

## Mormon Polygamy An Obsolete Question

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SALT LAKE CITY, Oct. 15, 1909.—President Taft's sermon in the Mormon tabernacle about the blessings of toleration, charity and brotherly love, does not seem to have had much effect on the hearts of those for whom it was intended. His amiable words seem to have fallen on stony ground.

The bitterness between the gentile and Mormon politicians, particularly on the former side, has been even more intense since his visit and the attacks on the Mormon leaders and the Church at large by the gentile newspapers, chiefly because Senator Stansbury, a Mormon, with one wife and a life-long opponent of polygamy, had charge of the president's reception and entertainment.

A stranger finds it difficult to understand the situation here, and a friend who has lived here nearly all his life advises me not to waste any time in trying to understand it. He said the hostility between the Mormons and the gentiles is confined to a few people, but is incomprehensible and eternal, and they could not agree on any subject.

The polygamy question is obsolete. The leaders and members of the Mormon Church—except a small minority—still adhere to the principle of plural marriages, as justified and authorized not only by Joseph Smith's revelation, but by the example of the patriarchs and the biblical command to increase and multiply. They assert that plural marriage is nowhere forbidden, but is encouraged by the Scriptures, but, so long as it is forbidden by the Constitution and the laws of the state it cannot be practiced, and they yield their religious convictions to their civil obligations.

Polygamy has been prohibited by every president of the Church and by every successive conference that has been held since the Edmunds bill was passed. There have been occasional plural marriages, perhaps an average of one a year, entered into deliberately by fanatics at defiance of gentile authority, but those who have participated have been disciplined by the presidency in such a way as to make an example for the warning of others.

A prominent member of the Church, in conversation the other day, used the prohibition laws that recently have been passed in the southern states to illustrate the sentiment and the attitude of the Church toward a large and respectable element in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia, which he had recently visited, which regarded the recent legislation prohibiting the sale and

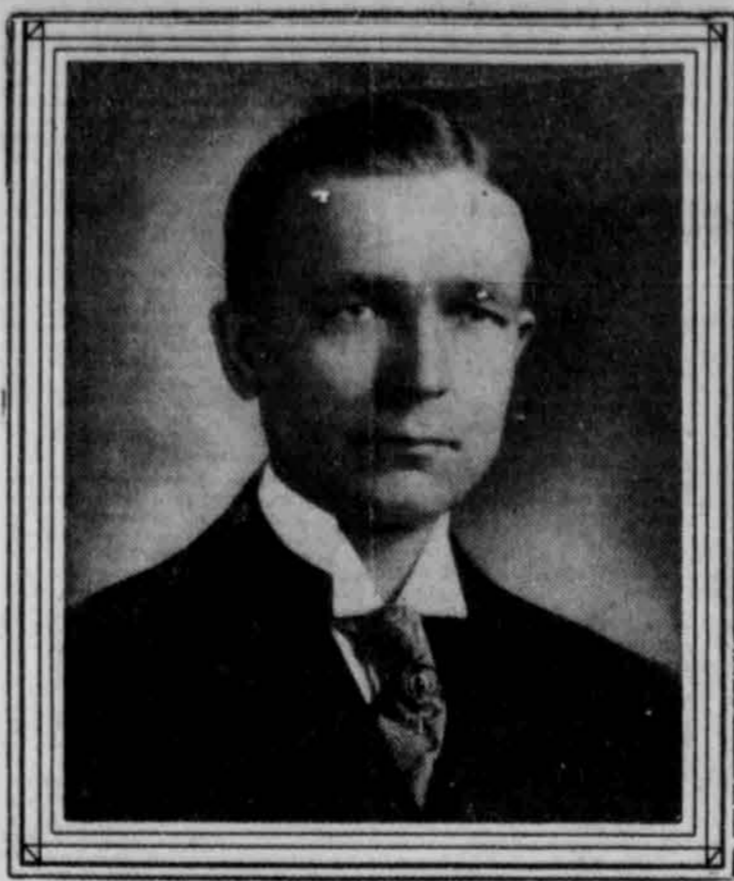
transportation of liquors an infringement of their constitutional rights and liberties; but their respect for civil authority compelled them to submit and obey. The Mormon Church recognized the authority of the legislature of the state and the Congress of the United States in the same manner, although its members believe that their action was tyrannical and that the law prohibiting plural marriage is tyrannical and unjust.

