

Western Push for Polygamy in the Nineteenth Century

For some, this study may seem farfetched but I implore you that patience and research will open the gates of understanding on this very complex subject matter. To recap in article [one](#) we discovered that Israel had sister cultures that also subscribed to the practice of multiple marriages. In article [two](#) we discovered that according to the fragments of Zadok the practice of taking more than one wife simultaneously was considered “[fornication](#).”

Now if I may I would like to fast forward to a more recent history. Picture it pre-civil war America, slavery is still legal and the Christian climate in American is bubbling with [religious fervor](#) and evangelism. One man was able to rise above the chatter, his teaching garnering thousands of followers who are still here today some two hundred years later.

Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church

In short, the Church of Latter Day Saints also known as Mormons is a religious sect started by one man with a “vision.” In 1820 a young twenty-four-year-old Joseph Smith purported to have received a vision from an angel name Moroni, the result of his ‘heavenly’ encounter was the founding of a new church. The angel Moroni lead Smith to a buried treasure, the story goes the angel prohibited him from taking the treasure for four years, during which time Smith received intermittent “teachings.” At the end of Smith’s probationary period, the angel allowed Smith to take the “golden plates,” commissioning him to translate them which by way of his magical “seer stones.”

According to [reports](#), Smith began teaching about polygamy as early as 1831 and by 1837 the doctrine of “plural wives” began to cause a rift in his organization. Smith taught that “the highest manifestation of the New and Everlasting Covenant was achieved through “plural marriage.” In order for man to “become a god,” it was imperative that Smith and his congregants participated in “celestial marriage”. The charismatic leader attempted to convince his followers that the angel strongly urged him to practice “multiple marriage” or suffer [death](#). A short ten later Smith “married” thirty women, ten of whom were already married to



other men. Some of these polyandrous relationships were consented by the women's first husband; ten of the thirty were teenagers and the remaining women old enough to be their grandmothers.

[Polygamy or Death?](#)

Can you imagine an angel/gods appearing and forcing a man to take multiple mates or else! God is a general term and in the case of Joseph Smith, it would be necessary to determine which god (power) instructed him to take multiple wives considering some underage and some already married to other men.

Smith and his Heavenly Encounters

Many scholars and ex-members actually assert that Smith and his family were involved in magical ceremonies, [witchcraft](#), and Occultism. Given that the "God" of the bible is on record as being against witchcraft, adultery and fornication that leaves us to ponder who were these gods that taught Smith this information; In light other studies it would be highly plausible to assert that the ["fallen angels and or demons"](#) were the gods that introduced this doctrine to Smith and others.

What do multiple wives have to do with the concept of men becoming 'gods'? Doesn't that concept sound familiar?

Genesis 3: 4-5

4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil."

Just a thought and come to think about it before we continue it would be most beneficial to define one of the words that seem to be thrown around a lot here, fornication:

In Hebrew the term is Zanah: A primitive root (highly fed and therefore wanton); to commit adultery (usually of the female, and less often of simple fornication, rarely of involuntary ravishment); figuratively to commit idolatry (the Jewish people being regarded as the spouse of Jehovah): - (cause to) commit fornication,

X continually, X great, (be an, play the) harlot, (cause to be, play the) whore, (commit, fall to) whoredom, (cause to) go a-whoring, whorish.

There are so many references in the scripture the primitive root gives the picture of what it means. Highly fed and therefore wanton.

Wanton: 1250-1300; Middle English wantowen literally, undisciplined, ill-reared,

adj. 1) grossly negligent to the extent of being recklessly unconcerned with the safety of people or property. Examples: speeding by a school while it is letting out students, or firing a shotgun in a public park.

2) sexually immoral and unrestrained.

Fornication Review

- ✓ Fornication
- ✓ Zannah
- ✓ Wanton
- ✓ Highly Fed
- ✓ Undisciplined
- ✓ Sexually Immoral
- ✓ Unrestrained

Nation Building

There are [many](#) in the west "black" and "white" who swear by polygamy, it is touted as the most effective relationship paradigm for nation building. "Be fruitful and multiply," ah, that is such an expansive topic in studying biblical polygamy that it warrants its own space, no need to fret there is an entire article dedicated to that topic alone. For now, let's take a sneak peak at some of the effects that can come about because of rapid reproduction aka nation building.

I know this [article](#) is about Western Polygamy but if I may let's travel east for a hot minute to take a look a look at an Ethiopian man who took 11 wives and procreated 100 children, 23 of which died.

Meet [Ayattu Nure](#), 56, who is in despair because his fortune has disappeared under the “competing demands of his growing family.”



The concept that more wives and children automatically equal a greater potential for establishing an “economic powerhouse” did not hold true in Ayattu’s case, sadly the father of 77 surviving children shared this as it related to his improvised condition, "I feel like killing myself when I see my hungry children whom I cannot help," Mr. Ayattu says.

This may be a bit extreme so to be objective we will continue to look at other in-depth examples of polygamy in modern African and Eastern cultures, stay tuned for that. For now, it is interesting to note that Ayattu’s is not alone in his extreme polygamous experience many of which are echoed in the Mormon documentary [Lifting the Veil](#), a film of testimonies from Mormons who practiced polygamy for generations. Please check out the documentary and share your thoughts below.

In closing over the last two centuries in America the Mormons have become a leading example for the re-introduction of polygamy into western society. I find their motivations telling, the concept of becoming a “god” through this process is an important thread that connects their experience to the theory of “other world” introduction and teaching about this practice.

Stay tuned as we continue to revisit the subject of “multiple wives,” historically, culturally and biblically.

Tell a friend, sharing is caring.

Sources:

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