MAN AND WOMAN IN BIBLICAL LAW

A Patriarchal Manifesto

They Shall Be One Flesh
Part 2
by Tom Shipley

MAN AND WOMAN IN BIBLICAL LAW

A Patriarchal Manifesto

They Shall Be One Flesh

Part 2

By Tom Shipley

Copyright © 2009 by Tom Shipley

Institute for Christian Patriarchy
Baltimore, Maryland USA

All Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

Foreword 4

Chapter 1 7

Chapter 2 15

The Concept of Covenant 33

"…as also saith the Law" 45

Appendix: A Perennial Issue 51

Appendix B: 57

A Critic Addresses Christian Plural Marriage 57

Answering the Critics 74

Did GOD COMPARE HIMSELF to a Polygynist? 92

Did JESUS Compare HIMSELF to a Polygynist? 94

Is Polygyny Commanded of Man? 95

Did GOD Really Give a Man Many Wives? 96

Two Polygynists Found Blameless by GOD? 98

FOREWORD

In his book, "The Mystery of Love and Marriage," Anglican theologian Derrick Sherwin Bailey observes of the early Church's teachings about sex and marriage:

> "A noticeable feature of Patristic thought, particularly in the West, is the growing suspicion (indeed, it amounts to fear) of sex, which attains extravagant, even ridiculous proportions in the writings of Tertullian and Jerome, and relapses into a more moderate negative attitude in those of Augustine, Ambrose and Gregory the Great…
>
> "The significance of sex in the personal life of the individual was never appreciated, nor was sexual intercourse seen to possess any meaning or even importance in the experience of husband and wife as `one flesh', save for the purpose of procreation.
>
> "Thus early Christianity left to succeeding ages an unbalanced conception of sex and sexual intercourse, and an entirely mistaken view of sexual pleasure. While in theory the seat of sexual sin was held to reside in the will and not in sexuality itself, this distinction was rarely and inconsistently observed. This failure to understand sex contributed to the exaltation of celibacy…
>
> "It is remarkable that the Fathers should have failed so completely to appreciate the bearing upon sex of the doctrines of Creation and the Incarnation…
>
> "In this respect most Anglican and theologians of the Reformation and Caroline periods were at an advantage, having judged that marriage would serve better to godliness, though they were still fettered by a conservatism which maintained with but

> little modification much of the Augustinian tradition which held the field for more than a millennium…
>
> "This was without doubt the result of what Dr. E. C. Messenger has called the `deformation of the Christian Tradition' by Gnostic and Manichaean influences, and its consequences have in fact been more destructive and far-reaching than he allows. In attempting, therefore, to work out a Christian theology of sex there are few authorities to whom appeal can be made, and allowance is necessary for the fact that not a little in the tradition which has descended to us is misleading and untrue to fundamental Biblical insights and principles."—pg 54-59

The failure of the Church's theologians to adequately address these areas is not exclusive to the early Church and the Reformation period. Jay E. Adams points out in his book, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible," that modern Evangelicals have "neglected the whole area for so long, uncritically accepting local or denominational traditions" (pg. viii).

The simple fact of the matter is, the Church to this day has NEVER developed a systematic and biblically faithful doctrine of sex and marriage. Readers may find it incredulous that a subject of such import should have suffered such neglect. Yet, if there is any such work in existence (to say nothing of a large body of literature) your present writer is ignorant of it. Yes, I know, the bookshelves of modern Christian bookstores are replete with "practical" treatments of husband/wife relations and "how-to" manuals from a Christian perspective. Marriage seminars abound. Christian radio and television and internet websites go on for 24 hours a day on the subject. Josh McDowell fills stadiums full of men who come home with a zeal to do it God's way. Yet, for all this, there is, and always has been, a curious dearth of solid doctrinal treatments of the subject. To my way of thinking, this is a positive scandal. The cart, as they say, has been put before the horse.

It must be confessed that there HAS been some progress in this regard among modern Evangelicals due to the ingrained Biblicism at the heart of the Reformation. There are not many modern Evangelical men, for example, who are racked with pangs of guilt over enjoying sexual relations with their own

wives. And I know of no major, orthodox theologian today like Origen of the early Church who has gone to the absurd and tragic extreme of castrating himself in order to be more spiritual. This would be the equivalent in today's world of getting news that Billy Graham underwent a castration procedure so that he could attend to his Crusades more spiritually!

It is easy for us, standing 1700-1900 years distant from these men, to condemn their capitulation to the corruptions of Gnostic and Manichaean influences in their understanding of Scripture. But are we really so different today? Have we taken the Word of God in all its purity to heart? Or have WE ALSO allowed unbiblical, non-biblical and anti-biblical systems of thought to corrupt our doctrines of sex and marriage?

As I have pointed out in Volume 1 of this series, the modern Church is way off base in all its major branches concerning the doctrines of patriarchy and polygyny. As a consequence, the Church is compromised in its approach to and handling of modern feminism, as well as its understanding of the biblical definition of adultery. The legacy of ancient pagan Rome is still very much with us today. We in the West are their direct lineal descendants in more than one way. We ARE their children.

This Volume and the one that preceded it is offered to the Church as a belated treatment of the subjects at hand—I say belated because Athanasius or Augustine or Luther, good Biblicists of the past, should have provided such a work to the Church long ago. It is long past time to cast off the yoke of Rome.

CHAPTER 1

> 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." --Genesis 1:26-28
>
> 21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 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." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. --Genesis 2:21-25

One of the things that has greatly agitated Bible commentators who have undertaken an exposition of the subject of marriage is the seeming "silence" of the Scriptures concerning the lawful means of commencing or inaugurating a new marriage. The absence of commands having to do with legal or ceremonial procedures, or public oaths, in Genesis 1 – 2 is manifest. Consulting the prescriptive commands of the Law and prophets does not alleviate the agitation. As James Jordan has commented:

> "We are not told all we should like to know about the legal side of marriages in Israel." –The Law of the Covenant, pg. 149

To this, Jay E. Adams harmonizes,

> "We have no engagement or wedding ceremonies of any detail in the Bible." --Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible, pg 13

In fact, both Jordan's statement and Adams' understate the reality that there are no prescriptive commands in the Bible whatsoever concerning ceremonial procedures, rituals, civil and/or ecclesiastical requirements, or public oaths or vows.

Why, we must ask, is the Bible silent on this issue? Is not the institution of marriage and family of surpassing importance? Given the great detail and length the Bible goes into in many related matters, does it not seem strange that nothing is commanded relating to marriage rituals, vows, ceremonies, etc.? The peculiarity of this is intensified when we consider that the violation of marriage is the immediate concern of the seventh of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Add to this the factor that the marriage of man and woman is God's chosen analogy of His own relation to His people, and we have a mystery of the greatest magnitude. Contemplate this mystery for decades, if you will, and God's Word will still be silent in this regard: "Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven," (Ps. 119:89). If we are tempted to think that the Bible is deficient, and has omitted something of necessity, we are rebuked by that very word: "The Law of the LORD is perfect," (Ps. 19:7) Oaths and vows, and rituals and ceremonies, are numerous in the Bible, but marriage oaths or ceremonies are conspicuous by their absence.

Evangelical commentator, M. G. McLuhan observes:

> "Research has indicated that no written record of marriage was kept by the Israelites until the time of the Macabees in the second century before Christ. Even then it was not a general practice, with few observing it even in the time of our Lord. In our highly

> organized Western society we have become accustomed to looking upon marriage as a mere legalized union that we have in most cases totally overlooked the divinely stated elements of that relationship… Not one word in the entire Bible implies that a legal record should be kept."—Marriage and Divorce: God's Call, God's Compassion, pg. 31

The prevailing Evangelical (and, indeed, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) dogma posits three things as essential and necessary elements to institute and commence a biblically lawful marriage: 1) a public oath which is 2) officiated by a civil or ecclesiastical officer and 3) sexual relations to "consummate" and complete the union. It is the thesis of this present volume that points 1 and 2 are biblically extraneous and without scriptural foundation and that point 3, sexual relations alone and by itself, is the only one of the three above-named requirements that is biblically required and exegetically defensible.

As we will see, the Scriptures irrefutably place the primary emphasis and focus upon the "one flesh" nature and basis of marriage. Actually, sexual relations is one of three basically distinct ways that a biblically lawful marriage commences. The other two biblical means of inaugurating a new marriage are: 1) by arrangement of the parents of the bride and groom. This is what is commonly referred to as "betrothal" or "espousal" in Scripture; (We will elaborate more on this later on in the book.) and 2) by agreement of the bride and groom themselves when there are no familial authorities living. In biblical Israel, and, indeed, in the great preponderance of societies that have ever existed, the respective parents normally arranged marriages with minimal involvement on the part of the bride and groom. It is legitimate to call this arrangement of parents an agreement, contract or covenant. Moreover, as we shall see, parental arrangement of their children's marriages is the biblically prescribed ideal and normative manner of instituting a new marriage.

As noted above, the Bible places the emphasis upon the "one flesh" nature and basis of marriage. By this we understand that sexual union is marriage, properly defined. Betrothal, or espousal, is actually an agreement or covenant pertaining to marriage, and not marriage itself. Such agreements, however, are presented in the Bible in covenantal terms. This is because marriage is a

covenantal relationship. Marriage agreements/contracts/covenants are treated in biblical law exactly as if they are actual marriages already realized and in effect. In effect, betrothed couples are treated as if married even though they have not yet experienced marriage. (We will elaborate more on this later in the book also.)

John Murray has stated:

> "It is quite apparent that the first biblical passage bearing upon the question is Genesis 2:23, 24. At the very outset this enunciates the nature and basis of marriage."—Divorce, pg. 1, emph. supp.

One of the fallacies of the prevailing dogma is in not discerning the sufficiency of Genesis 1 and 2 in the disposition of this issue. Genesis 1:28 and 2:23-24 authoritatively establish sexual relations, in and of itself, as the commencement of marriage, as the very substance and essence of it—the thing itself.

In Genesis 1:26-28, we find God creating man and woman and blessing them with the words, "Be fruitful and multiply." This was, in essence, the betrothal of Adam and Eve by their Father. There is no question here of any ceremony or ritual to "solemnize" or "authorize" their union, only the authoritative command of their progenitor. Moreover, in Genesis 2 we are informed that God brought the woman unto the man, whereupon Adam names her in the same manner that he had previously done with the animals (indicating his patriarchal authority over Eve and his own subordination to God). "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." This is the basis for the subsequent theological pronouncement of Moses in verse 24 that "they shall be one flesh" via sexual relations. It is because of original physical unity (flesh of flesh, bone of bone) that marriage subsequently finds its commencement in sexual relations. Thus, Genesis establishes the lawful means of entering a marriage (sexual relations) and the philosophical, ontological basis for this mode (original physical unity).

So, contrary to what many have asserted, the Bible is NOT silent or non-specific concerning the lawful means of entering a marriage. Let it be asked

again: assuming that Genesis does not establish a norm, why is the Bible silent (otherwise) about THIS issue in particular? Why, when the Bible goes into such detail on other matters, why is it silent on this? If there is a specific lawful means of entering and instituting a marriage via vows and ceremonies, why does not the Bible prescribe the way in definite terms? Why must we make INFERENCES? Why must we deduce? But Genesis DOES specify the norm. Sexual relations establishes and ordains a marriage, the making of husband and wife.

This is confirmed in Matthew 19:4-6, in which Jesus explains to the Pharisees why he asserts that marriage is meant to be perpetual:

> 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Does the Lord hearken back to the authority and solemnity of an OATH? Or a ceremony? Manifestly not. However, Christ DOES appeal to the authority of the marriage ACT of becoming one flesh. As it was the separation of flesh FROM flesh that differentiated and divided asunder the first man and woman, so it follows that it is the joining of flesh TO flesh in sexual relations that unity comes about again. This physical reality and history very strongly commend the view that sexual relations constitutes and institutes a marriage covenant without the necessity of a verbal covenant.

There is no logical foundation in Genesis 1 or 2 (or 3) for inferring the NECESSITY of a ceremony, ritual, oath or contract to commence a marriage, to say nothing of mandating civil or ecclesiastical involvement. However, the inference in favor of sexual relations alone is very strong, to the point of being sufficient without any other scriptural support.

Moreover, the apostle Paul in the New Testament EXPLICITLY interprets the phrase "one flesh" as sexual relations (I Cor. 6:16). While many have rightly pointed out that the phrase is not restricted to sexual relations alone but covers

the whole personal relationship of man and wife, it is a very great error not to see that this is its core meaning and central focus. To assert otherwise is to nullify Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6 and I Corinthians 6:16.

There is something in sexual intercourse that is not only physical but PROFOUND as well; we shall only grope for words and stutter in the face of ineffable mystery if we do not apprehend the source of that profundity in THE COVENANTAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACT. For man does not live his life against the backdrop of a personless void, but all that man does is inescapably played out within the context of the sovereign God and His immutable covenant revealed in the Bible. And marriage, the act of becoming one flesh, is uniquely preeminent among all human relationships in partaking of a covenantal nature. There is no ceremony or ritual, no oath or contract, which carries more covenant-making significance than "mere" sexual relations.

Since the Bible itself unmistakably, clearly, and unambiguously places the emphasis upon the physical, sexual, one flesh relationship, the onus and burden of proof rests very heavily upon those who would DENY the covenant-making significance of sexual relations. Where in God's Word, it must be asked, is there even ONE positively stated prescriptive command mandating a ceremony, ritual, oath or contract (either verbal or written) for entering into a marriage? There is not even one. Not one! I have already quoted commentators James Jordan and Jay E. Adams who were disappointed about not being able to find such. This consideration alone ought to be DECISIVE to settle the issue for all those who acknowledge the authority of God's inerrant, all-sufficient Word. But—alas!—custom and tradition are uniformly given more weight in our churches on this issue than the inspired Word of God.

Innumerable Christian laypersons have perceptively grasped this truth from the pages of the Bible. Examples are legion within the church of Christian ministers battling this incipient belief among members of their congregations. (I once saw D. James Kennedy, whom I admire immensely, on television relate from the pulpit his experience of dealing with a member of his church on this very issue.) They are refuting what they should be affirming. It is not fidelity to Scripture they are acting upon (as they suppose) but fidelity to

custom and tradition. They think they are defending what the Bible teaches. They are defending the doctrines and commandments of men.

When asked where in the Bible there is a positive command mandating a ceremony or oath officiated by a civil or ecclesiastical officer, most ministers will frankly admit that there is none; but, they will confidently assert, the necessity of such can be definitely INFERRED from Scripture. This, however, immediately raises a very serious objection to which there is no sufficient answer, namely, marriage is not just one doctrine among many in the Bible. It is a CENTRAL THEME, and one which is related to soteriology by analogy and by type. Moreover, it is of paramount importance in the creation account, and it occurs by way of example numerous times in the Bible. Large portions of the Law of Moses are particularly addressing marriage and its violations. Is it likely (or even CONCEIVABLE) that the means of commencing a relationship of such vital importance should be left to inference, conjecture, implication and deduction?

The casual reader might not appreciate just how devastating this consideration is to the traditional dogma. But let such a one read uninterruptedly through all of the exacting detail of the laws in the Pentateuch and then consider the same question again. God does not overlook or omit essential details and expect us to know them anyhow! But the prevailing dogma insists that a public oath officiated by a civil or ecclesiastical official is precisely such an "essential detail."

Unquestionably, there is something seriously deficient about the prevailing dogma. The above considerations ought to be sufficient to cause the Bible-believing church to re-examine its presuppositions on this doctrine. To my knowledge, no orthodox commentator has addressed these objections and yet they are so very, very basic. Some, such as James Jordan and Jay E. Adams, though not directly addressing this issue, have nevertheless admitted the paucity of biblical support for the necessity of a ceremony or oath.

When first seeing Eve, our first father focused upon the physical, fleshly origin of Eve out of his own flesh. In his theological summary, Moses focused upon the "one flesh" nature of marriage. In disputing with the Pharisees, Christ himself focused upon and emphasized the one flesh basis of marriage.

Clearly, physical sexual union is at the heart of the biblical definition of marriage.

CHAPTER 2

When first seeing Eve, our first father focused upon the physical, fleshly origin of Eve out of his own flesh. In his theological summary, Moses focused upon the "one flesh" nature of marriage. In disputing with the Pharisees, Christ himself focused upon and emphasized the one flesh basis of marriage. Clearly, physical sexual union is at the heart of the biblical definition of marriage.

In his book, "Man and Woman in Christ," Stephen B. Clark, though not explicitly advocating this view, does imply it:

> "Therefore, Gen 1:27-28 states that the two sexes are part of the way God made the human race, and that God made them that way for a purpose—so that they could have children and increase and multiply. Here the command to increase is linked with the creation of the human race male and female. Sexual differentiation, then, is part of God's original purpose…" (pg. 13)

And,

> "Both `cleave to his wife' and `become one flesh' are phrases which describe the establishment of a new committed relationship…He leave the `one flesh' which is his parents and joins with a woman to create a new `one flesh'…This social fact is explained by the original creation of woman out of man. Something was taken out of man when woman was formed, and hence it is natural for a man to find a woman that he can join to himself, becoming one flesh as a foundation for creating a new family…" (pg. 20, emph. supp.)

And,

> "In creating woman and coupling her with the man, God created one flesh that could be the source of a family. The New Testament interprest `one flesh' in terms of sexual intercourse (I

> Cor. 6:12-20). While it would be a mistake to regard one flesh solely in terms of sexual intercourse it would be an even greater mistake to miss the reference to family and reproduction and concentrate instead on the modern idea of companionship." (pg 20, emph supp.)

This is where Clark leaves the matter although his book is quite comprehensive, well over 700 pages. Clark does not discuss the specific term "covenant" as it applies to marriage, but uses, as a synonym, the less-pointed phrase, "committed relationship." Clark comes up to the edge but leaves the reader to make the inference for himself. (Very diplomatic!) What Clark is inferring is clear upon review: commencement of sexual relations begins a marriage. There is no doubt but that this is the logical conclusion of Clark's thesis here.

