser a “bum rap,” let us proceed forthwith to Kaiser.

“Genesis 2:21-24 presents the creation of the first two human beings and their monogamous marriage as the will of God. Indeed, *all* the fathers from Adam to Noah in Seth’s line of descent are *said* to be monogamous.” — pg. 182, *emph. supp.*

Is this statement true? *Where* does Genesis “say” this? Kaiser’s statement here is a blatant, demonstrable falsehood and, unfortunately, anticipates the nature of the rest of his argument. Where is the chapter and verse for this amazing statement? Kaiser supplies none. And for good reason: there is none. Kaiser’s statement is apparently intended for consumption by the Christian public at large, or those who already agree with his premise (and who, therefore, could be expected not to object too strenuously to this falsehood). From the outset, it is clear that Kaiser is both desperate and disingenuous in his approach to polygamy.

Moreover, Kaiser claims:

“In addition to Lamech, only one other passage before the Deluge gives evidence of polygamy during this long period of time, namely, Genesis 6:1-7. But it was precisely *because of man’s autocratic and polygamous ways* that God destroyed the earth with a flood.” — pg. 183, *emph. supp.*

Again, Kaiser invents a lie. What the Bible precisely *does* say is, “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with *violence* through them,” (Gen. 6:13). God did not say, “The earth is filled with polygamy,” but *violence*. Exactly what Genesis 6:1-7 has to do with polygamy is beyond me. That passage has to do with *intermarriage* of the righteous line of Seth with the wicked line of Cain. Even on the more esoteric view of some that this passage refers to interspecies mating of humans with angels, polygamy is still irrelevant. Now, I will concede that the antediluvian world could be condemned as “autocratic,” but where is the mention of polygamy which Kaiser asserts? Again, for the second time, there is no such statement in Genesis. Kaiser, it seems, has a very active imagination.

Continuing in this vein, Kaiser says, “Abraham’s brother Nahor had a concubine and Abraham was talked into having temporary sexual relations with Sarah’s handmaiden Hagar,” (pg. 183). Exactly how a period of fourteen plus years can be characterized as “temporary,” Kaiser does not explain. As Genesis 21 makes clear, Hagar was not cast out of Abraham’s household until Isaac was weaned, sometime after Ishmael was fourteen years old. Though we are not told explicitly that Abraham continued sexual relations with Hagar after the birth of Ishmael, we *are* told in Genesis 16:3 that

Hagar had been given to Abraham as his *wife*. Having taken this marital responsibility unto himself, are we to assume that Hagar was deprived of "the duty of marriage" (Exo. 21:10) which was *owed* her? The assumption must be that Abraham acted honorably, not treacherously. Besides, God plainly told Isaac that his father had lived *obediently*. To have taken Hagar merely temporarily and then to have put her away after the birth of Isaac would have involved the worst kind of callous disregard for Hagar's humanity.

Kaiser's assertion here involves a parochialism that cannot get beyond his own individualistic cultural conditioning and perspective. Unlike us who are the heirs of Roman civilization, Abraham and his household would have had (and *did* have) much more contention and jealousy over their children than over the issue of sexual relations. Modern Westerners just do not seem capable of understanding that sexual relations of a man with multiple wives would not have elicited the same kind of emotional response that it does among us. The reason is because it did not have the same *significance* to them that it does to us: *our* self-image and sense of self-worth plays out in the context of a supremely individualistic orientation; whereas in a patriarchal society, an individual's self image and sense of self-worth is *profoundly* connected to their *group* identity. In our civilization, taking another woman is interpreted to mean, "I *reject* you." Whereas, in a patriarchal culture which permits polygamy, taking another woman signified that she was *included* in a blessed and prosperous family with a certain amount of *prestige* being associated with this fact. Kaiser, and Westerners in general, just simply cannot conceive of this.

From the above, the reader should begin to see the obvious, namely, that Kaiser is not on the level on this issue. These patent falsehoods, though, are just the tip of the iceberg.

Kaiser continues, "During these thousands of years since the beginning, we have only six examples of polygamy." This is a more subtle form of dishonesty, but it is still a deliberately misleading statement. Kaiser gives the impression that because thousands of years have passed in the first part of Genesis, that somehow this necessitates a thorough enumeration of *all* of the examples of polygamy that ever existed. This is hardly a valid assumption. For one thing, the genealogies almost completely *omit* any mention of wives and daughters. Secondly, the first part of Genesis is in summary form. There is simply no concern of making much ado about something that was mundane to them.

Next, Kaiser says, "In the next period, moving through the divided monarchy, there are only thirteen single instances" of polygamy, (pg. 183). Did Kaiser say "*only*?" Now, dear reader, if polygamy was such a heinous sin, as Kaiser contends, then thirteen men of repute who practiced it can hardly be denominated as "*only*." If I told you that thirteen American presidents were known to have committed adultery, you would certainly want to know why *so many* of them were adulterers. You would be wondering why *so many* evil men were able to be elected as President. The absurdity of Kaiser's verbal legerdemain is compounded by the fact that *eleven* of the thirteen were judges and kings *raised up by God*. The question is not, "Why were there so *few* polygamists?" but why were there so *many* of them?

Continuing in this vein, Kaiser states, "Some will wonder: why was not punishment inflicted on these polygamists by the government...On the contrary, there was censure for this type of adulterous action

in the Deluge and in the law of Moses,” (pg. 183). One begins to wonder why Kaiser’s book is not placed in the fiction section. Once again, Kaiser lies. He fabricates, out of thin air, “censure” and “punishment” for polygamy in the flood and in the Law of Moses. *Where* is the punishment for polygamy stipulated in the Law of Moses? In Exodus? Leviticus? Numbers? Deuteronomy? John Murray was distressed precisely because *he could not find* any such stipulation. Kaiser alleges that there *is*, but he cites no such passage. The reason why he does not is obvious. *Why* does Kaiser lie about things that are *demonstrably* untrue?

Kaiser then goes on to state:

“In addition to this, the narratives of Scripture imply that this state of affairs is the major reason for much of the misfortune that comes into the domestic lives of these polygamists. Scripture does not always pause to state the obvious.” —pg. 183-184

But, using Deuteronomy 21:15-17 as our guide, is it not more likely that the discord in Jacob’s and Elkanah’s household was due to their *partiality* and favoritism and not their polygamy? Genesis 29:31 plainly tells us that God shut up Rachel’s womb from conceiving because Jacob hated Leah and favored Rachel. With an explicit statement such as this about *why* this happened, this certainly refutes Kaiser’s contention that the cause of such discord is so “obviously” to be found in the fact of polygamy.

Moreover, as noted above, Kaiser calls polygamy, “adulterous action.” As has been pointed out so many times in the course of this work, if polygamy constitutes adultery, then its tolerance among men of God in the Old Testament, and its regulation and establishment under the Law, become truly incomprehensible, indeed. Kaiser, it would seem, is cognizant of this fact, for he then proceeds to deal with the Mosaic provisions themselves. Having thusly set the stage with such thoroughgoing dishonesty, what follows is no surprise.

Kaiser’s subchapter is titled, “The Issue of Polygamy.” I hereby commend to the reader the following alternate titles: “An Evangelical Primer on Scripture Twisting,” or “A How-to Guide on Exegetical Deck Stacking,” or “Alice in Bibleland.” Lewis Carroll would have been green with envy at Kaiser’s knack of making words mean anything one chooses. Let us proceed to Kaiser’s version of Wonderland.

“Those who believe there was direct or implied permission for polygamy in the Old Testament usually point to these four passages: Exodus 21: 7-11; Leviticus 18:18; Deuteronomy 21:15-17; and II Samuel 12:7-8.” —pg. 184

Exodus 21:7-11 is Kaiser’s first text. He quotes the passage and then alleges, “There are three mistakes made in this translation,” (i.e., the NIV). The NIV does not deviate in substance from the KJV in these verses. These “mistakes,” says Kaiser, “*are commonly repeated in other translations,*” (pg. 184). Let the reader bear that in mind as the next quote from Kaiser is read.

“The first is in verse 8 where the translators follow the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text and substitute for the small but extremely significant ‘not’...the reading, ‘for himself.’ The preferred and majority reading is “not” in most Hebrew manuscripts; all manuscripts and editions of Samaritan Pentateuch; and the versions of the Syriac, Persian, and Arabic. Only in six Hebrew manuscripts does the qere, codex Vaticanus of the Septuagint, the Lagardiana edition of the Septuagint the Targum, and Vulgate suggest ‘for himself.’ Verse 8 should read thus;

“If she displeases her master, so that he does not betroth her to himself he shall not allow her to be redeemed.” —pg. 184

The issue Kaiser is raising here is not one of *translation* but of choosing between different textual strains. As is well known, the KJV follows the majority text rule. By stating that “the preferred and majority text reading is ‘not’ in most Hebrew manuscripts,” Kaiser attempts to give the impression to the inattentive reader that the textual strain he prefers is the Textus Receptus. This is deception, pure and simple. Moreover, in the New Testament, *almost all* of the Old Testament quotations used by the apostles are from the Septuagint. It would seem from this that Kaiser’s preference of textual strains, *vis-a-vis* the Septuagint, is suspect on the basis of elementary theological considerations. If Paul and the other apostles considered the Septuagint reliable enough to quote from, how can Kaiser summarily dismiss its credibility? He simply expects the reader to accept his textual preference without demonstrating any sufficient basis for doing so. Also, since six *Hebrew* manuscripts *do* contain the phrase, “for himself,” there is certainly good reason, in conjunction with the adoption of this usage in the Septuagint, to conclude that the phrase *was* in the original.

Moreover, the adoption of Kaiser’s preferred translation presents some serious logical problems. If the maidservant should not please her master, the natural presumption would be that her father should be allowed to redeem her back again. The latter part of the verse, which Kaiser does not contest, informs us that her master “hath dealt *deceitfully* with her.” If this does not presuppose that she was bought as a concubine with marriage in view, then Kaiser’s preferred rendering leaves this phrase referring to absolutely nothing. To what does the “deceit” refer? Kaiser notwithstanding, the deceit can *only* refer to a betrothal agreement between the man and her father, which the man did not follow through with. Therefore, the rendering, “who hath betrothed her to himself,” is the most defensible rendering.

An interjection about linguistic arguments here: linguistic scholars debate amongst themselves the meanings of various passages every bit as much as non-scholars, and the debates are invariably over the same exact points that non-scholars debate. Linguistic analysis, in the end, is not the final court of appeal. The reason for this is simple: language is fluid and usage of the same word often carries different meanings, and different language often speaks synonymously. Linguistic analysis is, therefore, subject to the law of diminishing returns. Logical, contextual, and overarching theological issues are more decisive in determining the exact meaning of many Biblical passages. So let not Kaiser, or anyone else, succeed in placing themselves in the position of saying, “I’m a linguistic scholar, therefore, you must defer to my opinion.” Linguistic scholars are often *not* as well equipped as some average layman in logical analysis.

But back to Kaiser: “The second mistake,” he says, “comes in the tenth verse.” He tells us, “It implies that he therefore has two wives at the same time; but verse 8 had already noted that the ‘other woman’ had been rejected for marriage. The true meaning is: “If he marry another woman instead of her.”

This is a peculiar thought, especially in view of the commandment that her “duty of marriage shall not be diminished” in this circumstance. If the concubine is not married at all by him, then what is the point of the commandment? This is subterfuge on Kaiser’s part, but he has an answer for this objection, too.

Even if we grant Kaiser’s misinterpretation of verse 8, his conclusion on verse 10 is still a non-sequitur. As I explained back near the beginning of this work, Exodus 21:7-11 addresses three possible *separate* circumstances in which a concubine might find herself. Notice the word “if” in verses 8, 9, and 10. Kaiser interprets verse 10 as if it were a *subsequent development* ensuing upon the rejection mentioned in verse 8. But following Kaiser’s own hermeneutical method here, why should not verse 10 follow upon the situation mentioned in verse 9, namely, the giving of her unto his son? Why should the man be obligated to render unto the concubine “the duty of marriage” if he had given her to his son? Kaiser has surely mangled this scripture.

Kaiser continues:

“The third mistake is also located in verse 10. The word translated ‘marital rights,’ the third element that is owed to the first woman is almost certainly an improper guess at what this *hapax legomenon* means. S.M. Paul suggests that it be translated ‘oil’ or ‘ointments’ since many Sumerian and Akkadian texts list the three items of ‘food, clothing and oil’ as the basic necessities of life. Once again the translators have been unduly influenced by the Septuagint (*ton milian auto*, ‘her cohabitation.’) —pg. 185

Ah, yes, that horrible Septuagint again! Kaiser accuses the translators of being “unduly influenced by the Septuagint.” Is it not rather obvious that Kaiser is unduly influenced by the extra-biblical writings of the heathen Sumerians and Akkadians? Kaiser’s attempt to equate Exodus 21:10 with Sumerian writings (whose civilization peaked 1,000 years before Moses many hundreds of miles away) is similar to the attempt of the priests of “higher criticism” who allege a direct connection between the Code of Hammurabi and the Torah because of certain similarities. If this doesn’t turn legitimate Biblical interpretation on its head, then it is difficult to know what does. Clearly, what Kaiser is proffering here is not Biblical exegesis but theological snake oil in sheep skins. Moreover, by referring to Sumerian and Akkadian “texts” Kaiser attempts to create the impression that he is referring to *biblical* texts, when in fact he is referring to non-Biblical writings.

The deception employed by Kaiser is so systematic, so strategic and so pervasive throughout his treatment of polygamy, that it is difficult indeed to believe that it is accidental. Kaiser, unhappy at where the traditional dogma and exegesis has led, is determined to strike out on his own tangent and defend the doctrine of monogamy *no matter what it takes*. (The end justifies the means, you know.)

What we have here in Kaiser on this issue is the wholesale abandonment of scholarly integrity, all in the name of God. To be fair to Kaiser, this is not in evidence in his treatment of *other* subjects. Kaiser probably never expected that opposition and criticism would arise or anyone would take him to task on *this*, of all issues. Who would have thought that opposition would have arisen from within conservative, Evangelical, Bible-believing circles on the issue of polygamy? But here I am and I could not let this pseudo-exegesis go by without exposing its deceitful nature.

Kaiser then turns to Leviticus 18:18. "The problem phrase," according to Kaiser is "a woman to her sister," (pg. 185) Again, the influence of John Murray is apparent here. Kaiser points out that the other thirty-four times this phrase appears in the Old Testament it has the sense of "one to another."

"Can we render it any differently, then, in Leviticus 18:18? Ordinarily, the answer would be a definite 'no,' but there is one large difference. There is no reference to a *relationship by blood* in the other thirty-four references."

Huh? Relationship by blood? So what? Is there something I'm not grasping here? Has Kaiser plumbed the depths of some metaphysical syllogism that this poor present writer cannot fathom? I must confess: I just do not get it. Since I do not understand Kaiser's point here, I will allow for the possibility that he simply did not explain the point clearly enough or go into enough detail. In any event, he certainly has not established his conclusion: "Leviticus 18:18, then, is a single prohibition against polygamy and abides by the law of incest stated in the same context," (pg. 186).

Kaiser turns next to Deuteronomy 21:15-17. He relies upon S.E. Dwight's futile attempt to overturn the plain implications about the lawfulness of polygamy in this passage on supposedly logical (!) grounds.

"S.E. Dwight spells out the syllogism that those who contend that the Old Testament tacitly approves of polygamy use:

"Major premise: 'Moses here legislates on the case of a man who *has* two wives at the same time.'  
"Minor premise: 'But he could not lawfully legislate upon that which might not lawfully exist.'  
"Conclusion: 'To have two wives at the same time was therefore lawful.'

"Dwight's rejoinder to the minor premise is convincing:

"In Deuteronomy xxiii. 18. it is said, 'Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow.' Taught by the schoolmen, we thus argue—Moses here legislates upon the wages of a harlot, and therefore supposes that harlots will receive the wages of prostitution: But he could not legislate upon that which might not lawfully exist: To be a harlot and earn the wages of prostitution, were therefore lawful..." —pg. 187

This whole argument is ridiculous. First of all, it is a straw man argument and *not* what is being advocated by those who understand that polygamy is lawful. Secondly, *every* prohibition in the Bible

constitutes “legislation upon that which might not lawfully exist.” Dwight’s minor premise is, therefore, absurd. Thirdly, there is a difference between *prohibiting* something and *regulating* something. Deuteronomy 23:18 does not regulate and specify the proper *manner* in which the wages of a harlot are to enter into the house of the LORD; no, the prohibited sinful practice having already taken place, it is *further* disapproved by *prohibiting* from entering the house of the LORD even the very money which is associated with it.

Before lecturing “those who contend that the Old Testament tacitly approves of polygamy” on logic, Kaiser should master the study of logic himself. Indulging in such logical fallacies, or citing them as authoritative, is no way to inspire confidence in one’s readers.

But Kaiser is not through with Deuteronomy 21:15-17, “If a man *has* two wives.” According to Kaiser, “The Hebrew verb is not so easily translated” (pg. 187). Kaiser confidently asserts that this supposedly ambiguous and not-so-easily-translated verb should be translated, “If a man has *had* two wives.” Kaiser says that our understanding of this verse should be established by, among other things, “the history of exegesis (as indicated by the major translations,” (pg. 187). Now that is an interesting assertion. To my knowledge, there are *no* English translations which translate the phrase in the past tense. Why does Kaiser summon to his defense “the major translations” when, in fact, *none* of the major English translations favor his rendering? Is it possible that Kaiser is attempting to convey to the reader the impression that the major translations *do* favor his rendering? The only translations Kaiser cites that render it in the past tense are non-English: the Vulgate (Latin), Samaritan and Targum (Hebrew) and, interestingly enough, the Septuagint. Is Kaiser being “unduly influenced” by the Septuagint here? First Kaiser diminishes the credibility of the Septuagint when it uses a phrase he doesn’t like; then he cites it as authoritative when it cites a verb tense he *does* like. It should also be pointed out that verse 16 speaks in the present tense concerning the wives: “the wife he loves,” and “the wife he does not love.” Kaiser is silent upon this, but I would guess that he would assail the accuracy of the verb tenses of these clauses, also.

“The second thing which bears on our interpretation of this passage,” says Kaiser, “is the concern of the law, (inheritance rights, not polygamy).” This is good in and of itself. Certainly the subject of a passage and its context need to be taken into consideration. But *how* does the fact that the subject matter in Deuteronomy 21:15-17 is inheritance rights and not polygamy cause us to translate verse 15 in the past tense? Kaiser leaves us in the dark on this one and expects us to jump to his conclusion without demonstrating any rational connection between the two things. Again, Kaiser’s “logic” leaves much to be desired.

Finally, says Kaiser, “The understanding cannot be based solely on the grammar, which is imprecise,” (pg. 187). Now, dear reader, I confess to being no scholar (or even reader) of Hebrew. But if Hebrew grammar is so incomprehensible, then surely it is impossible to translate *any* Old Testament passage with any certitude, and virtually all translation becomes guesswork. Kaiser’s assertions relegate us to a no-man’s land of agnosticism and doubt.

Finally, Kaiser comes to II Samuel 12:7-8:

*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 thee such and such things.*

Kaiser points out that the Bible only mentions two wives of Saul: Ahinoam who was Michal's mother, and Rizpah, Saul's concubine (I Sam. 14:50 and II Sam. 3:7). It should be pointed out here that this does not preclude the possibility, or probability, that Saul had other wives who were not specifically mentioned.

“There were only two wives that Saul is said to have had: Ahinoam mother of David's wife Michal (I Sam. 14:50), and Rizpah, Saul's concubine (II Sam. 3:7). If this statement in 2 Samuel 12:8 be taken as divinely authorized marriage of Saul's wives, then more is involved than polygamy: David was authorized, on this supposition, to marry his wife's mother—a form of incest already condemned in the Levitical law, carrying the sanction of being burnt alive (Lev. 18:17). David also married Michal, Ahinoam's daughter when he was quite young, so this also precludes the thought that he may have married the mother much later.

“Interestingly enough, even though David's wives are enumerated frequently after Saul's death, never once are Saul's two wives included.” —pg. 188

Kaiser's observation with regard to Ahinoam is well-taken. But the presupposition upon which Kaiser proceeds is that Ahinoam and Rizpah were Saul's *only* wives. Given the extremities to which Saul went to secure the privileges of kingship to himself (I Sam. 8:11-17), it is exceedingly unlikely that he restricted himself to only one wife and one concubine. It is noteworthy that in the genealogies of David (II Sam. 5:13-16, I Chron. 3:1-9) neither the names of his concubines nor of his concubine's sons and daughters are enumerated, a relevant fact Kaiser passes over in silence. The rationale for this is the lack of inheritance rights on the part of concubines and their children. If Saul had other concubines, the likelihood of their being mentioned was not great. Ahinoam is mentioned by name because she was Michal's mother, and Rizpah was mentioned only because she figured very prominently in a couple of noteworthy incidents relating to David's reign (see II Sam. 3:6-8, II Sam. 21:7-14). There seems to have been very good reasons why both Ahinoam and Rizpah would not have been taken by David. Less significant wives and especially concubines would almost certainly have been passed over in silence, so it is no surprise at all if they are mentioned only in passing. It is to be concluded, therefore, that there is no compelling reason why the *prima facie* sense of II Samuel 12:7-8 should not be accepted: “I gave...you your master's wives into your bosom.”

Kaiser asks,

“What then can the phraseology ‘I gave...your master's wives into your arms’ mean? The expression is a stereotype formula which signifies that everything that had belonged to his predecessor technically was his—all other (laws) being equal, which, of course, they were not! God had handed over to David ‘the house of Israel and of

Judah,' in other words the whole kingdom so that he could have chosen a young maiden from any of the eligible virgins as his wife. 'And if that had been too little, I would have added to you this and that.' No doubt the chief problem here is in translating the word 'wives.' That word should have been translated as 'women,' not 'wives.' Thus Saul's 'house' and 'women' were delivered by God into his 'lap' (cf. Prov. 16:33, which is better than 'bosom'). We can understand the phrase as everything that was Saul's, including all his female domestics and courtesans passed into David's possession.

"The word translated 'bosom' (our 'lap') or as the NIV has it 'into your arms,' is rendered freely by the New American Standard as 'care.' Surely, something like this is appropriate here since Deuteronomy 17:17 had prohibited the king from multiplying wives for himself 'or his heart will be led astray.' We conclude that the expression of the divine donation of all that was Saul's means nothing more than the fact that everything was placed under the control and supervision of David much as a conquering king exhibited his full victory over a subjugated nation by taking control of the defeated king's household." —pg. 188

Methinks he doth protest too much! Kaiser's contentions here are easy to refute. Let us start with the phrase "into your bosom." What Kaiser does not inform his readers of, which he certainly knew (Kaiser *is* thorough, if nothing else), is the *demonstrable* fact that *every* other Old Testament use of this phrase, when used of men and women, denotes *sexual intimacy* and the marital union. The first time we encounter this phrase in the Bible is in Genesis 16: "And he (Abraham) went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid *into thy bosom...*"

The meaning here is unmistakable. Does the usage of this expression conform to Kaiser's interpretation of II Samuel 12:8? Obviously not; the meaning here is exactly what Kaiser says it cannot mean. Hagar was not merely delivered into Abram's "care" but *into his bosom* for the purpose of sexual relations. Nor is this the only time that the phrase is used this way. Deuteronomy 13:6 speaks of "the wife of thy bosom," Deuteronomy 28:54 again speaks of "the wife of thy bosom." Deuteronomy 28:56 speaks of "the husband of her bosom." When David was sick on his deathbed, his servants found a young virgin named Abishag to minister to him:

*wherefore his servants said unto him. Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her **lie in thy bosom**, that my lord the king may get heat...and the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: **but the king knew her not**, (I Kings 1:2, 4).*

Once again, we see clearly from this passage that taking this young virgin into David's bosom was for the purpose of sexual relations. Kaiser passes over these passages in silence as if they do not even exist because they so obviously and conclusively refute his assertions.