Practically all of the plural wives have been put away, and their husbands, as a rule, are living with the woman to whom they were first married, but the discarded wives are being liberally supported and their children are being given the same opportunities and advantages as those of the first wife. The government of the United States appropriated \$250,000 to provide and asylum for discarded polygamist wives, and a large, comfortable building was erected for that purpose, but it never had an inmate. The women for whom it was intended either declined or did not require the protection, and it has since been transformed into a hospital.

The polygamy issue having become obsolete, the Mormon Church is now charged with violating the Constitution and conspiring to destroy the American home because the presidency, in a despotic manner how the members of the Church shall live and work and exercise their privileges and duties as citizens. The Church is called an oligarchy whose practices and principles are repugnant to the American standard of liberty and civilization.

It is not necessary to say that this charge is not made by the members of the Church—those whose interests are most affected. The victims of the tyranny seem to be contented and satisfied with their situation, and there is no more prosperous class of people under the sun.

The officials of the Church exercise a paternal interest over all the members, both temporal as well as spiritual, over their morals as well as their theology, over their amusements as well as their worship; over their domestic relations as well as their commercial and financial affairs. No matter that affects a Mormon family or individual is too trivial to escape the vigilance of the elder or the bishop. The Roman Catholic church extends protecting wings over all the children of that faith, particularly in European countries, but its paternalism does not reach half so far or go half so deep as that of the Mormon hierarchy. I have already written and told you about the activity the Church has shown in the physical development, the



ADOLPH O. EBERHART.

The new governor of Minnesota, succeeding the late John A. Johnson.

literary and musical culture of its members, and its exacting influence over their amusements and recreations. One of the first things Brigham Young did after founding his empire in the Wasatch valley was to build a theater, a social hall for dancing and other assemblies, and the officials of the Church have always exercised a censorship over the management of these popular places of amusement. The erection of the \$300,000 pavilion at the lake was simply a continuation of the philanthropic policy to promote the enjoyment and thereby the contentment of the masses.

From the beginning the officials of the Church have endeavored to control the political opinions and actions of its members, although this effort has not been entirely successful. The membership of the Church in the United States has been, divided in opinion on national issues, such as the tariff and the currency, the forestry policy and the disposition of public lands, but wherever there has been an attack or a threat against Zion they have stood unanimously to resist it. And today the officials of the Church, like those of every other organization in existence, secular or religious, endeavor to use their power and influence to control every vote they can reach for the election of such men as they believe to be favorable to their ideas and their interests.

This is done by several other religious denominations. The Methodist church, the Christian church, the Roman Catholic church and every other denomination invariably endeavors to unite its members in the support of the defense of what it believes to be right and essential to its prosperity. The Mormon Church does the same, with the advantage of a more compact and thorough organization.

It is also charged that the Church has been and still is guilty of "commercialism," of avarice and selfish methods to increase its wealth and thereby its influence. As an evidence of this disposition its critics point out the co-operative policy that is followed in commercial and industrial matters and the investment of ecclesiastical funds in business enterprises. In reply the defenders of the Church explain that the co-operative idea has always prevailed from its organization and that the office of "trustee-in-trust" was first held by Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, Ill., and was established in conformity with the laws of that state, which require every religious body to have a trustee in trust for its real estate and other property.

Ever since that time the president of the Church or one of the apostles has been chosen at a general conference to act as "trustee-in-trust" for the body of religious worshippers known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The powers and responsibilities attached to this office are precisely those imposed on the bishops of the Roman Catholic church, in whose name all the real estate and other property stands, and the bishops are expected to exercise their judgment, with the advice of such laymen as they have confidence in, in the necessary or advisable to expend or invest the funds entrusted to their care.