Another commentator, Ralph E. Woodrow, in his book, "Divorce and Remarriage," makes these observations:

> "Our idea of marriage—with a minister performing a ceremony—was not the custom in Bible times…Back then, an agreement may have been made between heads of families—a gift or bride price may have changed hands—but it was through sexual union that a couple was considered `one.' It was when Isaac took Rebekah into the tent that `she became his wife' (Gen 24:67." –pg 75)

Gary North, on the other hand, in his book, "Tools of Dominion," is more explicit about the covenantal nature of sexual relations. Commenting on Exodus 22:16-17, concerning the seduction of an unbetrothed virgin, North states:

> "It is not a capital crime. Adultery, in contrast, is a capital crime (Deut. 22:22). Why is there a difference in the punishments? Because the seduction of a virgin does not involve the breaking of a covenant vow. In fact it involves the *taking a covenant vow* (the emphasis here is North's—T.S.). It involves the physical bonding associated with the consummation of a binding marriage

> vow. In biblical law, physical consummation is itself the mutual vow of betrothal." –pg. 642, emph supp.

And on the next couple pages:

> "When private physical consummation itself becomes the form the vow takes, then a public act must follow…The physical consummation constitutes covenantal betrothal. It is a binding oath. It is a bond… The consent of the girl to her seduction is the equivalent of her private betrothal. She takes a binding covenant vow with the seducer by means of her body. The seducer does the same with his body. She implicitly agrees to marry the seducer and he implicitly agrees to marry her."

Although North does not make a clean break with the traditional antinomian view of marriage requirements, his view as quoted above does come extremely close to the scriptural norm. And although North cannot bring himself to plainly, unequivocally declare that sexual relations alone institutes and constitutes a binding marriage covenant, he does perceptively grasp the covenantal import of the act. Sexual relations is inherently covenantal in nature. North clearly has no doubt about that.

Consider also these observations of Susan T. Foh, in her book, "Women and the Word of God:"

> "The woman was created from man to set up the basis for the one flesh principle in marriage. There is a real biological and historical foundation for the oneness that should be between husband and wife (Gen. 2:24)." –pg. 61, emph. supp.

> "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. As such, they should be permanently joined together in marriage."—pg 75, emph. supp.

> "In the case of husband of wife, they are one flesh. This unity is more than emotion or common interests. It also has its basis in creation—the woman was made from Adam's body (Gen. 2:21-24). So the man is to love his wife as his own body, which is to say as himself. This unity is initiated and then reenacted by sexual intercourse; intercourse is more than biological function."—pg 132, emph. supp.
>
> "But this view does not account for the `sacredness' of sex in the marriage relationship, with all of the regulations to maintain it; nor does it account for the indissolubility of the one-flesh relationship resulting from sexual intercourse…God created two sexes for marriage, to give it a physical basis for union in sexual intercourse."—pg. 178, emph. supp.
>
> "The oneness in marriage, founded in creation and enacted by sexual intercourse, provides the basis for love…" pg. 183, emph. supp.
>
> "The oneness of marriage is permanent. Sexual intercourse establishes this permanent bond; that is, when a couple is joined through sexual intercourse, they become indissolubly one flesh (I Cor. 6:16)."—pg 216, emph. supp.

Susan T. Foh is to be commended for her consistency throughout her book on this point, and for the precision with which she articulates this doctrine. She notes that the origin of Eve from Adam is the "basis" for the one-flesh principle; that a man and woman become one flesh "when they have sexual intercourse,"—that this unity is (note well) "INITIATED" by sexual intercourse; and that the permanence of the one flesh relationship "[results] from sexual intercourse."

The only point lacking in Foh's analysis is an explicit, direct affirmation of the covenant-making import of the act. The only comments I would add to Foh's remarks concern her statement that "intercourse is more than a biological function," and her attempt to "account for the `sacredness' of sex in the marriage relationship." I have already indicated the source of that sacredness:

it is the covenant-making significance of the act. If we synthesize Gary North's exegesis with that of Susan Foh's, then the result is the full-blown affirmation of the thesis I am contending for in this book. In short, I have said nothing new.

In sharp contrast to Gary North, Susan T. Foh, Stephen B. Clark, M. G. McLuhan, Ralph Woodrow, and myself, Jay E. Adams has tried to divest sexual relations of all inherent meaning in his book, "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible:"

> "Marriage must not be equated with sexual relations. A sexual union is not (as some who study the Bible carelessly think) to be equated with the marriage union.
>
> "If marriage and sexual union were one and the same, the Bible could not speak about illicit sexual intercourse; instead (in referring to fornication) it would talk about informal marriage…
>
> "The notion that marriage begins on the honeymoon when sexual relations first occur, and not when the vows are taken is totally foreign to the Scriptures…"—pg 5-6

Adams' statement here is fraught with confusion. Since the Bible nowhere establishes or commands any oaths or vows to be taken in connection with marriage, nor any ceremony or ritual, nor any contractual guidelines for forming a marriage covenant, there is no biblical basis to distinguish "formal" versus "informal" marriages. "Formal marriage" in Adams' sense is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. Adams thinks otherwise, but he is constrained to admit, "We have no engagement or wedding ceremonies of any detail in the Bible," (pg 13). Adams' premise, however, forces him into the unhappy position of trying to find one. Adams cites Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8 as support for his thesis.

> "The closest thing to a ritual or ceremony of engagement (or practice that possibly preceded the engagement ceremonies) is

> found in Ruth and Ezekiel. The practice is not altogether clear to us, but, in some way or other, involved spreading one's garments over the woman to be engaged (cf. Ruth 3:9,10), In Ezekiel 16:8 we read…"— pg 13, emph. supp.

To the "some way or other" we now turn our attention. Let us survey the relevant biblical texts to determine, authoritatively, the disposition of this question. It will be necessary, before we examine Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8 to lay the foundation with some introductory observations. First, consider Deuteronomy 27:20;

> "Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt."

And Deuteronomy 22:30;

> "A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt."

Let the reader note carefully that the "uncovering of the skirt" in both of these passages refers to sexual relations. This fact is clear and unambiguous. On this point there can be no debate. There is a direct equation made in the form of synonymous parallelism. To "uncover the skirt" is to have sexual relations with, to "lie with," to "take" carnally. The phrase "uncover the skirt" is used synonymously and interchangeably with sexual relations.

The laws against incest in Leviticus 18 employ the same terminology, "to uncover," to refer to sexual relations. Note 18:6; "None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD."

And 18:7-9;

> The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.
>
> The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.

> The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.

The following verses in Leviticus 18 repeat over and over again the same phrase, "to uncover," to denote sexual relations. These laws and those of Deuteronomy bear pointedly and directly upon how Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8 are to be understood. With this foundation of scriptural precedent laid, consider the meaning of Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8;

Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? 3:2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. 3:3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. 3:4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. 3:5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. 3:6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. 3:7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. 3:8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. 3:9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. 3:10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. 3:11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

The first point to note in Ruth 3 is Naomi's instruction to Ruth to "uncover his feet." This phrase is obviously related to the scriptures we examined above in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The phrase contemplates a spreading open or a lifting up of Boaz's garment to expose his nakedness. The fact that the term

"nakedness" is not employed in no way indicates that this is not in fact what Naomi's instructions meant. Perhaps the reference to his "feet" obscures the meaning for some. James Jordan is helpful on this point. Jordan comments on the account of Eglon in Judges 3:

> "According to verse 24, Eglon's courtiers thought he was `covering his feet' in the cool room. The expression `covering the feet' is used for private acts in Scripture. Here it clearly refers to a bowel movement."—"Judges: God's War Against Humanism," pg. 63.

Jordan goes on to state:

> "Man's sense of shame is psychologically localized in terms of his `private parts,' his genitals and bowels, in terms of sex and excretion. Thus, both activities are performed in private…Thus, these two activities were normally referred to in Israelite society under a figure of speech. The private parts of the human anatomy, below the waist, were called "feet," and covering or uncovering of the "feet" referred to covering or exposing nakedness. (See Ruth 3:4, 7-9; 2 Kings 18:27; Is. 36:12; Ezekiel 16:25, in Hebrew or in marginal English renderings; `urine' is literally `water of the feet.')
>
> " `Uncovering the feet' refers to sexual relations, in that the man and the woman are properly naked to each other, and wrapped in one garment (Ruth 3:4, 9)."—Judges: God's War Against Humanism," pg 65

Jordan's observations here are worth lingering over. Note especially the comment that the literal Hebrew for "urine" is "water of the feet." Jordan's citation of Ezekiel 16:25 is especially illuminating, especially since it comes from the same chapter and section that Adams cites, and which we will consider below. The verse says:

> "Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms."

Note also Jordan's unequivocal statement, "uncovering the feet refers to sexual relations." What then is the meaning of Naomi's advice to Ruth to "uncover his feet and lay thee down?" Jay E. Adams notwithstanding, there is only one possible meaning. Naomi advised Ruth to seduce Boaz into sexual relations as a means of securing him as her kinsman redeemer. After exposing Boaz's "feet," that is, his private parts, Ruth was then to "lay thee down." Consider the sequence: first to expose Boaz's nakedness and then to lie down. This sequence of acts is nothing else, and can be nothing else, except a direct invitation to sexual intercourse. Boaz could not possibly have mistaken the meaning and significance of Ruth's actions.

"It is not altogether clear," to Jay E. Adams, exactly what Ruth was requesting when she asked Boaz to spread his skirt over her. It is unfortunate that Adams did not consult a concordance at this juncture to find out what light Deuteronomy 22:30 and 27:20 and Leviticus 18 would throw upon Ruth's words. Her words meant precisely the same thing as her actions did. "Spread thy skirt over thy handmaid" contemplated bringing Ruth inside the garment with Boaz in the act of sexual intercourse—that is, to commence marriage. As Jordan notes, "the man and woman are properly naked to one another and wrapped in one garment," and Jordan even makes it clear that this is his understanding of Ruth 3 by his citation of Ruth 3:4, 9 in connection with this point.

Jordan had previously brought out the same point in an earlier book:

> "It is God who has spread his cloak over his bride in marriage (Ruth 3:9; Ezek. 16:8). In the symbolism of Scripture, the veil is removed from the face of the bride, removing the barrier of clothing between groom and bride (Gen. 24:65ff). The two are one flesh, covered by one garment around them both. In terms of this, then, when God made his covenant with Israel, he spread his garment over them."—"The Law of the Covenant," pg 160-161

I should like to interject here for the reader that I arrived at precisely this same understanding of these Ruth and Ezekiel passages as Jordan, totally independently of Jordan (or anyone else), long before I ever read any of Jordan's books or even heard of him. Now, it may not prove anything, but it is my opinion that such a point for point correspondence of understanding would not occur if there were not some essential truth to it. The entire context of Ruth 3 simply mandates this understanding. Can it be seriously maintained that Naomi's and Ruth's plan was just to be a verbal proposal of marriage? If so, why did Naomi instruct Ruth to go at night? And then only approach him after he had lain down? Why the instruction to wash herself? And to perfume herself? And to put on her best clothes? Is all of this a formal, ritualistic request for marriage? Hardly! This is seduction, pure and simple. To deny this is to deny the obvious.

Matthew Henry's comments on Ruth 3 are also illuminating:

> "The course she took in order to her daughter's preferment was very extraordinary and looks suspicious. If there was any thing improper in it, the fault must lie upon Naomi, who put her daughter upon it, and who knew, or should know, the laws and usages of Israel better than Ruth. 1. It was true that Boaz, being near of kin to the deceased, and (for aught that Naomi knew to the contrary) the nearest of all now alive, was obliged by the divine law to marry the widow of Mahlon, who was the eldest son of Elimelech, and was dead without issue (v. 2): "Is not Boaz of our kindred, and therefore bound in conscience to take care of our affairs?" This may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ, that he is our near kinsman; having taken our nature upon him, he is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. 2. It was a convenient time to remind him of it, now that he had got so much acquaintance with Ruth by her constant attendance on his reapers during the whole harvest, which was now ended; and he also, by the kindness he had shown to Ruth in smaller matters, had encouraged Naomi to hope that he would not be unkind, much less unjust, in this greater. And she thought it was a good opportunity to apply to him when he made a winnowing-feast at his threshing-floor (v. 2), then and there completing the joy of

the harvest, and treating his workmen like a kind master: He winnoweth barley to-night, that is, he makes his entertainment to-night. As Nabal and Absalom had feasts at their sheep-shearing, so Boaz at his winnowing. 3. Naomi thought Ruth the most proper person to do it herself; and perhaps it was the usage in that country that in this case the woman should make the demand; so much is intimated by the law, Deut. xxv. 7-9. Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make herself clean and neat, not to make herself fine (v. 3): "Wash thyself and anoint thee, not paint thee (as Jezebel), put on thy raiment, but not the attire of a harlot, and go down to the floor," whither, it is probable, she was invited to the supper there made; but she must not make herself known, that it, not make her errand known (she herself could not but be very well known among Boaz's reapers) till the company had dispersed and Boaz had retired. And upon this occasion she would have an easier access to him in private than she could have at his own house. And thus far was well enough. But, 4. Her coming to lie down at his feet, when he was asleep in his bed, had such an appearance of evil, was such an approach towards it, and might have been such an occasion of it, that we know not well how to justify it. Many expositors think it unjustifiable, particularly the excellent Mr. Poole. We must not do evil that good may come. It is dangerous to bring the spark and the tinder together; for how great a matter may a little fire kindle! All agree that it is not to be drawn into a precedent; neither our laws nor our times are the same that were then; yet I am willing to make the best of it. If Boaz was, as they presumed, the next kinsman, she was his wife before God (as we say), and there needed but little ceremony to complete the nuptials; and Naomi did not intend that Ruth should approach to him any otherwise than as his wife. She knew Boaz to be not only an old man (she would not have trusted to that alone in venturing her daughter-in-law so near him), but a grave sober man, a virtuous and religious man, and one that feared God. She knew Ruth to be a modest woman, chaste, and a keeper at home, Tit. ii. 5. The Israelites had indeed been once debauched by the daughters of

> Moab (Num. xxv. 1), but this Moabitess was none of those daughters. Naomi herself designed nothing but what was honest and honourable, and her charity (which believeth all things and hopeth all things) banished and forbade all suspicion that either Boaz or Ruth would attempt any thing but what was likewise honest and honourable. If what she advised had been then as indecent and immodest (according to the usage of the country) as it seems now to us, we cannot think that if Naomi had had so little virtue (which yet we have no reason to suspect) she would also have had so little wisdom as to put her daughter upon it, since that alone might have marred the match, and have alienated the affections of so grave and good a man as Boaz from her. We must therefore think that the thing did not look so ill then as it does now. Naomi referred her daughter-in-law to Boaz for further directions. When she had thus made her claim, Boaz, who was more learned in the laws, would tell her what she must do. Thus must we lay ourselves at the feet of our Redeemer, to receive from him our doom. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6. We may be sure, if Ruth had apprehended any evil in that which her mother advised her to, she was a woman of too much virtue and too much sense to promise as she did (v. 5): All that thou sayest unto me I will do."

May the reader indulge one more lengthy quotation, this one from C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch's, "Commentary on the Old Testament:"

> "In the case before us Elimelech had possessed at Bethlehem, which Naomi had sold from property (chap iv.3); and Boaz, a relation of Elimelech, was the redeemer of whom Naomi had hoped that he would fulfill the duty of a redeemer,--namely, not only that he would ransom the purchased field, but marry her daughter-in-law Ruth, the widow of the rightful heir of the landed possession of Elimelech, and thus through this marriage establish the name of her deceased husband or son (Elimelech or Mahlon) upon his inheritance. Led on by this hope, she advised Ruth to visit Boaz…during the night, and by a species of bold

> artifice, which she assumed he would not resist, to induce him as redeemer to grant to Ruth this Levirate marriage. The reason why she adopted this plan for the accomplishment of her wishes, and did not appeal to Boaz directly, or ask him to perform this duty of affection to her deceased husband, was probably that she was afraid lest she should fail to attain her end in this way, partly because the duty of a Levirate marriage was not legally binding upon the redeemer, and partly because Boaz was not so closely related to her husband that she could not justly require this of him, whilst there was actually a nearer redeemer than he (chap iii. 12). According to our customs, indeed, this act of Naomi and Ruth appears a very objectionable one from a moral point of view, but it was not so when judged by the customs of the people of Israel at that time. Boaz, who was an honorable man, and, according to chap. iii. 10, no doubt somewhat advanced in years, praised Ruth for having taken refuge with him, and promised to fulfill her wishes when he had satisfied himself that the nearer redeemer would renounce his right and duty (chap iii. 10, 11). As he acknowledged by this very declaration, that under certain circumstances it would be his duty to marry Ruth, he took no offence at the manner in which she approached him and proposed to become his wife. On the contrary, he regarded it as proof of feminine virtue and modesty, that she had not gone after young men, but offered herself as a wife to an old man like him…
> "From the account which follows of the carrying out of the advice given to her, we learn that Naomi had instructed Ruth to ask Boaz to marry her."--"Commentary on the Old Testament," Volume 2, The Book of Ruth, pg 482-483

It hardly needs to be pointed out that Matthew Henry's Commentary is, by far, the single most popular commentary on the Bible among conservative, Protestant Christians. The Old Testament commentary of Keil and Delitzsch is also regarded with great respect. This is not meant to imply that human authority settles the issues addressed here, but only so the reader may understand that the view of Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8 advanced in this book is neither extreme nor unique.

Matthew Henry clearly recognized that Ruth's actions toward Boaz were sexual in nature. So, manifestly, did Keil and Delitzsch. Clearly, so does James Jordan. Both Henry's comments and the comments of Keil and Delitzsch note that Ruth's actions did not seem evil to the Israelites as they do to modern, Western Christians, inculcated with the mores of our Greco-Roman tradition and culture. The Israelites of Ruth's day understood something about the Law of God that Evangelicals do not understand today. Henry, Keil and Delitzsch (and countless others, Jay E. Adams, for one) were clearly uncomfortable with the fact of sexual intent on Ruth's part, but they possessed enough scriptural insight and integrity to accept the passage in its obvious meaning. What made them uncomfortable was this: how could all of this be reconciled with the obvious fact that both Boaz and Ruth are portrayed as virtuous and righteous?