Proverbs 5:20, concerning adultery, asks, "And why wilt thou, my son, *embrace the bosom* of a stranger?" Proverbs 6:27 asks, "Can a man take fire *into his bosom* and not be burned?" Verse 29 answers the question: "So he that goeth into his neighbor's wife...shall not be innocent." Micah 7:5 states, "Keep the doors of thy mouth from *her that lieth in thy bosom*," referring to a wife.

When not used of sexual/marital intimacy, the bosom is still pictured as *the place of intimacy*, as with parents and children. Moses said to God, "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?" (Num. 11:12). And again, "And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became a nurse unto it," (Ruth 4:16) Other references to this effect include I Kings 3:20, I Kings 17:19, Isa. 40:11. For New Testament references see Luke 16:22-23, John 1:18 and John 13:23. In reference to the physical body, the word "bosom" refers to the chest area (Exo. 4:6).

The clear sexual and marital denotation this phrase carries in regard to male-female relationships *conclusively* supports the KJV rendering of the word as "wives" in II Samuel 12:8. Thus, on linguistic grounds alone, Kaiser's preference for the looser meaning is invalid. Even more persuasive, however, is the usage of this same phrase *just a couple verses earlier in the same conversation* in verse 3 of Nathan's parable: "But the poor man (referring to Uriah) had nothing, save one little ewe lamb (representing Bathsheba), and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, *and lay in his bosom*, and was unto him as a daughter."

Kaiser is, therefore, refuting the meaning of the phrase in verse 8 which it clearly carries in the same passage just a few verses earlier! So, not only is the scriptural testimony in other passages contrary to Kaiser, but the very passage he is exegeting explicitly uses the phrase with the meaning Kaiser says it cannot have! Is all of this an oversight on Kaiser's part? Hardly. Kaiser deliberately *ignores* all of this in favor of his own exegetical flight of fancy, and he does not inform his readers of the usage of this term elsewhere because it eloquently testifies against his thesis even without any commentary.

In addition to all of this, there is another extremely compelling reason to translate the word as "wives" in verse 8. This also comes from the context of the passage. In this chapter, Nathan, the prophet of God, is condemning David for two sins: murder and adultery. First God enumerates *His* acts of kindness and blessing to David:

- 1) *I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul and*
- 2) *I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom.*

God is *contrasting* His goodness with David's sins:

- 1) *Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite and*
- 2) *hast taken his wife to be thy wife.*

Notice that points 1 and 2 stand in direct *logical antithesis* to each other in each set. First, God *spared* David from being murdered by Saul, but then David *committed* murder. Second, God blessed David by giving him the *wives* of Saul, but then David *violates another man's wife*. The logical structure of God's condemnation of David in making this contrast verifies the interpretation and translation of the word as "wives" rather than "women." From this we are compelled to conclude that there were other wives of Saul which are not specifically named in Scripture but which are mentioned in passing in II Samuel 12:7-8. (My own view is that the ten concubines whom Absalom defiled had been the wives of Saul). The deliberate antithesis of God's words to David allows of no other possibility. Given Kaiser's disregard for logical analysis in the rest of his treatment of polygamy, I doubt that this aspect of this passage ever occurred to Kaiser. If it did, he simply chose to ignore its significance.

We see the same contrast, once again, in the punishments God pronounces upon David.

1) Now therefore **the sword** shall never depart from thine house and

2) I will **take thy wives** before thine eyes and **give them unto thy neighbor**.

There are two *triple* parallels here. David was...*spared* from murder / *committed* murder / his sons *slain*; given *wives* / *violated* a wife / *wives* taken.

As I noted before in my commentary on David (#12, Part 1), there were undoubtedly many and various kinds of blessings God could have enumerated to David, but the blessings of being delivered from murder and given the wives of Saul as his own wives were specifically mentioned because they had a direct logical and subject-matter relation to the sins which David committed.

Kaiser alleges that the phrase, "I gave...your master's wives into your bosom" is, in Kaiser's words, a "stereotype formula which signified that everything that had belonged to his predecessor technically was his." By "stereotype formula," what else can Kaiser be trying to tell us here other than that the phrase is *invariable in its meaning* in every other passage where it is used and that it *always* has the meaning Kaiser interprets it to have here? This is a truly curious argument on Kaiser's part for two reasons: first, it *never* has the meaning he attributes to it elsewhere, and secondly, this intimates that Kaiser *did* search out the other occurrences of this phrase elsewhere in the Bible but chose to refrain from citing the references. (I wonder why!)

David, says, Kaiser, "could have chosen a young maiden from any of the eligible virgins as his wife." Kaiser's confusion at this juncture is manifest. David was already a married man at this point. In fact, he was already a polygamist! Since Kaiser argues against himself here, I will leave this point as it is and just say, "Amen."

Kaiser says, "The chief problem...is in translating the word 'wives.'" Actually, the chief problem is Kaiser's Alice in Bibleland approach to Biblical interpretation, his exegetical alchemy. For Kaiser seems to believe in his own power to transform the Divine gold of scripture into base metal by the power of his own word. *This*, in reality, is what is at the heart of Kaiser's problem.

After a brief summary, Kaiser then turns to Proverbs 5:15-21. Kaiser tells us that of all the Old Testament passages exhorting us to sexual and marital purity, this is "the best statement of the monogamous marriage" as a moral standard. Let us see if Kaiser's assertion will hold up to scrutiny.

*Drink water from your **own** cistern,  
 running water from your **own** well.  
 Should your streams overflow **in the streets**?  
 your streams of water **in the public squares**?  
 Let them be **yours alone**,  
 never to be **shared with strangers**.  
 May your fountain be blessed  
 and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.  
 a loving doe, a graceful deer—  
 may her breasts satisfy you always,  
 may you ever be captivated by her love.  
 Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress?  
 Why embrace the bosom of **another man's wife**?*

Says Kaiser:

"Could these instructions be obeyed by a man who had many additional wives beside 'the wife of (his) youth?'" —pg. 190

The man who wrote these words was Solomon, a man with many, many wives. The answer to Kaiser's question is a definite, "Yes." Polygamy is indeed brought within the purview of the exhortation to "let *her* breasts always satisfy thee." The contrast, the antithesis, is that of one's *own* wife (or wives) vs. taking *another man's wife*. Kaiser creates a false antithesis of monogamy vs. polygamy in this passage when the plainly stated antithesis is between "thine own" and "another man's" wife.

Kaiser goes on to say, "Had polygamy been customary, or tacitly approved, the text would have innocently read 'wives'." Is this, in fact, logically necessary? No. This is a simple non-sequitur. The passage as it stands is quite sufficient to cover the exigency of polygamy: to wit, on the basis of this passage, a polygamist would certainly understand that it was wrong to have relations with another man's wife or wives. It is not logically necessary or required to state the rule in the plural. Kaiser has *superimposed* the issue of polygamy onto this passage which deals with committing adultery with another man's wife. Logic is obviously not Kaiser's strong point. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that even if the Bible did explicitly state such an admonition of this nature with a clear allowance for polygamy, that Kaiser would invoke his alchemy and his exegetical incantations and deny that it really did say so. Kaiser would, no doubt, allege "mistakes in the translation" or an "incorrect choice of manuscripts" and complain about the "undue influence" that particular translation had upon the translators. We would surely witness the spectacle of Kaiser's wholly subjectivized exegesis, as we already have witnessed it in regard to the Scriptural passages he has distorted.

## Article 48: The Commentators, #6: Wenham

### #6. Gordon Wenham: “Law, Morality, and the Bible”

While writing this book, one of the things that occurred to me over and over again is that no matter which view of God’s Law to which one adheres, whether Dispensationalist or Reformed and Covenantal, polygamy is a thorn in the side of *every* commentator who takes the position that polygamy is unlawful. Gordon Wenham is a striking contrast to John Murray, for example. John Murray believed in one continuous ethic in God’s Law from the creation to the resurrection, the basic immutability of God’s Law. Gordon Wenham, as we will see, believes in a radical discontinuity. Because neither man can accept the lawfulness of polygamy, both are consigned to positions which compromise the unity and integrity of God’s Word. Wenham is forced into a Dispensational hermeneutic and Murray was forced to posit “tolerance of sin” by God.

An analysis of the continuity vs. discontinuity debate is beyond the scope of this work. My own position is one of continuity. I refer the reader to Greg Bahnsen’s, “Theonomy in Christian Ethics,” and Rousas Rushdoony’s, “The Institutes of Biblical Law.” As for me, the abiding validity and authority of the Law of God is a fundamental presupposition upon which this work is based (see Mat. 5:17-19, Rom. 3:31 and I Cor. 9:21). With this in mind, let us go forthwith to Wenham.

“Seventh Commandment. Immediately following the prohibition of murder comes the prohibition of adultery (*na’ap*), i.e., sexual relations between a married woman and a man who is not her husband.” —pg. 34

In a footnote, Wenham states,

*“Relations between a married man and an unmarried woman did not count as adultery. If the laws in Ex. 22:16 and Dt. 22:28f applied to married men as well as unmarried men, the man would have been forced to take the woman as a second wife. This would fit in with the practice of polygamy, allowed in Old Testament times.”* — pg. 51, emph. supp.

Isn't this interesting? Since Wenham holds to a Dispensational hermeneutic, he can admit the true meaning of these laws without worrying that there are any implications *vis-à-vis* the New Covenant. Unhindered by this concern, Wenham sees very clearly what I have already advanced in this work: 1) the definition of adultery concerns married *women* who have relations with men other than their husbands, 2) sexual relations between married men and unmarried women results in *marriage*, not adultery, 3) the laws of Exodus 22:16-17 and Deuteronomy 22:28-29 result in *mandatory polygamy*, and 4) this is consonant with the fact that polygamy was allowed under the Law.

These facts about these laws are really quite obvious, but those commentators who believe in the basic continuity of the Law have a problem here (i.e., John Murray, Rousas Rushdoony, Gary North, James Jordan, etc.). If you believe in the continuing authority of the Law *and* admit to the interpretation of these laws as enunciated by Wenham, then the result is the continuing validity of polygamy.

This is why polygamy is commented upon by so many commentators dealing with Biblical ethics. Polygamy is an inescapable issue because of the hermeneutical problems it raises for the traditional monogamy-only position. If one is basically of a more orthodox bent like Murray, the tendency is to deny the validity of polygamy even under the Old Covenant. If one is more Dispensational in one's theology, the tendency is to dismiss polygamy as an irrelevant relic of a by-gone age. Where it concerns polygamy, Dispensationalists are more consistent in denying its validity than orthodox theologians.

Wenham acknowledges the meaning of the Old Testament marriage laws as I see them and exegete them in this work. Wenham sets aside the thorny exegetical issues by a resort to a Dispensational hermeneutic:

“In certain respects, then, Old Testament marriage law is less strict than that of the New Testament. Infidelity by the husband does not count as adultery in the Old Testament. It does in the New Testament. ‘Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery,’ (Luke 16:18 parallels Mt. 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12).

“These Gospel sayings also explicitly rule out remarriage after divorce and, by implication, polygamy as well, equating them with adultery. Thus, at three points—polygamy, remarriage, and a husband's adultery—the Old Testament laws plainly conflict with the New Testament ideal of life-long monogamous marriage.” —pg. 37

There is no mistaking Wenham's meaning: the Old and New Testaments are in direct contradiction to each other on these basic issues of morality. The almost explicit (but not quite) premise here is that *there has been a fundamental re-definition of the meaning of adultery in the New Testament*. Wenham is not merely saying that we have misunderstood the Biblical definition of adultery. His thesis is more radical than that. Wenham is arguing that the immutable God Whose laws are a reflection of His own holy and immutable character has mutated the definition of adultery!

Wenham's citation of Luke 16:18 (and parallels) does *not* prove that the definition has changed; to the contrary, these passages can only be appealed to in this regard if we first *assume* that this is so. Wenham's mistake is to classify together two *different* circumstances. Consider:

**Circumstance #1**

A man *divorces* his wife *and* marries another woman, without the just cause of fornication.  
(Mt. 19:9)

**Circumstance #2**

A man *remains married to* his first wife, and marries another woman in *addition to* the first wife.

Christ's words in the Gospels clearly correspond to Circumstance #1, the man who has committed adultery. Malachi 2, speaking about the "treachery" of the priests against their wives in putting them away, shows that Christ's condemnation was valid under the *Old Covenant* as well as the New. Without a doubt, it was not necessary for Christ to re-define adultery in order to condemn divorce without valid cause. Christ's condemnation of capricious divorce stands entirely justified *on the basis of Old Covenant law*. The man has violated his marital bond with his wife and is thus an adulterer.

Now consider circumstance #2. A married man takes a second wife, but *keeps* his first wife. Gordon Wenham would agree with me that this did *not* constitute adultery under the Old Covenant. The question must be asked: Why, under Old Covenant law (see Exodus 21:10-11) was the first man an adulterer but the second not? Clearly, the only possible answer to this question is that it was the *divorce* of the first wife that made the man in circumstance #1 an adulterer. The polygamist, on the other hand, as Wenham acknowledges, does not come under this condemnation.

Let us now bring a consideration of both circumstances forward to the *New Covenant*. On what basis can we conclude that circumstance #1 *and* circumstance #2 *both* constitute adultery? We *cannot* unless we *first* prove that the definition of adultery has been altered under the New Covenant. But Wenham does not do this. He simply *assumes* that the definition has changed and then deduces that it has changed on the basis of an argument that asserts this as the beginning premise. This is a classic non-sequitur, a tautology, a circular argument. If we begin the argument by *assuming* the validity of the premise, then, of course, we cannot disagree with the conclusion. But Wenham has not come even close to establishing the validity of this re-definition.

I have already pointed out that Exodus 21:10-11 is a *divorce* provision, which in the same breath, *commands a man who takes a second wife to continue in his polygamy*, but grants to the first wife the right to divorce the man if he ceases, or unduly restricts, her cohabitation. The reason is manifest: such a course of action is a violation of the marriage bond with the first wife. These considerations force us to classify such a situation as *adultery*.

This is very significant for any exegesis of Matthew 19:4-9, for Exodus 21:10-11 speaks to *the exact same situation addressed by Christ*: putting away and remarriage in coordination. Though Exodus does not use the word "adultery," the fact that the first wife is granted the right to divorce the man under the specified circumstances means that adultery *is* being dealt with.

We see, then, that Christ's words in the Gospels are completely in accord with the Old Testament laws on marriage, divorce, remarriage and polygamy. Wenham's contention that the Old and New Covenants "plainly conflict" is false and without rational foundation. Christ's words in the Gospels are an *endorsement* and *affirmation* of the Old Covenant laws. There is not one jot or tittle of difference between the two.

## Article 49: The Commentators, #7: Jordan

#7. James B. Jordan: “Judges: God’s War Against Humanism”

### **The Typology of Polygamy**

James Jordan discusses the polygamy of Gideon in Judges 8:29-32. Jordan sees Gideon’s polygamy as “the natural man in him acting up:”

“The name Gideon is used in verse 30, because here we see the ‘natural man’ in him acting up. The Biblical position is always monogamy, because man is to image the Lord in his life, being the very image of God by creation. The Lord is monogamous; His bride is the Church, and he has no other. If a man does not stick with one wife, he does not properly image the Lord in his life. Since the essence of ethics is human conformity to the very character of God, any failure to image forth that character is sin.” —pg. 154

From the ground that we have covered so far, the reader should now have a sufficient foundation to understand that the Biblical position is emphatically *not* always monogamy; and that the *mandatory* polygamy resulting from Exodus 22:16-17, Deuteronomy 22:28-29 and Deuteronomy 25:5-10 flatly contradicts Jordan. Or should I say that Jordan flatly contradicts the Bible?

Picking up on the allegories and typologies of Scripture, Jordan informs us that the Lord is monogamous. The chief problem with this contention is that in Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3 *the Lord portrays Himself as a polygamist* married to *two* women. If the LORD can portray Himself in polygamous terms, and it is the duty of man to “properly image the LORD in his life,” then it follows by good and necessary consequence that polygamy comes within the purview of that “imaging of the LORD” that we are to do. Jordan’s *own* hermeneutical method terminates in *favor* of polygamy and not against it. Moreover, we are told in the New Testament:

*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that*

*he which is joined to a harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. **But he that is joined unto the lord is one spirit.*** —I Corinthians 6:15-16

What is to be noted here is that Paul uses the analogy of marriage in regard to *the individual believer*. Each individual believer is married to the Lord. In I Corinthians 12:12, we are told that there are “many members” to the Lord’s body. We see, then, that the Lord, like Solomon before him, is a polygamist, *par excellence*. In fact, the polygamy of Solomon is a type, or image, of the Lord’s marriage to the many members of his church. Polygamy is a faithful representation of Christ’s relationship to the Church. There is but *one head*, Christ/the husband, but *many* subordinate members, the Church/multiple wives. The analogy and type is exact.

There is a complementarity between monogamy and polygamy in terms of how they image, figure, or allegorize Christ and his church. It is valid to point out *both* the one and the many in this connection. Neither is more nor less valid than the other. Both the individual members and the aggregate collection are faithful and true representations of Christ’s relationship to the Church, his assembly (ekklesia). While it is valid to highlight the *unity* and *oneness* of the Church, it is also valid to highlight the *multiplicity* and *diversity*—in short, the Church as an *assembly* of believers. There can be no assembly without a multitude. “After this I beheld, and, lo, *a great multitude, which no man could number*, of all nations, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes,” (Rev. 7:9).

*And I heard as it were the voice of a great **multitude**...saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **his wife** hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine **white linen**, clean and white; for **the fine linen** is the righteousness of the saints.* —Revelation 19:6-8.

Notice in the above passage how the allegory switches back and forth from the plural to the singular in reference to the “bride,” singular, to the “saints,” plural. Since both the singular and plural are used in this selfsame passage and in the very same sentence, it would be simple obtuseness to insist on an airtight restriction of the allegory to the singular.

Jordan continues:

“Polygamy is forbidden in Leviticus 18:18, which says ‘You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister, to be a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.’ If Jacob was out of line marrying two sisters, then surely so would any other Israelite. Moreover, any second wife would be a rival (I Sam. 1), and any second marriage would expose the first to shame (uncover nakedness) because it would advertise to the world that the first wife was not satisfactory. Thus, Leviticus 18:18 clearly outlawed all polygamy in Israel.” —pg. 154-155.

As we have noted previously, Leviticus 18:18 prohibits *one form* of polygamy in the context of a law-order which permits polygamy, *per se*. Jordan has added to the word of God a general prohibition

against polygamy which is not commanded in Leviticus 18:18. The contrast with Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17, which expressly permit polygamy, manifests this fact clearly. Moreover, we must ask: would *any* second wife *automatically* be a rival? The “rivalry” in Leviticus 18:18 concerns taking a wife’s sister to bear children when the first wife is barren. This is why the text of Scripture says not to do this to vex “*her*,” singular: only *one* of the sisters is “vexed” by this situation and not *both*, and why it does not say “to vex *them*.” If *any* second wife is automatically a rival, then so are all subordinates in *all* hierarchical institutions—whether the Church, the State, a business, etc. If we take Jordan’s proposition to its logical conclusion, then what we have is the assertion of ontological anarchism.

Concerning the assertion that “it would advertise to the world that the first wife was not satisfactory,” I presume that Jordan means sexually. But a second wife in no way reflects any such thing about the first wife. And even if the motive of the husband is entirely sexual in nature, so what? The validity or invalidity of this motive must rest upon the *prior* validity or invalidity of polygamy. This appeal of Jordan’s is entirely pejorative in nature.

Jordan continues,

“Moreover, polygamy is particularly forbidden to the kings and rulers (Deut. 17:17). This is partly because they are more susceptible to temptation, since they can afford it. It is also because *the many wives usually meant foreign alliances*, which were forbidden.

“This is the command of God. The response of Gideon is disobedience. The evaluation of God brings judgment against the house of Gideon. By setting up a false ephod Gideon brought Israel into spiritual adultery. By committing polygamy, Gideon acted out in life a principle he had established by setting up a second ephod.

“Gideon’s many wives show the drift toward humanistic kingship. He is aggrandizing himself. Moreover, the text pointedly notes that he had 70 sons. We have seen, in our comments on Judges 1:7, that the number 70 connotes the nations of the world.” — pg. 155

Jordan’s equating of Gideon’s polygamy with the ephod he set up is a false parallel. Setting up the ephod was a violation of the second commandment; his polygamy was perfectly lawful, a valid exercise of his familial headship. Precisely how Gideon’s polygamy indicates a drift toward humanistic kingship Jordan does not explain; given the fact that Gideon *refused* to be appointed king when the Israelites offered this to him, Jordan’s association of polygamy with humanistic kingship is highly precarious, to say the very least. Deuteronomy 17:17, as Jordan himself notes, has reference, not to polygamy, but to treaty marriages with heathen nations.

Jordan’s association of the number 70 with the nations of the earth (based upon Genesis 10) is more solid. The problem is that Jordan takes a positive image and makes it a negative one. The fact is that

Gideon's seventy sons, whom he ruled over, makes Gideon a type of Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. Gideon was by no means aggrandizing himself by taking many wives. His rejection of the offer of kingship is proof enough of this fact. Gideon was simply the recipient of Divine blessing in having many wives (II Sam. 12:7-8) and many sons.

## Article 50: The Commentators, #8: North

### #8. Gary North: “Tools of Dominion”

“The Bible is a unit. It is a ‘package deal.’ The New Testament did not overturn the Old Testament; it is a *commentary* on the Old Testament...

“Jesus said: ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled...’ Christ took the Old Testament seriously enough to die for those condemned to the second death (Rev. 20:14) by its provisions. The Old Testament is not a discarded first draft of God’s Word. It is not God’s word (emeritus).

