

Jesus, inasmuch as we have faith and confidence in God.

Our traditions inform us that if a man has two wives, it is a great sin and transgression against the laws of heaven and the laws of man. The congregation that now sit before me, both male and female, imbibed these traditions before they embraced the doctrines of the Latter-day Saints. We were taught strictly, by our parents, by works on theology, by our neighbors, by our ministers from the pulpit, by the press, and by the laws of Christendom, that plurality of wives is a great crime. Many of us, perhaps, never thought of questioning the correctness of the tradition, to know whether it was in reality a crime or not. That which is generally condemned by our nation, by our parents and kindred, by our public teachers, and by the laws of Christendom generally as a crime, is considered criminal by us. If asked why polygamy is considered a crime, our only answer is, Because false tradition says so—popular opinion says it is a crime. Now, if it be a crime—if it can be proved to be a crime by the law of God, then the inhabitants of this Territory, so far as this one institution is concerned, are in an awful condition; for it is well known that this practice is general throughout this Territory, with but a few exceptions. A great many families, not only in Salt Lake City, but throughout the settlements, have practically embraced this doctrine, believing it to be a Divine institution, approbated of God and the Bible.

We shall inquire a little into this principle for the information of the strangers who are present. Let us inquire whether, indeed, plurality of wives ever was sanctioned by the God of heaven—whether he himself is the Author of it, or whether he barely permitted it as a crime, the same as he permits many known crimes to exist.

The Lord permits a man to get drunk; he permits him to lie, steal, murder, to take his name in vain, and suffers with him a long time, and at last he will bring him to judgment: he has to render up his accounts for all these things.

If the Lord permits what is termed polygamy to exist as a crime among the Latter-day Saints, he will bring us into judgment and condemn us for that thing. It is necessary that we, as Latter-day Saints, should certainly understand this matter, and understand it, too, beforehand, and not wait until we are brought to an account. If a man were in the midst of a nation where he was not thoroughly acquainted with their laws, he would be thankful to obtain such information as would guard him from committing crime ignorantly: he would not wish to remain in ignorance until the strong arm of the law laid hold of him and brought him before the bar of justice, where he would be forced to enter into a public investigation of his deeds, and be punished for them. Neither do we, as Latter-day Saints, wish to wait in ignorance until we are brought before the great tribunal, not of man, but of God.

Let us, therefore, carefully investigate the important question—Is polygamy a crime? Is it condemned in the Bible, either by the Old or New Testament? Has God ever condemned it by his own voice? Have his angels ever been sent forth to inform the nations who have practiced this thing that they were in transgression? Has he ever spoken against it by any inspired writer? Has any Patriarch, Prophet, Apostle, angel, or even the Son of God himself, ever condemned polygamy? We may give a general answer, without investigating this subject, and say to the world, We have no information of that kind on record, except what we find in the Book of Mormon. There it was