The answer to their perplexity, and Jay E. Adams' as well, is really so obvious that it is astounding it has been misunderstood for so long. The "customs" that Ruth, Boaz and Naomi were acting upon were not "customs" at all, but rather the Divine Law. Henry was clearly embarrassed to admit, "there needed but little ceremony to complete the nuptials." Yeah, some ceremony! The irony here is almost humorous. Henry (et al) mistakenly believed that a custom and tradition of his own age (and ours) that is, a public oath officiated by a civil or ecclesiastical officer, is a Divine law; and at the same time he could not comprehend why Ruth and Naomi conducted themselves according to Divine law, which he thought was a mere custom!

Since Matthew Henry, Keil and Delitzsch, James Jordan, and myself can discern the sexual intent and purpose of Ruth's actions towards Boaz, and the concomitant view of this as commencing a marriage, why, then, does Jay E. Adams vehemently insist on seeing a ritual or ceremony in Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8? Because Adams, unlike Henry or Keil and Delitzsch, has an axe to grind. Simple cohabitation as marriage was not pervasive in Henry's time. Henry and Keil and Delitzsch were not arguing against anything, they were simply concerned about accurate exposition of the biblical text. Jay E. Adams, because of his false premise, and because of contemporary social problems he faces as a pastor, is forced into an unnatural and illogical denial of the obvious in Ruth 3 and Ezekiel 16:8. Let us now turn to the other passage under

examination, Ezekiel 16. Let us note the whole context from verse 1 and forward:

> Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. 4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. 6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. 7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

This passage of Scripture gives powerful, indeed, decisive, weight to the present thesis. As Jay E. Adams himself acknowledges of this text, "In Hebrew poetry, such synonymous parallelism is used to equate two things" (Marriage Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible, pg 15). This, in fact, is the key to understanding verse 8. Verse 8 is itself a case of synonymous parallelism. Verses 1-6 refer to Israel's bondage in Egypt. Verse 7 tells us of God's actions in connection with their oppression there. And then, verse 8, the culmination, shows God's love in taking Israel to Himself as a bride. In other words, God is comparing the marriage act, sexual intercourse, to the covenant He made with Israel at Sinai. He is telling faithless Israel that taking them into

covenant with Himself was the same in nature as when the groom spreads his "skirt" over the bride in the act of sexual intercourse.

A closer examination of the passage will only confirm this more fully. Let us suppose for the moment that the entirety of verse 8 is allegorical and uses, as Adams alleges, a literal marriage ritual as a basis for comparison. First, it should be noted that even if Adams were correct on this point, it would not prove that such a rite is prescriptive in nature. This "rite," if it is a "rite," would be merely descriptive of the marriage rites that existed in Ezekiel's day. The weakness of Adams' contention on this issue is that there is absolutely no evidence for this at all. It is pure, unadulterated speculation.

Second, since we have already proven that Deuteronomy 22:30, 27:20, Leviticus 18, and Ruth 3:9 decisively establish the language in verse 8 as referring to sexual relations, then the resulting sequence would be that of sexual relations preceding the oath and covenant. The verse would read as follows: "When I passed by thee…I spread my skirt over thee in the act of sexual intercourse and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swear unto thee and entered into a covenant with thee." I don't think Jay E. Adams would be too happy with this result!

The above rendering could be conceptually defensible by making the verse repetitious rather than parallel (and therefore compatible with the present thesis). In other words, verse 8b restates 8a in different terms. It could be identifying (rather than correlating via metaphor) the swearing and covenant-making with the sexual relations. The problem with this is that this would destroy the obvious parallelism that is being made. Therefore, the context vitiates this as a possible rendering. If the full-blown parallelism is not maintained within verse 8, then the verse loses all meaning. One thing is certain: the spreading of the skirt in 8a refers to sexual relations. The only sensible interpretation of the verse, then is as follows:

> "Now when I passed by thee, and saw thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee (that is, I commenced marriage with you through sexual relations) and covered thy nakedness. I sware unto thee and entered into a

> covenant with thee (that is, this corresponds to the covenant I made with you at Sinai)."

No other rendering of this verse is exegetically defensible. Once we see this, it becomes obvious that Ezekiel 16:8 confirms the thesis of this book in a very, very compelling manner, indeed, for it directly equates God's covenant with Israel at Sinai with the initial sexual relations of groom and bride. The allusion here in Ezekiel 16:8 is, in fact, borrowed from Ruth 3:9. Clearly, then, sexual union is a covenant-making act. God Himself has declared this to be so in this Scripture.

The reader may now be questioning in his mind, "Is the proposition being advanced here that a covenant can exist without two parties swearing a verbal oath?" This, of course, is precisely the point that has been made. And it is this point upon which Jay E. Adams (and Evangelicals in general) stumbles. Adams' failure to recognize this reality is fatal to his thesis. Adams says, "The reason for marriage is to solve the problem of loneliness," (pg. 8, "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible"). Moreover, "Marriage was established because Adam was alone, and that was not good. Companionship, therefore, is the essence of marriage. We shall see that the Bible speaks of marriage as 'The Covenant of Companionship'," (pg. 8, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible emph. in original). A little later, Adams says:

> "Now we must consider in detail what we have already seen to be the very essence of marriage: companionship. God made most of us so that we would be lonely without an intimate companion with whom to live. God provided Eve not only (or even primarily) as Adam's helper (though help is also one dimension of companionship), but as his companion. He too, as all other humans since, (we shall see), is to provide companionship for her." –pg 11, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible

Adams cites Malachi 2:14 in this connection:

> "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant."

Adams, once again, gets it backwards. His view sounds nice and sentimental and, no doubt, there is even some truth in what he says. But, as with most half-truths, Adams' statements obscure the essential truth. Let us turn once again to Stephen B. Clark for some insight.

> "Some modern interpreters view man's aloneness as meaning `loneliness.' Man needs a companion, a woman to talk to and share his life with, someone to give him ego support. In this view, the real companion for a man is one woman with whom he can be especially intimate and share his `real self.' Such interpretations proceed from a modern view of companionship marriage that was undoubtedly foreign to the author of Genesis 2, as well as to the writers of the New Testament. The view that the ideal fulfillment of the need described in Genesis 2 is the modern approach to companionship in marriage may possibly be held on other than simply exegetical grounds, but is it a historical anachronism to read such a view back into the account and hold that Genesis propounds such a view. Man's aloneness was not good, but Genesis does not see the solution in one intimate partner for personal sharing. Rather, man needs a human society to live in, a household and a people…
>
> "Genesis does not describe woman as a companion to man but as a helper to him…the phrase is not a romantic evaluation of the woman. Rather, it presents woman as `useful' to man. The use of the word `useful' here does not suggest that Genesis teaches that man should approach woman as `a thing' or `use her,' nor that he should not love and care for her. But in an age when many writers tend to idealize deep interpersonal sharing relationships and read them back into Genesis, it is important to point out that writers of scripture approach personal relationships with a certain peculiarity of common sense…Genesis describes her part in the marriage as being a helper to the man in the work of establishing a household and a family."— "Man and Woman in Christ," pg 21-22

The companionship view of marriage endorsed by Adams is essentially humanistic in outlook, positing man's needs or desires as more important or fundamental than the purpose of God. There is more of pop psychology in Adams' remarks than orthodoxy. There is nothing objectionable in calling marriage "a" covenant of companionship (this is, indeed, an aspect of

marriage), but to define the entire marriage covenant itself in those terms is biblically unwarranted. The whole marriage covenant cannot be subsumed under this definition. Stephen B. Clark's exposition of Genesis is rigorously reasoned. The reader is urged to consult Clark's book for a detailed analysis. But back to Adams.

> "All these facts make it as clear as can be that marriage is fundamentally a contractual arrangement (called in Mal. 2:14 a marriage `by covenant') and not a sexual union. Marriage is a formal (covenantal) arrangement between two persons to become each other's loving companions for life. In marriage, they contract to keep each other from ever being lonely so long as they shall live. Our modern wedding ceremonies should stress this point."—pg. 13, "Marriage Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible"

It should be obvious to the reader by now where the logical fallacy lies in Adams' thesis. Adams creates a false antithesis, opposing covenantal to sexual union. In Adams' mind it is sexual union VERSUS `formal' covenantal union. What he fails to perceive is that sexual union is subsumed under the concept of covenant. In adopting Adams unbiblical, man-centered definition of marriage, it is inevitable that sentimental gush assumes the prominence: "they contract with each other from ever being lonely." The biblical emphasis, on the other hand, is on God and His covenantal ordinance.

Gordon H. Clark, in a similar vein, is singularly helpful in this connection. In his book, "The Atonement," Clark observes:

> "The preceding section assumed that a covenant was an agreement between two or more persons. Although this is the standard Calvinistic definition, sometimes it is said to be incorrect. It does indeed run the risk of producing a misunderstanding…In the Covenant of Grace, however, sinful man has no say as to what the terms of the covenant shall be. Therefore, the transaction might be called an imposition, a promise, a command, but hardly a contract. While such a misunderstanding is possible, yet it is not an objection to

> defining covenant as an agreement. The most frequently repeated covenant in the Old Testament was the marriage covenant. Yet in those times the wife was not the equal of the husband, nor for that matter did the groom have full liberty in setting the terms of the agreement. The idea of agreement therefore requires neither that the parties be equal, nor that the parties themselves determine the conditions. Yet when they accept the conditions an agreement exists."—pg. 18, emph. supp.

Let the reader linger long over Clark's words. If Clark's observations are correct, and assuredly they are, then it follows from this that a VERBAL assent is not always necessary for a covenant to exist. As observed earlier, human actions are played out against the backdrop of a pre-existing and overarching covenant, the Law of God. There is an inevitable covenantal aspect to man's acts. All men stand condemned as violators of God's covenant with man, or else as pardoned according to the conditions of His covenant (i.e., faith in Jesus Christ).

Review the main points of Clark's proposition:

1. A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons.
2. Man has no say as to the terms of the covenant.
3. The transaction may be rightly regarded as an imposition.
4. The Bible declares marriage to be a covenant.
5. Man may not formulate the terms of the marriage covenant.
6. When they accept the conditions an agreement exists.

Thus, secondary covenants on the human level can come into being when human beings enter into relationships that mandate mutual responsibilities to each other. If God's covenant with man is imposed, then there is no logical objection to the thesis that subordinate covenants come into effect through various human relationships. As Gordon Clark said, "When they accept the conditions an agreement exists."

Since "the conditions" which incur marital obligations are sexual relations (Exodus 22:16), it follows that when a man and woman enter into such relations an implicit covenant has been entered into. It matters not whether the man and woman are subjectively considering a permanent union or not, nor whether the man and woman are cognizant of the reality of God's law concerning their actions. Once they have become one flesh, they ARE married and in covenantal union. There are many people who object to this thesis because they do not like the implications of it in their own lives, but subsequent to becoming one flesh they will be judged by God as man and wife in accordance with their actions. A woman who is joined to a husband via sexual relations, in the absence of any oath or civil/ecclesiastical officer "officiating" their union, will be subsequently judged as an adulteress is she then afterwards has sexual relations with another man. The fact that she is ignorant of her covenantal union with the man as her husband does not mean that she is not in such a union. It is clear from Leviticus 4 and Numbers 15:22-29, which require blood atonement for sins of ignorance, that even sins of ignorance incur culpability before God.

Gary North has written some very excellent commentary on implicit covenantalism in his books, "Moses and Pharaoh" and "The Sinai Strategy." In "Moses and Pharaoh," in the chapter titled, "Covenantal Judgment," North comments:

> "Men are judged in social orders in terms of the decisions made by their legitimate rulers.
>
> "…The Bible teaches the doctrine of representative government. This refers to all government, not just civil government. Representative government applies to churches, corporations, trusts and families. Adam, our representative before God, sinned, and we are under a curse. This `federal headship' of Adam was based upon a concept of representative government under a covenant. So was the `federal headship' of Pharaoh…
>
> "The Bible teaches methodological covenantalism…A social covenant does exist, whether explicit or implicit…

> "When God brought judgment on Egypt, the seemingly innocent Egyptians were not spared. This was because there were no innocent Egyptians. They were all under Pharaoh's covenant, they all operated in terms of his divinity."—pg. 109-111

There is no way to avoid North's conclusion here. If God judges entire nations because of the sins of their leaders who represent them—and clearly He does (see also II Sam 24)—then there must be an implicit covenant in effect.

In "The Sinai Strategy," North brought out the same point:

> "Marriage requires a covenantal oath, for the family is a monopolistic agency sanctioned by God. It is therefore marked by legally enforceable vows, either implicitly under God or explicitly under God (Mal. 2:14)…Where God's name is invoked, both marriage partners come under the self-maledictory conditions of God's covenant oath…both church and state can impose their respective sanctions against covenant-breakers within the marriage…it must be understood that marriage is a monopolistic institution established by God…"—pg. 57-58

We will discuss North's (and James Jordan's) views concerning the role of the State and Church in another place. For now it is sufficient to highlight his observation that God has established the Family as a monopolistic agency over marriage in which the covenantal oath is unavoidable: if not made explicitly, it is, as North correctly notes, made "implicitly" under God. North correctly cites Malachi 2:14 in which God asserts that He, Himself, is the witness. This observation alone is sufficient to nullify any need to go beyond "mere" physical union as a basis for marriage. A little further on, North notes again:

> "We discover a fundamental distinction between contracts and covenants. A contract is made between individuals or organizations on the basis of mutual self-interest…A private contract does not legitimately involve the use of a self-maledictory oath, implicitly or explicitly, since no God-ordained

> sovereign institution has initially bound the parties by means of such an oath…
>
> "If this analysis is correct, then we have additional evidence that marriage is a covenant rather than a contract, for marriage implicitly involves a self-maledictory oath…"—pg 65-65, emph. supp.

Please note that North consistently hammers home the point about an "implicit oath." North has grasped something very fundamental here. The Family, as an institution founded by God, is not dependent upon any human agency for its validity. Marriage and Family are inescapably covenantal in nature. When men and women perform actions which pertain to marriage and the family, they are involving themselves with an inherently covenantal institution ordained by God. God Himself has invoked and imposed covenantal meaning upon sexual relations. Thus, when a man and woman have sexual relations, they have entered into a covenantal relationship. They become married and assume the obligations of marriage.

Let us quote North once more in this connection:

> "Marriage is a covenantal institution. It is established by the exchange of vows, both implicit and explicit...Because of the covenantal nature of these vows, their terms are subject to enforcement by external human institutions: family, church, and civil government."—pg 128

North cites the "implicit oath" doctrine as least four times in "Tools of Dominion" (pgs. 657, 658, 659 and 660).

While North has not fully developed the logical implications of this concerning the commencement of marriage, and though some of his remarks in this connection are logically contradictory, his thesis as a whole is both insightful and laudatory. By contrast, most Evangelical commentators continue to mindlessly genuflect the traditional, unbiblical stance of previous writers and their own denominational positions. Jay E. Adams, himself, has recognized this. In the preface to "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the

Bible," Adams bemoans the fact that Evangelicals have "neglected the whole area for so long, uncritically accepting local or denominational traditions" (pg viii). Unfortunately, Adams has not extricated himself from the same predicament, as we have seen. He has failed to unravel "the many complex and knotty exegetical problems" pertaining to marriage (pg. vii). These "exegetical problems" will remain "complex and knotty," indeed, intractable and intransigent, for Adams and other commentators until they recognize the ONE FLESH NATURE AND BASIS of marriage.

Adams is to be commended for sincerely attempting to discern the biblical teaching on the subject. However, this should not prevent the rest of us from recognizing that, though so trying, Adams has denied a fundamental teaching of the Scriptures. And not only Adams, but the Evangelical church as a whole.

If these observations are not enough to convince the reader that covenants can be entered into IMPLICITLY without a verbal oath, then consider the institution of the New Covenant itself: Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-22. As each Gospel indicates, Christ announced the New Covenant to the assembled apostles at the Passover. They were told to take and eat, and to drink. Clearly, this is the institution of the New Covenant in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31. Think of the magnitude of this! The New Covenant. "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Lk. 22:2). Whatever the apostles did or did not understand about the nature of the New Covenant, they certainly understood that Christ had announced a covenant. What oath did Christ require of them? Did impulsive Peter swear allegiance to death to Christ at this Meal? Did the apostles utter even so much a one word? No. They simply partook of the covenantal meal and, thus entered into the New Covenant with Christ. Their oath and allegiance was implied by their actions. A verbal affirmation was not demanded of them.

Now if the New Covenant itself could be inaugurated in this way, that is, without a verbal oath, then there is no rational objection to the thesis that other covenantal relationships can be entered into without a verbal oath. To quote Gordon H. Clark once again, "When they accept the conditions, an agreement exists."

Ray R. Sutton, in his book, "That You May Prosper," has given us what is essentially an identical observation as Gordon Clark's insight about the imposed covenant. Speaking about ancient suzerainty treaties, he writes:

> "The sanctions of blessing and cursing were received by an oath, a self-maledictory (`to speak evil of oneself') oath. The suzerain entered the covenant by pledging and calling down evil on himself from his deities, in the event that he failed to honor his word. The vassal also entered the covenant by taking the self-maledictory oath. Perhaps it could be argued that `secular' covenant-cutting involved two oaths. It seems, however, that the vassal actually received the suzerain's oath. What the suzerain called down on himself would hit the vassal, should the latter violate his agreement. So, there was essentially one oath by the suzerain consigned to the vassal.
>
> "Even if there were not the situation in secular oath-taking, the Biblical covenant was by consignment."—pg 83-84, Sutton's emphasis

In other words the vassal was in covenant with his suzerain, like it or not. This covenant was CONSIGNED or imposed upon him by a superior power and authority. Sutton's argument is that the biblical covenant of God is the same. God has a covenant with man. All men are either covenant-keepers or covenant-breakers. My argument is that a secondary (i.e. marriage) covenant is also consigned by Divine Law upon men and women who enter into sexual union. That is the significance of Genesis 2:24. Sexual intercourse directly and immediately brings the consignment of a marriage covenant by God upon a man and woman. This gives rise to another observation Sutton made earlier in his book:

> "God is transcendent. He directly relates to each sphere of society. Family, Church and Sate are not stacked on top of each other. The Family does not have to go through the State, nor the Church, to get to God (emph supp). This gives the Family a sacred character. No longer is the Family viewed this way. The State has crippled its God-given powers."—pg 8

Unfortunately Sutton is inconsistent with himself in this regard; he does not see the implications of his own insight. Sutton argues in his book that the traditional marriage ceremony, officiated by Church and State, as witnesses, is necessary for a valid marriage covenant:

> "Next in Genesis 2 the text says, `For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh…'Moses adds his own editorial comment (under the inspiration of God), which is judicial in character. All the language here implies some kind of legal process of oath-taking (emph supp) to establish a marriage union." –pg 14

What Sutton has failed to grasp is that sexual intercourse IS "some kind of legal process of oath-taking." Like Jay E. Adams, he has created a false antithesis between sexual and covenantal union. In the following quote, we see Sutton in the act of creating this false antithesis:

> "Even the `one flesh' language is primarily legal and covenantal , not primarily `physical.' The word for `cling' or `cleave' (dabaq) is the key to understanding the full sense of `one flesh.' Dabaq is a technical term often used in covenantal contexts like Deuteronomy (Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20; Josh 22:5, 23:8)"—pg 144

Sutton is correct. The "one flesh" language is, indeed, "legal and covenantal." If Sutton did not hold to the false antithesis of "covenantal vs sexual" union, he would be affirming precisely the same doctrine as I am.