“If anything, the New Testament law is more stringent than the Mosaic law, not less stringent. Paul writes that *an elder* cannot have more than one wife (I Tim. 3:2). The king in the Old Testament was forbidden to have multiple wives (Deut. 17:17). This was not a general law, unless we interpret the prohibition of Leviticus 18:18 as applying to all additional wives, and not just to marrying a woman’s sister, as ethicist John Murray interprets it. If we attempt to interpret Leviticus 18:18 in Murray’s fashion, the question arises: Why specify kings as being prohibited from becoming polygamists if the same law applied to all men anyway? *Possibly to prevent the system of political covenanting through marriage* (Solomon is a good example here). Certainly, there is no equally clear-cut Old Testament prohibition against polygamy comparable to I Timothy 3:2, which indicates a tightening of the requirements *for at least church officers*. The New Testament appears to be more rigorous than the Old in this instance.” —“Tools of Dominion,” pg. 50-51

Gary North is a staunch theonomist who rejects Dispensationalism and who contends vigorously for the proposition that the Law of God under the Old Covenant carries forward to the New Covenant. What we have here, therefore, in the above remarks of North is *a capitulation to Dispensationalism*. North believes that the Bible is “a unit” and “package deal,” yet, concerning concubinage (for one

issue) North qualifies this proposition to the point of denying its validity under the New Covenant. Concubinage, as the above quote shows, is not the only aspect of God's Law that North cannot stomach and about which he rejects the unity of Scripture; the Divinely ordained Biblical institution and establishment of polygamy also offends his sensibilities. Clearly, North is not immune to the zeitgeist of our culture. I would highlight and emphasize North's own exhortation that "the Old Testament is not a discarded draft of God's word." Indeed, it is not. It was, and *is*, God's immutable Law.

Let us focus on North's remarks in particular,

1. "The New Testament is more stringent...Paul writes that an elder cannot have more than one wife." Like Rushdoony, North does not inform his readers that there is an ambiguity in the language of this commandment. The Greek phrase is "*mias gunaikos andra*," and is capable of being translated in *three* separate ways, and subject to being interpreted in *four* different ways. The possible translations are:

1) "one wife man," (prohibiting *polygamy*) or 2) "a wife man" (requiring elders to be *married*; on the Catholic interpretation, "married" only to the Church) or 3) "*first* wife man" (prohibiting *divorcees* from ordination.)

Let us follow the logical train of each of these translations and interpretations and see where they lead us.

First, the traditional Protestant view is that the requirement prohibits the ordination of polygamists. It is argued, as we have seen in this work, that monogamy is a "creation ordinance," and a "law," prohibiting polygamy. I have already demonstrated conclusively that this proposition is false. The creation ordinance and purpose of God is *patriarchy*, and polygamy is an inevitable consequence of patriarchy. *If* the proper interpretation and translation of this requirement is "one wife man," then the *basis* of the prohibition cannot be a general moral requirement of monogamy. It must apply to ordained officers exclusively.

The problem with this interpretation, however, and one that appears to decisively scuttle this view, is that the logical *result* is an inexplicable *dichotomy of moral requirement* between the marital requirements of the laity versus the marital requirements of ordained officers. *Why should ordinary members and ordained officers be subject to two different moral requirements?* Is this rational? This result of this interpretation makes the interpretation suspect right from the start.

North says that I Timothy 3:2 is a "prohibition against polygamy...at least for church elders." By saying this, North thus acknowledges that there is no general requirement of monogamy in the New Testament. It is clear that he sees this. Actually, assuming the correctness of the translation as "one wife," North's phraseology is still not precisely accurate, anyway. I Timothy 3:2 would not, on this interpretation, disallow an elder from marrying a second wife, but it would mandate his resignation from office if he did so. This is a crucial distinction. If I Timothy 3:2 is properly translated as "husband of one wife," or, more literally as "one wife man," then this is not a prohibition against polygamy, but a prohibition against *ordaining* a Christian man who *is* a polygamist. This raises

another rather sticky question for those who believe in this interpretation: *why* would a Church even *think* of ordaining a polygamist as an elder if polygamy were categorically unlawful? Would such a “polygamous adulterer” even be allowed to be a *member*, to say nothing of an elder? Apparently he *would*, and not only that, but also be considered a natural candidate for ordination *but* for this prohibition. Noel Weeks, in his book, “The Sufficiency of Scripture,” states: “We may infer from I Timothy 3:2 that there were men in the New Testament congregations with more than one wife. Thus the New Testament church did not force the dissolution of polygamous marriages,” (pg. 156). Weeks very clearly sees the same logical inference, based upon this premise, as I do.

There *is* a way of avoiding the obvious difficulty here by proposing that the requirement is laid down for *practical* reasons, and not because of *moral* turpitude. Some support for this proposition may be gleaned from the other requirements. For example, an elder *must* be “*able* to teach,” and he must not be “a new convert.” There is no moral turpitude involved in lacking the ability to teach; there are many fine Christians who simply are not gifted as teachers and are not qualified for eldership because of this lack of *ability* and *practical* consideration. And being a new convert is obviously not sinful; though the consideration on this point is to *prevent* sin, the sin of pride.

It could also be proposed that the New Covenant Church, being ordained to be run by a council of elders, plural, and not one man, is compromised in its basic system of governance by ordaining polygamists; that is, a polygamist with several wives, and a few sons by each of the wives, could effectively monopolize power in a church and rule arbitrarily. Multiply this by two or three tightly-knit polygamist families, and one *can* see the possibility of a problem here. The question here, though, is: Is there really any more danger of this because of *polygamy* than because of the kind of “cliquishness” that is so often manifested in churches, anyway? I think not! In the final analysis, the translation of I Timothy 3:2 as “*one* wife man,” breaks down because of these irresolvable issues. That only leaves us with two other possible translations: “*a* wife man,” and “*first* wife man.”

The Roman Catholic position here (that priests are to be “married” to the Church) is utterly ludicrous and does not even really merit comment.

The second interpretation, “*a* wife man,” is based partly upon the observation that the Greek word used here, “*mia*,” also serves as the definite article, “*a*” in Greek. It is pointed out that the clause here in I Timothy 3:2 *lacks* a definite article if the word “*mia*” is not serving as such. I don’t want to place too much stress on how Greek syntax and grammar sounds to English-speaking minds, but the result here is “An elder then must be a wife man.” This seems a little dubious when Paul could have easily used the word “*gameo*” (“married”) and have communicated the thought more clearly.

However, let us not attribute any undue weight to linguistics. Language *is* often ambiguous and idiomatic. Let us accept for the moment the interpretation of this verse that it requires elders to be *married men*. This immediately raises the objection that the man laying down this requirement, the apostle Paul, was *unmarried* himself. One would think that the Lord would have provided Paul with a wife if the Lord required marriage as a condition of eldership. Once again, we have a proposition which logically terminates in a dichotomy of moral requirement among Christians if this

interpretation be the correct one. Paul obviously would have been exempt from this requirement. And what of elders who become widowers? Are they to forfeit their office because of their bereavement and consequent singleness?

There is, however, also a way of avoiding this obvious difficulty by proposing that *this* requirement is laid down for *practical* reasons, as well. A bit of a stronger case can be made for this interpretation than for the requirement for monogamy. Paul goes on to say that an elder must rule his own house well with his children being in subjection. Once again, we *do* have a *practical* consideration laid down as a requirement. But even this requirement does not categorically *prove* that elders must be married. It is equally capable of being interpreted to mean that those candidates for eldership who *are* married must demonstrate their ability in their home life. But, in connection with this proposition also, this still leaves us scratching our heads with no resolution to the question concerning Paul and of widowers.

The third translation, "*first* wife man," would mean that elders must *still* be married to their first wives (*if* they had been married) and, thus, we have a requirement concerning *divorce*. The strength of this translation, *vis-a-vis* the other two options, is immediately manifest. There is no resulting dichotomy between laity and ordained officers on the basis of this interpretation. And the requirement is clearly of a *moral* nature, so there is no need to seek for a *practical* basis to avoid any complicating issues.

It seems to me that this interpretation clearly commends itself as the natural one, all things considered. Is not Paul, therefore, echoing in a New Covenant setting *precisely* the admonition of Malachi to the priests of Israel in Malachi 2:15: "Let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth?" That is, the priests of Israel should be *first* wife men, still married to their first wives.

It is my contention that Paul's command in I Timothy 3:2, "an elder must be a *first* wife man," is *an allusion to* Malachi 2:15 and is in fact based upon it and derived directly from it. Note in Malachi that it is the *priests*, the ecclesiastical officers of Israel, who are specifically admonished not to divorce their wives; and in I Timothy 3:2, it is the elders, the ecclesiastical officers of the Church, who are being addressed. Is this just a "coincidence" or an insignificant correlation? Moreover, the logical implication of the statement, "*first* wife man" leaves open the possibility of *second* and other subsequent wives. The polygamist, like the monogamist, must show a pattern of commitment to his marital unions.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that this is the *only* interpretation of this passage that does not involve us in contradiction and complication in the context of Scripture as a whole. It is clearly the most defensible translation and interpretation of this verse.

Let me add as a qualifier that I Timothy 3:2 would not automatically disqualify *any and all* divorced men. A man who divorced his wife for adultery, for example, would not be disqualified, because he has a Biblically justifiable reason. And a man who was the *victim* of illegitimate divorce on the part of his wife would also not be disqualified. God certainly discriminates between the *victims* of sin and the *perpetrators* of sin. And I would go so far as to say the actions of a man *before* his conversion to

Christ should be forgiven along with the rest of his sins. Just because such modifications to a commandment are not specifically found in the passage under question, does *not* mean that the requirement cannot be legitimately modified by the Biblical testimony as a whole. In other words, we cannot legitimately interpret this command *in isolation from the balance of scripture* and in an absolute and unqualified sense.

Concerning North's remarks about Deuteronomy 17:17, "Why specify kings" indeed? North clearly knows the answer to this question but cannot bring himself to answer the question without qualification: "*possibly* to prevent the system of political covenanting through marriage (Solomon is a good example here)." Why does North add the qualifier, "possibly," when he plainly recognizes that Solomon's covenanting with Pharaoh via marriage to his daughter (and 700 others!) is an "example" of violation of this law? The reason is because he asserts in another place (pg. 268) *without qualification* that "Monogamy was the legal standard for Hebrew kings." This is *equivocation* on North's part. Either Deuteronomy 17:17 prohibits political covenanting via marriage with heathen nations' officials' female relatives or it refers to polygamy. Which is it? North is simply in error. Monogamy was *not* the legal standard for Hebrew kings, a fact proven by II Samuel 12:7-8.

Concerning John Murray's comments on Leviticus 18:18 in "Principles of Conduct," North *overstates* Murray's position. Murray did *not* insist that Leviticus 18:18 is a general prohibition against polygamy: he simply suggested the *possibility* and then cited very powerful considerations *against* that interpretation. To enlist Murray as an advocate of a general prohibition against polygamy in Leviticus 18:18 is to put words in Murray's mouth which Murray never uttered. Anyone who doubts this is urged to read Appendix B in "Principles of Conduct" and see for himself.

Greg Bahnsen, on the other hand, ever the stickler for precision, correctly notes that Murray only "suggests" this possibility; and Bahnsen himself was not willing to go overboard in this direction with that verse (see "Theonomy in Christian Ethics," pg. 113n).

The only other place in "Tools of Dominion" in which North makes any extended comments on polygamy is on page 268. Commenting on Exodus 21:7-11, he says:

"The justification for divorce for the concubine was that her husband treated another wife with greater favor. The New Testament's standard is monogamy, for only through membership in Christ's bride, the church, can people find salvation. God is not a bigamist; Israel as a bride has been lawfully divorced because of her rebellion. He has not taken an additional new wife; the church is the replacement of the lawfully divorced wife. Israel must become part of the church if she is ever again to regain her status as bride (Rom. 11). Therefore, men are not supposed to be bigamists. Monogamy was the legal standard for Hebrew kings (Deut. 17:17), and this 'one wife' standard is explicitly stated as a requirement for church elders (I Tim. 3:2)...

"Finally, husbands are not allowed to take extra wives, so there is clearly no purpose in establishing special divorce laws to protect a concubine who is not being treated equally to a new wife."

Note well what North acknowledges in his first sentence: the justification for divorce for the concubine is not *polygamy* but, rather, greater "favor" to the second wife, North's euphemism for the failure to continue sexual relations with the concubine, the first wife.

Note well also that North qualifies for a second time the requirement that monogamy is "for church elders," thus acknowledging that there is no prohibition against polygamy *per se* in the New Testament. The best that North can do is to follow the lead of James Jordan and manufacture a prohibition against polygamy based upon *allegory*. I remind the reader yet again that in Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3 God uses the *allegory of polygamy* to describe His relationship to His people. To which we may well add Jeremiah 31:32, in which God says of Israel, "I was a husband unto *them*." Why do North and other commentators try to make a case for monogamy based upon allegory as if these other passages do not exist in the Bible?

## Article 51: The Commentators, #9: Smith

### #9. William Smith: “Smith’s Bible Dictionary”

William Smith’s comments on polygamy and monogamy are discussed in his entry on “marriage” in his popular dictionary. “Smith’s Bible Dictionary” has been one of *the* best selling Biblical reference books. It behooves us then to take note of what he had to say on the subject. Though his treatment of the subject is by no means thorough or systematic, his views are without doubt a very good condensation of the traditional Evangelical position on the subject.

“The institution of marriage dates from the time of man’s original creation. Gen. 2:18-25. From Gen. 2:24 we may evolve the following principles: (1) The unity of man and wife, as implied in her being formed out of man. (2) The indissolubleness of the marriage bond, except on the strongest grounds. Comp. Matt. 19:9. (3) *Monogamy as the original law of marriage.* (4) The social equality of man and wife. (5) The subordination of the wife to the husband. (6) The respective duties of man and wife. *In the patriarchal age polygamy prevailed,* Gen. 16:4; 25:1, 6, 28; I Chron. 7:14, *but to a great extent divested of the degradation which in modern times attaches to that practice.* Divorce also prevailed in the patriarchal age, though but one instance of it is recorded. Gen. 21:14. *The mosaic law discouraged polygamy, restricted divorce, and aimed to enforce the purity of life. It was the best civil law possible at the time, and sought to bring the people up to the pure standard of the moral law.* In the post-Babylonian period monogamy appears to have become more prevalent than at any previous time. *The practice of polygamy nevertheless still existed;* Herod the great had no less than nine wives at one time...Our Lord and his apostles re-established the integrity and sanctity of the marriage bond by the following measures: (a) *By the confirmation of the original charter of marriage as the basis on which all regulations were to be framed.* Matt. 19:4, 5.”

Note well that Smith sees monogamy as a “law” arising out of creation. If monogamy, then, is a “law,” then polygamy is a *violation* of this “law” and constitutes a *sin*. Is it not strange, therefore, to assert that Moses records this “law” in Genesis, but then, *at God’s command*, enacts laws which

permit polygamy (Exo. 21:10; Deut. 21:15-17;) and in some cases even *requires* polygamy (Deut. 25:5-10; Exo. 22:16-17; etc.)? This is surely an inconsistency in the monogamy-only thesis. Smith does not, however, explicitly admit that the Law permitted polygamy (though most other commentators do). He alleges that the Law “discouraged polygamy,” though he gives no references to this effect, nor any explanation of how the Law supposedly accomplished this. Smith probably had in mind Deuteronomy 17:17 (which prohibits kings from treaty-marriages, not polygamy) and Leviticus 18:18 (which prohibits a man from taking a woman and her sister in a very specific circumstance, not polygamy, *per se*).

Smith is quite correct in seeing Genesis as establishing “the basis” for all marriages. *Adam’s headship over Eve, the hierarchical principle, establishes polygamy as a valid practice*, and is applicable to all marriages. The man was not made for the woman but the woman for the man. The only thing which could offset the logical development of polygamy from the creation would be an explicit prohibition against it. But instead we find exactly the *opposite* in God’s Law. And this is exactly what we would expect to find if, indeed, the creational basis of marriage necessitated the approval of polygamy.

Let us pause to focus on this thought. If monogamy were a “law of creation,” would we not expect to see an unambiguous prohibition against polygamy in the Law? However, since so many commentators assert that polygamy was “tolerated” by the Law, a better question is: *why* and *how* would a *law* of monogamy result in toleration of polygamy in the Mosaic code? Does this really make any sense at all? Does not the Law of Moses establish the very *standard* of morality? And are we not told in Psalm 19 that the Law is “pure” and “perfect” and “righteous altogether?”

As I observed earlier in this work, the book of Genesis is *an integral part of the law*. Many, if not nearly all, of the laws in the Pentateuch were already known to the Israelites (Gen. 18:18-19; Gen. 26:5) through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was given unto Moses to put down *in writing* the national charter of Israel, the people of God. That charter is the Pentateuch, the Torah—the five books of Moses, including Genesis. The purpose of the book of Genesis is to provide the foundation and justification for the specific, positive laws. Thus, the book of Genesis may be compared to the preamble to the United States Constitution.

In other words, in Genesis God is telling us *why* the positive laws are what they are. There is an essential and *thorough* unity and *logical harmony* between the creation narrative of Genesis and the positive laws of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. When Exodus 21:10 permits a man to take a second wife, and when Deuteronomy 21:15-17 regulates the inheritance in a polygamous household (logically presupposing the validity of polygamy), the *reason* for these laws is precisely *because* Genesis validates polygamy when it establishes patriarchy as a principle inherent in the creation of man and woman.

Exodus through Deuteronomy, broadly speaking, is the *what* of God’s Law, and Genesis is the *why*. Come to think of it, this is precisely the theme of John Murray’s masterpiece, “Principles of Conduct.” But Murray shipwrecked on the exegetical shores of monogamy and polygamy. One of the basic tenets I am advancing in this work is that the traditional explanation to account for the existence

of polygamy (and divorce) in God's Law, that is, that it is "tolerated" *as a sin* and a concession to man's intransigent sinfulness, is simply not palatable. And no commentator to my knowledge has answered Greg Bahnsen's devastating critique of this view in his book, "Theonomy in Christian Ethics," though it was published thirty years ago. I will therefore take the silence of our Biblical scholars as a tacit "amen" to Bahnsen's thesis. And I am contending that *only* the pro-polygamy thesis, that there is an essential *righteousness* in polygamy, accounts for the Biblical data. This thesis avoids the pitfall (which must assuredly grieve everyone who believes in the Divine inspiration of Scripture) of reading "contradictions," and "tensions" and "antinomies" into the word of God. There is *no contradiction* between Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch. Genesis 2:18 and Exodus 21:10, Deuteronomy 21:15-17, etc. all *agree* together that polygamy is a valid and righteous part of God's law-order. The doctrine of monogamy is a superimposition of an extra-Biblical principle onto the pages of the Bible and results in the illusion of paradox and contradiction where there really is none.

Smith acknowledges that there was polygamy among the patriarchs but that it was "divested of the degradation which in modern times attaches to the practice." This is a curious statement. What exactly is the degradation of which Smith speaks? And why and how did ancient polygamy not have the same "degradation" as modern polygamy? I have to confess I do not have the foggiest idea and Smith does not even pose, let alone answer, this question. It is sufficient to observe that *Smith* sees "degradation" in polygamy but that *the Bible* nowhere makes any such comment.

Smith also alleges that the Law "discouraged" polygamy, but that "it was the best civil law possible at the time, and sought to bring the people up to the pure standard of the moral law." But the Law of Moses *is* the standard of the moral law, is it not? Smith creates a false dichotomy between the "civil" law and the moral law. The institution of marriage is inherently *moral* in nature. Assuredly this is so where monogamy and polygamy are concerned. To paraphrase Smith's own words here, it would seem that Smith attempted "to divest polygamy of the righteousness which attaches to that practice."

Moreover, if monogamy is the "law" of creation, then would not a law establishing monogamy as the *only* marital option for a man be the best civil law possible? How can a law which falls short of God's standard possibly be "the best law possible" at *any* period of time?

Smith believed that the Law of Moses "sought to bring the people up to the pure standard of moral law." To which it must be asked: Does Exodus 21:10 make an attempt to bring the people up to the pure moral standard of monogamy? Or Deuteronomy 21:15-17? Or Deuteronomy 25:5-10? Or Exodus 22:16-17? Or Deuteronomy 22:28-29? Or Deuteronomy 21:10-14? No, rather it is clear that *each* of these laws *establishes a standard of morality which includes the institution of polygamy as integral* to God's Law. And since this is so, the attempt to repudiate polygamy is to take a stand against God.

## Article 52: The Commentators, #10: Adams

### #10. Jay E. Adams: “Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible”

“(I)t would seem strange for Paul to forbid the church to appoint someone as an elder or deacon who is a remarried man. Yet that is exactly what some teach. This error arises from an incorrect interpretation that has been placed upon the words ‘the husband of only one wife,’ which occur in I Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6...

“There was a perfectly good word that Paul might have used (*gameo*) to indicate that one could *never* remarry (even after the death of his spouse) and hold office in the church if that is what he had wanted to say. Then the phrase would have read: ‘married (*gameo*) only once.’ That would have been clear. But he did not use *gameo*; indeed, he was not talking about how often one was *married*. Rather, Paul consistently used the unusual construction ‘the husband of only one wife.’ He was concerned *not* about how many times a man had been married, but about how many wives he had!

“The phrase ‘the husband of only one wife,’ strictly speaking, permits only one interpretation: a prospective elder or deacon (because he must be an example in all things—including his marriage practices) may not be a polygamist.” —pg. 80-81

*Why* should Jay E. Adams think it such a strange thing that remarriage is an issue of concern? Especially when the issue of *divorce* preceding it may very possibly reflect upon the moral character of the candidate for ordination?

Since Adams acknowledges that the Greek phrase, “*mias gunaikos andra*” (“first/one/a wife man”), is “an unusual construction,” he should not be hinging his entire argumentation upon this passage upon linguistics. Linguistic analysis, as I have noted before, is subject to the law of diminishing returns. That is why linguistic scholars debate the meaning of biblical passages just as much as us who are not linguistic scholars. There is an admitted ambiguity in the language of I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 and problems arising out of Adams’ preferred rendering.

Adams appears to be refuting the translation “*a wife man*” and a particular interpretation of that translation which allows for only *one* marriage in a lifetime, period. Adams does not say whose view he is refuting, but it must be that of J. Carl Laney in Laney’s book, “The Divorce Myth” (a book which is appropriately titled, for that is exactly what Laney proffers), in which Laney proposes this view.

It is to be pointed out that Adams (and Laney) does not distinguish between “*one wife man*” and “*a wife man*,” as these interpretations bear upon the meaning of the text. Moreover, Adams passes over in silence the possible translation of the passage as “*first wife man*.” This means that there is a basic *equivocation* and failure to discriminate between distinct concepts lying at the foundation and premise of Adams’ argument. Thus, Adams has barely gone beyond mere assertion and he has certainly not made his case nor refuted anyone else’s.

Adams goes on to say,

“*The OT permitted polygamy*, but it was never the ideal. (In Genesis God said the *two* shall be one flesh—not *three* or *five* or *eight*!) But in the NT, while *a polygamous convert was allowed to enter the body without putting away his wives* (on the principle stated and reiterated in I Cor. 7:17, 20, 24), he could not become an officer. The life of an officer must be exemplary and God wanted the example of monogamous marriage held before the Church.” —pg. 81

Adams says all that really needs to be stated in the first clause. On Adams’ thesis, since the Old Testament permitted polygamy, then *the Old Testament permitted sin!*

Adams continues,

“(I)f before conversion a man married more than one wife, his polygamy does not keep him from membership in Christ’s church, but it does prohibit him from bearing office in the church. And *this is not because he is not forgiven by God* and the church, but because an office bearer must ‘be an example in all things’ (including monogamous marriage practices).” —pg. 83, emph. supp.

