

"THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF MARRIAGE: OR, POLYGAMY AND MONOGAMY COMPARED, BY A Christian Philanthropist."

THE author of the work bearing the above title, published by J. Campbell, Boston, Mass., in the commencement of his life, gives a slight account of his life and the causes which led him to publish his defence of the system of plural marriage. He states that he is a native of New England, was brought up a strict Puritan and educated for the law. He graduated from college nearly forty years ago, and had almost completed his professional studies when his health suddenly broke down. The physicians prescribed a voyage at sea and a residence of some months in a tropical climate, and to accomplish this he entered into an engagement with a Boston House having an extensive business in India, first as their clerk, and afterwards as their factor. It was while thus engaged that the subject of plural marriage was brought forcibly to his notice, through the difficulties experienced by the missionaries amongst the heathens in reconciling the creed of modern Christianity, regarding marriage and the customs of the people amongst whom they ministered.

In speaking of his intercourse with these missionaries he says: "I was very much surprised, however, soon after my first acquaintance with them, to learn that, under some circumstances, they allowed the members of the native Christian churches a plurality of wives. As I had been educated a strict monogamist, in New England, I had never once dreamed that any other social system than monogamy could be possible among Christian people, anywhere, and I remonstrated with the missionaries for permitting polygamy among their converts, under any circumstances whatever."

"I was answered by them that the Bible has not forbidden it, but, on the contrary, has recognized it, as sometimes lawful and proper; and although they themselves did not encourage it, they could not positively prohibit it. I then endeavored to recall some prohibition in the Bible, but could neither recollect nor find one there. On the contrary, to my own astonishment, after a careful examination of the Sacred Scriptures, I did find therein many things to favor it. The missionaries also said that their experience had taught them that the converting grace of God was granted to those living in polygamy as often as to others; the natives themselves attach no moral reproach to it, and, said the missionaries, 'if such persons give evidence of genuine conversion, can any man forbid water that they should not be baptized, who have received the grace of God as well as we?' Besides, they added, 'if they are not received and recognized as Christians, how shall we dispose of them? Shall we refuse them our fellowship, and send them back again to their idolatry? This would be no less unchristian than unkind. Shall we compel them to put away all their wives, but those first married, and then receive them into the church? But in many cases this would be impossible, for many of the women hitherto irreproachable would be tarnished by their repudiation; they would often be left without a home and without support; and, like other disgraced and destitute women of all lands, they would be thrust upon a life of infamy and vice.' 'Who,' continued they, 'shall dare assume the responsibility of separating wife from husband, and children from parents? since the Bible expressly forbids a man to divorce his wife, for any cause, except unfaithfulness to her marriage vow? God is not said in the Bible to hate polygamy, but it says there that 'he hateth putting away.'"

These arguments, the writer states, soon made him ashamed of his own late ignorance and bigotry, and ultimately resulted in his devoting a number of years to the investigation of the laws of marriage, the result of which researches he gives to the world in this work.

In stating the reasons why he has written this book, he says: "I am unwilling to leave the world without having given it the benefit of these reflections. All truth is important. If these views are true, they ought to be known; if they are not true let them be refuted. If the prejudices of modern Christians are opposed to the social system which their ancient brethren, the earliest saints and patriarchs, practised in the good old days of Bible truth and pastoral simplicity, I believe that these prejudices are neither natural nor inveterate; but that they have been induced by the corrupted Christianity of the medieval priesthood, and that they will be removed when Christian people become better informed; and if it be necessary for me to sacrifice my own ease, my own credit, in attempting to remove them, I shall only suffer the common lot of all reformers before me."

Mr. Campbell then enters into a discussion on the "primary laws of life" in which he takes the position that love is inherent in all, and is the right of all; that it must be limited by chastity and that marriage constitutes that proper limit.

We shall give some extracts on a future occasion from that portion of the work upon the "Laws of Marriage."



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