Sutton goes on to say:

> "The language of Genesis 2:24 therefore, implies a legal process whereby God's sanctions are received for the marriage covenant. In essence, the traditional marriage ceremony even to this day reflects the covenantal influence on marriage, `Till death do us part.' Most people do not realize that they are taking an `oath' before God, witnessed by the minister (Church), the relatives (Family), and civil authorities via the marriage certificate (State).

> All three institutions testify that an oath was taken, sealing the two together until one or the other dies."—pg. 144

The language of Genesis 2:24 does, indeed, imply a "legal process whereby God's sanctions are received for the marriage covenant." That legal process is sexual intercourse, not a traditional ceremony officiated by the State and Church. Or, to phrase it another way, Genesis 2:24 imputes a legal covenantal significance to sexual intercourse. This is where Sutton falls short of affirming the biblical covenant of marriage. When Sutton uses the word "legal" in this context, he is referring to the institutions of civil government, not the Law of God itself. Sutton observes that "most people do not realize they are taking an oath" to God in the traditional marriage ceremony. I would supplement Sutton's observation by saying that most people do not realize they are taking an oath before God in the act of sexual intercourse. Sutton thinks the legal, covenantal aspect of marriage necessitates the involvement of the State and Church. But this is a misapprehension. The legal inferences are to the Law of God itself, not to the State or civil law, as an institution. As Sutton says, "The Family does not have to go through the State, nor the Church, to get to God." State or Church involvement in marriage is nowhere commanded nor logically implied in the Scriptures.

The language of Genesis 2:24 does, indeed, imply a "legal process whereby God's sanctions are received for the marriage covenant." That legal process is sexual intercourse, not a traditional Western ceremony officiated by the State and Church. Or, to phrase it another way, Genesis 2:24 imputes a legal covenantal significance to sexual intercourse. This is where Sutton falls short of affirming the biblical covenant of marriage. When Sutton uses the word "legal" in this context, he is referring to the institutions of civil government, not the Law of God itself. Sutton observes that "most people do not realize they are taking an oath" to God in the traditional marriage ceremony. I would supplement Sutton's observation by saying that most people do not realize they are taking an oath before God in the act of sexual intercourse. Sutton thinks the legal, covenantal aspect of marriage necessitates the involvement of the State and Church. But this is a misapprehension. The legal inferences are to the Law of God itself, not to the State or civil law, as an institution. As Sutton says, "The Family does not have to go through the State, nor the

Church, to get to God." State or Church involvement in marriage is nowhere commanded nor logically implied in the Scriptures.

"…AS ALSO SAITH THE LAW"

We have now come to the point to examine the prescriptive commands of the Law of God; those which bear directly upon the issue of what constitutes and commences a marriage are 1) Exodus 22:16-17, 2) Deuteronomy 22:18-19, 3)Deuteronomy 21:10-13, 4) Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and 6) Deuteronomy 22:13-21. The relevance of these laws to our present thesis consists in the fact that they are not merely descriptive in nature (as is the history of Genesis) but prescriptive, in that they enunciate the very standard of God's moral law.

Exodus 22:16-17 is the premier passage in the Law to be consulted in answering the question, "Do sexual relations constitute the commencement of marriage?" What we have in these verses is an example of sexual relations between a man and an unbetrothed virgin (note well, there is nothing specified as to the prior marital status of the man in this statute) unmediated by any ceremony, ritual, oath or external authority.

> 16 And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie 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.

This is the passage of Scripture which originally persuaded me of my present viewpoint. This is also a most misunderstood scripture because of the pervasive ignorance of the significance of the dowry in biblical marriages. In a footnote to Jay E. Adams' statement cited above, Adams cites this verse as--of all things--refutation of the view that sexual relations are constitutive of marriage! Adams says that those who hold this view "study the Bible carelessly." Apparently Susan Foh, Gary North, James Jordan and I are all studying the Bible carelessly. Actually, it is Adams' treatment of this text that is careless. Adams observes, "If they had to be married later, they were not married already; and if the father refused, they never would be." But the verse does not say that "they had to be married later," it says "he shall surely endow her to be his wife."

Adams understands not the meaning and significance of this. This statement has reference to the dowry that ought to have been bestowed to secure the

woman as a free wife. Without possessing a dowry coming into the marriage, the woman's status is that of a servant-wife, a concubine. With a dowry, she is a free woman with inheritance rights. Adams misses the significance of this stipulation entirely! The point is that a man who seduces a woman into marriage without her father's consent is forbidden to make a concubine out of her. She must be provided a dowry by her seducer and granted the status of a free woman. This is the biblical meaning of, "he shall surely endow her to be his wife." The dichotomy enunciated here is not a dichotomy of "married vs. not married" but "free wife vs. servant wife." That a marriage took place during the seduction is the very premise of this law.

It is Adams' failure to understand the patriarchal authority bestowed by biblical law upon fathers to ordain marriages for his children which prevents him from grasping this aspect of the biblical text. It is the father's right and responsibility to arrange a marriage for his daughter. When his authority is bypassed via seduction, he has the legitimate annulment power over the marriage, that is, the right to divorce his daughter from the man who seduced her. The right to annul such a marriage in no way implies that a real marriage did not take place.

Marriage normally carries the obligation to obtain parental permission, and the loss of a daughter compensated for by payment of a bride price. This proves conclusively that the union entered into by the man and the virgin is a legitimate marriage under biblical law. If such a seduction were a sexual violation and not a marriage, then why the stipulation for the dowry? Surely, this proves that the man is to honor his marital responsibilities, something he could not logically be demanded to do if he were not in fact already deemed to be married to the virgin in question. If the father refuses to give her unto him, he still pays money according to the dowry of a virgin. By contrast, other violations under the Law are compensated for by means of "restitution" or "compensation," but the language employed here is completely marital in nature. This law, then, is sufficient to refute the view that marriage only occurs when a verbal oath is pronounced. Clearly, no such oath occurs is a case of seduction.

Rushdoony has pointed out that "marriage normally was by dowry," (The Institutes of Biblical Law, pg. 176). Before most Israeli parents would consent

to give their daughters to a man, the prospective bridegroom, through his father, would have to pay a dowry. Exodus 22:16-17 shows that this is a legitimate demand (though negotiable). This consideration adds weight to the thesis that seduction of a virgin is not regarded as fornication or whoredom but rather as a violation of parental authority. When a daughter and her seducer usurp this parental authority, they have violated the command to honor father and mother. It is parental authority to arrange marriages for their children which is at issue in this law, and not fornication.

Jay E. Adams is not the only commentator who is confused about this law. James B. Hurley gives us a rather strange mixture of insight and error in his book, "Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective":

> "In this text…the seducer must compensate the father for the loss of the `payment for a virgin,' which can no longer be expected in the light of the girl's loss of virginity, and must follow through by marrying her. The father's option to refuse her to him is also parallel (i.e., to Assyrian law)…In Assyrian culture the sexual relation itself was sacred and restricted certain contexts."—pg 39

On the next page, Hurley goes on to say:

> "It must be noted, however, that the passages of the civil code which discuss the matter (i.e., seduction and adultery) are thinking in terms of crime against the rights of a father or husband, punishment, damages, and responsibility rather than purely moral dimensions." –pg. 40

On the one hand, Hurley would have us know that the emphasis is upon "the sexual relation itself," but, on the other hand, these laws are "thinking in terms of crime against the father or husband." It is possible, and, of course, sometimes actually the case that particular sins violate more than one commandment at the same time. But Hurley is mistaken in his view that Exodus 22:16-17 "concerns the sexual relation itself." As noted above, this law has the purpose of upholding parental authority. Indeed, we do not even know, by virtue of the seduction alone, if an offense has occurred (i.e., Ruth 3). It is not until we know that the seduction has bypassed the authority of the

father that we know an offense has occurred. Exodus 22:16-17 concerns itself with violation of the fifth, not the seventh, commandment.

There is no question in this law of the man's seduction of the virgin being inherently sinful. If the girl's parents were dead, the girl's own consent to the seduction would be sufficient. Of course, whether on her own, or under her parents' authority, the man in question would be obligated to the girl as her husband. Sexual relations incur a marital responsibility, for they are the institution of a marriage covenant.

Matthew Henry's comments on this verse are short and to the point: "A law that he who debauched a young woman should be obligated to marry her, v. 16, 17. This law puts an honor upon marriage and shows how improper it is that children should marry without their parents consent."

Parental authority in their children's marriages is definitely the heart of this law. Sexual violation, per se, is simply not the subject matter of Exodus 22:16-17.

Gary North, in commenting upon this passage, has recognized this:

> "In the New Covenant era, seduction remains an attack on the covenantal authority of the girl's family."—"Tools of Dominion", pg 643 North, however, while grasping all of the essential points of this present thesis, cannot bring himself to make a clean break with the traditional dogma:
>
> "A lawful marriage normally requires three things in the following order: a mutual vow of the proposed marriage partners, a public transfer of covenantal authority from the girl's father to the bridegroom, and sexual consummation…
>
> "The girl must immediately inform her father of the act-vow. If she refuses, she has identified herself before God as a promiscuous woman, a prostitute. She has accepted the legitimacy of sexual union outside of marriage, the essence of prostitution."—"Tools of Dominion", pg 644-645

North is quite correct concerning the girl's obligation to inform her father. The rest of his conclusions here are non-sequiturs. North makes the same mistake Hurley does in inferring that the seduction and the girl's consent to it constitute a sexual violation. As previously noted, the wholly marital language employed by the text refutes North's contention here, as does Ruth 3. North himself seems to anticipate this objection and implicitly defers to the logic thereof, for on the very next page he concedes the essential point: "The daughter's original consent to the act of seduction does not itself constitute whoredom." But then, in the very next sentence, North backtracks, as if in horror, from where his theonomic argument has brought him: "Her failure to tell her father immediately of the seduction is what constitutes her whoredom, for whoredom (as distinguished from adultery) is defined biblically as sexual bonding apart from a marriage vow."

Huh? North has already plainly and explicitly declared that sexual intercourse is itself a marital vow. This is why he cannot now plainly say that the sexual act itself constitutes whoredom. But he cannot emotionally detach himself from this culturally ingrained notion, so he simply transfers the idea of whoredom to a different cause! This may be method, but there is certainly madness to it! North's reticence to abandon the traditional antinomian dogma on this issue has caused him to utter this blatant contradiction. To be true to his theonomic premise, North must abandon the man-created myth that sexual relations alone do not constitute a valid, binding marriage under biblical law. Despite claiming to alienate virtually everybody in the Evangelical world ("Tools of Dominion", pg. 86), North seems to want to not put too much distance between himself and antinomian Evangelicalism—at least on this point.

If the girl's consent to seduction does not constitute whoredom, as North (correctly) asserts, then does it not follow by good and necessary consequence that her "failure to tell her father" is a violation of some other law? And since this is the case, we are left with the inevitable conclusion that, not being whoredom, her seduction must constitute a marriage. There is no in-between possible. This is the inevitable conclusion from which North retreats despite himself.

Exodus 22:16-17, in commanding a seducer to "endow" the woman he has seduced, thereby informs him that she is now his (free) wife, and he her husband. The father's right to disallow a permanent union is of no consequence to this point; it is the father's right to dissolve the marriage, that is to divorce her from her seducer. In other words there is a hierarchy of concerns here in the economy of God, and patriarchal authority trumps even the one flesh bond of marriage when that authority is violated.

See Tools of Dominion:
http://www.garynorth.com/freebooks/docs/372e_47e.htm

APPENDIX: A PERENNIAL ISSUE

1 When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, 2 when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4 then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.—Deuteronomy 24:1-4, NKJV

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." 7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" 8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." 10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been

> given: 12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it." –Matthew 19, NKJV

Hello members:

Two brothers from the group and I have just gotten back Sunday from the retreat in North Carolina sponsored by our friends at Biblical Families. We had a great time meeting people I've known online for about 10 years but never met in person before. It was very stimulating.

While there, one of the wives of a young brother in Christ asked me some very perceptive questions and – wouldn't you know it!—she brought up the question of divorce, remarriage and adultery addressed by Jesus in the above-cited passage from Matthew. How to reconcile this passage, in which Jesus says that anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery, with Deuteronomy 24, which apparently authorizes (at least implicitly) divorce and remarriage for uncleanness, is a task that has occupied many commentators and expositors. It is an issue that inevitably comes up in any serious discussion of the topic. It has been a perennial issue down through the centuries of the Church.

How can these two passages be reconciled? Unbelievers and "higher criticism" minded expositors often take the position that this is a blatant contradiction in Scripture. More orthodox commentators, sensitive to the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, tend to fall into one of three camps: the first are those who commonly explain this by way of a Dispensationalist hermeneutic, claiming that the New Testament alters or "tightens" God's rules for divorce and remarriage, so that the OT command is superseded by a new and higher commandment in the NT; the second group attempts to explain this by asserting what I believe to be a false dichotomy between "divorcing" and "putting away." To wit: that Jesus is only addressing a situation where a man has put away his wife without giving her a certificate of divorce. I have admonished believers for many years now on a variety of issues to beware of trying to solve logical dilemmas in Scripture by a resort to linguistic hair-

splitting. Such attempts are seldom fruitful. The third group attempts to explain this by the claim that God simply tolerates with disapproval the use of divorce in His Law. Greg Bahnsen has totally and conclusively demonstrated the falsity of this in his book, Theonomy in Christian Ethics.

Since I am decidedly not Dispensationalist in my theology, and since I believe no essential distinction between the terms "divorce" and "putting away" can be ultimately proven, and since I believe that God nowhere in His Law tolerates sin, is there any rationally defensible way to reconcile these two passages?

The answer to this dilemma can be shown without resorting to claiming there is an alteration of ethical requirements between the OT and NT, without verbal hair-splitting, and without, most of all, claiming that God is tolerant of sin in His prescriptive commands.

First of all, why did God authorize divorce in his Law to begin with? Jesus answers this question: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives." If Jesus is not referring here to a concession to sin on God's part, then what can he possibly mean? Quite simply that because of sin (hardness of heart) that is, adultery and fornication, God authorized divorce as a punitive measure to deal with this particular form of hardness of heart. In other words, since hard-hearted men commit adultery with other men's wives, and since hard hearted women commit adultery against their husbands, it is necessary to authorize divorce to deal with this sin. The proper understanding of this passage is no more difficult than that.

What, then, of the other clause, "whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality (Gk, "porneia") and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery"? This is a rather more complicated issue. As I have already intimated, the standard explanations are inadequate and involve us in even worse dilemmas when those explanations are adopted.

Let us examine a closely related passage, Matthew 5:31-32: "It has been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the

cause of fornication, CAUSES HER TO COMMIT ADULTERY: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery."

Note well what Jesus asserts: such a man CAUSES HIS WIFE TO COMMIT ADULTERY. Amazingly, with all of the voluminous commentary about divorce and remarriage in existence, hardly any attention at all has been given to this clause. Note, first of all what Jesus simply presupposes: that the woman in question will remarry—else there would be no adultery to speak of. Secondly, Jesus clearly places the GUILT of the adultery upon the man who divorces his wife. That is to say, though the woman and her new husband commit the act, the guilt of the adultery (i.e., the violation of the one-flesh bond) is imputed to the divorcing husband.

It is my assertion that the wife who remarries in such a situation and the man who marries her are not imputed with the guilt of the adultery. The Law of God always distinguishes between the perpetrators of sin and the victims of sin. A wife who is unjustly put away by an unrepentant husband is a victim, and would be permanently victimized and consigned to a life of singleness if she were required to remain unmarried. Jesus clearly imputes to the divorcing husband, as the causative agent of the adultery, the guilt thereof. Most commentators simply assume, a priori, that the wife who remarries and the man who marries her are also imputed with the guilt of adultery. This assumption has no overt, explicit affirmation or confirmation in Scripture.

Matthew 19:10-11 should also be looked at closely in this connection: "His disciples said to him, `If such is the case of the man and his wife'—(that is, if the man is taking a wife divorced from a previous husband)—`it is better not to marry.' But he said to them, `All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given.'"

It is clear here that Jesus is QUALIFYING what he had just said to them about adultery. Jesus is essentially asserting that no one except those who have a gift of celibacy can receive this saying. Jesus does not expect a typical man to refrain from marrying in this instance. This would seem to rather clearly give the permission for the woman and a new man to marry. Therefore, no guilt is imputed to them if they do.

Is this not amazingly clear once you see it? There is simply no need to go into long, tortuous, hair-splitting linguistic defenses of this thesis, or encyclopedic rationalizations to harmonize the Old and New Testament scriptures; they are already in harmony. It is our fallen, fleshly misconceptions and unexamined presuppositions which imprison us in confusion and darkness. Clarity of thought is like sunlight extinguishing darkness. And I submit to you that this explanation of these passages is precisely the light of God's truth.