The office of "trustee-in-trust" has been held by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, and other men, who have shown extraordinary shrewdness in the management of the financial affairs of the Church. Brigham Young, for example, invested the Church funds in the Deseret Telegraph line, which was built entirely with Mormon capital and labor; he invested heavily in the promotion of the Union and Central Pacific railroads; he organized Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution, a mammoth concern which does the larger part of the mercantile business of the State of Utah, and has been managed with remarkable ability. President Woodruff built the Pioneer Electric Power company at a cost of several million dollars; the Church has promoted the best sugar industry with great liberality and enterprise; it is the principal owner of several large irrigation projects and other business enterprises which were intended to develop the resources and the industries of Utah. The Church has, however, been no speculation, and I was informed by a reliable authority that the Church has never held a share of mining stock.

The "trustee-in-trust" is prominent in many business concerns. He is a director in many companies by inheritance from his predecessors. As the financial agent of the Church he exercises a tremendous influence in banking, commerce and loan associations, insurance companies, and other corporations which are distinctly Mormon and are accused of favoring the Mormon element of the population.

That, however, is one of the objects of the Church, which endeavors to promote the material as well as the spiritual welfare of its members. It not only educates them and provides them with amusements, but it teaches them thrift, economy, honesty, and encourages the accumulation of wealth, as well as the raising of large families. This is perfectly natural. The larger the family the larger the Church, the richer the individual the more titles, which are still paid by every Mormon, rich or poor, high or low, capitalist or laborer, to the extent of one-tenth of his annual income. The higher men in the Church give this offering as well as the poorer, and the proceeds are used for the relief of the sick, the support of the aged, the care of the widows and orphans, for building temples and houses of worship, for promoting immigration, for the maintenance of schools and colleges, for missionary propaganda, and for other denominational purposes. Whatever surplus may remain after the ecclesiastical necessities are provided for is invested

by the finance committee of the presidency in the name of the trustee-in-trust for the body of religious worshippers known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There is a difference of opinion concerning the aggregate amount of these investments. Some people insist that the Church is as rich as John D. Rockefeller; others will declare that it is frequently embarrassed financially and has suffered enormous losses, but it may be said that its credit is sound and undoubtedly equal to any demands that may be made upon it, and that nobody knows the extent of its holdings.

The Mormons, as a rule, have an excellent reputation for money-getting and money-keeping; they are almost invariably successful in business enterprises; their credit is better than that of the average of citizens because everybody knows that the officials of the Church will not commune with a member who does not pay his debts or respect his obligations or with a man of intemperate or dissolute habits. There are no paupers; no beggars; no tramps. Improvident and impetuous saints are taken care of by the Church and employment for which they are competent is provided for them. There is a disposition among the members of the Mormon Church to conceal every weakness or defect, financial or otherwise, among their number. They are loyal, helpful and benevolent toward each other. When a brother shows signs of weakness he is strengthened; when he becomes offensive he is hustled out of sight; when he becomes indignant he is provided for. Therefore, the gentile world has little opportunity to see the nether side of Mormon affairs.

All dreams of empire, all hopes and desires of an independent principality in Zion have vanished, even if they ever existed, which is doubtful, except in the ecstatic visions of the early prophets and apostles. The population of Utah is becoming more and more evenly divided every year. Gentile immigration is greater than that of the saints, and the combination of material interests among the members of the community without regard to religious sentiment has promoted unity.

And the most important fact is that the hostile elements are limited in numbers compared with the total population. Antiquity to the Church is confined to politicians who desire to make political capital, to a few Protestant clergymen, some of whom are actuated by conscientious motives and others by jealousy of the prosperity and influence of the Mormon organization, and finally to the old-timers, who came here early, and were compelled to fight for a foothold because

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of the determination of Brigham Young and other leaders that Zion should be reserved exclusively for the use and enjoyment of the saints. The public generally, the business community at large, and at least 80 per cent of the population take no interest in the continuous conflict, and that proportion will gradually increase.

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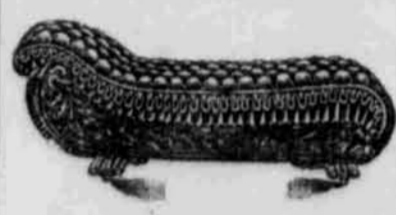


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