Note what Adams is telling us: polygamy is something which must be *forgiven*. In other words, quite clearly Adams is saying that polygamy is *sin*, a sin which the OT permitted! Does not the reader begin to discern from Adams’ commentary how hopelessly heretical the “monogamy-only” doctrine is? When such an intelligent and capable commentator as Jay E. Adams offers these kinds of absurdities to us, we can only conclude that there is *a blind spot* pertaining to this issue. The question is never asked concerning the basic premise, “Is it *really* sin?” The doctrine of monogamy is treated as an *unquestionable* premise and first principle.

Notice also the patent irrationalism that the doctrine forces Adams into: Adams regards the creation narrative as making polygamy a sin, and yet God, in opposition to Himself, permits polygamy under

the Old Covenant. This is God vs. God, the Old Testament vs. the Old Testament, the word of God vs. the word of God. May I remind Adams of a *New Testament* doctrine: “Whoever commits sin, transgresses also the law, for sin *is* the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). If it is *permitted* by the Law, as Adams acknowledges that polygamy is, it is not sin. If it is forbidden by the Law, then it is sin. It really is that simple.

Adams admits what surely is a logical deduction from his premises, that polygamists were allowed to enter into the communion of the Church *without putting away their multiple wives*. Here we see in Adams’ system, “sin” that does not need to be repented of! Now if you think that the pro-polygamy teaching is off-the-wall, you have simply not thought through the implications of the traditional monogamy-only position (and you’ve got plenty of Evangelical company!). Let me summarize Adams’ position:

1. Sin is permitted by God.
2. Sin does not need to be repented of.
3. Unrepented of sin is forgiven by God.

Is this orthodoxy?

Now I am persuaded that if Adams were asked point blank if he believed in the three above-named propositions, his answer would be a strong, unqualified, “No.” In the abstract, Adams would denounce these three propositions as heresy. And yet he unwittingly endorses them in the concrete example. And so do a multitude of other commentators. The rejection of the lawfulness of polygamy under the New Covenant (if logically applied) leads inevitably to a Gospel without repentance, and an indulgent, antinomian God who is the author and encourager of sin.

In the following paragraphs, Adams goes on to discuss the *history* of polygamy from the first century B.C., to the eleventh century A.D. What he says is worth noting:

“We are told by advocates of the anti-remarriage viewpoints that there was no polygamy in the NT times (this is one of Laney’s assertions—T.S.). The facts prove otherwise; they are wrong. Polygamy not only continued among the Jews, but also among the Greeks and Romans (and who knows who else?).

“Most of the early converts of every church that Paul began were Jews of the Dispersion. Josephus twice mentions polygamy in his day. In 212 A.D., the ‘Lex Antoniana de Civitate’ made monogamy the law for Romans, *but specifically exempted the Jews!* Later, in A.D. 285, Diocletian found it necessary to rescind the exception, but in 393 Theodosius found it necessary to enact a special law against polygamy among the Jews since they persisted in the practice. Even that did not put an end to it; polygamy among the Jews continued until the eleventh century.

“But that isn’t all. Greek marriage contracts indicate the existence of polygamy in the New Testament times. One such contract, from 92 B.C., reads, ‘It shall not be lawful

for Philiscus to bring in another wife besides Appolonia.’ This marriage contract makes it clear that, apart from such a prohibition, polygamy was an altogether likely option. The law enacted in 212 A.D. mentioned above, also indicates the presence of polygamy in the Roman world. That the clause against polygamy in the marriage contract just cited was not a rare exception is shown by a similar one in another contract from 13 B.C.: ‘Ptolemaes...shall not...insult her nor bring in another wife.’ ”  
—pg. 81-82

The point Adams is driving home is that polygamy was *prevalent* in New Testament times among the Romans, Greeks, and *especially the Jews*, that there were converts who were polygamists, and therefore, he believes, the references in I Timothy and Titus refer to polygamy. Not a bad conclusion based upon Adams’ premise, but, of course, it is the very premise which I am refuting here.

There is another aspect of this history that Adams overlooks which is evident on its face: *the tradition of exclusive monogamy was bequeathed to us from pagan Rome!* Note the date of the law: 212 A.D. This is well over a hundred years before Constantine’s conversion. Monogamy was enforced by pagan Roman civil law upon the Empire well before Christendom came into its own. From the time that there was something that could realistically be spoken of as “Christendom,” monogamy was *already* an established Roman tradition. It is clear from Adams’ overview that monogamy was *not* inherited from the Jews.

## Article 53: The Commentators, #11: Lockyer

### #11. Herbert Lockyer: “All the Women of the Bible”

“Originally, God sanctioned monogamy, that is, the marriage of one wife or husband at a time...

“As civilization developed, and sin increased, man perverted the divine ideal and purpose in marriage, and became a polygamist, a man with more than one wife. Lamech, of the family of Cain, the world’s first murderer, appears to be the first to violate the original ordinance, for he is spoken of as having two wives, Adah and Zillah (Genesis 4:23). By the time of Noah, polygamy had degenerated into interracial marriages of the most incestuous and illicit kind (Genesis 6:1-4). By the time Moses came to write the law, polygamy had apparently become general, and although accepted as the prevailing custom, was never approved. The Mosaic law sought to restrict and limit such a departure from God’s original purpose by wise and humane regulations. The curse that almost invariably accompanies polygamy is seen in Elkanah’s home life with his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. The Old Testament presents similar indirect exposures of what polygamy can lead to. Failures and calamities in the reigns of David and Solomon are attributed to the numerous wives each had (II Samuel 5:13; I Kings 11:1-3; see Deuteronomy 17:7).

“Under polygamy power was transferred from the wives to the queen mother, or chief wife (I Kings 2:9; 15:13). The husband had to house and feed his wives. Sometimes separate establishments were provided for the wives collectively or individually, “The house of the women” (Esther 2:3, 9; I Kings 7:8). For meals and social intercourse the wives gathered at the common table. Since the advent of Hollywood, film capital of the world, the command relevant to multiplying wives—and husbands—has been flouted (Deuteronomy 17:17).

“The prophets spoke of monogamy as being symbolic of the union of God with Israel (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14; 31:32; Hosea 2:16; Matthew 9:15).” —pg. 16

Like most of the other commentators examined, Lockyer sees Adam's monogamy as constituting a legislative decree by God for all men. Lockyer does, however, add a twist to this which, as far as I am aware, no other commentator has asserted. Lockyer argues that it is the *indissoluble nature* of the marriage bond that mandates monogamy. Actually, the passage which Lockyer alludes to here, Matthew 19:3-12, presents Christ as basing the lifelong requirement of marriage upon the *one flesh* nature of the bond. There is a considerable lack of lucidity here on Lockyer's part.

Lockyer cites the example of Lamech, who is the first polygamist *mentioned* in Scripture, and concludes, based upon this example, that polygamy *must* be sinful since it is a polygamist who committed murder. This is not logic at work, but the age-old propaganda technique of guilt by association. The reader is urged to consult Article #15 and the treatment of this subject in the sections on commentators Rushdoony and Murray.

Lockyer's next statement is a real head-scratcher: "polygamy had degenerated into interracial marriages of the most incestuous and illicit kind." Concerning interracial marriages, the reader is urged to consult Numbers 12 and pay particular attention to verse 10. Concerning "interracial incest," *how* does one accomplish such a feat? Perhaps Lockyer has in mind *half* brothers and sisters whose mother or father is not blood related? But this would only be *half* interracial incest. It should be obvious to the alert reader that Lockyer's commentary here is not a serious attempt at exegesis, but a blatant appeal to the emotions by heaping a bunch of negative sounding words together. This is sermonizing to the *lumpenproletariat*.

Concerning the statement, "By the time Moses came to write the Law, polygamy had apparently become general...accepted as a prevailing custom, never approved," the reader should be able to spot the logical fallacy here. Polygamy in Israel prevailed precisely *because* it was approved. The "custom" was not *merely* a custom, but a legitimate application of the Divine institution of marriage. Lockyer continues by saying that the Law of Moses sought to "restrict" and "limit" polygamy. He cites Deuteronomy 17:7, which I take to be a misprint for Deuteronomy 17:17, concerning the kings of Israel. Lockyer, however, does not grasp the meaning and purpose of that passage, which is to prevent the kings from entering *treaty-marriages* (I Kings 11:1-4) with the heathen. A comparison of Deuteronomy 17 with I Kings 11 and II Samuel 12:7-8 should suffice to show that a general prohibition against polygamy is not intimated there.

It is to be noted in those passages that God compares Solomon negatively with David in I Kings 11:4. Solomon's polygamy with *foreign* princesses resulted in his idolatry, whereas David, who married multiple *Israelite* women, never had his heart turned away after false gods. Solomon's polygamy was not the issue. The issue is *who* his wives were: heathen idolaters. *David never violated Deuteronomy 17:17*, because Deuteronomy 17:17 does not outlaw polygamy, *as such*. It is also to be noted that God informs David in II Samuel 12:7-8 that it was *He* who blessed David with multiple wives. Did God contravene His own Law in regard to David? Would God outlaw polygamy for kings and then give His own king multiple wives? The difficulty with this proposition is more than superficial.

Lockyer then speaks of "the curse" that accompanies polygamy. Apparently what Lockyer is intimating here is not merely that there may be some practical difficulties to overcome in a polygamous situation, but that polygamy is *accursed by God*. In response to this, it should be noted that numerous curses are pronounced upon many sins in the Bible (see Deut. 22:30; 27:30, for example), and many punishments dictated, but *never* upon polygamy.

Lockyer alleges that the failures of both David and Solomon are "*attributed to the numerous wives each had.*" Lockyer cites II Samuel 5:13 as support for this contention. But II Samuel 5:13 merely states the fact of David's polygamy via a list of his wives and children. How does this "attribute" David's shortcomings to his polygamy? It seems as though Lockyer was being a little disingenuous with us here. Concerning Solomon, as already observed, his problem was clearly attributed to the *foreign* wives he had, and not his polygamy.

Lockyer then complains that in a polygamous, royal household power is "transferred" to a queen mother or a chief wife. One might as well complain about the law of the firstborn. Certainly the social position of the least of Solomon's concubines was greater than most other Israelite wives. So what is Lockyer's point? He also complains that in a polygamous household, the women are sometimes housed separately or collectively. Interestingly enough, Lockyer cites Esther 2:3, 9. Lockyer conveniently fails to mention that Esther, who was just one of the king's *many* concubines (Est. 2:8), was brought to the king's palace in a sort of mass marriage. It would seem that neither Esther nor Mordecai had any second thoughts about the polygamy involved in this.

Finally, Lockyer states that the "prophets spoke of monogamy as being symbolic of the union of God with Israel." He cites, among other passages, Jeremiah 3:14 and Jeremiah 31:32. Apparently, Lockyer did not do his homework here, for in these very passages God actually speaks of *polygamy, not monogamy*, as being representative of His union with Israel: "I was a husband unto *them*" (31:32), and in chapter three He speaks of Israel and Judah as His *two* wives. How these passages qualify as a metaphor of monogamy, I cannot imagine.

The other references, Isaiah 54:5, Hosea 2:16, and Matthew 9:15 also use the analogy of marriage, but where is the reference to monogamy of which Lockyer speaks? Like so many others, Lockyer is grasping at empty air in this connection. He reads *into* the scriptures his own thoughts rather than exegeting what is really there. Lockyer's short treatment of polygamy falls far short of making a case for the monogamy-only doctrine.

## Article 54: The Commentators, #12: Tucker

### #12. Ruth A. Tucker: “Women in the Maze”

Having reviewed eleven examples of orthodox, Evangelical perspectives on patriarchy and polygamy, let us now turn to one of the more influential *unorthodox* and heretical perspectives—that which is referred to by the oxymoron, “Christian feminism.”

It will be readily seen that the traditional monogamy-only doctrine has laid the foundation for present day “Christian” feminism, and provided it with its basic pillars of support by its attendant endorsement of a Dispensationalist hermeneutic, the proposition that God “tolerates sin” via the provision of His Law, and that there are “contradictions” and “antinomies” both within and between the testaments. (Tucker makes it clear on pages 252-253 of her book that she is Dispensationalist, Arminian and antinomian.)

Tucker begins by assailing the doctrine of patriarchy as the creation purpose of God. She declares confidently, “(T)here is no reference to headship in the creation account,” and then quotes Bilezikian, “(T)here is not the slightest indication that such a hierarchy existed between Adam and Eve,” — “Beyond Sex Roles” pg. 34.

Those who have been studying this work carefully will recall that I began by demonstrating *eight* logical aspects of Genesis which *do* teach patriarchy (see Article #1, “How Feminism Denies the Gospel” and “Patriarchy Before the Fall,” I through VI), three of which are *plainly, clearly and unambiguously* declared by the apostle Paul. Those three aspects are 1) the woman was made *for the man* (Gen. 2:18, I Cor. 11:3, 9), 2) the woman was made *from* the man (Gen. 2:21-22, I Cor. 11:8) and 3) the man was made *first* (I Tim. 2:13). Since the New Testament explicitly and unequivocally proclaims the doctrine of patriarchy based upon the creation account, this denial of feminists is totally inexcusable.

Needless to say, Tucker and other “Christian” feminists have gone to great extremes of Scripture twisting to deny these unambiguous teachings of the Bible.

For example, concerning Genesis 2:18 in which we are told that the woman was made for the man, Tucker resorts to *misdirection* and the creation of a straw-man argument: instead of addressing Paul's *actual* exegesis of this passage where he observes that the woman was made for the man, she attempts to obfuscate the issue by misdirecting the readers' attention and focus to the clause about the woman being a *helper* for the man. Basically, Tucker's argument is that since God is declared to be a helper to man, and since God is obviously man's authority, then it cannot be said that Eve being Adam's helper establishes patriarchy (pg. 37-38).

To which I ask: why try to demonstrate a denial of patriarchy from a statement of Scripture which Paul did *not* use to defend the patriarchal thesis? Why not address the precise clause Paul *did* comment upon? The answer is obvious: Tucker is not concerned about correct exegesis of Scripture but about promoting feminism *no matter what the Scriptures actually teach*. Tucker is apparently conscious of the fact that if she addresses the *real* issue here that the weakness of her basic contention will be manifested.

Tucker does evidence an awareness that most Evangelicals are not going to fall for her line of "reasoning." She states,

"Even if it were true that male headship was instituted at the time of creation, it would not necessarily follow that it must remain in force throughout all history," — pg. 33

This statement is a patent contradiction of a statement made in the immediately preceding paragraph:

"Those who argue that the Bible teaches man's authority over woman contend that God instituted male headship when he created male and female. The fact that this design was *creational* makes it particularly significant, *because it cannot then be viewed as a temporary provision* (emph. supplied) that might at some point be rescinded." —pg. 33

But not to worry: Tucker never develops this theme because her main contention is that there was *never* any patriarchy involved in the creation. Nevertheless, this is a significant admission on Tucker's part: demonstrate patriarchy as the creation purpose of God, and the rest of her argument is refuted.

Tucker's thesis is that patriarchy is a *sinful result* of the Fall. She contends that the pronouncement of Genesis 3:16, "he shall rule over you," is *descriptive* not *prescriptive*. Even if this is the case, we are still left with the fact that patriarchy is taught *before* the Fall and unambiguously reiterated in the New Testament (see Ephesians 5:22-24).

"Following the Fall into sin in Genesis 3, *a new patriarchal order began...*(I)n many ways the Old Testament is a patriarchal book...at every turn women confronted sex discrimination..." —pg. 57

Here we see plainly manifested that “Christian” feminism relies upon a Dispensationalist hermeneutic as an integral and *essential* support for its system of belief. Heresy *begets* heresy.

This becomes even more explicit in Tucker’s next paragraph,

“How do we regard the patriarchy of the Old Testament? (Note well that Tucker acknowledges the patriarchal nature of the Old Testament.—T.S.) Because it is there—in holy Scripture—ought it be seen as a standard for today? I think not. *Many aspects of the Old Testament have been superseded by the teachings of Jesus.* Indeed, one of his common expressions was, ‘You have heard that it was said...But I say to you...’ *The New Testament overturns some of the most basic tenets of patriarchy, such as polygamy and the double standard regarding adultery and divorce...*” —pg. 58, *emph. supp.*

Tucker parrots the traditional Dispensational line here. Thus, we see very clearly that Dispensationalism and the compromise of orthodox theologians with Dispensationalism in the matters of divorce, adultery, and polygamy plays very conveniently into the hands of feminist theologians. Tucker, like so many other commentators, does not discern that this entire idea flagrantly contradicts Jesus’ declaration in Matthew 5:17-19 that he did *not* come to abolish, that is, *annul*, the Law, but to *confirm* or *ratify* it.

Coming to the subject of polygamy, Tucker notes that “Polygamy was an accepted practice in ancient Hebrew culture,” (pg. 61). We have already demonstrated conclusively in this work that polygamy was not *merely* an aspect of Hebrew culture but *biblical* culture as a result of the laws *instituted and established by God Himself*. Tucker seems to forget that the laws of the Pentateuch were not human creations but *the commands of God*. And, of course, God *discriminates* (that is, He observes the *differences*) between men and women, and issues His commands in accordance with those differences He has ordained. Tucker is quite correct that “at every turn women faced sex discrimination.” It is only feminists, who live in a fantasy world where there *are* no differences, who would think of pointing this out in a pejorative fashion. Their denunciation of this reality is, in essence, a denunciation of *God*.

Tucker notes that Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, David and Elkanah and other men of God were polygamists.

“Polygamy did not work well for David who was ever troubled over the women in his life, but he nevertheless ‘took more concubines and wives’ (2 Sam 5:13). His attitude toward them was not necessarily love—or even lust. In 2 Samuel 20:3 we read: ‘David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took ten concubines whom he had left to look after the house, and put them in a house under guard, and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood.’ Such were the effects of patriarchalism.” —pg. 61

Ruth Tucker, like Walter Kaiser, resorts to outright fabrication to bolster her position. There is no statement anywhere in the Biblical record that David was "ever troubled over the women in his life." The wives, including the concubines, David had were a *blessing* in his life—a point made explicitly by *God Himself* in II Samuel 12:7-8. It is also explicitly pointed out in Scripture that the troubles David had were the punishments for his sins of murdering Uriah and committing adultery with Bathsheba.

Tucker attributes this entire episode to David's "patriarchal attitude," and "the effects of patriarchalism," making absolutely no mention whatsoever of the context. She makes no mention of David's sins (except the "sin" of patriarchy), no mention of Absalom's rebellion, no mention of Absalom's defilement of David's concubines (who were probably previously the concubines of Saul and, therefore, probably *complicit* in Absalom's rebellion and their own defilement), in fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy. Tucker wants the casual reader of her book to believe that David was a male chauvinist, patriarchal pig arbitrarily "discriminating" against the oppressed sex like any modern secular wife beater. This is all obviously a *deliberate* attempt to distort the Scriptures.

The fact of the matter is, David *provided* for these women for the rest of their lives, clearly indicating his concern for them. His divorce of them cannot be abstracted from the context of adultery which gave rise to it.

Tucker goes on to say, "But David, of course, does not take the prize for polygamy. His celebrated son Solomon made a game out of the custom," (pg. 61). Once again, Tucker is guilty of fabricating a proposition out of thin air. What warrant is there in the Biblical text for such a (pardon my bluntness) *stupid* statement as this? None. It is clearly the product of Tucker's overactive imagination.

I Kings 3:1 reveals what Solomon's polygamy was all about: "And Solomon made affinity (that is, a treaty) with Pharaoh king of Egypt, *and took Pharaoh's daughter.*" This was no "game" or trivial pursuit but consummately (pardon the pun) *serious*. It was an integral aspect of Solomon's conducting of foreign affairs.

Tucker continues,

"Like other aspects of patriarchalism, polygamy had a very negative effect on women. Indeed, it often brought out the worst in them, as was true of Sarah who gave her slave-girl Hagar to her husband, Abraham...In this instance, Sarah 'succumbed to the patriarchal system with her manipulative use of Hagar...' " —pg. 61-62 (the last sentence is a quote from Gretchen Hull in, "Equal to Serve").

Are Sarah's actions recorded in Genesis 16 an example of *patriarchy* bringing out the worst in Sarah? Tucker seems to forget that original sin lies in the bosom of every one of us and that "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward," as Job declared. Sarah's envy of Hagar and her consequent harsh treatment of her is no effect of patriarchy but the *choice* Sarah made in giving in to the fallen passions of the flesh.

It also deserves to be noted in this connection a point made earlier in this work regarding Rachel and Leah in Genesis 30. Both of these wives of Jacob, who gave their handmaids to Jacob, regard the lawfulness of polygamy as an occasion to bring out the *best* in them. As Leah is recorded saying in verse 18, “God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband.” This is clearly viewed as an act of selflessness which God rewarded.

Tucker then turns to Elkanah:

“Another contentious polygamous situation involved Hannah and Peninnah, the wives of Elkanah...we read that when Elkanah went to the temple to sacrifice (note; it wasn’t the Temple, but the Tabernacle.—T.S.), he gave a portion to his wife Peninnah, ‘but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb.’

“Yet these were perhaps the least of the devastating effects on women of the patriarchal system and polygamy.” —pg. 62

While I Samuel 1 clearly depicts a “contentious polygamous situation,” this is no more of an argument against polygamy than the pervasiveness of contentious *monogamous* households in our culture is an argument against monogamy. And I would dare say that contentiousness plagues our monogamous culture’s households to a *far* greater degree than anything ever seen in all of Israel’s patriarchal history. But don’t try confusing Tucker with logic. It is clear from her book as a whole that logical consistency has no place in her theology. “The system” which Tucker condemns, let us never forget, is *God’s* system. Tucker’s *real* problem is with God who commands our obedience.

Tucker then goes on to say,

“The case of Michal, one of David’s many wives, illustrates the utter degradation of the system. Michal was initially married to David as a political pawn, at the insistence of her father, Saul. Later, however, when Michal aided David in escaping Saul, Saul abruptly married her to another man...David later decided that he needed Michal’s political connections, and he demanded that she return to him as his wife. ‘Ishbaal went and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping as he walked behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, ‘Go back home!’ So he went back’ (2 Sam 3:15-16.) Hull confesses, ‘I have always had a soft spot for Paltiel, the only man who ever cared for Michal and who was loyal and open enough to show it.’ Hull reflects further on Michal:

“ ‘What of Michal? We can imagine her dismay, not only at being wrenched from a loving husband (to whom she had now been married for about ten years) but upon finding herself back in David’s household, part of an ever-growing list of wives and concubines (2 Samuel 5:13-16). Is it any wonder that when Michal saw David

exuberantly dancing in a religious celebration, she despised him? Was she thinking: *you who care so much for your God, don't care much for human beings he made*. Is it surprising she greeted him with sarcasm when he returned? There was no relationship between these two, no 'one flesh' union. The story of this unfortunate woman's life concludes on a bitter note. Michal's punishment for her lack of respect for the man who treated her like a possession was to be deprived of the ancient world's female status symbol: 'And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.' —pg. 62-63.