APPENDIX B:

A CRITIC ADDRESSES CHRISTIAN PLURAL MARRIAGE

On January 22, 2005, an article was posted on the web ostensibly giving valid "scriptural refutation" against the biblical doctrine of polygyny. This article appears to have been specifically directed against Evangelical Christian patriarchy which includes polygyny as a valid practice under God's moral Law. In short, this article seems to be directed more or less right up our alley. I have included this article in full and unedited (so as to avoid any accusation of misrepresenting the views of the author or taking him out of context), and pose the question to you: Are YOU able to give a sound, solid, biblical response to the contentions of such critics? If not, you need to be. I thought I would commence formal discussion in this group by soliciting your comments about this article (see below). I should like to point out that every point raised by this critic has already been fully addressed with complete biblical exposition in my book, "Man & Woman in Biblical Law." If you have not already done so, I urge you to obtain a copy of the book or even multiple copies to pass around to others who may be interested in searching the Scriptures to see whether these things be so. BTW, the author does not give attribution to himself on the webpage, but following the links shows that the author is a Timothy W. Dunkin, who runs www.studytoanswer.net. Anyhow, below is the article. I offer it up for discussion and comment.

God bless you.

Tom Shipley

****

Polygyny - Is It Scriptural?

Addressing Some Faulty Arguments That Try to Justify Multiple Marriages

The impetus for this page stems from an email I received from a Christian sister who recently was confronted on a Yahoo group with some sort of pseudo-Messianic cult group that promotes and practices polygyny, and tries to justify their activity by twisting the Scriptures. She forwarded the email from this group to me. As such, I felt moved to provide a scriptural refutation of their arguments, by drawing from the whole testimony of the Scriptures on the matter of marriage, in its natural context, using exegetical and hermeneutic principles which do not do violence to the contextual meaning of the Biblical message about this issue. I trust that it shall become readily apparent, as I address the arguments in turn, that this group supporting polygyny takes the Biblical statements they use to support their position far out of context, and twist the Scriptures to make them say what they were not meant to say by God. Likewise, many of the arguments made are logically and theologically flawed when taken in light of the full message of the Bible.

Though the issue of polygyny, which can be either polygamy (multiple wives) or polyandry (multiple husbands), is not one which is commonly encountered in most places in America, it still is an issue that needs addressed. Certain fundamentalist LDS groups centered primarily in the western United States still practice polygamy, and recent years have seen the proliferation of small but growing pseudo-Christian groups advocating for plural marriage as a "Christian liberty". Missionaries abroad are certainly likely to encounter one or both types of polygyny if they are serving anywhere in Africa, South Asia, the Pacific Islands, or any places where Muslims make up at least a small minority of the population. I hope and pray that this response will be of use not only in refuting the particular arguments put forth in the email I received, but might also be useful in helping both missionaries and those of us on "the home front" know how to Scripturally deal with the issue of polygyny as the need arises.

One fundamental rule of Biblical hermeneutics (the science of studying the Bible systematically) is known as the "rule of first mention". It has been observed that the first place in the Bible where a doctrine, idea, institution,

etc. is mentioned, a foundational truth is set forth that underlies all understanding gleaned from further revelation. In the case at hand, we see that the first place where the institution of marriage is set forth in God's Word is in Genesis 2:21-24,

> 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. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Marriage is God's plan for the relationships of companionship, fellowship, and sexuality among His most valued created beings, Man. And we see that God, in setting forth this plan, lays out several key understandings about marriage in this passage:

- It is monogamous. God did not create multiple wives for Adam. He created one. It seems like a rather simple point, true, but again remember that God is setting forth a pattern in this passage which defines His intentions for this institution. God's plan, through His act of creation while the world and all creation was yet perfect and without sin, was for a man to be married to one woman, and one woman only.
- This monogamy is affirmed in the starkest possible manner by the proclamation that a man shall cleave unto his wife, and that they would be one flesh. While the marriage relationship does entail the psychological cleaving of a man and wife together, the conjugal act is also well in view here. The sexual intimacy of a husband and wife is key to their cleaving to one another and becoming one flesh. Indeed, Paul states that if a man goes in to a harlot, he is joined with her in one flesh (I Corinthians 6:16). But yet, just because he has cleaved to her, this does not make their joining right. If multiple wives are introduced into the marriage arrangement, then the man may well

cleave to his wives, but his attentions, affections, and physical intimacy are divided among several women, and the fundamental unity for the man which is intended by the covenant of marriage (see above) is destroyed as his flesh is cleaved to several women and his loyalties divided.

- Further, this pattern for marriage can be understood to have general application, i.e. it is not merely set forth for Adam, but for all his descendants as well. This is derived from the fact that, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Adam had no earthly father or mother. The statement applies universally to his descendents, and this further affirms that these verses lay out God's fundamental plan for marriage.

In contrast to this first mention of the institution of marriage in Genesis 2, let us now look briefly at another first mention, that of polygyny. We find this in Genesis 4,

> "And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.....And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." (Genesis 4:19, 23-24)

Who was this Lamech? He was, in short, a rebel against God. This is shown in his action and statement in vv. 23-24. Lamech murdered a man for injuring him, following after the murderous sin of his ancestor Cain. He then adds insult to injury by proclaiming his own superiority to and independence of God's seal upon Cain (and hence, God's authority). If Cain was to be avenged sevenfold by God if someone were to kill him, Lamech is saying that he would avenge HIMSELF seventy-seven fold for even being injured by another. The act and statement indicate deep rebellion against God. The fact that the Bible specifically points out Lamech as the first to enter into polygyny, then, seems to be an introduction to the rebellious and wicked

character of this man - hardly someone that polygynysts should want to point to as a role model.

These foundational understandings on marriage, both monogamous and polygynous, must be kept in mind as we approach the rest of what Scripture has to say about these issues. The fundamental element that monogamy is God's plan for marriage and polygyny is rebellion against that plan is the lens that brings the rest of what God's Word says about marriage into focus.

The Lord Jesus Christ reaffirmed the monogamous ideal for marriage when He quoted and argued from the Genesis 2 passage (Matthew 19:4-7, Mark 10:5-9). He quite clearly envisions marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman. This is further illustrated when, upon further questioning, He states that to divorce a spouse and marry another is adultery. The ideal is monogamy in relationship and lifetime exclusiveness in sexual knowledge. To marry another while your divorced spouse is still alive is considered by God to be adultery, the same as if you were to go in unto another while still married. The only seeming exception to this is in cases of pre-marital fornication (Matthew 19:9), and the same principle applies to these - the spouse who has been unfaithful during the betrothal period has already violated the sexual exclusiveness that is supposed to exist between a married man and woman, and hence, the Law (because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts, remember) allowed for the breaking of the marriage covenant in these cases. From all this it is clear that the inviolability of the marriage institution is understood from a physical, sexual ground as well as from that of a legal covenant, which is why any sexual congress outside of marriage is an assault upon God's plan for marriage and human sexuality, whether it be pre-marital fornication, extra-marital adultery, or the numerous varieties of unmentionable perversions that exist in the world. Indeed, the one instance in the Old Testament where divorce is commanded by God (Ezra 10:9-44) because many Israelites had married strange (i.e. foreign, pagan) wives, there is nothing mentioned that these men would, or could, remarry. The fact that God considers the marriage covenant permanent, even after divorce, is illustrated in Malachi 2:13-16 where men who divorced their first wives and married others were said to have dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth. This emphasis, then, on the inviolability of the marriage covenant and the sexual exclusiveness demanded in God's plan (extending

even before marriage or after divorce while the partner is still living) demands monogamy on the part of a married person if they are to be within God's will in their life. To marry multiple partners is to, essentially, commit adultery in the sight of God, as it is a violation of His plan and the covenant relationship between man and his one wife that God established on the sixth day of creation.

The Scripture also uses the image of monogamous marriage to illustrate the relationship of Christ with His churches. In Ephesians 4, the argument and commandment had already been set forth that there should be doctrinal and spiritual unity within each local church assembly. In Ephesians 5:22-33 then, Paul teaches on the duties of the husband and the wife to each other, and likens their relationship to that of Christ with His church. Christ is the Lord of each local church body, likened to the husband, as the local assembly is to the wife. In each local assembly, due to the unity that should prevail in spirit and doctrine, Christ has only ONE wife, not many as if there were many different spirits and doctrines residing in the body of the same local church. Lest one be tempted, then, to suggest that the presence of multiple local churches suggests that Christ has multiple "wives", it is best to keep in mind that when all is said and done, the various local assemblies, the saints from all the ages, will be gathered together into one united body in heaven (Hebrews 12:23) which is the true and final embodiment of Christ's "wife", the collection of the church of saints which He has espoused to Himself through His shed blood. Each local assembly, for the time being, is contextually and logically to be considered as a foreshadowing of that final assembly of which its members will one day be part, and thus is one wife with Christ as her head.

Monogamy is also set forth in the Scripture as the pattern which Christians are to follow, which they are to see in the lives of godly pastors. Each pastor that God sets over a local assembly is to be "the husband of one wife" (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6). These same pastors are set forth to be emulated by the members of their assemblies, if they are living right with God (Hebrews 13:7, I Peter 5:3).

The arguments for polygyny included attempts to appeal to the authority of various saints in the Old Testament who were involved in polygamous marriages, such as David, Abraham, and others. The email included a rather

long list of polygamists in the Old Testament, and notes that some of them were considered righteous by God. This argument falls flat. The simple fact of polygamy in the Old Testament cannot be rightfully taken as an approbation of the practice by God, in light of the clear principle of monogamy as ideal set forth in Genesis. The example of even righteous men who were involved in polygamy cannot be taken as evidence, in contravention to the words of Scripture, that polygamy is acceptable to God.

How does one explain the fact that men who were polygamists were yet considered righteous by God? By the fact that their righteousness came, just as it does for believers in our time, by God's grace through faith. "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). Just as saints today are not saved and justified by either their own ability to satisfy their debt of sin or their own ability to retain their salvation through their own good deeds, so it was with saints in the Old Testament times. Saints in any age are justified because God extends grace to them through faith and repentance. But, justification does not equal perfection. Every saint sins, even those considered just by God. David was a man after God's own heart, yet he murdered a man through treachery and lied about it, this after he had committed adultery with his wife. Does the fact that God still deemed David to be righteous mean that adultery, murder, treachery, and dishonesty are acceptable in God's sight? Of course not. It merely means that God, through His abundant grace, still forgives and justifies and preserves His saints, those who have trusted on Him in faith, even when they fail Him. As such, merely pointing to the fact that David or Abraham or Solomon was righteous while yet being a polygamist, does not theologically mean that God approves of polygamy.

Indeed, if we look at the lives of the Old Testament saints, we see two things. One, most of them actually were not polygamists, the norm for the faithful man in the Old Testament was monogamy. Two, those who engaged in polygamy had far from the idyllic, blessed home life that the author of the arguments for polygyny seems to intimate will come from polygyny.

Yes, some Old Testament patriarchs and saints had multiple wives, such as David, Solomon, Abraham (a concubine), etc. However, the norm was monogamy. Job was monogamous, as were Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Isaiah,

Jeremiah, Noah, Shem, Samuel, and many others, as well as was, of course, Adam.

Those who engaged in polygamy often saw their family lives ruined by strife and discord. Abraham's concubinage of Hagar, for example, was an act done because of a lack of faith (hardly a reason to hold him up as an example in this particular case). His act with Hagar brought about a child who was a competitor with the seedline God intended to bring the Messiah from, was a source of continual friction in his home life with Sarah, and produced a lineage which is to this day a thorn in the side of God's people. Likewise, Jacob's polygamy was the result of trickery, and produced familial discord between his two wives Leah and Rachel, and this discord may even have been the cause of the crime committed against Joseph (son of the favoured wife) by his brothers (sons of the disfavoured wife and the servant-concubines). It is also noteworthy that Jacob entered into his polygamous marriages during the time in his life when he was not walking with God like he should have been. David's home life certainly was harmed by his polygamy, as the succession squabbles, the rebellion of Absalom, and the rape of Tamar all illustrate. Solomon's polygamy, likewise, provides no positive example for the Christian, as we note that his hundreds of foreign wives and concubines drew him after their false gods, a situation which would likely not have occurred had he remained true and faithful to his original bride. Indeed, though the article tries to hold up David and Solomon as positive examples, even arguing that it must be right if David did it, we see that both David and Solomon were breaking God's explicit commandment of monogamy to Israel's kings,

"Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." (Deuteronomy 17:17) Indeed, we see that this is exactly what happened to both David and Solomon - they multiplied their wives, and this to a greater or lesser extent turned their hearts away from the LORD. Why would polygamy turn their hearts from God? Because by engaging in polygamy, they were sinning the sin of adultery, and shutting God's ears to them,

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2) Yes, they were still righteous because they had trusted in the Lord God and been justified, but

their sin came between them and God, cutting them off increasingly from His intimate fellowship, making them susceptible to being drawn after further ungodliness.

Now I wish to provide some direct cut-and-pasted copies of several specific arguments made in this article, listed as "Biblical Support for Polygyny". These arguments will be in red, with my responses following.

Did GOD Compare HIMSELF to a Polygynist?

"In Jeremiah 3:6-14, 31:31-34 and again in Ezekiel 23 the LORD compares HIMSELF to a man with two wives who are harlots – Judah and Israel. The Jews had turned away from GOD. GOD would not compare HIMSELF to a polygynist if polygyny were wrong."

It is a gross miscomprehension of the meaning and points of these passages to try and approach them, when they speak of spiritual adultery and God's covenant with Israel, as if they gave legitimacy to any polygyny. To understand them merely for the purpose of legitimizing multiple wives is to take them wholly out of context and miss the whole point. The point to the passage is not to present a pattern for marriage acceptable to God, but to decry the spiritual whoredoms of God's people.

Technically speaking, the way God frames the discourse in Jeremiah 3:6-14, for example, the allegory would not even be depicting God as a polygamist, even if one wished to interpret the passage this way. Indeed, God presents a bill of divorcement to Israel for her adultery first, as the Law allowed, and then the passage speaks of Judah as the other unfaithful sister. Indeed, if one wishes to approach this passage the way the author of the article does and understand it as God depicting Himself as a polygamist, then they will attribute to God a CLEAR VIOLATION of His own Law, this being against the marriage of a man to two sisters at the same time (Leviticus 18:18)

Did JESUS Compare HIMSELF to a Polygynist?

"In Matthew Chapter 25 JESUS tells a parable were he compares HIMSELF to a man betrothed to 10 women where only 5 are ready. This is a famous parable recited often in churches. It seems strange people readily accept the

message to be ready for JESUS's return but ignore the fact that HE compared HIMSELF to a polygynist. All believers are (collectively) the bride of CHRIST 1 Corinthians 6:15. Since the bride of CHRIST is composed of many members, we see yet another reference to polygyny. JESUS would not compare HIMSELF to a polygynist if it were wrong."

Again, to understand this passage the way the author of the article does is to do injustice to the message that the Lord Jesus was trying to illustrate. Further, it displays a miscomprehension of the mechanics of the cultural norm behind the parable. The ten virgins were not brides, but bridesmaids. Jewish marriage custom was such that the bridegroom would come to the home of his betrothed, take her to himself, and they would then go to the place of the marriage. The bride did not "go forth" to meet her groom, as the ten virgins do. The fact that the bridegroom goes to the place where the virgins are at and enters in to the marriage indicates that the virgins are not brides. They are where the marriage is at, not being picked up by the bridegroom to be taken somewhere else. This, of course, in no wise lessens the impact and meaning of the parable, which is to be sure that we are ready for the marriage feast with the Lord.

Is Polygyny Commanded of Man?

"Every man is commanded to marry his brother's wife and give her children if his brother dies and she is childless. This obligation to marry is not reduced by the fact a man may already have one or more wives. Deuteronomy 25:5,6 'If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. 6And 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'."

This argument is non sequitur. There is nothing in the Levirate marriage law which indicates that this commandment is binding on a man who is already married, and thus to argue that this passage "commands" men to polygamy is not legitimate. Indeed, the caveat "if brethren dwell together" would seem to suggest younger unmarried brothers living with an older brother who has

already married and begun to build a life for himself. This is supported by the evidence in Matthew 22:24-28 where the Sadducees present their argument against the resurrection to the Lord Jesus about the seven brethren who all married the same woman, successively, after the previous had died. That question clear presupposes that the next younger brother, likely unmarried, is marrying the woman. If this were not so, the brethren would not be "dwelling together".

Did GOD Really Give a Man Many Wives?

"In 2 Samuel 12:8 GOD tells David that HE gave David his wives and that GOD would have given David more wives if David wanted them in HIS rebuke of David concerning Bathsheeba. 2 Samuel 12:8 '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'."

This example is taken out of context, and does not even indicate what the author thinks it does. The context is when David sinned with Bathsheba and is confronted by Nathan the prophet. He is reminding David of all that God had given him, and the underlying remonstrance is then to question why David had gone beyond and taken the wife of another man. One of the things, however, that God had NOT given to David was Saul's wives to be his own. The "giving" to David in context is control and kingship over, not personal ownership or possession. Saul's wives were "given" to David in the sense that their house and family lost the kingship and was made subject to David, as the rest of the verse indicates. David did not marry Saul's wives, anymore than he took personal possession of Saul's possessions and children, he merely became king over them, as he did over Israel and Judah. There is nothing indicating God giving a "gift" of polygamy in this text.

Some supporters of polygamy will try to point to the fact that Saul had a wife named Ahinoam, and that David had a wife named the same, as evidence that God was indeed giving Saul's wives to David. This is highly unlikely as the Scripture indicates that David was married to *his* Ahinoam while Saul was yet still alive and married to his (e.g. I Samuel 25:43, I Samuel 27:3).

Two Polygynist Found Blameless by GOD?

"In 1 Kings 15:5 we see David was very close to GOD and without fault except in the matter of Uriah and his wife. Since David already had many wives when this was written we can see the LORD found nothing wrong with polygyny. Since GOD does not find fault with polygyny who are we to condemn the practice? 1 Kings 15:5 'Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite'.

"In Judges 6:12-27 we see that the LORD and HIS Angel talked with Gideon. The LORD told Gideon HE was with him and the Angel of the LORD called Gideon a `mighty man of valour'. Gideon had many wives yet the LORD was with him."

The matter of David's righteousness despite his polygamy has been detailed above. However, the passage is not saying David was blameless, necessarily, but rather that he had not "turned aside" in any matter other than the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba. The verb translated "turned aside" is the Hebrew "suwr" (Strong's H5493), which has the idea of turning off, departing, rebelling, or declining. The particular reference to David's sin with Bathsheba is mentioned as his "turning aside" because it was an open and flagrant sin which brought great opprobrium to the name of God and gave God's enemies opportunity to slander and deride the name of the Lord. In other words, it was the most particularly grievous sin against God that was committed. That this passage is not meant to say that it was the ONLY sin David ever committed (as the author seems to argue to try to justify polygamy) can be seen in that David sinned by numbering Israel, as well as sinning by multiplying wives to himself (discussed above). Concerning Gideon, again, to call Gideon a "mighty man of valour" is not the same as saying he was blameless. Indeed, the passages about Gideon indicate that later on in his life, he erred by making the ephod which all Israel whored after (Judges 8:27).

