

Patriarchs' Journal™

Dedicated to the restoration, support and encouragement of biblical family structure.

Volume 3
Issue 20

The Story Behind the Book

Evaluating Western Christianity's Interpretation of Biblical Polygamy

by — Lauren Heiligenthal

Polygamy.¹ This word often conjures up negative thoughts, images, and stories told throughout the years. The Western world most likely identifies polygamy with Mormonism and the tragedies therein. It seems as though these tragedies have defined what polygamy is all about, but is this generalization really fair? Before you misunderstand me, I am NOT (nor ever have been) a Mormon nor do I agree with the tenets of Mormonism. Rather, my interest in polygamy derives from my love of missions.

Because of the negativity surrounding polygamy in the Western world, people's perceptions and feelings often get inserted into scriptural depictions of polygamy. Growing up in the church, I was taught that God simply tolerated polygamy practiced by the biblical patriarchs. This "toleration" led me to believe that polygamy was indeed a sin, but for some reason God just let it go. The impression I got from this teaching was that these patriarchs were righteous men who happened to make mistakes along the way. But one question remained in my heart: Does God really tolerate sin to the point of not saying ANYTHING? It wasn't until much later that I reevaluated this thought process.

1. I am specifically referring to polygyny, which is one man having multiple wives. I focus on this form of polygamous marriage because it is demonstrated in Scripture and appears to be an acceptable form of marriage. Other forms of polygamy, such as polyandry (one woman with multiple husbands), polyamory (multiple relationships at the same time), and polygynandry (multiple husbands and wives in an intertwining of relationships), are not demonstrated in Scripture. I believe they are considered sinful because polyandry and polygynandry result in adultery. Polyamory could involve adultery, but it is also a demonstration of blatant sexual promiscuity.

I started participating in short-term mission trips around 11 years old. In the following years, my passion and heart grew for missions as I traveled to Hungary, Romania, Thailand, Peru and South Africa. I met amazing people who had a heart and hunger for the truth. I pursued a degree in Intercultural Studies because it has been God's desire for me to be a missionary. In learning how to approach another culture and teach the Gospel, the subject of polygamy would come up from time to time. I wrestled with the question, What would I do? Can I justify teaching people to split up their families because they're in sin? On the flip side, can I live with teaching people how to live a Christian life while still living in sin? It seemed like there was no good outcome to either of these questions. As soon as I would ponder this dilemma, I pushed it off and moved onto something else. It wasn't until I was sitting in a Cultural Anthropology class during my undergraduate studies that I was confronted with these same questions.

My professor must have been talking about different family structures one day (I don't exactly remember), and he commented that he didn't think Scripture teaches against polygamy. I had never heard anyone say this before. This went completely against what I had been taught, and I questioned him, What

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about this Scripture? What about that Scripture? He gave me some responses, but he didn't have much to say. He mainly was just giving the class his opinion. Within this discussion he commented how polygamous families coming to America were often forced to divorce because of our laws, and my professor didn't agree with that. He also shared one story in particular that caught my attention.

Years ago his parents were missionaries in Western Africa. His parents were planting a new church and needed funding for a new building. A polygamist offered to pay for the project (polygamists tend to have more wealth which they need to take care of their larger families), and apparently my professor's parents agreed. However, when it came time for services to begin, the missionaries wouldn't allow the polygamist to participate unless he was no longer a polygamist. As I listened, I could tell that my professor was not pleased with his parents' decision, and I began to wonder a few things myself. Why did they offer to let the man pay the expenses if they didn't agree

with his lifestyle? Because they accepted his money, how could they justify excluding him from the body? What kind of message did this send to the rest of the village? How could they encourage divorce in order to participate in the body of Christ? At this point, I couldn't let the polygamy dilemma go. There had to be a biblical course of action.

I decided to take a fresh look at Scripture again and found that there is, indeed, no prohibition of polygamy. There are regulations concerning polygamy in the Law, and there are a number of narratives involving polygamy, but there is no prohibition. On the contrary, there are a few passages that seem to indicate God's involvement rather than a simple toleration. For example, in II Samuel 12 Nathan confronts David about his sins of adultery and murder. Pay attention to what the Lord says through Nathan in :7-8.

Nathan then said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'It is I Who anointed you king over Israel and it is I Who

Patriarchs' Journal™

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Patriarchs' Journal is a periodical dedicated to the definition, defense, support and encouragement of the God-ordained family as an autonomous, sovereign entity that existed before civil governments and religious organizations, and is independent of their approval and direction.

Patriarchs' Journal is <i>NOT</i> about ...	Patriarchs' Journal <i>IS</i> about ...
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We seek to bring as many voices from as many backgrounds as possible to this periodical. Many are scripturally based; others find their context in the social, legal, historical and scientific arenas. Because of the diversity, you will likely not agree with everything you read. Frankly, we do not ask that of you. In fact, your editorial staff does not agree with everything placed within these columns at times. We are simply presenting things that, we trust, will be supportive and edifying in their overall scope.

We will attempt to take an honest, fresh look at the subject of the family from a Biblical perspective, and to recover truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13). Readers are encouraged to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21). This publication is not intended to provide personal or legal advice.

Minor changes to punctuation and grammar may have been made to articles for better reading.

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delivered you from the hand of Saul. I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!"