It is clear from the quotation of Hull, that Tucker is not the only feminist with an overactive imagination. Hull presumes to know the very *thoughts* of Michal which are *not* recorded for us in Scripture. She even intimates that Michal's despising of David was *justified* (!!!): "*Is it surprising that she greeted him with sarcasm when he returned?*" The inference here is exactly the *opposite* of what the passage teaches. II Samuel 6:23 records that Michal remained *barren* (i.e., a judgment of God, not of David) and "had no child until the day of her death." In an attempt to counteract this obvious fact, Hull again fabricates out of nothing yet another lie: "There was no relationship between these two (i.e., David and Michal—T.S.) no 'one flesh' union." Oh no? II Samuel 3:14 refutes Hull's contention here. The meaning of that passage is clear. David had Michal returned *as his wife*. *By the time David brought the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem, and danced before it, Michal and David had resumed their one flesh union for about five years!* Yet Tucker and Hull comment upon the incident as if this incident ensued simultaneously or immediately upon his reunion with Michal. This is patent Scripture twisting.

Hull and Tucker also both conveniently fail to mention that Paltiel's marriage to Michal was *adultery!* They intimate that Saul was *justified* in giving Michal to him because of David's "patriarchal attitude." Perhaps Paltiel was somewhat of a pawn of Saul in all of this, but how much of "a soft spot" should we have for a man who reaps the consequences of his adultery? "The only man who ever cared for Michal" seems to not have cared for her enough to make sure he did not make her guilty of adultery before God! Hull and Tucker thus demonstrate their enmity toward God: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," (James 4:4). Tucker and Hull should both meditate at length upon this statement of James.

It also bears pointing out that as Saul's chosen man to have Michal during his campaign against David, and therefore a man of wealth and means, that it is entirely *probable* that Paltiel was a polygamist himself. Tucker and Hull *presume*, in the absence of any Biblical confirmation, that Michal was Paltiel's only wife. The *likelihood* is that Paltiel had other wives.

"Michal's punishment for her lack of respect for the man who treated her as a possession" was inflicted *by God*. There is no justification in the biblical text for concluding that David ceased sexual relations with Michal. Indeed, verse 23 is *promised* upon the fact that their sexual union *continued*. We are not told, as is the case with the ten concubines, that David divorced or "shut (her) up until the day of (her) death." What we *are* told is that Michal *bore no children*. It was not *David* but *God* who punished Michal in this manner.

Ruth Tucker's feminist mores are clearly offended by the patriarchal implications of divinely sanctioned polygamy. The fact that polygamy is provided for in God's Law places Tucker, and all feminists, in the position of either rejecting God's word or rejecting feminism. Tucker has chosen to reject God's word.

The fact that "Evangelical" feminists such as Tucker should react against polygamy is not surprising. The god they really worship (excuse me, *goddess*) is *Woman*. Polygamy refutes their idolatry and shatters the pillars of the Temple of Feminism. For if polygamy is lawful, then the distinctive tenets of "biblical" feminism are false.

## Article 55: The Commentators, #13: Foh

### #13. Susan T. Foh: “Women and the Word of God”

“It seems clear that desiring another’s wife (*or husband*) is wrong, and that this is the point of Exodus 20:17. *The ten commandments are addressed to women as well as men.*” —pg. 71, emphasis supplied.

Susan T. Foh does not undertake to give a systematic treatment of the subject of polygamy; her comments above are strictly in passing, but as far as I know, she is the *only* commentator examined who ties in the “monogamy only” doctrine to the tenth commandment. Therefore, it is worth including her comments in this work. It actually is surprising that this line of argumentation is not pursued by other commentators because the ten commandments are certainly foundational to Biblical ethics.

There is, indeed, truth in the statement that the ten commandments are addressed to women as well as men. But that is not the *whole* truth. There *is* a sense in which the Law is addressed *primarily* and particularly *to men* as the (Divinely ordained) authorities in God’s law-order and the guardians of that order. For one thing, it was the *heads of families*—men—who were the appointed elders of Israel, and from whom the judges were appointed and ordained as the leaders of tens, hundreds, and thousands. These were the people who would be *applying* the Law in the everyday life of Israel.

The express language of the tenth commandment forbids *men* from coveting other men’s wives. According to Foh, “The Hebrew woman listening to the ten commandments would know she was not to covet her neighbor’s husband.” But *is* this true? Does this logically follow?

Since men’s and women’s roles are different, a point Foh acknowledges, then what is prohibited to men is not *necessarily* prohibited to women also. Given the explicit permission in Exodus 21:10 for a man to have more than one wife, Foh’s statements in this regard go beyond what can logically be deduced.

The relevance of the Song of Solomon should be considered here. For there we have described, *in the most glowing terms conceivable*, the *desire* of the Shulamite woman for Solomon. As pointed out earlier in this work, the Shulamite woman was about to become the 141st wife of Solomon! It can safely be said, therefore, that Foh's conclusion in this regard is erroneous. A single woman *may*, indeed, lawfully covet, desire and *have* an already-married man.

I was told one time by a very irate person that my views on polygamy represented a "double standard" which is essentially very permissive for men and restrictive for women. The fact of the matter is, however, that there are *two* sides to this coin. There is a complementarity to the Biblical doctrine of patriarchy that just simply is not appreciated by monogamy-only adherents: the Law severely *restricts men's choice* of women exclusively to available single women. *All* married women are prohibited. But it is very *permissive* in this regard toward women. A single woman may desire and have *any man* whether that man is single or married.

It is a simple fact of everyday observation that truly desirable women, whether those traits are in regard to physical beauty or character traits or both, tend to have a lot of competition for their affection and commitment from men. There is a certain truth in the proposition that "all the good ones are taken" in regards to women, as well as in regards to men. In a patriarchal law-order, it is more difficult for a man to find a good woman than it is for a woman to find a good man. The advantage in this regard is clearly in favor of women.

How many times amongst us Christians have we witnessed godly women winding up with unsaved men because "all the good Christian men are taken?" I can think of several examples from amongst Christians I have known, and I have no doubt that everyone reading these words can cite examples of such from their own acquaintances and fellow church members. There are virtually always more women in any given church than men—usually by a *wide* margin. I think all of the statistics will bear this out uniformly, and it has certainly been true of the churches I have attended. This presents a serious dilemma for Biblically-based congregations who understand that it is against God's will to marry the unsaved. How are we to counsel single women looking for a husband when their choices of "available" Christian men are so limited and their competition from other Christian women so pervasive?

This is no abstract or academic question. Even as the reader is reading these words right now, there are Christian women out there who are *answering* this question for themselves; and they are *concluding* that since the "available" Christian men are so few, or the ones they know are not the kind of men they wish to make a life commitment to, that they may as well marry some unsaved man who is more appealing for whatever reason than any of the few "available" Christian men.

I well remember shortly after becoming a Christian, probably around six months after, I arrived at church quite early for a Sunday evening service. I was the first person to take a seat in the pews. As I sat there praying and reading my Bible, one of the young, single women of the church entered the sanctuary and went to the altar. She was about 22 years old. (I believe her name was Laura, but I don't recall for sure now.) Laura just so happened to be a woman who would not consent to a date

with me. She would never explain why, the answer was just "No." She knelt down to pray. I noticed that she was also weeping. She remained at the altar for about ten minutes occasionally wiping the tears away from her eyes. Finally, she got up and sat down in one of the pews. I went over to her and told her that I had seen her crying, and asked if there was anything that I could do to help her. At first she was reluctant to talk, but then she proceeded to open up to me and tell me of her situation.

It turned out that Laura was distressed over her romantic interest in a young man who was ambivalent in his attitude toward her. It was quite clear that Laura had no ambivalence regarding the young man. For Laura, this young man was *the one*. She related to me that her intended love interest just so happened to be an unbeliever! She was praying for his salvation. (I was rather appalled that she would have her sights on this non-Christian, but I kept my composure and listened.) Laura pulled out a bunch of photographs of the young man and showed them to me. *Well!!!* Robert Redford in his youth would have been green with envy at this guy. He was quite the handsome jock, muscular definition and all. He could have been a professional baseball player. It became self-evident as Laura went on, that this man had no interest in spiritual things. But Laura was set on him, anyway, I presume largely due to physical attraction. Laura was no Marilyn Monroe or Raquel Welch. She was about fifty pounds overweight, and I would think would have been quite plain even without the excess weight. I did not say so, but I thought to myself that Laura was setting herself up ultimately to have her heart broken by rejection. It was quite clear just from the photographs of the man, his manner of dressing, etc., that he placed a great deal of emphasis on physical attractiveness, certainly his own, and almost certainly of women, as well. I cannot stress too strongly that this kind of situation is *routine* and *pervasive*. *This is one of the consequences of the monogamy-only teaching!* We have unduly, and unbiblically, restricted the choice of women in this regard, and the result has been the violation of God's will and the ruination of the lives of many decent Christian women.

I would like to say that I do not decry in the least Laura's obvious inclusion of physical attraction in her list of requirements for a man. The celebration of physical beauty is writ large in the Song of Solomon. It is a gift of God. The problem here is that in the Church's restricting her choice to *single* men, Laura's options were *severely* restricted. Handsome men seldom go begging for a mate, and they usually wind up with women who have a corresponding beauty. But let us suppose for a moment that Laura lived in a patriarchal Christian society which allowed polygamy. A handsome young Christian man would almost certainly be *less* reticent about taking Laura as a wife because of her lack of physical beauty because he would know that there would still be plenty of opportunity to find other women who satisfied his desire for a beautiful woman. And a handsome *married* man who might wish his wife had more going for herself than her physical beauty would be more prone to marry a second wife like Laura because of her other obvious strong character traits.

It is utterly foolish for us to be in denial of the obvious role that physical attractiveness plays in the selection of spouses: it is patently manifest and obvious just from observing the couples in any church on any given Sunday. It seems to me that Biblical patriarchy which allows polygamy accommodates this reality and addresses its drawbacks in a way that a monogamous culture simply cannot begin to. Under enforced monogamy, the Lauras of this world are often consigned to having their hearts broken continually. In a patriarchal society, Laura would have had a much better likelihood of finding a

Christian man to her liking, perhaps from among the already-married men. Would this not have been *far* preferable than to consigning her to pine away after an unsaved man who was probably going to break her heart anyway?

## Article 56: God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ

### Introductory remarks

In the world today, and especially in the West, there is a virtual deluge of feminist propaganda—a veritable Hell’s Cornucopia. I suppose we might expect such delusions from the God-haters and Bible bashers amongst us; they, after all, have “the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart,” (Eph. 4:18). The delusional and just plain idiotic thinking of feminists is well exemplified by an event reported on network news several summers ago. On the border of Canada and New York, a dozen or so bare-breasted women were protesting a “repressive” ordinance in the State of New York. What form of tyranny were they protesting? A law which made it illegal for women to go bare-breasted on the beach! When one of these enlightened women was asked the rationale for their protests, she responded, “If men can go topless on the beach, then why shouldn’t women be allowed to go topless, too!?”

I say the idiocy of feminism is well exemplified by this event because it embodies the underlying, archetypal assumption and premise of all feminism: namely, that there are no real differences between men and women, and that any empirical differences that can be demonstrated are insignificant. Extrapolation of logical consequences on the basis of differences between the sexes simply is not *permitted* in feminist ideology. Reality be damned! The sheer stupidity to which these women were driven by their feminist premises *ought* to have caused them to understand that there is something erroneous about their guiding assumption. But you may as well try to explain to a man blind from conception the difference between orange and blue!

Unfortunately, it is not only feminists, secularists, and Humanists who vomit out feminist propaganda, but some who profess to be Evangelical Christians, as well. They may not be as numerous or vociferous as their openly secular counterparts, but their views have made significant inroads into the believing Church. Their influence can even be seen and felt in the statements of orthodox theologians. One example of this influence is this statement of James I. Packer:

“While I am not keen on *hierarchy* and *patriarchy* as terms describing the man-woman relationship in Scripture, Genesis 2:18-23...Ephesians 5:21-23...continue to convince me that the man-woman relationship is intrinsically non-reversible. By this

I mean that, other things being equal, a situation in which a female boss has a male secretary, or a marriage in which a woman (as we say) wears the trousers, will put more strain on the humanity of both parties than if it were the other way around. This is part of the reality of the creation, a given fact that nothing will change.”

This quote is from the volume, “Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” subtitled, “A Response to Evangelical Feminism,” (pg. 45). (The “response,” it would seem, is a half-hearted “Amen,” with a few reservations.) The editors of this anthology, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, express a similar sentiment in their Preface:

“We are uncomfortable with the term ‘traditionalist’ because it implies an unwillingness to let Scripture challenge traditional patterns of behavior, and we certainly reject the term ‘hierarchicalist’ because it overemphasizes structured authority while giving no hint of equality or the beauty of mutual interdependence.”  
—pg. xiv

This present work certainly affords ample opportunity to Piper and Grudem to demonstrate how great is their commitment “to let Scripture challenge traditional patterns of behavior.” Packer & Co. may not be keen on the terms “hierarchy” and “patriarchy,” but it is abundantly clear from Scripture that these terms accurately define the Divine will and standard. Given the last two sentences in the above cited quote of Packer, one wonders precisely *why* he is so averse to these terms. Is he *ashamed* that the Bible teaches these truths? This seems to be the only explanation for his squeamishness. And if Piper and Grudem, *et al*, are not prepared to uncompromisingly declare the truth of biblical *hierarchy*, how effective can their volume be? Are they not giving an uncertain sound from their trumpet?

It is the purpose of this present work to present the biblically prescribed ethic regarding the roles and relationships of Man & Woman, marriage and the family. The biblical commands have the purpose of effecting a *hierarchy* within marriage and the family. This hierarchy may justly be referred to as *patriarchy*.

The term, “patriarchy,” may not exist in the Bible (though the word, “patriarch,” certainly does), but the *concept* is clearly pervasive in both testaments. The foundation for the biblical doctrine of patriarchy is first clearly set forth in the Bible prior to the fall, in Genesis 2:18, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet (fit, appropriate) for him.”

Note that the woman is created in consideration of, and in subordination to, the needs of the man. This declaration of God is inherently hierarchical, patriarchal. It is clear from the apostle Paul’s Divinely inspired exegesis of this passage in 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8 that this fact of the original creation is applicable to *all* husbands and wives:

*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God...Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.*

Every husband is the head of his wife. Every wife is made *for* her husband. This fact is *inherent in sexual differentiation* and the Divinely instituted marriage ordinance. Since we are all derived from Adam and Eve, and all partakers either of Adam's "manness" or Eve's "womanness," what was true for Adam and Eve must be true for *all* husbands and wives. The nature which effected God's first patriarchal hierarchy is the same and, therefore, the Divine will and purpose is the same.

In Paul's revelation from God, there is not only the *affirmation* that the woman was made for the man, but the *denial* that the man was made for the woman. These two propositions in conjunction are fully sufficient in and of themselves to establish the doctrine of the wife's subordination to her husband. No other support for the doctrine of patriarchy is logically necessary. However, in this regard, the Scripture has given us something of an overkill, as the previous articles in this work demonstrate.

### **God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ**

"In order to counteract these humanistic conceptions of the family and of the parental role, the Biblical doctrine of the family which is plainly *God-centered* must be understood and stressed. The humanistic doctrine of the family is man-centered and society-centered. The family is seen as a social institution, which in the course of evolution, provided the 'old collectivity' and must now give way to 'the new collectivity' as mankind becomes the true family of man. As already noted, the *first* characteristic of the Biblical doctrine is that the family is viewed in terms of a God-centered *function* and *origin*. The family is part of God's purpose for man, and it functions to the glory of God in its true form, as well as giving man his own self-realization under God.

"*Second*, Genesis 1:27-30 makes clear that God created man to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it under God. Although originally only Adam was created (Gen. 2:7), the creation mandate is plainly spoken to man in the married estate, and with the creation of woman in mind. Thus, essential to the function of the family under God, and to the role of the man as the head of the household, is the call to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it. This gives the family a possessive function...it clearly involves in the Biblical perspective private property. Man must bring to all creation God's law order, exercising power over creation in the name of God. The earth was created 'very good' but it was as yet undeveloped...by man, God's appointed governor. *This government is particularly the calling of the man as husband and father, and of the family as an institution.* The fall of man has not altered this calling, although it has made its fulfillment impossible apart from Christ's regenerating work." —Rousas J. Rushdoony, "The Institutes of Biblical Law," pg. 163

*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*—Colossians 2:9

It is not without relevance to our present topic that the early fathers of the Church set out to defend the faith against heretical notions about the nature of God; after all, to have a false conception of God is to be an idol worshipper. The very first articles of the Apostles' Creed begin with a defense of the Trinitarian nature of God:

I believe in GOD THE FATHER Almighty.  
And in JESUS CHRIST, His only Son, our Lord.

The Creed goes on to State our belief in the HOLY SPIRIT. It is quite clear that a defense of Trinitarianism is embodied in the Creed, as against the *subordinationist heresies* of Arians and others who denied the full deity of Jesus Christ.

In our contemporary setting, there is a new, rival view of God, alien to the Bible's undeviating designation of God as "He" and "Him." This rival view of God arises from feminist quarters who assail the *propriety* (!!!) of the Bible's use of male pronouns when referring to God. It should be noted in this connection that *every* single pronoun in the Bible which refers to God *employs the masculine appellation*. There is not one single instance in which God is referred to as "she" or "her." That we should mix masculine and feminine pronouns when referring to God is one of the more common demands of feminists. God is a spirit, it is argued, therefore the masculine pronouns of the Bible should not be taken too seriously.

When confronted by these demands of feminists, many of the more orthodox commentators (for example, Susan T. Foh in "Women and the Word of God" and Mary Kassian in "The Feminist Gospel") point out that it is the prerogative of *God* to define *Himself*, not of feminists or any other human being, and that *He* has *done* so in masculine terms. This point is well worth heeding. It is also argued in response to feminists that the "masculine terminology has significance because God has given the man authority in the family (husband) and in the church (elder) rather than the woman," (Foh, "Women and the Word of God," pg. 163). Therefore we should address God as *He* has commanded. While these reasons are not entirely without force, I believe that they are more subsidiary and do not get to the heart of the issue. I believe that God's maleness has a *metaphysical ground* and a very real substantive aspect, involving the doctrines of the Incarnation, and what the Creed refers to as the "eternal generation" of the Son. This forces me into a divergence of opinion with Susan T. Foh. Foh states in "Women and the Word of God," "We have already established that God is neither masculine nor feminine; God is a Spirit," (pg. 150). Thus, on Foh's analysis, while positing God as male has God's stamp of approval, He would appear to be acting somewhat arbitrarily in doing so.

I fear that in placing the justification for referring to God exclusively in male terms *solely* on the basis of an anthropomorphic analogy and an arbitrary decree, Foh has placed her thesis in the same predicament as the feminists' preference for the feminine *comparisons* (i.e., God's comparison of His love for His people to the love of a mother for her children) which occur a few times in the Bible. If the argument from analogy in the case of the husband-wife relationship is a sufficient basis to refer to God as "He," then we are left wondering why the argument from analogy in the case of the mother-

children relationship is *not* a sufficient basis to refer to God as “She.” It seems to me that Foh has not fared any better in this particular regard in her defense of orthodoxy than the feminists have done in the defense of heresy.

When we read the Bible, we are confronted by the *undeviating* use of male pronouns when referring to God. If God is a genderless being, then it would seem consistent with the truth to refer to Him as “It.” And yet, we are consistently confronted in the Bible, not with female or neuter pronouns for God, but masculine ones. (A neuter pronoun, of course, would not necessarily *deny* gender to its referent, but simply not *specify* gender.) How are we to account for this undeviating consistency if there is not a *metaphysical* ground for its occurrence in the Bible? Frankly, Foh’s explanations leave me unsatisfied.

In summarizing her views of the gender of God, Foh states:

“God is a spirit and, as such, is beyond the categories of male and female. He created those categories and existed before they did.” —pg. 163

Actually, the categories of male and female existed in God’s mind from all eternity past. And *is* God truly beyond such a category? To observe that God is a spirit does *not* prove such a proposition.

I contend that God *identified*, in the person of Jesus Christ, with the *male* category, from *all eternity past*; and, as that which is future/potential from God’s perspective is as substantive as that which is present tense, the gender of God is, therefore, an *eternal* character of His nature. I believe it goes yet deeper than this particular facet, but I contend that this facet itself establishes the male gender of God.

Let us now explore this matter in particular.

### **Subordinationism and the Trinity**

In order to understand the significance of this, it is necessary to divert momentarily to a logically related topic: the question of subordinationism within the Godhead. Rushdoony has noted that:

“Every heresy in the church has been subordinationist in some form or other. If, for example, by God, the Almighty Creator, the Father is meant exclusively, and the Son and Spirit are seen as some kind of junior gods...” — “Foundations of Social Order,” pg. 93.

The early Church was constantly battling one form of subordinationism or another. The creeds and councils of the early Church repeatedly were dealing either directly or indirectly with this tendency. Rushdoony quotes St. Leo:

“But the Godhead, which is One in the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *excludes all notion of inequality*. For the eternity of the Trinity has nothing temporal, nothing dissimilar in nature: Its will is one, Its substance identical, Its power equal,

and yet there are not three GODS, but one GOD; because it is a true and inseparable unity, where there can be no diversity. Thus in the whole and perfect nature of the true man was true GOD born, complete in what was his own, complete in what was ours.” — “Foundations of Social Order,” pg. 80

*Orthodox Christianity holds that the persons of the Godhead, constituting an inseparable unity, are co-equal.* The only form of subordinationism between the persons of the Godhead is *economical* and functional, not *ontological* (that is, in regard to their actual attributes). This is a crucial thought to bear in mind as we progress to our next point.

### **The “Eternal Generation” of the Son**

The expanded Creed of Constantinople reads in part:

“We believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, *begotten from the father before all time (pro tanton ton aionon)*, Light from light, true God from true God, begotten not created.” — Rushdoony, Foundations of Social Order,” pg. 26

The Council of Chalcedon formulated this part of the Creed as follows:

“as regards his Godhead, *begotten of the Father before all ages*, but yet as regards his manhood...begotten of the virgin Mary.” —Rushdoony, “Foundations of Social Order,” pg. 66.

Since any subordination within the Godhead is functional and economic, not ontological, then the “eternal generation of the Son” must necessarily refer to the relations of the Father and Son in some *functional*, economic aspect. What *is* this aspect? It *must* have a *teleological* reference (from the Greek, “telos,” meaning “end” or “goal”). What else can this end or goal be except the Incarnation?