Again, these men may have been blameless in the sense that they were both saved by grace and declared righteous by God, but that does not mean that the

practical example of their lives was perfect, and as such, these passages cannot be rightly used to try to argue for God's approval of polygyny.

GOD Chose a Polygynist as Father of HIS People

"Abraham was counted as a friend of GOD James 2:23. Most Jews consider Abraham to be the greatest man in scripture. Jews hold Abraham in such high esteem they refer to him as "father Abraham" (James 2:21, John 8:56). Abraham was very close to GOD. Not only did they have many conversations, but GOD regarded Abraham with great favor. Genesis 12:2,3 "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

"Abraham had three wives and at least 2 concubines Genesis 11:29, 16:3, 25:1, 25:6. JESUS regarded Abraham favorably in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28. JESUS referred to HIMSELF as a "son of Abraham" in Luke 19:9. JESUS refers to GOD specifically as the 'GOD of Abraham' in Luke 20:37, Matthew 22:32 and Mark 12:26. How can any man condemn polygyny when GOD holds a polygynist in such high regard? Gen 17: 2-7, Gen 15:5, Gen 13: 15,16"

Again, this misses the point that a righteous man is not a perfect man. Abraham's example does not legitimize polygyny, especially as the clear testimony of so much of God's Word is against the practice, and the foundation text relating to the marriage institution speaks against it.

Also, Abraham technically only had one wife at a time, but two concubines (Hagar and Keturah). Keturah is called a wife in Genesis 25:1, and a concubine in I Chronicles 1:32, and it is likely that he married her formally after Sarah died. However, the "sons of the concubines" mentioned in Genesis 25:6 would be the sons from Hagar and Keturah. This passage doesn't suggest further concubinage beyond those two.

One last attempt at a Biblical argument is made near the beginning of the article,

"Today polygyny is still practiced in at least 167 countries but remains uncommon in the west. Polygyny has only been practiced by a minority of people in any society throughout our 6000 year history. Absent a war, the LORD has provided only a small percentage more women than men of marrying age. For this reason polygyny is likely to remain less than 5% of all marriages until the end times when Isaiah's prophecy comes true: '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 passage does not necessarily indicate polygamy as much as it does intense competition for the small number of men remaining after the wars that decimate Israel's male population. And certainly, a passage describing the effects of God's judgment upon His people hardly seems like a desirable passage from which to derive a doctrine supporting polygyny.

Lastly, let us consider some of the ethical and practical considerations surrounding polygyny. The author of the article writes,

"Polygyny is all about family. The first command from GOD recorded in the Bible is to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:22, 28; 9:1,7, Jeremiah 29:6). While this command applies to all married families, polygyny, by it's very nature, makes it possible to have and raise more children than monogamy.

"When a woman is abandon through divorce or widowed and is unable to find a new Christian husband it is a Christian man's duty to marry her if he is able provide for her and her children (1 Timothy 5:8-10, 14-16, Ezekiel 44:22, Deuteronomy 25:5-8).

"This obligation to marry is not reduced by the fact a man may already have one or more wives.

"Finally, A Christian wife is one of the greatest blessings GOD bestows on men. Who among us would choose to reduce or limit the number of blessings we receive from GOD? Proverbs 18:22 "Whomever finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD". Most of the great men in the Bible had multiple wives. They were not great because they had multiple wives rather they had multiple wives because they were close to GOD and the

LORD blessed them. In a large plural family love abounds. Polygyny is a tremendous blessing for the entire family provided it is GOD's will."

First, we see that some of this is stretching the Scripture quite thinly. To use the institution of Levirate marriage to justify polygyny (especially in light of the arguments made above) is not feasible. Neither is the commandment for the church to care for older widows and for younger widows to remarry in I Timothy 5. Indeed, there is nothing that indicates polygamy in this set of verses, they ONLY say that the younger widows should remarry, but there is NO indication that it should be to a man who already has a wife. In light of all that has been said above, the full context of scripture would forbid this, not demand it. And Ezekiel 44:22 merely stipulates that priests should marry either a virgin of the daughters of Israel, or the widow of a priest - nothing in this verse even suggests polygamy by any reasonable and normal reading of the verse.

Further, the author makes the argument that polygyny actually helps to fulfill the commandment to be fruitful and multiply, since it allows a man to have more children. It is true that a polygamous man can indeed have more children than a monogamous one, though in primitive societies this is usually done with a mind towards increasing the power and prosperity of the communal father, who benefits from having extra sons to work and fight for him1. This argument, however, neglects the fact that all the other men who cannot find a wife because of the polygamy of the others end up not producing any children, thus destroying their ability to carry out the command. Likewise, the command to be fruitful and multiply is to be understood as a general command, given to humanity, not just individual members of the race. A polygamous man married to, say, ten wives would not be likely to produce a much different number of children than would ten men each married to one wife. As such, polygamy would not yield any real "net gain". In fact, polygamy can be harmful to societies that practice it widely. The high rates of venereal diseases, and the subsequent sterility associated with many of those, in many tribal African societies is thought to be connected with the promiscuity endemic in polygamous groups2. Also, polygamy would actually be HARMFUL to the long-term health of the human race if practiced widely as it would limit the genetic variability of the succeeding generations. Inbreeding results in enhanced, accelerated

deterioration, and polygamy would result in much the same deterioration, though at a slower rate.

Finally, the author argues that polygyny can be a "tremendous blessing" in which "love abounds" in a large, plural family. However, the Scriptural evidence delineated above does not support this contention. David's plural family caused him much heartache and difficulty. Jacob's plural family caused him much anguish, and the bigamous relationships of Esau were a grief of heart to Isaac and Rebekah. The experience of modern day missionaries in foreign lands where polygamy is practices also testifies to the detrimental nature of the practice. Polygamous families in these lands tend to be characterized by strife and discord between wives competing for place and attention and for the advancement of their particular children. Often, the senior or first wife will encourage her husband to find "secondary" wives as this increases her power, prestige, and authority in the household, to the detriment of these other wives, who often are resentful and insubordinate3. It is for reasons such as these that polygamy has been declining, even among heathen societies, such as the Islamic society, where it has been traditionally practiced and supported by explicit theological approval.

Polygamy contributes to social ills, as well. Women are often reduced from being the valued and beloved helpmeets which God intended, to being mere commodities or trophies. Hitchens quotes from Ellwood this observation made from primitive societies that practice multiple marriage,

"While often adjusted to the requirements of barbarous societies, it seems in no way adjusted to a high civilization. Polygyny, indeed, must necessarily rest upon the subjugation and degradation of women. Necessarily, the practice of polygyny must disregard the feelings of women...."4 Relatedly, the fulfillment of sensual desires for the male becomes a primary concern in a polygamous society where women are considered more "tradable". This observations seems to be more or less explicitly affirmed in the hadithic traditions of Islam, perhaps the most well-known civilization to advocate polygamy:

"Allah permits you to shut them in separate rooms and to beat them, but not severely. If they abstain, they have the right to food and clothing. Treat women well for they are like domestic animals and they possess nothing

themselves. Allah has made the enjoyment of their bodies lawful in his Qur'an."5 Indeed, the reason polygamy is practiced in many primitive societies is that a man seeks to replace a wife who has grown old and less attractive. Polygamy has proven to be a powerful cause of war, since men who are deprived of the availability of wives at home will often seek them abroad, as history shows from the quasi-mythical ravishing of the Sabine women by the wifeless Romans 800 years before Christ to the taking and keeping of Korean and Chinese "comfort women" by wifeless Japanese soldiers during the imperial conquests of the 1930s and 1940s. Familial bonds in plural marriages are actually weaker than in monogamous ones, since the husband and father's affections are divided among the several wives and children, thus leading to the oft-time strife mentioned above.

In summation, the arguments made for polygyny in the article under discussion are very weak, relying both upon the twisting and decontextualising of the Scripture, as well as argumentation which begs many questions. The clear testimony of the Scriptures, even the example of the lives of polygamist men in the Bible, shows that the practice is one which is outside the will of God. The clear testimony of God's foundation of marriage and the superstructure built upon this foundation in the rest of the Bible indicate that God's plan for marriage is monogamous. One of the topic headers in the article asks, "When is Polygyny Forbidden?". The answer would be, "In every case".

End Notes

(1) - see R.J. Hitchens, Multiple Marriage: A Study of Polygamy in Light of the Bible, pp. 106-107 for several aspects of this general idea. (2) - R.H. Reyher, Fon and His Hundred Wives, p. 224 (3) - R. Clignet, Many Wives, Many Powers, p. 35 (4) - from C.A. Ellwood, Sociology and Modern Social Problems; cited by R.A. Hitchens, Multiple Marriage: A Study of Polygamy in Light of the Bible, p. 123 (5) - al-Tabari, Vol. IX, no. 113

ANSWERING THE CRITICS

Dear NCP members:

Below is the first part of my response to our Mr. Dunkin concerning his contentions about biblical polygyny. I posted his article yesterday along with solicitation of comment from you. The format I will be using will be to first quote Mr. Dunkin (unedited in red) and then to follow up with my answers. I will be breaking this down into parts in several posts for easier digestion. Your comments and observations are desired.

POLYGYNY - IS IT SCRIPTURAL? ADDRESSING SOME FAULTY ARGUMENTS THAT TRY TO JUSTIFY MULTIPLE MARRIAGES

> The impetus for this page stems from an email I received from a Christian sister who recently was confronted on a Yahoo group with some sort of pseudo-Messianic cult group that promotes and practices polygyny, and tries to justify their activity by twisting the Scriptures. She forwarded the email from this group to me. As such, I felt moved to provide a scriptural refutation of their arguments, by drawing from the whole testimony of the Scriptures on the matter of marriage, in its natural context, using exegetical and hermeneutic principles which do not do violence to the contextual meaning of the Biblical message about this issue. I trust that it shall become readily apparent, as I address the arguments in turn, that this group supporting polygyny takes the Biblical statements they use to support their position far out of context, and twist the Scriptures to make them say what they were not meant to say by God. Likewise, many of the arguments made are logically and theologically flawed when taken in light of the full message of the Bible.

Though the issue of polygyny, which can be either polygamy (multiple wives) or polyandry (multiple husbands), is not one which is commonly encountered in most places in America, it still is an issue that needs addressed. Certain fundamentalist LDS groups centered primarily in the western United States still practice polygamy, and recent years have seen the proliferation of small but growing pseudo-Christian groups advocating for plural marriage as a "Christian liberty". Missionaries abroad are certainly likely to encounter one or both types of polygyny if they are serving anywhere in Africa, South Asia, the Pacific Islands, or any places where Muslims make up at least a small minority of the population. I hope and pray that this response will be of use not only in refuting the particular arguments put forth in the email I received, but might also be useful in helping both missionaries and those of us on "the home front" know how to Scripturally deal with the issue of polygyny as the need arises.

One fundamental rule of Biblical hermeneutics (the science of studying the Bible systematically) is known as the "rule of first mention". It has been observed that the first place in the Bible where a doctrine, idea, institution, etc. is mentioned, a foundational truth is set forth that underlies all understanding gleaned from further revelation. In the case at hand, we see that the first place where the institution of marriage is set forth in God's Word is in Genesis 2:21-24,

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. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Marriage is God's plan for the relationships of companionship, fellowship, and sexuality among His most valued created beings, Man. And

> we see that God, in setting forth this plan, lays out several key understandings about marriage in this passage:
>
> - It is monogamous. God did not create multiple wives for Adam. He created one. It seems like a rather simple point, true, but again remember that God is setting forth a pattern in this passage which defines His intentions for this institution. God's plan, through His act of creation while the world and all creation was yet perfect and without sin, was for a man to be married to one woman, and one woman only.

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin slams the pro-polygyny thesis as being "logically and theologically flawed." Mr. Dunkin appears to have been looking in a mirror while making this statement; for it is HIS analysis of exactly what is being established in Genesis that is logically flawed. What is being established in Genesis is not a mandate of monogamy but a mandate of PATRIARCHY, as is apparent from Genesis 2:18, where we are plainly told that the woman, due to her sexual differentiation from the man, was made FOR the man. The apostle Paul takes up this theme in I Corinthians 11 and makes the inference explicit: "Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man."

Okay, so HOW exactly is Mr. Dunkin's inference of monogamy logically flawed? Well, a basic principle of logic (indeed, this is logic 101) is that universal principles must be established FIRST before drawing an inference from a particular example. One cannot validly reason from a particular to a universal. Yet Mr. Dunkin takes the particular of Adam's monogamy and, based upon the particular, draws the non-sequitur that God intends ALL men to be monogamous. Mr. Dunkin's inference is a classic logical fallacy that any first semester student in logic could easily refute. There is no EXPLICIT statement in Genesis directly pertaining to monogamy or polygamy. I have nothing against logical inferences, but I do have something against Mr. Dunkin's flawed "logic." It is an invalid conclusion on first principles.

Universal principles are, indeed, being established in Genesis, but the universal principle relevant to the question at hand is the establishment of male headship, patriarchy. A necessary consequence of patriarchy is the

validity of polygyny, and the invalidity of polyandry. This is the REASON why the Law makes provision for polygyny (Exo. 21:10; Deut. 21:15-17) but outlaws polyandry (adultery) in no uncertain terms, even requiring death as the maximum penalty. Mr. Dunkin's thesis requires and, therefore, implictly asserts inconsistencies and contradictions in the Word of God. Recognize polygyny as a valid consequence of creational patriarchy, and the seeming contradiction between Genesis and the specific provisions of God's Law disappears. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies with God.

Let me get basic here with an example. One can posit the following syllogism to see clearly the logical fallacy in Mr. Dunkin's thinking:

1. Major Premise: This dog is black.
2. Minor Premise: There are other dogs.
3. Conclusion: All dogs are black.

Mr. Dunkin assumes that because his dog is monogamous, that all other dogs are monogamous, too. This argument, which is indeed representative of the thinking of the Evangelical church as a whole, is flawed in the most basic way. It is a foundation of sand.

Thus the "law of first mention" to which Mr. Dunkin appeals establishes exactly the point he is trying to refute. I have gone into detail in Article 8 in my book, "Man & Woman in Biblical Law," detailing exactly how and why the patriarchy/polygyny connection is a valid logical conclusion established in the creation narrative in Genesis.

> - This monogamy is affirmed in the starkest possible manner by the proclamation that a man shall cleave unto his wife, and that they would be one flesh. While the marriage relationship does entail the psychological cleaving of a man and wife together, the conjugal act is also well in view here. The sexual intimacy of a husband and wife is key to their cleaving to one another and becoming one flesh. Indeed, Paul states that if a man goes in to a harlot, he is joined with her in one flesh (I Corinthians 6:16). But

> yet, just because he has cleaved to her, this does not make their joining right. If multiple wives are introduced into the marriage arrangement, then the man may well cleave to his wives, but his attentions, affections, and physical intimacy are divided among several women, and the fundamental unity for the man which is intended by the covenant of marriage (see above) is destroyed as his flesh is cleaved to several women and his loyalties divided.

ANSWER: Here, again, Mr. Dunkin, falls into a logical fallacy, the fallacy of "FALSE DICHOTOMY." In more colloquial terms, Mr. Dunkin speaks with a forked tongue. On the one hand, he acknowledges that the one flesh concept centers around sexual union, and acknowledges that this one flesh cleaving occurs even in cases of prostitution; but then he claims that the one flesh reality itself is "destroyed" by polygyny! Mr. Dunkin is prepared to credit to whoredom and adultery that which he denies to polygyny. Mr. Dunkin tries to have it both ways: polygyny IS a one-flesh cleaving but, on the other hand, polygyny is NOT a one-flesh cleaving. It is not possible for both propositions to be true at the same time. Mr. Dunkin's confusion is obvious.

> - Further, this pattern for marriage can be understood to have general application, i.e. it is not merely set forth for Adam, but for all his descendants as well. This is derived from the fact that, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Adam had no earthly father or mother. The statement applies universally to his descendents, and this further affirms that these verses lay out God's fundamental plan for marriage.

ANSWER: Indeed, the "pattern of marriage" set forth in Genesis for Adam "can be understood to have general application," and applies to "all his descendants." On this point Mr. Dunkin and I are agreed. But, of course, Mr. Dunkin and I are at odds concerning exactly what that "pattern for marriage" IS. I assert that it is patriarchy which entails the permissibility of polygyny (again, a point confirmed by its inclusion in the Law of God).

> In contrast to this first mention of the institution of marriage in Genesis 2, let us now look briefly at another first mention, that of polygyny. We find this in Genesis 4,
>
> "And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.....And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." (Genesis 4:19, 23-24)
> Who was this Lamech? He was, in short, a rebel against God. This is shown in his action and statement in vv. 23-24. Lamech murdered a man for injuring him, following after the murderous sin of his ancestor Cain. He then adds insult to injury by proclaiming his own superiority to and independence of God's seal upon Cain (and hence, God's authority). If Cain was to be avenged sevenfold by God if someone were to kill him, Lamech is saying that he would avenge HIMSELF seventy-seven fold for even being injured by another. The act and statement indicate deep rebellion against God. The fact that the Bible specifically points out Lamech as the first to enter into polygyny, then, seems to be an introduction to the rebellious and wicked charactre of this man - hardly someone that polygynysts should want to point to as a role model.

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin really SHOULD take an introductory course on logic (certainly not an advanced one!). The fact that an evil man had two wives does not, and CANNOT, by itself, establish that polygyny is unlawful. Could it be possible that the biblical text points out to us the fact of Lamech's polygyny to demonstrate the CONTRAST between the goodness of God versus the utter unthankfulness of Lamech to God? To wit, that the Lord BLESSED this man with multiple wives, but, unthankful in his heart for the goodness extended to him, Lamech violates the fundamental law against murder?

