

Chapter 7

Revelations of Convenience

The authors wonder about the change between Book of Commandments 4:2 and Doctrine and Covenants 5:4 (p. 90). However, it is rather easy to sort things out with minimal effort. First, at the time the revelation was first given, Joseph Smith was only supposed to be working on getting the Book of Mormon translated and into print, and not to pretend or use any other gifts because only one was to be used at that time. Later, Joseph Smith finished the translation. The original revelation was published in the Morning and Evening Star. Later still, Joseph Smith was called to function further and bring forth additional scripture, as well as publish various revelations that had been revealed to Joseph. By revelation, the original sense was preserved by adding clarification that the limitation only pertained to the period when Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon.

The authors claim that the “new and everlasting covenant” refers to plural marriage (*polygyny*) (p. 92). However, this is not the case. The new and everlasting covenant is defined in the Doctrine and Covenants (e.g., 66:2) as the covenant that has been restored from antiquity, encompassing the fullness of the gospel, not polygamy.

The critics regurgitate the long-standing claim that polygamy contradicts Jacob 2 in the Book of Mormon. However, this ignores the over-arching context of Jacob 2. The unauthorised extensions to plural marriage of David and Solomon engaged in were what were abominable to the Lord in the Book of Mormon. Notwithstanding, the Book of Mormon *does* allow for plural marriage insofar as the Lord commands such, as he did for early Latter-day Saints. The following is from Jacob 2:30 (square brackets and comments my own):

For I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people [I.e., the engage in plural marriage]; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things [I.e., monogamy].

Furthermore, in Alma 10:11, we read the following (italics added):

For behold, he hath blessed mine house, he hath blessed me, and *my women*, and my children, and my father and my kinsfolk; yea, even all my kindred hath he blessed, and the blessing of the Lord has rested upon us according to the words which he spake.

In Hebrew, woman and wives are the same word, אִשָּׁה *ishah*.¹ In this verse of the Book of Mormon, it is rather conducive to Amulek having multiple wives, something that is not

¹ J. Weingreen, *A practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* 2nd edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 30

condemned in the Book of Mormon, a possible case of the polygyny condoned by the Lord.² The argument forwarded by critics fails miserably when the whole text of the Book of Mormon is taken into consideration for exegetical purposes.

Brigham Young clearly taught that ‘the only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy’ [*Journal of Discourses* 11:269] (p. 95)

This is a classic case of quoting out of context. Lets put it in context.

When that revelation was first read to me by Joseph Smith, I plainly saw the great trials and the abuse of it that would be made by many of the Elders, and the trouble and the persecution that it would bring upon this whole people. But the Lord revealed it, and it was my business to accept it.

Now, we as Christians desire to be saved in the kingdom of God. We desire to attain to the possession of all the blessings there are for the most faithful man or people that ever lived upon the face of the earth, even him who is said to be the father of the faithful, Abraham of old. We wish to obtain all that father Abraham obtained. I wish here to say to the Elders of Israel, and to all the members of this Church and kingdom, that it is in the hearts of many of them to wish that the doctrine of polygamy was not taught and practiced by us. It may be hard for many, and especially for the ladies, yet it is no harder for them than it is for the gentlemen. It is the word of the Lord, and I wish to say to you, and all the world, that if you desire with all your hearts to obtain the blessings which Abraham obtained, you will be polygamists at least in your faith, or you will come short of enjoying the salvation and the glory which Abraham has obtained. This is as true as that God lives. You who wish that there were no such thing in existence, if you have in your hearts to say: "We will pass along in the Church without obeying or submitting to it in our faith or believing this order, because, for aught that we know, this community may be broken up yet, and we may have lucrative offices offered to us; we will not, therefore, be polygamists lest we should fail in obtaining some earthly honor, character and office, etc,"?the man that has that in his heart, and will continue to persist in pursuing that policy, will come short of dwelling in the presence of the Father and the Son, in celestial glory. The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. Others attain unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory, because they had blessings offered unto them, and they refused to accept them.

The underlined portion is critical as is based on an eternal principle of obedience. When God gives a commandment, one can't decide for themselves whether they will follow it or

² It is also interesting that only the unauthorised extension of polygyny of David and his son, Solomon is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and not of other biblical figures, such as Abraham and Moses. Furthermore, Mosaic Law made provisions for plural marriage.

not. We can't pick and chose. There were men who had decided that they would not obey the commandment of plural marriage if they were commanded to practice it. These men were concerned more about losing earthly honour and office than submitting themselves to the will of God. When one refuses to submit their will to God and wilfully disobey, their opportunity for exaltation is at risk.

The primary issue here is disobedience and not plural marriage. If the situation was not plural marriage but men refusing to pay tithing as it would interfere in their earthly gains, then Brigham Young could have said "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who pay their tithing." One can't be exalted if they commanded to do something (all commandments have blessing given to them) and they refuse to accept them.

When one looks at the context, one sees that Brigham was not making a blanket statement that only those who are exalted are those that practice plural marriage but was he was trying to impress on the minds of people that if a commandment is given, they must submit to it and not refuse it for earthly reasons or else they commit sin and its the disobedience that disqualifies them from the blessings. In this case, if these men refuse plural marriage due to their earthy reasons of glory, then God will punish them by denying them the blessings he has for those who are willing to obey. God does not reward disobedience but punishes it. If Brigham was really making a claim that the only people who ever lived on the earth that obtain exaltation were the ones that practiced polygamy, then he would have stated just that and not thrown it into a context where men were refusing to practice it based on earthy reasons. Don't look just as the idle statement but look at the situation (context) that it occurs. Mike and Ann Thomas just avoided to give the context as that would hurt his contention and not support it.

From the time of the establishment of the church in 1830 until 1978, Negroes were denied the priesthood (p. 96)

Such a false statement! At least two black men, Elijah Abel and Walker Lewis, were ordained during Joseph Smith's lifetime.³

Brigham Young went so far as to say, 'Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so' (p. 100)

How about providing some historical context? Deseret, as well as other territories and states in the United States, did not legally permit inter-racial marriages, with the only way a Caucasian could have sex with a black female were in the instance of rape, an offence punishable by death contemporary with the time.

³ Jesse L. Embry, *Black Saints in a white Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 22

<Black skin is still the mark of Cain according to the Book of Mormon> (p. 102)

The mark of Cain is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon text, so the above is a non sequitur.