The astute historian will, no doubt, point out that this formulation of mine constitutes a redefinition of the Creed. To which I must admit. But for those Protestants who would fault me for this, I refer them to John Murray, who pointed out that Calvin himself was constrained to depart from the patristic dogma on this selfsame article of the Creed:

“There is the danger of stagnant traditionalism and we must be alert to this danger, on the one hand, as to that of discarding our historical moorings, on the other. Students of historical theology are acquainted with the furor which Calvin’s insistence upon the self-existence of the Son as to his deity aroused at the time of the Reformation. Calvin was too much of a student of Scripture to be content to follow the lines of what had been regarded as Nicene orthodoxy on this particular issue. He was too jealous for the implications of the *homoousion* clause of the Nicene Creed to be willing to accede to the interpretation which the Nicene fathers, including Athanasius, placed upon another expression in the Creed, namely, ‘very God of very God’ (*theon*

*alethinon ek theou alethinou*)...The evidence shows the meaning intended is that the Son *derived* his deity from the Father and that the Son was not therefore *autotheos*. It was precisely this position that Calvin controverted with vigor. He maintained that as respects personal distinction the Son was of the Father but as respects deity he was self-existent (*ex se ipso*). This position ran counter to the Nicene tradition. Hence the indictments leveled against him. It is, however, to the credit of Calvin that he did not allow his own more sober thinking to be suppressed out of deference to an established pattern of thought when the latter did not commend itself by conformity to Scripture and was inimical to Christ's divine identity. This polemic on Calvin's part offers a prime example of the need to bring theological formulation to the test of Scripture as the only infallible norm." —"Collected Writings of John Murray," Vol. 4, pg. 7

I must take Calvin's argument one step further. If the Son is of the Father "as respects *personal distinction*," is this not, itself, logically a denial of the deity of Christ? Is this not, in effect, an assertion of the *ontological* subordination of the Son to the Father? Personhood and identity are issues of ontology and not function. If Calvin was correct, then the issue of subordinationism within the Trinity must be completely reformulated by the Church in favor of some form of subordinationism within the Trinity. I, for one, reject such a proposition as, I suspect, will all who defer to the Bible's authority. In I Peter 1:18-20, the apostle Peter tells us:

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.*

Paul says something similar in Ephesians 3:11:

*According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our lord.*

And the apostle John in Revelation 13:8 speaks of "the **lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**"

These and many other statements of Scripture plainly reveal that the Incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection were predestinated from before the beginning of time. There was a plan of God, an end, a goal (a "telos") concerning the God-man, Jesus Christ. *The "eternal generation of the Son" is, thus, simply one way of formulating the biblical teaching of the eternal predestinating decree of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) to manifest the Logos as the man Christ Jesus in time.* The "Son"-ness of Christ is inextricably interwoven with his incarnation as a man in time. This is the crucial intersection with our current topic.

### The Incarnation in Time and God's Eternal Male Identity

In connection with the fact that God predestinated all things, it must be stressed that the Incarnation has reference to God's will and identity pertaining to *Himself*, and not something external to Himself. *From all eternity, it was a settled fact in God's mind, will and purpose, that He would become incarnated as the man Jesus.* In *eternally* predestinating Himself to become a man, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, *God is, thus, a male by identity.* In taking on the form of "a man" (Phil. 2:6-11) God's very *identity* intrudes into the realm of the human. Thus, while it cannot be said that God is a man, it certainly can be said that there is a man, Jesus, who is God. That is to say that the definition of God is broader than, yet inclusive of, a human male, Jesus Christ.

A couple of observations of Rushdoony are relevant here:

"Because the incarnation was real, and the union of the two natures a true union, it is impossible to treat Christ as two persons, ascribing certain acts to the divine and others to the human nature. *There are two natures but one person*, and to ascribe the miracles and the sufferings to any but that one person, Jesus Christ, is to deny the incarnation." — "Foundations of Social Order," pg. 101

And:

"In that the Divine is the infinitely superior and controlling nature in the incarnate Son, we must *economically* ascribe to him the activities and words of the whole for, while God the Son was truly incarnate, the determination of all things never passed from eternity to time, nor from God to man." — "Foundations of Social Order," pg. 50

The twin factors of God's *eternal* purpose, and the actual *union* involved in the incarnation, mean that the I AM of God, the *identity* of God, is *eternally bound up in the one who was incarnated as a man.* God's maleness, in the person of Jesus Christ, is an *eternal* characteristic and attribute of God. The incarnation, though manifested temporally, is (was) an *eternal* category in God's mind and self-identity.

As Philip Edgecumbe Hughes has remarked:

"The incarnation...is not the beginning of the Son's existence but an event, so to speak, in his eternal existence." — "The True Image", pg. 32

Therefore, it is written in Proverbs 30:4:

*Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bounded the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and **what is his son's name**, if thou canst tell?*

His Son's name, kept secret until the Incarnation, was *Jesus*. What this verse in Proverbs informs us of is the fact of multiple persons within the Godhead. The description is clearly of God: He who "established all the ends of the earth" can only refer to God. What is fascinating here is that this is a clear *pre-incarnation* reference to the Son. And it is precisely this scripture and others of this nature that the early fathers of the Church were attempting to explicate by the formula of the "eternal generation" of the Son. God had a Son, but His name could not (at that time) be told.

### Old Testament Theophanies

God's eternal purpose to incarnate the Logos as a man is also the reason why all of the Old Testament theophanies (visible manifestations of God) appear *as a man*:

*and the LORD appeared unto him (Abraham) in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him. —Genesis 18:1-2*

As we learn from the remainder of the chapter, the three *men* were the LORD Himself, and two angels.

*And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day...And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of that place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face. —Genesis 32:24-30*

Once again, it is the LORD Himself who appears in the form of a *man*. It is also noteworthy that this *man*, whom Jacob recognizes as God, does not tell Jacob His name. Again, His name—Jesus—could not be revealed until the incarnation.

Joshua also had an encounter with this man.

*And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. —Joshua 5:13-15*

This *man* is clearly the same One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3). In accepting Joshua's worship, He is clearly the pre-incarnate Christ (see also Rev. 22:8-9). Again, His appearance as *a man* is declared.

Another theophany is recorded in Judges 13, this time appearing to the parents of Samson. Though the whole chapter will not be quoted here, the reader is urged to read it and take especial note of verse 6 ("a *man* of God came unto me"), verse 8 ("let the *man* of God...come again"), verse 10 ("the *man* hath appeared"), verse 11 ("and came to the *man*"), verses 17-18 ("Why askest thou after *my name*, *seeing it is secret?*"), and verse 22 ("We have seen **God**"). Once again, we have a theophany in the form of a *man*, and once again he refuses to reveal his name (which we now know was *Jesus*).

The prophet Ezekiel also saw the God of Israel in the form of a man.

*And above the firmament that was above their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it...This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. —Ezekiel 1:26, 28*

The word "LORD" in the Hebrew is "Yahweh." So here we have in Scripture an explicit record of the appearance of Yahweh in the form and appearance of a *man*.

There is also the vision of one like "the son of man" in Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 7), Isaiah's vision of the LORD (Isa. 6), and other appearances of Yahweh in the Old Testament. *All* of the theophanies of the LORD appeared *in the form of a male human being*. From this, and from all of the other considerations mentioned above, it must be maintained that the answer to the question, "Is God male?", is essentially the same as asking, "Is Jesus male?" *The two questions cannot be answered separately*. And the answer must be an emphatic "Yes." The pre-incarnate Christ appeared in the form of *a man* because the eternal decree of God concerning the incarnation of the Son was unalterably moving towards its manifestation; being *male* by his very *identity*, and by virtue of the (from God's perspective) eternally present reality of the incarnation, and being unable to deny Himself, He necessarily appeared in the form of a man in His theophanies, and referred to Himself as "He" without variance in the Old Testament.

### The Naming of Jesus

*But while Joseph thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and **thou shalt call his name Jesus**: for he shall save his people from their sins. —Matthew 1:20-21*

*And the angel answered and said unto (Mary), The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy*

*thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God...Thou shalt call his name Jesus.* —Luke 1:31, 35

It is significant that both Joseph and Mary were instructed by Divine decree to give the child the name of Jesus. This was not left to their own discretion. The material we have already covered reveals why. Unlike every other human being who has come into the world, this One already had an existence, and a name (an identity), prior to conception. Jesus was *already* his name, known in the secret counsels of God from all eternity past, and possibly to the elect angels. In the Incarnation and virgin birth, the Pre-Existent One infallibly fulfilled and manifested the eternal decree of God. He became Emmanuel—God with us—in the form of a man and “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

### **The Metaphysical Character of Maleness**

There is yet another aspect of Jesus’ conception in the womb of Mary that is worth noting. I am not generally fond of incorporating into Biblical doctrine principles of scientific knowledge discovered by the finite minds of men; yet I do think it is worth proclaiming along with Scripture that Jesus’ conception was a true conception. As with all normal births, there was the union of the seed of the woman with the seed which is contributed by the male, in this instance God Himself.

Now we know from science that it is the seed of the male which determines *gender*. A normal man produces roughly a 50/50 proportion of sperm carrying either male or female genetic material. The woman contributes nothing to the child in this regard. In the case of Jesus, we are told that “the Word *became* flesh.” The Word or Logos of God was His *own* seed in this case. He Himself united with the ovum from Mary. And that which resulted was the *man*, Jesus. It *must* be that a metaphysical characteristic which he already possessed “translated” into the flesh as the *male* aspect of Jesus; Jesus’ gender *cannot* have come from Mary. It *had* to be a pre-existent character of the Logos of God.

This consideration provides potent evidence that God *is* a male by nature. Speaking in philosophic terms, we would say that God is “ontologically” a male being,” that is, maleness is part of the very nature of God, as opposed to being merely an analogy based upon the human family structure.

### **“I Believe in God the Father Almighty”**

We began this article with the Apostles’ Creed and we now return to it.

For 2,000 years the believing Church has confessed its belief in *God the Father* in humble deference to the truth of holy Scripture. In rejecting the Biblical revelation of God the Father, or by distorting it by *adding* the unbiblical concept of “God our Mother,” feminists deny the very first article of the Apostles’ Creed, held in common by Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox alike—and, indeed, by the apostles and Christ himself. In doing so, feminists venture outside of biblical orthodoxy. By defining God as something other than that which the Bible reveals and proclaims, feminists thereby worship *a false god*, an idol. They are, therefore, guilty of violating both the first and second commandments, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” and “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...to bow down thereto.”

Feminism is both heresy and blasphemy; heresy because it propagates error, blasphemy because it defines the true God out of existence. Feminism is implicitly exalted if it is treated as *merely* an error. Feminism is heretical to the core. The doctrine of God is not just another doctrine in the Bible. It is foundational. In defining God as “Mother” or as a genderless “Thou,” it is manifest that feminists do *not* know the only true God and are, therefore, “destitute of the Spirit.” Feminists are among those who have “departed from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits.”

Article 57:  
Patriarchy in the Church:  
I Corinthians 11:2-15; 14:34-37

An Exposition of I Corinthians 11:2-15; 14:34-37

*Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them unto you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. **Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.** For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. **Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.** For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; **for her hair is given her for a covering.** —I Corinthians 11:2-15*

***Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.** What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. —I Corinthians 14:34-37*

Commenting upon I Corinthians 11:2-16 in his book, “Man & Woman in Christ,” Stephen B. Clark remarks, “The passage is difficult to interpret clearly,” (pg. 166). Later, he says, “Some phrases in I Corinthians 11 are difficult to understand. In some cases the correct interpretation will probably never be understood,” (pg. 182-183).

Stephen B. Clark is not the only expositor to express problems comprehending this passage. Indeed, a survey of comments by other authors shows that inability to comprehend the passage is the *rule* and not the exception. Now, it is a generally accepted rule of scriptural interpretation by conservative, Bible-believing commentators (and a rule I endorse here) that difficult passages are to be interpreted by means of consulting other passages of Scripture which speak more simply, directly, and explicitly upon the same subject. Astonishingly, after admitting an inability to understand and interpret I Corinthians 11:2-16, Clark then proceeds to state (pg.183) that our interpretation of I Corinthians 14:34-37 “should be subordinate” to I Corinthians 11:2-16!

I hesitate to contradict Clark because his erudition and scholarship are so manifest, but surely what Clark suggests here is ill-advised at best. If we cannot understand a particular portion of Scripture, how can we *possibly* use that passage as a basis to properly understand another? Is this not giving reign to irrationality?

Clark’s suggestion here must be rejected outright. It is an invitation to hermeneutical chaos. If the first passage is mysterious and inscrutable, then, beyond dispute, the latter and clearer passage ought to be, and is, exegetically and logically antecedent to the former, and the latter subordinate to the former in terms of exposition.

The truth is, however, that I Corinthians 11:2-16 is *not* as inscrutable, standing on its own, as many commentators find it to be. The problem here is the same problem that plagues commentators in regards to so many passages of Scripture, that is, that commentators *begin, a priori*, with an interpretive conclusion, and *read into* verses 4-5 a “common sense” *interpretation* which is *not* explicitly stated in the text—namely that women *may* pray and prophesy in the Church. The root of the interpretive problem of so many commentators is that they are trying to approach the text *as if* Paul is making an *explicit* and *express* statement; whereas, he is in fact *inferring* and *implying* his meaning which he waits to spell out explicitly in chapter 14.

Let us note from the outset that Paul does *not* say here that women *may* pray or prophesy in the church—either with or without a head covering. This is a demonstrable, empirical *fact* of the text. Such an allowance is simply not stated. Commentators unfortunately jump to conclusions here without putting this assumption to the test. The text says simply that *if* a woman *does* pray or prophesy with head uncovered (in the Church—Paul is addressing proper decorum in the Church, the public assembly) that she dishonors her head, her husband. Paul is obviously addressing a practice in the Corinthian church. Since it is obvious from Paul’s remarks that it was the custom of Corinthian Christian women to wear head coverings as a sign of submission to their husbands, we should ask the question, “Why and where did these Corinthian women get the idea that they should *remove* the sign of subordination to their husbands and pray and prophesy in the Church?” It is my contention that the

Corinthians, who, unlike modern readers, had a direct and immediate knowledge of head coverings and their significance, intuitively grasped Paul's implied meaning which eludes so many modern commentators.

Most commentators too quickly pass by verse 4, which is, in fact, the key verse to understanding the whole passage:

*Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head, (i.e., Christ).*

*Why?* Why is it dishonoring to Christ for a man to pray (in the Church) with his head covered? The answer to this question will make sense of the entire passage without having to resort to tortured and convoluted exegesis. The answer is simple and straightforward and would have been immediately grasped by the Corinthians: praying and prophesying in the Church are inherently *authoritative* functions in which the speaker *represents Christ to the church, or represents the church to Christ*; covering the head is a sign of being *under* authority and so, he who speaks in the Church *must* do so with the head *uncovered* as a sign of speaking in the name of Christ. To do so with head covered represents our Supreme Head as being *under* the authority of man.

In other words, verse 4 is the logical premise of verse 5. The Corinthians would have immediately seen the “catch 22” situation in which this placed women addressing the Church or praying before it, and Paul immediately in verse 5 addresses the consequences: if a woman removes her head covering to properly “image” and represent Christ, the consequence is that she dishonors her husband; but if she leaves it on, she dishonors the authority of Christ! Think about it: *the only solution to this dilemma is to remain silent!!!* This is how simple this whole passage really is. To reiterate: Paul *implies* his meaning here in chapter 11 and spells it out *explicitly* in chapter 14, verses 34-37. Could words possibly be plainer and more clear than those of chapter 14, verses 34-37?

Verse 15 in chapter 11 is meant to reinforce Paul's inference: a woman's long hair constitutes a covering; if she thinks that all she has to do to properly honor and respect Christ is to remove her head covering, Paul says no, not so fast, you still have a covering in the form of your long hair; you would have to shave off your hair to achieve the desired representation of the authority of Christ. And this is a shame to a woman.

And is not the same commandment spelled out explicitly in I Timothy 2:8-12?

*I will therefore that **men** pray every where, lifting up holy hands...In like manner also, that **women** adorn themselves in modest apparel...**Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.***

Note that Paul here specifically distinguishes between men and women (the word for “men” is “*aner*,” not “men” in the Greek but “*males*”) and specifies that it is the *males* who are to pray in the Church. Moreover, between I Corinthians and I Timothy, we have no less than three *explicit*

commandments to women to keep silent in the churches: “it is not permitted unto them to speak.” Linguistic analysis will not provide an escape clause for those who wish to defy and disobey the commandment of the Lord in this regard. The Greek word for “speak” is “*lalein*,” which corresponds precisely to our English “speak.” That is what it means. It does not mean “background chatter” as some expositors attempt to propose, claiming that the Corinthian women were disrupting the worship service by personal chatter to one another; and it does not mean “sing,” so there is no basis to prevent women from joining in songs of worship. The essence of the commandment concerns *authority*, either in the form of addressing the congregation, or addressing the Lord in the church on behalf of the congregation.

The Old Testament provides some elucidation of, and support for, our doctrine here:

*When thou goest forth to war with thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.* —Deuteronomy 21:10-14

Note that upon bringing such a woman home, the woman is to *shave her head*, change her native clothing to (implied) Israeli clothing, bewail her father and mother (who would have been killed in the war), etc. All of this signifies the removal from under the *authority* of a foreign god, under the *authority* of a foreign nation, and under the *authority* of foreign parents. Note that the woman is to shave her *own* head, herself, thus signifying her consent and affirmation to this change. The removal of her hair, which grew in her old country, signifies the repudiation of her previous authorities; a new growth of hair would provide a new sign of submission to her new god, her new nation, and her new husband. This is an Old Testament allegory of the new birth. The reference to her being “humbled” speaks of these changes, especially the head shaving.

I think it is accurate to say that the majority of modern commentators, even conservative Evangelicals, incorrectly interpret I Corinthians 11:5 as placing a *qualification* upon a woman praying and prophesying in the Church, namely, that it is lawful to do so *provided* that she does so with her head covered. It is time that the Bible-believing Church disabuses itself of this heretical notion. For if this proposition is true, then we have blatant contradiction in the Scriptures, and contradiction within the selfsame epistle separated by only three chapters. We would have the apostle Paul in one place explicitly forbidding women to speak in the churches, even to the point of denominating it as “a *shame*,” and permitting it in another place. Was Paul so obtuse? Of course, not! (This is the same as asking “Is God so obtuse?” since the Scriptures are God-breathed.) It is modern commentators who

exhibit obtuseness, perceiving not the contradiction they involve themselves in, and the betrayal of their commitment to the Scriptures as the word of the infallible God.

## Article 58: Feminist Hermeneutics: Making the Straight Places Crooked

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.—Matthew 7:15*

We now come to the point to examine feminist literature, and specifically feminist Biblical *hermeneutics* (“hermeneutics” denoting interpretive principles). I have made it plain in this work that I believe in the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, meaning that the Bible is *God-breathed*, and have defended here and there the authority and infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture. These doctrines are basic and foundational for anyone who wishes to credibly attempt to exegete Scripture.

Many disagreements over doctrinal points arise from divergent views about the authority and nature of Scripture. This is precisely the point at which Protestantism divides from Catholicism, for example. I adhere to the great Protestant dictum, “*Sola Scriptura*.” I believe, as Scripture proclaims of itself, that Scripture is “*God-breathed*,” that it is infallible without any admixture of error. I believe that the very individual words of Scripture were chosen by God. Thus, we read of Christ defending the doctrine of the resurrection upon the very tense of a verb (Matt. 22:32). And we see him rebuking Satan thusly: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” (Matt. 4:4), and declaring in the Gospel of John, “The scripture cannot be broken,” (10:35). Jesus very clearly held to a very high view of the inspiration of Scripture.

One’s hermeneutical methodology is inevitably premised upon a prior view of the nature of Scripture. If one’s view of Scripture is erroneous, this will inevitably lead to error in interpretive methodology, which will, in turn, lead to further doctrinal errors.

It behooves us to know from the start that the Scriptures are the Word of God; the fact that they were conveyed to us through human instrumentality does not sully their character as the very Word of God. God is the potter and we are the clay. Prophets and apostles were ordained by God to be the means through which He would communicate to us. The Bible is the result of this ordination.

These beliefs are at the heart of my approach to the Bible. Others have defended this thesis more capably than I can. For those who feel it necessary to resolve issues on this subject before deciding between feminist and orthodox hermeneutics, I strongly recommend R. Laird Harris' work, "Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible." Though written in 1957, it is as up-to-date as anything written since. And while I'm recommending books, let me point to "The Identity of the New Testament Text," by Wilbur N. Pickering.

In examining feminist Biblical hermeneutics, the most fundamental aspect of all to examine first is their basic view of Scripture. What *are* the fundamental hermeneutical principles employed by feminists? There are some fundamental questions to be kept in mind when evaluating feminist hermeneutics and commentary. Among those questions are: Are these principles *consistent* with the Divine inspiration of Scripture? Do they honor the Bible as the very Word of God? Do they regard biblical injunctions as time and culture-bound, or as the eternal wisdom of God who knows the end from the beginning? Do they defer to the *unity* of the Bible as coming from a single source, God, and thereby being a coherent, perfectly logical unit? Do they regard the Bible as being absolutely *authoritative*? If feminists say they believe in the "authority" of the Bible, do they mean the *same thing* by this as do orthodox commentators? Or do feminists resort to redefinition and equivocation in their definition of "authority?" Do feminists appeal to the Bible because *they* accept its authority, or only because they realize *others do*? If so, is this not outright subversion? Is the Scripture regarded as the very Word of God, or is it regarded as *tainted* by human instrumentality? Do feminists interpret the Word of God by means of exegesis (i.e., drawing out of Scripture what is there) or is an *interpretive bias* imposed upon the texts? Is the Bible the starting point? Or do feminists begin from *another* source of authority? Are categorical commands *relativized* by feminists? Is the Bible regarded as the *norm*, once and for all delivered to the saints? Or is the Bible regarded as an evolutionary prototype to be improved upon by succeeding generations? All of these questions are relevant to any examination of feminist biblical commentary.

Many "biblical" feminists comment upon the Bible, but very few explicitly inform their readers what their underlying hermeneutical assumptions are. For example, Virginia Mollenkott, in her book, "Women, Men and the Bible," states: "I approach the Bible not only holistically but also with the hermeneutical norms and methods of the Christian feminist," (pg. vii). Just exactly what *are* those "hermeneutical norms and methods" of the "Christian" feminist? Let it be known that Mollenkott does *not* explicitly inform her readers what those "norms" are. But Mollenkott is quite accurate in describing her hermeneutical methods as the "norm" among supposedly "Christian" feminists.

The issue of hermeneutics (interpretive principles) is central to the question of feminism. We will begin our examination of this matter by scrutinizing the book, "Feminist Interpretation of the Bible," which is, in essence, a *manifesto* for feminist biblical hermeneutics. There are twelve contributors to this volume, edited by Letty M. Russell. According to the jacket cover of the book, its purpose is to "(clarify) for themselves and others *the character of feminist interpretation*," (emph. supp.) This book is a work of scholars, all of whom sport rather

impressive educational credentials, and all of whom describe themselves as “Christian feminists” with the exception of one Jewish contributor.

The value of “Feminist Interpretation of the Bible” as a place to begin an examination of “biblical” feminism is that it specifically focuses on the issue of hermeneutics from contributors from a wide range of denominational backgrounds. This book, published in 1985, is meant as a clarion call to all “Christian” feminists to follow in their footsteps. To judge from the volume and range of feminist biblical commentary now in existence, this call has been heeded.