Moreover, Dunkin falls into the same error as do so many commentators. He assumes, absent any biblical declaration, that Lamech was "the first to enter into polygyny." It hardly needs pointing out (or should not need pointing out) that just because Lamech is the first polygamist mentioned, this does not mean that Lamech was historically the first man to become a polygamist. It is entirely possible that Seth or any other son of Adam also practiced polygyny. Again, another logical fallacy on Mr. Dunkin's part. Logic and clear thinking are certainly not Mr. Dunkin's strong suit.

And so concludes Part 2 of the saga of our venerable Mr. Dunkin and his misguided attack upon biblical truth. I should like at this point to solicit prayer for Mr Dunkin, for I have no doubt but that he is sincere in his misapprehensions. Like so many others in the church today, he has more faith in the teachings of men than he does in the testimony of Scripture. He has been deceived into believing that the "party line" he parrots (there is absolutely nothing original in Mr. Dunkin's feces..excuse me, theses) is actually the teaching of the Bible, rather than what it manifestly is, the teachings and doctrines of men.

Perhaps I am being a little harder on Mr. Dunkin than I should be. He is not really a worthy opponent, and I AM opening myself up to the charge of being a bully here. This exercise here does cause the old schoolyard admonition to ring in my ears, "Why don't you pick on somebody your own size?" As a biblical commentator, Mr. Dunkin is a lightweight. He does not come even close to the capabilities of the commentators I have taken on in my book, "Man & Woman in Biblical Law," such as Charles Hodge, John Murray and Rousas Rushdoony, et al. But on the other hand, Mr. Dunkin has taken it upon himself to go public with a website called "studytoanswer." In doing so, he holds himself out to be at least in some degree an authority on the subjects on which he comments. If you are going to play ball with the big boys, you better be equipped to handle a little "rough and tumble." And if you're not, shame on yourself. You should know better than to go out onto the playing field.

These foundational understandings on marriage, both monogamous and polygynous, must be kept in mind as we

> approach the rest of what Scripture has to say about these issues. The fundamental element that monogamy is God's plan for marriage and polygyny is rebellion against that plan is the lens that brings the rest of what God's Word says about marriage into focus.

ANSWER: Note well, this pathetic foundation of sand is the BASIS upon which Mr. Dunkin builds the REST of his case. His premises are in error. Therefore, he can hardly arrive at a correct evaluation of other passages relevant to polygyny. I find it highly significant that Mr. Dunkin completely bypasses the two MOST significant laws in the Law of God relevant to polygyny, Exodus 21:10-11 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17. Perhaps this is because the article Mr. Dunkin comments upon omits reference to them, though this seems highly unlikely to me given the common currency these two passages have among us all in the Christian patriarchal movement.

> The Lord Jesus Christ reaffirmed the monogamous ideal for marriage when He quoted and argued from the Genesis 2 passage (Matthew 19:4-7, Mark 10:5-9). He quite clearly envisions marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman. This is further illustrated when, upon further questioning, He states that to divorce a spouse and marry another is adultery. The ideal is monogamy in relationship and lifetime exclusiveness in sexual knowledge. To marry another while your divorced spouse is still alive is considered by God to be adultery, the same as if you were to go in unto another while still married. The only seeming exception to this is in cases of pre-marital fornication (Matthew 19:9), and the same principle applies to these - the spouse who has been unfaithful during the betrothal period has already violated the sexual exclusiveness that is supposed to exist between a married man and woman, and hence, the Law (because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts, remember) allowed for the breaking of the marriage covenant in these cases. From all this it is clear that the inviolability of the marriage institution is understood from a physical, sexual ground as well as from that of

> a legal covenant, which is why any sexual congress outside of marriage is an assault upon God's plan for marriage and human sexuality, whether it be pre-marital fornication, extra-marital adultery, or the numerous varieties of unmentionable perversions that exist in the world.

ANSWER: It is clear that not only does Mr. Dunkin stand in contradiction to me concerning polygyny, but he also stands in contradiction to the prevailing understanding of "porneia," fornication, in Matthew 19:9. The vast majority of the Evangelical church does not understand Jesus to be referring to "pre-marital fornication," but fornication DURING the marriage. Mr. Dunkin is not the only advocate of this view, but he is certainly in a distinct minority. (Dunkin seems to be following J. Carl Laney in this view.)

Mr. Dunkin does not understand that the divorce in the scenario mentioned by Christ is ESSENTIAL for the adultery to occur. This is because Christ is here speaking about REPLACING one woman with another. He is NOT talking about polygyny. An analogous passage in the Law is found in Exodus 21:10-11:

"If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money."

There is no more important OT passage relevant to this issue than this one. Note well what we have here: we have two distinct scenarios described; first, we have polygyny. What is the mandated-by-God consequence of this polygyny? Simply, the man must CONTINUE with the first wife, including continuation of sexual relations, even while he has this second wife that he is also having sexual relations with. This is the Law of God. Second, we have a secondary situation proposed here (vs 11) where this man puts away his first wife despite his lawful obligation to her, and marries another. What is the consequence? The consequence is that the woman is THEN given the right to "go out free," that is, she is released from the marriage. In other words, in Exodus 21:10-11, we have the EXACT SAME SCENARIO AS ADDRESSED BY CHRIST IN MATTHEW 19, but with the additional issue of polygyny factored in. Note well, it it NOT the polygyny which occasions

the right of the first wife to divorce her husband but being put away via the de-facto abandonment of the marriage bed. The divorce/putting away is ESSENTIAL for an offense to occur. There is no logical way to extend the application of Christ's words beyond the strict coordination of "divorce + remarriage." The "marriage + marriage" scenario is NOT addressed by Christ, but it IS addressed in the Law, and it is addressed as something permitted.

> Indeed, the one instance in the Old Testament where divorce is commanded by God (Ezra 10:9-44) because many Israelites had married strange (i.e. foreign, pagan) wives, there is nothing mentioned that these men would, or could, remarry. The fact that God considers the marriage covenant permanent, even after divorce, is illustrated in Malachi 2:13-16 where men who divorced their first wives and married others were said to have dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth. This emphasis, then, on the inviolability of the marriage covenant and the sexual exclusiveness demanded in God's plan (extending even before marriage or after divorce while the partner is still living) demands monogamy on the part of a married person if they are to be within God's will in their life. To marry multiple partners is to, essentially, commit adultery in the sight of God, as it is a violation of His plan and the covenant relationship between man and his one wife that God established on the sixth day of creation.

ANSWER: Dunkin's assertion here that polygyny constitutes adultery is entirely without foundation in Scripture. I have gone into great length about this in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law," and due to consideration of length won't here duplicate all of what I said in the book. Suffice to say, EVERY mention or example of adultery in the Bible concerns a man (either married or single) who has sexual relations with an already-married woman. The idea, for example, that Jacob's marriages with his three subsequent wives constituted adultery is just sheer nonsense. The same can be said concerning

all of the other polygamists mentioned in Scripture. Adultery, properly defined, is "the violation of the marital bond between a husband and wife." Exactly what constitutes such a violation is DIFFERENT for men and women. For a man, it is (groundless) DIVORCE which constitutes adultery, or taking another man's wife. For a woman, it is sexual relations with someone other than her husband, or, of course, the groundless dissolution of the marital bond. The church, has, unfortunately incorporated much of its definitions of biblical concepts from the surrounding culture. I knew a Christian woman, for example, who was debating me about the definition of fornication in the Bible. Her "trump" card in this debate was to go get a modern secular dictionary and argue to me, based upon this dictionary, that my interpretation of Scripture was faulty. This is unfortunately common fare--and not only among laity but among supposedly trained biblical expositors who should know better.

> The Scripture also uses the image of monogamous marriage to illustrate the relationship of Christ with His churches. In Ephesians 4, the argument and commandment had already been set forth that there should be doctrinal and spiritual unity within each local church assembly. In Ephesians 5:22-33 then, Paul teaches on the duties of the husband and the wife to each other, and likens their relationship to that of Christ with His church. Christ is the Lord of each local church body, likened to the husband, as the local assembly is to the wife. In each local assembly, due to the unity that should prevail in spirit and doctrine, Christ has only ONE wife, not many as if there were many different spirits and doctrines residing in the body of the same local church. Lest one be tempted, then, to suggest that the presence of multiple local churches suggests that Christ has multiple "wives", it is best to keep in mind that when all is said and done, the various local assemblies, the saints from all the ages, will be gathered together into one united body in heaven (Hebrews 12:23) which is the true and final embodiment of Christ's "wife", the collection of the church of saints which He has espoused to Himself through His shed blood. Each local

> assembly, for the time being, is contextually and logically to be considered as a foreshadowing of that final assembly of which its members will one day be part, and thus is one wife with Christ as her head.

ANSWER: I don't have too much to quarrel with here because the unity of the body of Christ is a very real thing. I will simply point out that the same Paul whom Dunkin quotes also applies the marital metaphor to the INDIVIDUAL believer, and he does so precisely in connection to Genesis 2:24. Consider what Paul says in I Corinthians 6:16b-17: "...for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Note the equation Paul makes. The marital, one-flesh union of a man and his wife is a metaphor or type of the union of the INDIVIDUAL believer to Christ. It is simple obtuseness and denial of the obvious on the part of the critics of polygyny to deny what is clear from this consideration. Since the marital metaphor applies to the individual believer, Christ is, therefore married to a multitude of spiritual wives. In short, in Scripture, the marital metaphor takes BOTH forms, monogamous and polygynous. The legitimacy of the one metaphor does not deny the legitimacy of the other. There is a clear complementarity here.

> Monogamy is also set forth in the Scripture as the pattern which Christians are to follow, which they are to see in the lives of godly pastors. Each pastor that God sets over a local assembly is to be "the husband of one wife" (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6). These same pastors are set forth to be emulated by the members of their assemblies, if they are living right with God (Hebrews 13:7, I Peter 5:3).

ANSWER: I addressed this argument in my post to Mr. Yeager last week. The essence of my point is that there is an admitted ambiguity to the Greek phrase, "mias gunaikos andra," in Timothy and Titus. The Greek word "mias" is translated variously in other passages as "first," or as the article, "a." The possible translations of this passage then are three: "FIRST wife man;" or it could mean "*A* wife man," or it could mean, "ONE wife man." Since Greek

New Testament scholars such as Jay E. Adams and others admit an "unusualness" in the syntax, and an AMBIGUITY in the meaning, I feel free to insist on bringing the translation and interpretation of this passage into conformity with the balance of Scripture. The "FIRST wife man" translation squares this passage with other passages touching the subject of marriage in connection with DIVORCE, such as Malachi 2:14-16, Matthew 19:3-9, and Mark 10:2-12. This issue is, and always is, DIVORCE.

> The arguments for polygyny included attempts to appeal to the authority of various saints in the Old Testament who were involved in polygamous marriages, such as David, Abraham, and others. The email included a rather long list of polygamists in the Old Testament, and notes that some of them were considered righteous by God. This argument falls flat. The simple fact of polygamy in the Old Testament cannot be rightfully taken as an approbation of the practice by God, in light of the clear principle of monogamy as ideal set forth in Genesis. The example of even righteous men who were involved in polygamy cannot be taken as evidence, in contravention to the words of Scripture, that polygamy is acceptable to God.

ANSWER: I address this very issue in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law." Mr. Dunkin incorrectly assumes that he has established a mandate of monogamy in Genesis and, therefore, he believes, the polygyny in the lives of righteous men of God cannot possibly have the apparent significance it would seem to have on the surface. As I said above, Mr. Dunkin's premises are faulty, so he cannot possibly properly evaluate the significance of polygyny as it occurs in the Bible. It is true that a mere EXAMPLE or OCCURENCE of polygyny cannot establish a rule of law. But there is a fatal error in logic in the anti-polygyny position here; unlike the occasional slip into sin which all men are subject to and of which we must repent, the righteous men of God in the bible who were polygynists persisted in the practice of polygyny FOR THE DURATION OF THEIR LIVES. If a second marriage constitutes adultery, as Mr. Dunkin alleges, then there MUST be repentance from such "adultery." But there is no such repentance recorded nor any demand from God that any

man do so anywhere in Scripture. The most notable example of this is, of course, David's polygyny. He was confronted by God via the prophet Nathan about his adultery with Bathsheba, but his "adultery" with his approximately 20 other wives went unmentioned. A little peculiar, don't you think?

> How does one explain the fact that men who were polygamists were yet considered righteous by God? By the fact that their righteousness came, just as it does for believers in our time, by God's grace through faith. "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). Just as saints today are not saved and justified by either their own ability to satisfy their debt of sin or their own ability to retain their salvation through their own good deeds, so it was with saints in the Old Testament times. Saints in any age are justified because God extends grace to them through faith and repentance. But, justification does not equal perfection. Every saint sins, even those considered just by God. David was a man after God's own heart, yet he murdered a man through treachery and lied about it, this after he had committed adultery with his wife. Does the fact that God still deemed David to be righteous mean that adultery, murder, treachery, and dishonesty are acceptable in God's sight? Of course not. It merely means that God, through His abundant grace, still forgives and justifies and preserves His saints, those who have trusted on Him in faith, even when they fail Him. As such, merely pointing to the fact that David or Abraham or Solomon was righteous while yet being a polygamist, does not theologically mean that God approves of polygamy.

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin evades the issue here. The issue here is not justification. Saved or not, God demands holiness and righteousness and repentance from sin. The fact that God dealt so severely with sin (as in the case of David) including the sin of adultery, and yet for some inscrutable reason passed over the "sin" of polygyny, is an affront to the holiness of God. Mr. Dunkin's "explanation" for the polygyny in the lives of righteous men of God, and God's absolute lack of any condemnation whatsoever for this

supposed "sin," is a miserable failure of an explanation. Mr. Dunkin has not come within light years of offering an explanation. So, I'll offer my explanation: the reason why we find so many men of God in the Bible practicing polygyny is because it is a perfectly righteous thing in God's eyes. It is not adultery. It is not any kind of sin at all.

> Indeed, if we look at the lives of the Old Testament saints, we see two things. One, most of them actually were not polygamists, the norm for the faithful man in the Old Testament was monogamy. Two, those who engaged in polygamy had far from the idyllic, blessed home life that the author of the arguments for polygyny seems to intimate will come from polygyny.

ANSWER: What about the far-from-idyllic home lives of the monogamists in Scripture? Seems to me that Isaac had a little problem with his sons. AND WHAT ABOUT THE SHAMEFUL RATE OF DIVORCE AMONG MODERN EVANGELICALS? Has enforced monogamy brought paradise into the modern Evangelical family? Watch out, Mr Dunkin. You are opening up a real can of worms with this line of argumentation.

> Yes, some Old Testament patriarchs and saints had multiple wives, such as David, Solomon, Abraham (a concubine), etc. However, the norm was monogamy. Job was monogamous, as were Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Noah, Shem, Samuel, and many others, as well as was, of course, Adam.

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin's lack of biblical diligence is almost embarrassing. Jeremiah was not a monogamist. Nor was he a polygynist: he was celibate. Moses is a probable polygamist (see Num 12). Joseph may have had subsequent wives and concubines after the wife given to him by Pharaoh. And it is also possible that Shem and Samuel had multiple wives.

> Those who engaged in polygamy often saw their family lives ruined by strife and discord.

ANSWER: Following Mr. Dunkin's own logical folly here, we could say of modern Evangelicals and the 50% divorce rate among us, "Those who engaged in monogamy have often seen their family lives ruined by strife and discord." Mr. Dunkin, are you sure you want to go there? Apparently he does...

> Abraham's concubinage of Hagar, for example, was an act done because of a lack of faith (hardly a reason to hold him up as an example in this particular case). His act with Hagar brought about a child who was a competitor with the seedline God intended to bring the Messiah from, was a source of continual friction in his home life with Sarah, and produced a lineage which is to this day a thorn in the side of God's people. Likewise, Jacob's polygamy was the result of trickery, and produced familial discord between his two wives Leah and Rachel, and this discord may even have been the cause of the crime committed against Joseph (son of the favoured wife) by his brothers (sons of the disfavoured wife and the servant-concubines). It is also noteworthy that Jacob entered into his polygamous marriages during the time in his life when he was not walking with God

ANSWER: I have to interject right in the middle here. This assertion of Mr. Dunkin's is stupendously preposterous. Just read Genesis 28 about Jacob's vision of the ladder and his vow to God, and you'll see what hogwash this contention of Mr. Dunkin's is. The timeline of Genesis 28 is during Jacob's journey to Laban's household. What evidence does Mr. Dunkin offer to the effect that Jacob "was not walking with God?" Well, his polygamy, of course! Mr. Dunkin is so full of circular reasoning, it is a wonder he can stand up straight from dizziness.

> like he should have been. David's home life certainly was harmed by his polygamy, as the succession squabbles, the rebellion of Absalom, and the rape of Tamar all illustrate.

ANSWER: One gets weary of such drivel. This assertion is a pure flight of fancy in the face of the EXPLICIT DECLARATION OF SCRIPTURE that these problems suffered by David were God's chastisement upon him for his sins in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba.

> Solomon's polygamy, likewise, provides no positive example for the Christian, as we note that his hundreds of foreign wives and concubines drew him after their false gods, a situation which would likely not have occurred had he remained true and faithful to his original bride. Indeed, though the article tries to hold up David and Solomon as positive examples, even arguing that it must be right if David did it, we see that both David and Solomon were breaking God's explicit commandment of monogamy to Israel's kings,
>
> "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." (Deuteronomy 17:17)

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin's ignorance of the true meaning of Scripture begins to get breathtaking after a while. As I Kings 11 elucidates for us, what is at issue in Deuteronomy 17:17 is not polygyny, but INTERMARRIAGE WITH IDOL WORSHIPPERS as an act of State. We are told in I Kings 11:4, that Solomon's heart "was not perfect with the LORD, as was the heart of his father, David." If the issue here is polygyny as Mr. Dunkin believes, then was not David just as much in transgression as Solomon since they were BOTH polygynists all the days of their lives?