In the Introduction to “Feminist Interpretation of the Bible,” Russell states:

“As the contributions to feminist interpretation have continued to grow in volume and maturity, it has become abundantly clear that the scriptures need liberation, not only from existing interpretations but also from *the patriarchal bias of the texts themselves*” (pg. 11, *emph supp.*).

It is a striking irony that nearly all feminists and a confirmed patriarchalist like myself all agree on one fundamental point: that the patriarchal orientation of the Bible exists, not only in the subjective minds of traditionalists, but in “*the texts themselves*.” This truth is repeated over and over again by feminists who attempt to come to terms with the Scriptures and is recognized across the whole spectrum of feminist thought.

For traditionalists who adhere to the orthodox doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, this fact is foundational to their perspective on this issue. For feminists, this fact is intolerable. They cannot bear the fact that the Bible is patriarchal. Therefore:

“Feminists and liberation theologians and biblical scholars have begun working on this process of liberating the word.”—pg. 20

How is this process of “liberating the word” to be accomplished? Summarizing Katherine Sakenfeld, one of the contributors, Russell delineates the bedrock feminist strategies to be utilized in “liberating the word from its patriarchal bondage.”

- 1) “looking to texts about women to *counteract* famous texts ‘against’ women
- 2) rejecting the Bible as *not authoritative* and/or useful
- 3) looking to the Bible generally for a liberation perspective and

4) looking to texts about women to learn from the intersection of the stories of ancient and modern women living in patriarchal cultures.” — pg. 15 (emph. supp.)

Russell, characterizing feminist interpretation as a whole, is honest enough to admit that an “interpretive bias and understanding is *built into the exegesis itself* (emph. supp.), so that it is impossible to delay the feminist or liberation critical perspective until the exegesis is finished,” (pg. 15).

Strategy #1 betrays feminists’ pathetic misunderstanding of the nature of Scripture: the various texts about women do not “counteract” each other, they *complement* each other in a perfectly harmonious whole. It becomes immediately clear from this statement of feminist hermeneutics that the Bible is *not* seen as a coherent unit, as a single product of a single author (God). If this were believed, there would be no search for texts to “counteract” other texts. This is clearly not a hermeneutic of faith but of *unbelief*.

Strategy #2 speaks volumes for itself: if feminists don’t like what the Bible says, then *its authority is rejected! Period!* This approach may salve a few troubled consciences, but it hardly commends itself as an intellectually respectable approach on the part of “Christian” scholars. Actually, this strategy is not one of Sakenfeld’s explicitly listed interpretive methods (only #1, #3 and #4 are listed) but is (correctly) inferred and endorsed by Russell.

Strategy #3 reveals the strong, lingering influence of international Communism and Marxist-Leninist thought within the ranks of feminists. It is worth pointing out, for those who have forgotten already, that international Communism, especially that of the now defunct Soviet Union, invested billions upon billions upon billions of dollars for nearly a century on propagandizing the West, especially its institutions of higher learning, including theological seminaries. This was given top priority among Communist leaders. We still live with the legacy of Communism and “liberation theology” and this influence has had a lot to do with the force and potency of feminism as an ideology. We should not forget Communism and “liberation theology” as a strong factor within feminist theology.

Strategy #4 embodies both a fallacy and a subtlety.

Though not stated explicitly, what this intimates is that feminists seek for *superficial connections* between modern feminism and the Biblical text. This is the subtlety. The fallacy is that in approaching the Bible in this manner contemporary perspectives are *read into* and *superimposed upon* the Bible, where the text itself is proceeding upon an entirely different plane—a patriarchal plane, as feminists themselves admit.

As a summary of feminist hermeneutical strategies, these hermeneutical “principles” immediately raise the question in the mind of orthodox readers: Are they really serious? Personally, when I read such statements as these, what goes through my mind is that if I were a feminist seeking to effect a “change in the thoughts, values, and actions of religious groups

in the United States and abroad” (a goal enunciated on pg. 13), I certainly would not go about it this way. Frankly, if I was determined to do a real hatchet-job on biblical patriarchy, I could think of more effective ways of going about it. There simply are not many orthodox Christians who are going to take Letty M. Russell and her poison merchants seriously. Her apostasy is blatant. The potency of Russell’s campaign lies in its *indirect* effect: it provides an operational methodology for subverting the message of the Bible on the part of other “Christian” feminists who mask their antipathy to God and His word with a *professed* commitment to the Bible as the word of God.

The value of this book is that it gives us an “inside” look at the *conspiratorial* side of “biblical feminism.” In this book, we see what “Christian” feminism is really all about with all of the pretense peeled away. There are few, if any, pretensions in this book of actually believing the Bible. It is regarded, rather, as an enemy to be defeated.

Moreover, the hermeneutical methodology recommended in this work will manifest itself over and over again not only in blatantly heretical works like Russell’s, but also in pseudo-Evangelical writers, as well. The reader would do well to memorize the feminists’ methods delineated here and compare them to the specific commentaries on specific passages by supposedly more orthodox writers.

Before looking at the articles of the other writers in Russell’s volume, I will now jump to Russell’s own article which is saved for last. For those who may be prone to excuse feminists because they think that feminist scholars are simply *ignorant* of the Bible and the issues involved, rather than consciously attempting to subvert the message of the Bible, consider these comments of Russell:

“Feminists of the Jewish and Christian faiths are faced with a basic dilemma. Are they to be faithful to the teachings of the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Scriptures, *or* are they to be faithful to their own integrity as whole human beings?”— pg. 137 (emph. supp.)

Note well that Russell clearly sees that there is a *choice* to be made, indeed a “*basic dilemma*,” and a distinction to be observed, either fidelity to Scripture *or* fidelity to feminist “integrity as whole human beings,” whatever that means. Russell is expressly cognizant of the fact that “authority” is a theme that surfaces constantly in this book...

“Whether or not feminists choose to discuss this issue, it is pressed upon them every time they propose an interpretation or perspective that challenges a dominant view of scriptural authority and interpretation.”—pg. 137

It should come as no surprise at this point where Russell’s loyalties lie and that fidelity to Scripture is made (at best) subordinate to her fidelity to the feminist cause. Amazingly, and without any indication of intended humor, Russell titles her next section, “The Biblical Basis

of My Theology”! But, of course, from the hermeneutical strategies already endorsed by Russell, and the explicit admission that feminism involves a *choice* to be made between fidelity to Scripture *or* fidelity to feminist “integrity as a whole human being,” it is manifest that the Bible is no “basis” at all of her theology. It is, from the feminist perspective, simply a negative force to be reckoned with. Thus we see that Russell, with a crystal clear apprehension of the issues involved, self-consciously and deliberately chooses a path of lies and deception.

Russell continues:

“In spite of the patriarchal nature of the biblical texts, I myself have no intention of giving up on the biblical basis of my theology...In spite of its ancient and patriarchal worldviews, in spite of its inconsistencies and mixed messages, the story of God’s love affair with the world leads me to a vision of New Creation that impels my life.” —pg. 138

Well, those are a lot of weighty “in spite of’s” to overcome! Russell acknowledges as much:

“Perhaps it would be more useful to give up on the Bible as a normative source of my theology, but I don’t seem to be able to do that. The biblical witness continues to evoke my consent, even as *I reject many of its teachings* as well as its patriarchal context. And, as Mary Ann Tolbert has pointed out...feminist biblical scholarship is profoundly paradoxical because ‘one must *struggle against God as enemy* assisted by God as helper, or *one must defeat the Bible* as patriarchal authority by using the Bible as liberator.’ ”—pg. 140

Comment on these remarks is hardly necessary. Here, out of their own mouths, is what “biblical feminism” is all about in all its stark naked blasphemy. *Many* of the teachings of the Bible are to be rejected! God is an *enemy* to be struggled against! The Bible must be *defeated* by using (i.e., subverting) the Bible!

Russell continues:

“No interpretation of authority that reinforces patriarchal structures of domination would be acceptable for feminist interpretation. The Bible is understood to be a ‘dangerous book’...The Bible is especially dangerous if we call it ‘the word of God’ and think that divine inspiration means that everything we read is ‘right.’ ”—pg. 140-141

It is clear from statements such as these that Russell and her co-conspirators do not know God, that they are no Christians at all, but the emissaries of Satan, false prophets and false teachers “taken captive by the devil at his will.”

In one sense, I regard “Feminist Interpretation of the Bible” as a very valuable book. For one thing, there are very few “biblical” feminist works which are honest enough to straightforwardly declare and highlight, or state at all, the hermeneutical principles which lie at the foundation of their “Christian” feminist interpretation of the Bible. This book makes no bones about it, without any pretense of deferring to scriptural authority—well, almost no pretense. Secondly, because of this silence in most other “Christian” feminist commentaries, the underlying methods employed are masked to the readers.

With a knowledge of Russell’s book and the hermeneutical methods endorsed, the reader of other “Christian” feminist biblical commentaries can easily discern the nature of the subversion being indulged in by other more ostensibly “orthodox” or “Evangelical” feminists.

Let us now proceed to a perusal of the rest of this hermeneutical conspiracy. The anthology is divided into three sections: Part 1: “Feminist Critical Consciousness,” Part 2: “Feminists at Work”, and Part 3: “Feminist Critical Principles.”

The first author, Barbara Brown Zikmund, talks about her historical perspective of feminist consciousness and begins, not surprisingly, with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her “The Woman’s Bible,” published in the 1880’s. Zikmund writes:

“The project was especially noteworthy because it took the Bible seriously. In her introduction to ‘The Woman’s Bible,’ Stanton noted that ‘there are some who write us that our work is a useless expenditure of force over a book that has lost its hold over the human mind.’ Yet, she continued, ‘So long as tens of thousands of Bibles are printed every year...it is vain to belittle the Bible.’ More and more women craved freedom from the oppression of the biblical word.”—pg. 24

“Taking the Bible seriously” obviously does not mean, from the feminist perspective, obeying the voice of God in it, but simply recognizing, *and seeking to counteract*, its message and influence. This is the underlying reason why feminists do not simply “give up on the Bible,” as Russell suggested it might be useful to do. The Bible is simply too potent a force in human society to ignore. It is more effective to ask, “Yea, hath God said...?” than to pretend that He never said anything at all. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, there are simply too many of us who know that God *has* spoken.

The next author, Katie Geneva Cannon, represents the black feminist perspective. It is the only bright spot in the book. She talks about racial injustices against blacks and black women, especially in the United States, and how the biblical faith strengthened blacks in the face of racial oppression and slavery and the positive role of the Church in the black community. Cannon writes:

“The Black womanist identifies with those biblical characters who hold on to life in the face of formidable oppression. Often compelled to act or refrain from acting in accordance with the powers and principalities of the external world, Black womanists search the scriptures to learn how to dispel the threat of death in order to seize life.”—pg. 40

It is a little difficult to know why this article was included in Russell’s book. Its basic message seems to run counter to Russell’s objectives. There’s not much theologizing on the main topic. I would conjecture that Russell was preempting any possible criticism from readers that the black experience in America was not represented in a book ostensibly serving the cause of liberation. And there is the propaganda value of associating the condemnation of the oppression of blacks with a work condemning the history of patriarchy represented mainly by white males. This is the hopping-on-the-bandwagon propaganda technique. Though the two issues are not logically related, the tactic here is to associate the cause of “biblical” feminism with racial justice in order to marshal black support for the cause of subverting the Scriptures. Probably an effective technique, though it certainly cannot be commended as an intellectually honest approach to the subject at hand.

The next article, “Feminist Consciousness and the Interpretation of Scripture,” by Margaret A. Farley, runs right down Russell’s alley. Like Russell, Farley cannot be accused of erring out of ignorance of the issues. Consider:

“Is the testimony of the women returning from the tomb to be believed? And if it is, what does it really mean?” To put the questions in this way suggests that it is possible to separate them, to separate the question of authenticity, or authority, from the question of content, or meaning. *This however, cannot be done. Herein lies a stumbling block for many who would otherwise like to take seriously a feminist hermeneutic for the Bible.* (emph. supp.) If the question of the authority of the witness is made contingent in any way upon our recognition of the ‘truth’ of its message or the ‘justice’ of its aims, *this seems to make of the Bible a secondary source for our knowledge, one that is subject to the test of insights generated from some other more fundamental source* (emph. supp.). Is this not tantamount to bringing to scripture a test of one’s own, a criterion of truth, *rather than approaching scripture as a revelatory word, a test of all other claims of truth* (emph. supp.).

“This problem is not easily dismissed...The authority question is indeed inseparable from the question of content.”—pg. 42

One would almost think from this acknowledgement that Farley were preparing her readers for an endorsement of the traditional doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. But any such thoughts are dashed to pieces in subsequent words in the same paragraph:

“It can be, rather, an intuitive or reflective awareness that no communication has real and living power *unless it can elicit in us a responding recognition*. Call it grace, or previous insight, or a receptivity for truth...”—pg. 42

But what if *my* “intuitive or reflective awareness” tells *me* the opposite of *your* “intuitive or reflective awareness?” What if the biblical commandment of patriarchy “elicits in (me) a responding recognition?” Ought I, then, not to recognize patriarchy as authoritatively true? How, then do we determine which of our “reflective awarenesses” is valid and which is not?

Moreover, Farley states:

“As a revelation of truth, (the Bible) asks for something less like a submission of the will and something more like an opening of the imagination — and thence the whole mind and heart. In its own terms, then, *it cannot be believed unless it rings true to our deepest capacity for truth and goodness. If it contradicts this, it is not to be believed. If it falsifies this, it cannot be accepted.*” (emph. supp.) —pg. 43

Thus, after plainly stating that the issue of authority *cannot* be separated from the issue of the truth of its content, Farley flatly rejects the authority of Scripture anywhere and everywhere it displeases her subjective preferences—especially in the matter of patriarchy. She denies that the Bible, constituting the word of God, calls for the submission of our wills, and claims that its real message is “an opening of the imagination.” There is, of course, no *content* in the Scriptures validating this ridiculous assertion of Farley’s. Rather, we are commanded and exhorted to “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:5). Once again, we see the feminist hermeneutic as a hermeneutic of unbelief. The feminist theology is a theology of willful disobedience.

The next article is by Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, whom we have already considered indirectly in Russell’s summary of feminist hermeneutical strategies. We won’t reassess the ground already covered but focus on some of Sakenfeld’s other comments.

Sakenfeld asserts:

“Feminism may be viewed as a contemporary prophetic movement that announces judgment on the patriarchy of contemporary culture and calls for repentance and change.”—pg. 55

How curious: I regard biblical patriarchalism as a contemporary prophetic movement that announces judgment on the feminism of contemporary culture and calls for repentance and change. Perhaps we should inquire here as to the ultimate source and origin of the prophetic impulse of both camps? Since feminists acknowledge “the patriarchal bias of the (biblical)

texts themselves,” and give at least some form of lip service to the divine inspiration of Scripture, is it too far of a leap of logic to suggest here that the prophetic impulse of feminism may originate from a source antagonistic to the Word of God, namely Satan? Seems to me to be the natural conclusion given that we share the common premise that patriarchy *is*, indeed, in the text and content of Scripture.

Sakenfeld acknowledges:

“Feminists recognize in common that patriarchy was one of the most stable features of ancient biblical society over the thousand-plus years of the Bible’s composition and redaction. Thus, in studying any biblical texts, feminists need to be alert not only for explicit patriarchal bias but also for evidence of more subtle androcentrism...

“Only such a frank and often painful assessment of the depth of patriarchal perspective in the text provides an honest starting point...”—pg. 56

Sakenfeld also says something very illuminating about the logic of her three suggested hermeneutical methods:

“Each of the three options may lead in its own way to rejection of the Bible as not authoritative or not useful in any positive way for the feminist struggle.”—pg. 63

Sakenfeld explains how this might happen with each method. First, concerning using texts in “favor” of women to “counteract” texts “against” women:

“If there remain some negative texts concerning women for which no reinterpretation seems possible (and surely such do remain), which principle of discernment decides which set of texts is authoritative?...Although most careful studies try to suggest some principle...the person struggling with the issue often perceives the situation simply as one in which competing proof texts are at work...”

And, of course, any of the principles of discernment just mentioned raise other serious problems...

“Each of these two main areas of limitation—exegetical uncertainties and competing proof-texting—points to basic questions about the meaning of biblical authority and the usefulness of the Bible for Christian faith.” — pg.59

In other words, this feminist hermeneutical strategy tends to produce *doubt* and *unbelief* in the Bible on the part of those investigating these issues. One cannot help but wonder whether this tendency is, in fact, the primary goal of feminists rather than an unintentional side effect.

Concerning the attempt to interpret a general feminist perspective in the Bible, Sakenfeld says,

“(T)his approach runs the risk of concealing patriarchy in the biblical witness itself. Those who use this option are quick to agree that radical suspicion is necessary and that the whole Bible is infused with patriarchy...

“A second limitation lies in the possible claim that there is some timeless or eternal truth to be identified in scripture, while all the actual writers and texts fall short of that truth...

“...as with option 1, the limitations of option 2 call into question the ultimate usefulness of the biblical materials and direct our attention to issues of authority.”—pg. 61

Sakenfeld then makes the same observation about hermeneutical strategy #3. The underlying problem for feminists like Sakenfeld is that they desperately desire what patriarchy has but feminism lacks: the authoritative voice of God to endorse it. (Perhaps we should call this “Bible envy.”) In fact, the endeavor to find the authority of God to endorse feminism or, lacking that, the effort to make Scripture *seem* like it endorses feminism, may justly be described as the essence of the entire feminist approach to the Bible. The problem is the facts just keep getting in the way. As Sakenfeld acknowledges, “At the heart of the problem lies the issue of biblical authority.” In thus saying, it is acknowledged that feminism is a departure from the faith and that the authority of God speaking in the Scriptures is *the* problem.

The next author, Sharon H. Ringe, takes this feminist volume even further into the heart of darkness. Ringe, it would seem, has little inclination to indulge in heretical theologizing. She is so inflamed by the devil’s cause that her main preoccupation is to blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ.

The occasion for her rage against the lamb of God is the story of the Gentile woman in Matthew 15:20-28 and Mark 7:24-30, who spoke of the dogs eating crumbs from their master’s tables.

Ringe says she is “offended at the picture of Jesus that the story presents” (pg. 66). Ringe fantasizes that the Gentile woman “trips him up and corrects him” (pg. 67-68). She says that Jesus’s statement, “It is not proper to take the children’s food and give it to the dogs,” is “offensive in the extreme.” She says this is the equivalent of Jesus calling her in English “a bitch;” that this story reveals “Jesus’ psyche,” that there was “tension in the mind of Jesus;”

that he was “caught with his compassion down” (pg. 69); she speaks of his “*apparently*” miraculous powers; that the Gentile woman “(enabled) Jesus to see the situation in a different way;” that Jesus’ initial response was the result of him being “in a bad mood” or perhaps “tired,” or that he “participated in the racism and sexism that characterized his society;” that the Gentile woman “called his bluff,” that “she enabled him to act in a way *apparently* blocked to him before” and that “Jesus himself must learn about being that sort of Christ.” Ms. Ringe obviously doesn’t even know who Jesus *is*, to say nothing of *knowing him*.

In short, in Ms. Ringe, we have the sort of person whom Jude spoke about: “these speak evil of those things they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves...raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 10, 13).

The next article is

**“‘Mother In Israel’: A Familiar Figure Reconsidered,” by J. Cheryl Exum.**

This article, though still full of error, is a dramatic cooling down from the hysterical blasphemous ragings of the previous one. Exum at least remains in the real world and does raise some genuine considerations from Scripture about the place and role of women in the Bible. As her title suggests, she raises the issue of the significance of Deborah, who served as a judge. She writes:

“I do not wish to defend the Bible or deny its patriarchal bias. Like the wider theological enterprise, both the Bible and the history of biblical scholarship stand in need of feminist critique...Within the admittedly patriarchal context of the biblical literature, we find strong *countercurrents* (emph. supp.) of affirmation of women: stories that show women’s courage, strength, faith, ingenuity, talents, dignity, and worth. Such stories undermine patriarchal assumptions and temper patriarchal biases, often challenging the very patriarchal structures that dominate the narrative.”—pg 73-74

This is as good a place as any to address one of the fundamental lies of feminism, namely, that biblical patriarchy in any way denies the positive attributes or worth of women, or denies that they have *much* to contribute to human society. This charge of feminism is essentially an act of *slander* against the genuine biblical doctrine of patriarchy and an indulgence in hyperbole. It is simply a misreading of Scripture to see the affirmations of women in Scripture as constituting any kind of “countercurrent” to true biblical patriarchy. True biblical patriarchy *cherishes* godly women and their gifts. It also affirms at the same time patriarchy, as strictly defined and circumscribed by the divine ordinances. There is no contradiction between the two things. Feminists urge upon us a false dichotomy.

It is not my purpose here to define the precise limits of biblical patriarchy or to go into all of the issues raised by biblical characters such as female prophets or Deborah as judge. My

focus here is upon the hermeneutics of “biblical” feminism. (Suffice to say, there is a distinction between prophets and priests and judges, for example, and we have no biblical commands ordaining women as priests, or examples of such.)

Exum, like virtually all other feminists, posits a higher source of authority than the Bible, contending that the Bible stands in need of “feminist critique,” meaning that the Bible is to be *judged* by a standard dictated by feminists. Actually, it is feminism that stands in need of biblical critique, and when this is done and feminism is weighed in the balances, feminism is found wanting.

Applying feminist hermeneutics to the story of Sarah and Hagar, Exum states:

“Hagar in particular deserves to be approached from a feminist perspective, which views her as a paradigm of the oppressed woman who has the courage to seek freedom...Yet though the story is told with sympathy for Sarah and sensitivity toward Hagar, a feminist critique recognizes its painful limitations. Both Sarah and Hagar are victims of a patriarchal society that stresses the importance of sons...When a critical feminist perspective is brought to bear upon the narrative, Sarah’s anger at Abraham, ‘May the Lord judge between you and me’...becomes an indictment of the patriarchal system, which pits women against women and challenges their intrinsic worth with patriarchal presuppositions about women’s roles.”—pg. 76-77

This is, of course, an example of superimposing one’s own vain imaginations upon the text of Scripture which neither directly nor indirectly, nor intentionally or unintentionally, expresses any such thing. Exum seems totally unaware of the role that original sin and depravity of human nature plays in this story, as well as in most all biblical narratives. It is *sin* which is the culprit for Sarah’s and Hagar’s woes, not patriarchy. Again, we have here both an erroneous view of Scripture and a faulty hermeneutic going hand in hand. Exum cannot help *but* to err.

The next article, **“Prophets and Pornography: Female Sexual Imagery in Hosea,”** is by T. Drorah Setel, the only Jewish contributor to this anthology. Setel, like all of the other writers examined so far, recognizes the patriarchalism of the Bible:

“For women living in Western cultures deeply influenced by Jewish and Christian traditions, the Hebrew Bible is a central document in a historical exploration of patriarchy.”—pg. 86

And, like all of the other writers in this anthology, Setel applies feminist hermeneutical methods to her examination of the Bible. Where does Setel’s “feminist critical consciousness” lead her?

Her basic thesis is that biblical patriarchy and its views on women constitute, and are in essence, the same phenomenon as modern pornography and its objectification of women! Setel claims that “an examination of biblical texts shows an interesting congruence between ancient and modern depictions of female sexuality,” (pg. 86). It is quite clear that an accusation of this nature excludes any notion of the Bible constituting the word of God. Once again, we have here a hermeneutic of unbelief.

Setel’s mind also appears to be muddled from the reading of too much so-called “higher criticism” of the Bible. Rather than understanding Israelite culture and law as the creation and mandate of God, Setel thinks we have in the history of the Bible pure historical development unaffected by the Divine providence and will. As a feminist, she sees this supposed “development” especially in relation to biblical references to harlotry, of which she distinguishes three classes and condemns “a failure to distinguish...the terms ‘prostitute’ (as a nonjudgmental term to describe women who use their sexuality for economic subsistence), ‘harlot’ (implying a woman whose sexuality is ‘not subject to control’), and ‘whore’ (the object of male control and degradation).”—pg. 87-88

I find it significant that Setel advocates a nonjudgmental approach (i.e., it is not a moral issue) towards prostitutes and prostitution. I wonder what her response would be to the charge that “women who use their sexuality for economic subsistence” are contributing to the objectification of women? Moreover, we see this denial of the moral category concerning sexuality again in remarks asserting that the Bible and biblical Israel did not view sexuality as an issue of moral concern as regards virginity, marriage and adultery:

“(T)he locus of female sexuality is significant only inasmuch as it affects paternity. Marriage is a property relationship; the terms usually translated as ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ are actually ‘woman’ (ishah) and ‘master’ (ba’al). There is no verb ‘to marry’; a man ‘takes’ a woman for himself, thus transferring her from her father’s household to his own. *Virginity is not an ethical but an economic condition* (emph. supp.); women who are sexually active while in their father’s household diminish their property value in a marriage transaction.”—pg. 89

The thought never seems to occur to Setel that it is precisely the *moral* concern which diminishes the value of “women who are sexually active while in their father’s household.” Those assessing the accuracy of Setel’s remarks should read Genesis 34, the story of the seduction of Dinah, daughter of Jacob, by the uncircumcised Canaanite, Shechem.

*And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob’s daughter; which thing ought not to be done.—*  
Genesis 34:7

Jacobs' sons ultimately killed all of those in complicity with Shechem, saying, "Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?" Their fury is not explicable if this matter were seen as being merely an *economic* loss which could have been remunerated by restitution. The proper transitioning of a daughter to a husband's household was clearly seen as an *intensely* moral and ethical issue. Setel is way off base in her assertions and clearly does not understand the Bible.

Moreover, she continues:

"...adultery, which is a sexual relationship between a married woman and any man who is not her husband. Adultery is punishable by death. Again, *this is a property valuation and not an ethical issue*; it is paternity, not a woman's integrity, that is violated in an adulterous relationship." —pg. 89

Again, a thought seems to escape Setel's mind: namely, that issues of authority *and* a woman's integrity are *both* involved here and both of a *moral* nature. Setel seems hell-bent (literally) on emptying the Bible of its moral categories. She goes on to say on the same page, "Although... 'zonah' certainly indicates 'prostitute,' it is without any inherently pejorative connotation"! How anyone can read all that the Bible says about "harlots" and "whores" and *honestly* come to the conclusion that there is no "pejorative connotation" to the term is utterly amazing. From beginning to end, there is uniform and consistent denunciation attached to the practice. All this is by way of preparation for her comments on the book of Hosea. Setel correctly notes that Hosea's marriage to Gomer is an analogy of God's relationship to Israel and that the analogy supports the headship of the husband over the wife. *This* is the real crux of Setel's problem with the book of Hosea.

She regards such analogies and metaphors as "the emergence of objectified female imagery in Hosea and the other literary prophets" (pg. 94). Thus, in essence we have the thesis: "Authority/subordinate makes the subordinate merely an object, not a person."

This, of course, would mean that *every* human being is nothing but an object anyway since we are all subordinate to God; *children* are mere objects because their parents exercise authority over them; *employees* are nothing but objects because employers exercise authority over them; *citizens* are mere objects, not persons, because governments exercise authority over them. This thesis of Setel's, if applied consistently, leads to total anarchy, and is therefore reduced to absurdity.

In her concluding remarks, Setel states, "the 'pornographic' nature of female objectification may demand that such texts not be declared 'the word of God' in a public meeting," (pg. 95).

Setel's apostasy notwithstanding, the book of Hosea *is* the word of God, and she and other feminists can only profit by taking its patriarchy to heart.

The next article in this feminist Hall of Shame is

**“Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation,”** by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite.

Knowing what has preceded this article, it doesn't take a genius to deduce from the title what the thesis of this magnum opus is going to be: violence done to women is because of patriarchy and it's all the Bible's fault! As with Exum, Thistlethwaite doesn't seem to be cognizant of the biblical emphasis upon sin, original sin and the depravity of human nature.

Thistlethwaite heaps on the invective against patriarchy and men in general as thick as molasses. She claims that “*rapists* (emph. supp.) are the shock troops of patriarchy” and that “*all* (emph. supp.) women live with violence,” (pg. 96). It is obvious from word one that Thistlethwaite lacks scholarly restraint and integrity. Given the subject matter, one may conjecture that this obvious anger towards men is fueled by traumatic experiences in her own life. If so, one can sympathize with the lack of objectivity in her remarks. This is not scholarship in action here but pain and understandable rage.

Thistlethwaite also wastes no time slandering the Bible:

“A feminist biblical interpretation must have this consciousness” (of violence against women) “at its center. The Christian scriptures are inextricably interwoven with this history of the belief systems which support the view of women as scapegoats. In ‘Violence Against Women,’ Emerson and Russell Dobash have a chapter on the relationship of biblical material to the problem of spouse abuse...

“We begin to develop a feminist interpretation because the Bible is a part of the fabric of the oppression of battered women.”—pg. 96-97

Thistlethwaite then goes on in the same vein as the previous writers about “liberating the text” of Scripture, reinterpreting various passages from a feminist perspective such as Ephesians 5:21-23e, Colossians 3:11, etc.

We also find in her article the rhetoric of the pro-abortion movement (and, of course, an implied endorsement of abortion):

“(F)eminist interpretation must also recognize that the history of control of women's bodies is at stake in this text (i.e., Gen. 2:21-24—T.S.) and must become part of its interpretation...

“A woman is born from a man...Perhaps, too, this interpretation...is also meant to symbolize control over women's abilities to make decisions about whether to bear a child. From an early period the church has attempted to

curtail knowledge of contraception and abortion. Puritanical Protestants led a late nineteenth-century campaign to pass laws making contraceptive knowledge a crime. The current 'Right to Life' movement is ecumenical in that its adherents are both Catholics and Evangelical/Fundamentalist Protestants. These movements are attacks on female autonomy, which threatens patriarchal power at its core."—pg. 106

As with all such statements, the indubitable fact that abortion is the *murder* of innocent unborn babies, including little girl babies, is fudged over with euphemisms, equivocations, misdirection and denial of the obvious truth. Feminists just seem to lack the very capacity for honesty on this as well as many other issues. Such is where feminist hermeneutics leads us.

The next article in this parade of horrors is

**“Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation,”** by Rosemary Radford Ruether.

Ruether acknowledges that the patriarchy she so despises *is*, in fact, in the Bible:

“The feminist critique of sexism finds patriarchy not only in contemporary and historical Christian culture *but in the Bible* (emph. supp.). The Bible was shaped by males in a patriarchal culture, so much of its revelatory experiences were interpreted by men from a patriarchal perspective...The feminist critical principle thus demands that women stand outside of and in judgment upon this patriarchal bias of the scriptures.”—pg. 116

Ruether, of course, has got it backward. It was not the Bible which was “shaped by males in a patriarchal culture,” but the males, and all of Israelite society, who were shaped by the commands and revelations of God into a patriarchal culture. Ruether is, thus, advocating that feminists stand in judgment of the patriarchal God, Whom they hate. In line with her fallacious depiction of the nature of Divine revelation, she advocates the exaltation of “women’s experience” over and above Scripture as an authoritative standard and hermeneutical principle to judge the validity or invalidity of scriptural narratives and commands.

“It has been frequently said that feminist theology and theory of interpretation draw upon women’s experience as a source of knowledge. It is generally assumed by traditional theology that any experience, let alone ‘women’s experience,’ is merely a subjective and culture-bound source of ideas and cannot be compared with the objectivity of scripture, which discloses the ‘Word of God’ outside of, over, and against the subjectivity and sinful impulses of human experience.”—pg. 111

Well, amen! What Ruether notes as “frequently said” is right on target. However, lacking any objective standard in Scripture to refute patriarchy, Ruether is going to stick to her guns, settle for second best, and refute Scripture instead by the application of her subjective test of truth. Since, from her viewpoint, it is important to endorse this interpretive principle to nullify the patriarchy in the Bible, Ruether attempts to defend the principle itself:

“Such a response, aside from its trivializing of women’s persons, misunderstands the role of human experience in the formation of scripture...Human experience is both the starting point and the ending point of the circle of interpretation.” —pg. 111

How the traditional view of the nature and inspiration of Scripture “trivializes” women’s persons, Ruether does not explain. More importantly, this assertion about the origin of scripture and its interpretation is explicitly refuted by Scripture itself:

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place...Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. —II Peter 1:19-21*

The problem is precisely that feminists do not *want* to take heed to the sure word of prophecy which came through holy men of God speaking *as* they were moved by the Holy Spirit. *That* is the essence of the problem with feminists. The role of “human experience” in the formation of Scripture is one of *reception* of the word of God which *originated with God* and was *expressed* precisely as God intended—including its patriarchalism.

Our last article in this anthology of apostasy is

**“The Will to Choose or Reject: Continuing our Critical Work,”** by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

Like the other writers in this volume, Fiorenza recognizes the patriarchalism of the Bible:

“Some of us have therefore argued that as self-identified women we cannot but leave behind patriarchal biblical religion and communities and create a new feminist religion.”—pg. 127

And:

“Feminist biblical interpretation must therefore challenge the scriptural authority of patriarchal texts...”—pg. 129

And:

“...a feminist critical hermeneutics of suspicion places a warning label on all biblical texts: *Caution! Could be dangerous to your health and survival.* Not only is scripture interpreted by a long line of men and proclaimed in patriarchal churches, it is also authored by men, written in androcentric language, reflective of religious male experience, selected and transmitted by male religious leadership. Without question, the Bible is a male book...self-identified women struggling for survival should avoid it like the plague.” — pg. 130

As the title of her article implies, Fiorenza advocates what has often been characterized as the “smorgasbord approach” to Scripture. Picking what one likes, rejecting the rest. One need not be an intellectual giant to grasp the fallacy of this approach to Scripture: if the patriarchal aspects of Scripture are not really the word of God, then maybe the Gospel of Jesus Christ isn’t either? Maybe it’s *all* just a delusion? There is ultimately no objective standard of judgment for deciding between “legitimate” texts and “illegitimate” ones. If feminists want a valid interpretive key to Scripture, let them adopt Matthew 4:4 as their guide: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Finally, we come to the last statement of this conspiracy of Bible envy in the “Postscript: Jottings on the Journey,” by Phyllis Trible. Trible’s postscript is short, only three pages, but we will take note of a few things she says.

“Many voices and visions fill this volume. They belong to feminists who search the scriptures but do not always find in them eternal life...

“...the women call the Bible and its interpreters to accountability.”—pg. 147

“The datum is pertinent to current discussions on sexist language and the Bible. History shows that theological warrant for changing the text exists...”—pg. 148

“They identify with passages and themes that speak life; they reject those that bid death. A principle of selectivity is also present in the separation of descriptive and culturally conditioned texts from prescriptive and existentially valid ones.”—pg. 149

That the feminists in this volume are familiar with the *contents* of the Bible is something that must be conceded. I find it ironic, though, that Trible alludes to Jesus’ remarks to the Pharisees about searching the Scriptures thinking to find in them eternal life, when, in fact, the end result for feminists is the same as with the Pharisees: they failed to understand the message. It all pointed to Jesus, who is Yahweh incarnated, the same patriarchal God whose male identity and patriarchal laws He gave to Israel. Feminists construct and bow down to a god of their own making and thus fail to find in the Scriptures eternal life.

Feminists want to change the text of Scripture. Well, let them. They can have their “Inclusive Language Bible.” By their own words they will be condemned on the day of judgment. They have heard the word of God and have spurned it. Their fate will be the same as the idol worshippers of Scripture and false prophets like the prophets of Baal whom Elijah confronted: in the end, they will be consumed with the fire of God’s wrath.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tom Shipley

## Epilogue

The Biblical case for New Covenant polygyny, in order to be made practical, must be set in a context of the complete Biblical reformation of marriage. That reformation, in Tom's view, must include, besides the present work, the re-establishment of 1) patriarchy, 2) the dowry, 3) arranged marriage, and 4) the disestablishment of church and state from jurisdiction over marriage. Because it is Biblical, this reformation means the establishment of justice in the relations between men and women. Its success is guaranteed by the fact that God is the creator of the world, including time and history, and is in total control of it.

Thus, one fifth of a five-part case for the reformation of marriage has been made in the book you are holding. There is a lot of work left to do. Thank God, Tom Shipley is alive and well, willing, and equipped to carry out the balance of this work. What he is not, however, is funded. No institution is going to fund such a politically incorrect undertaking. It is up to individuals. But this is not a plea for funding. Does the State plead with you to pay your taxes? Well, God has His tax too and a good part of it is known as the "poor tithe" or the "widows and orphans tithe".

God's word is not a smorgasbord where we get to come and browse; "I'll have one of those and that looks good, but forget that stuff there." Like a godly wife to her husband, we must submit to all of God's word. That submission to God leads to dominion over creation, including history. Christendom, the dominion of Christ through His word, by His people, follows inevitably. To get there we must stop handing our children, widows, and orphans over to the State through public education, social security, WIC, and other programs and agencies. Christian men must learn how to be men once again. We must learn to be jealous, like God is Jealous, and not share our women and children with a false god and a surrogate husband, the State. We must stop being polyandrous and start being polygynous.

To help a widow individually is a good thing, but equally important is to re-establish a Godly order that precludes the oppression and exploitation of widows by the State, which by its God given nature, destroys everything it touches and so should only be allowed to touch those proven to be guilty of violating Biblical civil law. That Godly order is not going to happen without the house of God judging itself in the area of marriage. Before a judgment can be passed a case must be made. Tom Shipley is building that case.

Tom has proven himself in this present work. Re-read it if you like. The case is well made, thoroughly researched, logically laid out, and clearly presented. Is there another scholar who is going to do a better job? Probably not in our lifetimes. God has given us Tom Shipley and he is just entering the prime of his life. I know him personally well enough to know that he is what he represents himself to be. He has been writing this material for 20 years part-time and will confirm that it is not something one does to make money.

A business of any consequence usually has a research and development department, at least if it expects to have a future. That department will get some portion of the budget and the leadership makes that decision. Tom Shipley represents the research and development department of the reformation of marriage. Those readers with a vision for God's kingdom, who believe it has a future, who understand that our God names Himself Jealous, will also understand a good investment in the future of that kingdom when they see one.

A little noted truism of history is that people and institutions do not reform from the inside. Corruption and deterioration happen from the inside. Reform only occurs due to outside pressure brought to bear by those who are supposed to be served by those people or institutions.

Wherever there is a center of power, authority, and/or wealth (regardless of religious affiliation or lack thereof) there is accountability to God, the God of Scripture. If that power, authority, and/or wealth is not used for God's purposes and according to His LawWord judgment will follow. To escape this judgment those centers must be reformed to their God ordained purpose and function.

People will pay lip service before they will render their God given duties. Therefore, a system of specific actions and measurable results, using Scripture as your yardstick, must be required of them. This means the church must held accountable for standing on Scripture in its teaching on marriage.

The work will be done. The question is, will you get a "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," when it is all said and done? Will you be a part of the solution or the problem?

The Holy Spirit is the one who communicates the day-to-day will of God to us, the co-ordination and individual application of God's LawWord to our lives. Pray and ask God to tell you what you should do in regards to tithing a part of the widows and orphans tithe to Tom Shipley so that he might continue with the other four major parts of this work.

To find out how you can support this work see: [www.newcovenantpatriarchy.com](http://www.newcovenantpatriarchy.com)

Wayne McGregor  
March 2004

# Victims of Monogamania

What we can expect when we make up sins (polygyny) out of thin air:

The victims are women and children all over the world in all kinds of awful situations:

- the women in eastern Europe countries who, left with out a husband to provide and protect them, become easy prey to the mafia who sell them by the hour as sex slaves, paraded in store windows of bars in town and villages. This was the subject of a recent documentary on the Discovery Channel. These women end up diseased and broken in spirit dying of AIDS.

- the Philippino women, especially Christians (women are more likely to convert to protestant Christianity than men) who are reduced by poverty, with no husband to provide and protect them, to look for work as maids in middle eastern countries where many are inevitably raped by Muslim men or who go to places in Asia like Singapore where some are even beaten to death by godless employers.

- the black American women who are statistically sentenced to life without a husband, many of whom end up as government bureaucrats or dependents who end up looking to weak men as role models and have no examples of a Godly father and husband in their lives.

- the widows and single women everywhere who find the pool of available men to be made up of the lowest dregs of society, misfits, immoral, tyrants in waiting, undisciplined, and unproductive.

- the broken leftover women and children of divorce who lose their husbands to one of the highly competitive women not willing to settle for one of the above; these are left to lives of poverty and loneliness and often, a bitter attitude toward life, men, and God.

- the unborn baby girls who are aborted with a vengeance in India and Asia, especially China, because they are devalued and seen as a net liability to their families who have to work so hard to find them husbands and then pay large dowries for each daughter that gets married (the opposite of the Biblical dowry).

- the women everywhere who succumb due to the pressure of poverty to make "easy money" as sex objects of one kind or another and end up ashamed, diseased, abused, cast out, and with no picture of a loving provider and protector in their lives. I am sure I have only scratched the surface here. You are welcome to add your own examples.

We have not even touched on the devastation wrought on the masculinity of men and its consequences. The Biblical case for the legitimacy of polygyny is unassailable. The pragmatic case is overwhelming.

Wayne McGregor  
March 2004

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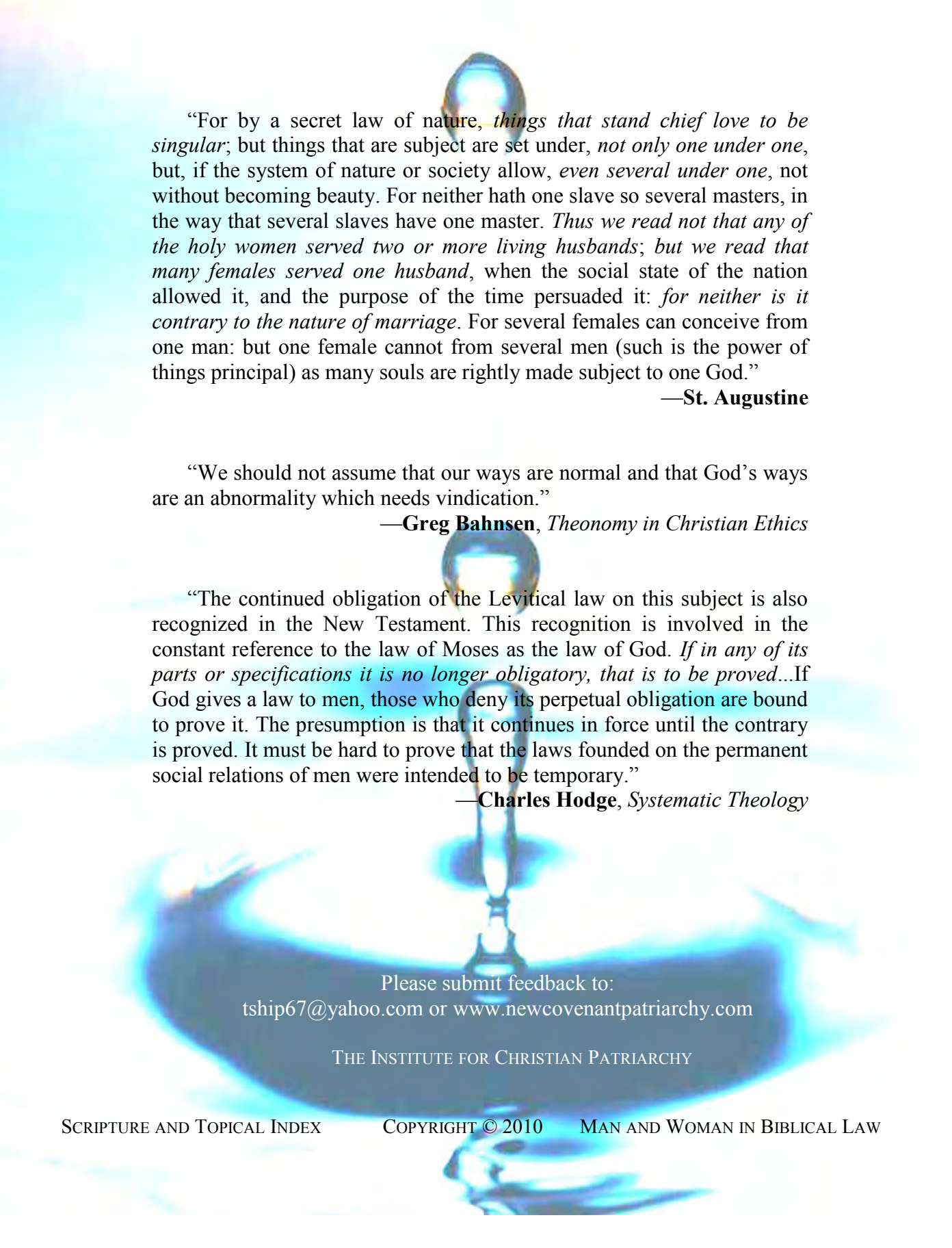
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“For by a secret law of nature, *things that stand chief love to be singular*; but things that are subject are set under, *not only one under one*, but, if the system of nature or society allow, *even several under one*, not without becoming beauty. For neither hath one slave so several masters, in the way that several slaves have one master. *Thus we read not that any of the holy women served two or more living husbands; but we read that many females served one husband*, when the social state of the nation allowed it, and the purpose of the time persuaded it: *for neither is it contrary to the nature of marriage*. For several females can conceive from one man: but one female cannot from several men (such is the power of things principal) as many souls are rightly made subject to one God.”

—**St. Augustine**

“We should not assume that our ways are normal and that God’s ways are an abnormality which needs vindication.”

—**Greg Bahnsen**, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*

“The continued obligation of the Levitical law on this subject is also recognized in the New Testament. This recognition is involved in the constant reference to the law of Moses as the law of God. *If in any of its parts or specifications it is no longer obligatory, that is to be proved...If God gives a law to men, those who deny its perpetual obligation are bound to prove it. The presumption is that it continues in force until the contrary is proved. It must be hard to prove that the laws founded on the permanent social relations of men were intended to be temporary.*”

—**Charles Hodge**, *Systematic Theology*

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