> Indeed, we see that this is exactly what happened to both David and Solomon - they multiplied their wives, and this to a greater or lesser extent turned their hearts away from the LORD. Why would polygamy turn their hearts from God? Because by engaging in polygamy, they were sinning the sin of adultery, and shutting God's ears to them,

ANSWER: Well, in this particular, Mr. Dunkin can't be accused of parroting the usual anti-polygyny line because any OT scholar with any degree of learning will admit (albeit usually with Dispensationalisist premises) that polygyny did not constitute adultery under the Old Covenant. I have demonstrated this in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law" with numerous quotations from OT scholars. On this point, I must side with majority opinion. Mr. Dunkin feels compelled to import an unwarranted, NT Dispensationalist gloss onto the pages of the OT. Mr. Dunkin apparently is not even sufficiently up to snuff on the topic to know what the "party line" is. He THINKS, but he is wrong, that the weight of Evangelical scholarship comes down on the side of denominating polygyny as adultery under the Old Covenant. But let's turn now to Mr. Dunkin's assertion itself. He claims that the practice of polygyny--clearly permitted by Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17--turned David's and Solomon's heart away from the Lord. Is not the fallacy of this reasoning self-evident? If polygyny constituted sin, then it was ITSELF a turning of the heart away from the Lord, not merely a practice which LED TO such turning away. On Mr. Dunkin's logic, what we have in Scripture here is the admonition, "Do not commit sin, lest this lead you to commit sin." No, the commandment under question in Deuteronomy 17:17 is not a ban on polygyny, but a ban on marriage (a good thing in and of itself) in a particular situation, that is, taking the daughters of foreign idol-worshipping officials as an act of State. It is treaty marriages which are under the ban here, not polygyny.

> "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2) Yes, they were still righteous because they had trusted in the Lord God and been justified, but their sin came

> between them and God, cutting them off increasingly from His intimate fellowship, making them susceptible to being drawn after further ungodliness.

ANSWER: According to Mr. Dunkin, one can be righteous even though one's sin separates you from God. I could have sworn that that was the definition of UNrighteousness! But I'll give some latitude to Mr. Dunkin here. He is clearly not attempting to speak with the precision of scholars, nor equipped to do so. What he is trying to say is that David and Solomon were not perfect but fell into this "besetting sin" of "adulterous polygyny." He is alleging an issue of sanctification here. But this won't wash either. As I noted before, David and Solomon, as well as Abraham, Jacob, etc, lived polygynously for the duration of their lives. They clearly saw no sin here, nor any mandate to repent of polygyny.

Now I wish to provide some direct cut-and-pasted copies of several specific arguments made in this article, listed as "Biblical Support for Polygyny". These arguments will be in red, with my responses following.

DID GOD COMPARE HIMSELF TO A POLYGYNIST?

> "In Jeremiah 3:6-14, 31:31-34 and again in Ezekiel 23 the LORD compares HIMSELF to a man with two wives who are harlots – Judah and Israel. The Jews had turned away from GOD. GOD would not compare HIMSELF to a polygynist if polygyny were wrong."
>
> It is a gross miscomprehension of the meaning and points of these passages to try and approach them, when they speak of spiritual adultery and God's covenant with Israel, as if they gave legitimacy to any polygyny. To understand them merely for the purpose of legitimising multiple wives is to take them wholly out of context and miss the whole point. The point to the passage is not to present a pattern for marriage acceptable to God, but to decry the spiritual whoredoms of God's people.

> Technically speaking, the way God frames the discourse in Jeremiah 3:6-14, for example, the allegory would not even be depicting God as a polygamist, even if one wished to interpret the passage this way. Indeed, God presents a bill of divorcement to Israel for her adultery first, as the Law allowed, and then the passage speaks of Judah as the other unfaithful sister. Indeed, if one wishes to approach this passage the way the author of the article does and understand it as God depicting Himself as a polygamist, then they will attribute to God a CLEAR VIOLATION of His own Law, this being against the marriage of a man to two sisters at the same time (Leviticus 18:18)

ANSWER: I have addressed this at length in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law." The reader is urged first of all to read the Jeremiah and Ezekiel passages for himself. It is abundantly clear, Mr. Dunkin's protestations notwithstanding, that both of those passages do, indeed, employ the metaphor of a man with two wives to describe his relationship with Judah and Israel. Mr. Dunkin attempts to deny the clear implications of this, first, by denying what is obvious about the nature of the metaphor employed, and second, by alleging that the Law banned marriage simultaneously with two sisters. But Mr. Dunkin, as with Deuteronomy 17:17, once again attributes a meaning to a biblical law which is not denoted. Leviticus 18:18 prohibits a man from taking a sister of a current wife as a second wife "to vex her," that is to vex the first wife. There is no reason or rationale for the qualification if what is denoted is a CATEGORICAL ban. As the stories of Abraham's wives Sarah and Haarg, and Jacob's wives, Rachel and Leah, and Elkanah's wives, Hannah and Penninah, demonstrate, what is contemplated as "VEXING" to the first wife is to be barren in the presence of a second wife who can or has borne children. Leviticus 18:18 prohibits a man with a childless wife from taking a blood sister as a second wife to bear children in the presence of the first wife. Family is important in Biblical Law. The sisterly relationship is respected and protected. The ethos of Biblical Law is foreign to Mr. Dunkin. He thinks as a modern Westerner, and projects his own mental constructs, and the mental constructs of his Greco-Roman culture, onto the pages of the Bible.

DID JESUS COMPARE HIMSELF TO A POLYGYNIST?

> "In Matthew Chapter 25 JESUS tells a parable were he compares HIMSELF to a man betrothed to 10 women where only 5 are ready. This is a famous parable recited often in churches. It seems strange people readily accept the message to be ready for JESUS's return but ignore the fact that HE compared HIMSELF to a polygynist. All believers are (collectively) the bride of CHRIST 1 Corinthians 6:15. Since the bride of CHRIST is composed of many members, we see yet another reference to polygyny. JESUS would not compare HIMSELF to a polygynist if it were wrong."
>
> Again, to understand this passage the way the author of the article does is to do injustice to the message that the Lord Jesus was trying to illustrate. Further, it displays a miscomprehension of the mechanics of the cultural norm behind the parable. The ten virgins were not brides, but bridesmaids. Jewish marriage custom was such that the bridegroom would come to the home of his betrothed, take her to himself, and they would then go to the place of the marriage. The bride did not "go forth" to meet her groom, as the ten virgins do. The fact that the bridegroom goes to the place where the virgins are at and enters in to the marriage indicates that the virgins are not brides. They are where the marriage is at, not being picked up by the bridegroom to be taken somewhere else. This, of course, in no wise lessens the impact and meaning of the parable, which is to be sure that we are ready for the marriage feast with the Lord.

ANSWER: This is one passage which I did NOT comment upon in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law." I do not regard it as integral, or even necessary, to my thesis. However, let me make an observation. Does it not seem particularly incongruous to speak of a marriage WITHOUT A BRIDE? If the virgins are not presented as brides of the bridegroom, then WHERE IS THE

BRIDE? We have a marriage with virgins but without a bride! I suspect that we have the metaphor of a rich bridegroom being pictured here with a full household of wives, not unlike many of the households of Jesus' day.

IS POLYGYNY COMMANDED OF MAN?

> "Every man is commanded to marry his brother's wife and give her children if his brother dies and she is childless. This obligation to marry is not reduced by the fact a man may already have one or more wives. Deuteronomy 25:5,6 'If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. 6And 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'."
>
> This argument is non sequitur. There is nothing in the Levirate marriage law which indicates that this commandment is binding on a man who is already married, and thus to argue that this passage "commands" men to polygamy is not legitimate. Indeed, the caveat "if brethren dwell together" would seem to suggest younger unmarried brothers living with an older brother who has already married and begun to build a life for himself. This is supported by the evidence in Matthew 22:24-28 where the Sadducees present their argument against the resurrection to the Lord Jesus about the seven brethren who all married the same woman, successively, after the previous had died. That question clear presupposes that the next younger brother, likely unmarried, is marrying the woman. If this were not so, the brethren would not be "dwelling together".

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin begins upon a premise shared by almost no OT scholar of any repute, namely that polygyny was outlawed under the Law of

God. Since his premise is faulty, his conclusion is as well. It is instructive to note that, according to Matthew 22, the scenario described by the Pharisees to Jesus is not of the UNMARRIED brothers taking their brother's widow, but in SUCCESSION from the oldest to the youngest in order. This is rather difficult to explain on Mr. Dunkin's anti-polygyny premises. No, Mr. Dunkin is in error. To begin with, polygyny was, as most OT scholars will admit, lawful under the Old Covenant, so there was no particular reason to limit the widow to only the unmarried brothers. The operative principle was the responsibility of the ELDEST, regardless of his marital status. "Dwelling together" need not imply an unmarried status, as Mr. Dunkin assumes, but simply in close enough geographical proximity to make the marriage practical. Mr. Dunkin reads MUCH into the Scriptures that is simply not there.

DID GOD REALLY GIVE A MAN MANY WIVES?

"In 2 Samuel 12:8 GOD tells David that HE gave David his wives and that GOD would have given David more wives if David wanted them in HIS rebuke of David concerning Bathsheeba. 2 Samuel 12:8 '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'."

This example is taken out of context, and does not even indicate what the author thinks it does. The context is when David sinned with Bathsheba and is confronted by Nathan the prophet. He is reminding David of all that God had given him, and the underlying remonstrance is then to question why David had gone beyond and taken the wife of another man. One of the things, however, that God had NOT given to David was Saul's wives to be his own. The "giving" to David in context is control and kingship over, not personal ownership or possession. Saul's wives were "given" to David in the sense that their house and

> family lost the kingship and was made subject to David, as the rest of the verse indicates. David did not marry Saul's wives, anymore than he took personal possession of Saul's possessions and children, he merely became king over them, as he did over Israel and Judah. There is nothing indicating God giving a "gift" of polygamy in this text.
>
> Some supporters of polygamy will try to point to the fact that Saul had a wife named Ahinoam, and that David had a wife named the same, as evidence that God was indeed giving Saul's wives to David. This is highly unlikely as the Scripture indicates that David was married to *his* Ahinoam while Saul was yet still alive and married to his (e.g. I Samuel 25:43, I Samuel 27:3).

ANSWER: I go into great depth on this topic in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law." Mr. Dunkin alleges two things here, 1)that the polygyny thesis is "taken out of context," and 2) that the statement, "I gave you...your masters wives into your bosom," is not meant to be taken in what appears to be its face value.

First, HOW is this statement taken out of context in the quotation Dunkin uses? The pro-polygyny author, whoever he may be be, reports quite accurately that it is in the context of God's rebuke of David in the matter of Bathsheba. This is very much IN context, indeed. Mr. Dunkin is sloppy and careless in his criticisms. He operates on emotion, not reason. This is a tirade and a temper tantrum, not a reasoned biblical response.

Second, Mr. Dunkin alleges (parroting Gleason Archer, Walter Kaiser, and many others) that the statement does not refer to David taking the wives of Saul as his own wives. Concerning Ahinoam and Rizpah (Saul's concubine) I am actually in agreement that David did NOT take these two particular wives of Saul. But he did take others.

Note first of all the phraseology "into your bosom," in II Samuel 12:8 and compare it to Genesis 16:5, Sarah speaking to Abraham about Hagar, "I have given my maid into thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived..." This is unmistakably and irrefutably in reference to sexual relations. The same

phraseology in reference to sexual relations appears also in I Kings 1:2,4, and Proverbs 5:20, and other passages. It NEVER carries the meaning Dunkin alleges it to have anywhere in Scripture.

Even more specifically, in the parable of Nathan to David itself, just a few verses earlier (I Samuel 12:3) it is stated of the little ewe lamb which represents Bathsheba, that it "lay in his (Uriah's) bosom," metaphorically representing the marital/sexual bond between Uriah and Bathsheba. I have gone into greater detail in "Man & Woman in Biblical Law," but this is sufficient to establish the point that it is actual marriage which is referred to in II Samuel 12:8, not merely the subjection of Saul's household to David's authority.

Assertions are one thing. But backing them up rationally with Scripture is quite another; and it is in this regard that Mr. Timothy W. Dunkin is weighed in the balances and found wanting.

TWO POLYGYNISTS FOUND BLAMELESS BY GOD?

> "In 1 Kings 15:5 we see David was very close to GOD and without fault except in the matter of Uriah and his wife. Since David already had many wives when this was written we can see the LORD found nothing wrong with polygyny. Since GOD does not find fault with polygyny who are we to condemn the practice? 1 Kings 15:5 'Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite'.
>
> "In Judges 6:12-27 we see that the LORD and HIS Angel talked with Gideon. The LORD told Gideon HE was with him and the Angel of the LORD called Gideon a `mighty man of valour'. Gideon had many wives yet the LORD was with him."

> The matter of David's righteousness despite his polygamy has been detailed above. However, the passage is not saying David was blameless, necessarily, but rather that he had not "turned aside" in any matter other than the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba. The verb translated "turned aside" is the Hebrew "suwr" (Strong's H5493), which has the idea of turning off, departing, rebelling, or declining. The particular reference to David's sin with Bathsheba is mentioned as his "turning aside" because it was an open and flagrant sin which brought great opprobrium to the name of God and gave God's enemies opportunity to slander and deride the name of the Lord. In other words, it was the most particularly grievous sin against God that was committed. That this passage is not meant to say that it was the ONLY sin David ever committed (as the author seems to argue to try to justify polygamy) can be seen in that David sinned by numbering Israel, as well as sinning by multiplying wives to himself (discussed above). Concerning Gideon, again, to call Gideon a "mighty man of valour" is not the same as saying he was blameless. Indeed, the passages about Gideon indicate that later on in his life, he erred by making the ephod which all Israel whored after (Judges 8:27).
>
> Again, these men may have been blameless in the sense that they were both saved by grace and declared righteous by God, but that does not mean that the practical example of their lives was perfect, and as such, these passages cannot be rightly used to try to argue for God's approval of polygyny.

ANSWER: Logic is clearly not Mr. Dunkin's strong suit. He thinks he can simply presuppose something and --voila!--it is true! First of all, concerning David's sins in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, and of his numbering the people, the Scriptures are EXPLICIT in both circumstances of the sinful nature of these actions. David's sins are specifically enumerated and the punishments explicitly spelled out. Mr. Dunkin PRESUPPOSES, but provides ZERO biblical support for the proposition that David was "sinning by multiplying wives to himself." WHERE does Scripture condemn David (or

Abraham? or Jacob? or Gideon? or Caleb? or Elkanah? or Solomon? or Jair? or Ibzan? or Abdon? or Joash? or anyone else for that matter?) for the "sin" of polygyny? When it comes to logic, Mr. Dunkin is a big, fat Donut. In fact, he is all hole and no donut at all!

If polygyny constitutes adultery, as Mr. Dunkin alleges, then, indeed, WHY was he not explicitly censured and punished for such "adultery," as he was for his adultery with Bathsheba? Something's wrong with this picture! There is a huge gaping hole here in Mr. Dunkin's thesis, and nothing in sight to fill it in. I stress once again that polygyny is something that David and other men of God lived in FOR THE DURATION OF THEIR LIVES. They understood that "what God has joined together, let no man divide asunder." As to their sins, they repented of them and forsook them. Such is not the case concerning polygyny precisely because polygyny is RIGHTEOUS before God and blameless according to His moral Law. David was not "(righteous) despite his polygyny." Polygyny was an ASPECT of his righteousness. It would have been sinful, once having become one flesh with his multiple wives, to put them away.

Mr. Dunkin continues...

> GOD Chose a Polygynist as Father of HIS People
>
> "Abraham was counted as a friend of GOD James 2:23. Most Jews consider Abraham to be the greatest man in scripture. Jews hold Abraham in such high esteem they refer to him as "father Abraham" (James 2:21, John 8:56). Abraham was very close to GOD. Not only did they have many conversations, but GOD regarded Abraham with great favor. Genesis 12:2,3 "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

> "Abraham had three wives and at least 2 concubines Genesis 11:29, 16:3, 25:1, 25:6. JESUS regarded Abraham favorably in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28. JESUS referred to HIMSELF as a "son of Abraham" in Luke 19:9. JESUS refers to GOD specifically as the 'GOD of Abraham' in Luke 20:37, Matthew 22:32 and Mark 12:26. How can any man condemn polygyny when GOD holds a polygynist in such high regard?
>
> Gen 17: 2-7, Gen 15:5, Gen 13: 15,16"
>
> Again, this misses the point that a righteous man is not a perfect man. Abraham's example does not legitimise polygyny, especially as the clear testimony of so much of God's Word is against the practice, and the foundation text relating to the marriage institution speaks against it.

ANSWER: Huh? Where is such "clear testimony of so much of God's Word" against polygyny? The couple passages Mr. Dunkin has cited have been conclusively demonstrated to testify to no such thing. By the "foundation text relating to the marriage institution," I presume Mr. Donut--excuse me, Mr. Dunkin--has Genesis 2:24 in mind, the one flesh pronouncement. There is, of course, nothing there in that text that speaks against polygyny. Again, Mr. Dunkin's inability to express himself clearly and precisely is a problem. What he means to say is that he perceives an INFERENCE in Genesis 2:24 against polygyny. But this is simply more faulty logic at work. The ASSUMPTION behind it is the oft-repeated non-sequitur that if a man is one flesh with one wife then he can't possibly be one flesh with a second--a proposition irrefutably demolished by Paul's observation in I Corinthians 6:16 that even in prostitution a man becomes one flesh with the harlot.

Mr. Dunkin goes on...

> Also, Abraham technically only had one wife at a time, but two concubines (Hagar and Keturah). Keturah is called a wife in Genesis 25:1, and a concubine in I Chronicles 1:32, and it is

> likely that he married her formally after Sarah died. However, the "sons of the concubines" mentioned in Genesis 25:6 would be the sons from Hagar and Keturah. This passage doesn't suggest further concubinage beyond those two.

ANSWER: Mr. Dunkin betrays here the depth of his ignorance of Scripture and the doctrine of marriage and his shallowness of understanding. Mr. Dunkin apparently has no clue what constitutes and distinguishes concubinage. A concubine IS a wife. Note Genesis 16:3, "And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar...and gave her to her husband Abram to be his WIFE." It should not go without comment that this is the narrative of Moses and, therefore, the perspective of God upon the issue. Mr. Dunkin takes it upon himself to contradict the explicit declarations of Scripture in favor of his own fairy tales. The idea that "technically" Hagar was not Abram's wife is simply preposterous. Mr. Dunkin just simply can't bring himself to admit that the Bible is true and his preferred beliefs a pack of lies. Unfortunately, Mr. Dunkin is not alone in such effrontery to God.