God Himself tells David that it was He who gave him Saul's wives. If the things God had given David were too little (this includes wives), He would have given him more. If polygamy was contrary to God's divine plan for marriage, it does not make sense for Him to offer more wives to David. Also, if you read through the rest of that passage (:9-23), you will find that God's punishment of David and his household had nothing to do with polygamy, but rather it was because David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband.

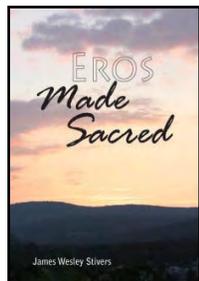
Another example is Genesis 29:31-30:24. It would take too long to discuss this passage in length (I discuss it in my book), but I bring it up to make you aware of how much God is involved in the growth of Jacob's family. He opens Leah's womb (Genesis 29:31), and she initially bears four sons. When she names them she praises the Lord for hearing and seeing her in her affliction. God is perceived as the One

blessing her. When Rachel remains barren she gives her handmaid to Jacob, and the children that Bilhah bears become Rachel's children. Leah also does the same thing when she stops childbearing and gives her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob. The wives themselves make this choice. Jacob does not simply take for himself (this is similar to Abraham's story when Sarah gives Hagar to him). When Leah bears again in :17, she exclaims in :18,

God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband.

Again, God is constantly perceived as being involved in childbearing. Then it's Rachel's turn. Verse 22 says,

Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.

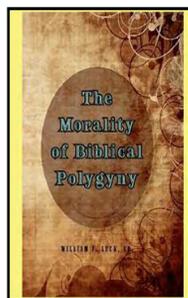


***Eros Made Sacred: or
The Biblical Case Made for Polygamy***

by — James Wesley Stivers
(originally published in 1991)
74 pages, PB. \$13 (See order form on back page.)

This book presents a clear biblical justification for polygamous marriage as sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures. The issue of polygamy is used to contrast current moral biases with those found in the Bible. First published more than 15 years ago, this thoughtful work has gone unrefuted. Provocative, instructional, challenging, edifying. The book chapters are:

- Polygamy: A Biblical Custom
- Objections Answered; In Favor of Polygamy
- The Ministry of the Patriarch
- Polygamy as a Tool of Christian Dominion
- Feminism, Monogamy and Witchcraft



The Morality of Biblical Polygyny

by — William F. Luck, Sr.
28 pages, PB. \$5 (See order form on back page.)

This is an amazing, courageous, contemporary work. William Luck is the son of Moody Bible Institute's Dr. G. Coleman Luck, Sr, Chairman of the Department of Theology, and a capable biblical scholar in his own right.

“God didn't ask me my opinion about the issue. He expected me to represent His. I've tried. If you can prove I'm mistaken, I'll be the first to thank you. But I'm not holding my breath in the meanwhile.” – the Author, from the Introduction

“To date [over twenty years after its original publication], I find the arguments ‘pro’ quite superior to those ‘con.’” – the Author, from the Conclusion

- The Background
- Laws That Imply the Moral Propriety of Polygyny
- Passages That Appear To Prohibit Polygyny
- The Association of Polygyny with Other Evils
- Alleged Prohibitions of Polygyny
- The Implications of “Adultery” in the “Vice Lists”
- Questions Concerning the Possibility of Moral Polygyny

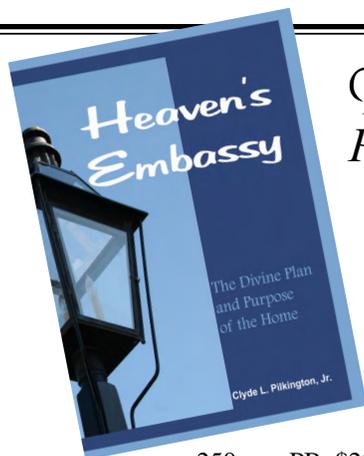
Some scholars argue that the language used to describe God's involvement is just simply how the people viewed their situation. It's not really what was going on. However, if we follow this kind of logic then we would have to doubt all of Scripture. With this same logic, every Christian perceives that he/she is saved because of Jesus's sacrifice, but this is not necessarily true. This is just what we want to believe. Now, we would argue that such a conclusion is false. So why is it that people assume that the OT is only a perception of truth but not a representation of truth itself? I hold to the belief that when Scripture indicates God's involvement, He was truly involved. You can make your own conclusions.

In I Samuel 1 God blesses Hannah, one of Elkanah's wives, with a son (Samuel) whom she dedicates to the Lord. This man becomes an important prophet in Israel's history. In II Chronicles 24:3 Jehoiada (a righteous priest) takes two wives for young king Joash. Again, if a person is deemed righteous, it does not make sense to say that their actions are sinful unless they are noted as such.

One of the most eye-opening passages of Scripture in my study of polygamy is Ezekiel 23. In this passage, the Lord (through Ezekiel) allegorizes the sins that Judah and Samaria have committed against Him. Let's take a look at :1-4.

The Word of the Lord came to me again, saying, "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; and they played the harlot in Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and there their virgin bosom was handled. Their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister. And they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. And as for their names, Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah."

Now, I am fully aware that this is NOT saying that the Lord is literally married to Judah and Samaria. The text is obviously allegorical to convey their abhorrent acts (continue reading the rest of the chapter). However, I am proposing that the Lord would not use a sinful depiction to describe Himself. The text explains how Oholah and Oholibah have committed adultery against the Lord. The only way for a woman to commit adultery against a man is if she's married to him. In this context it seems that God has depicted Himself as a polygamous husband to two women (Judah and Samaria) who eventually commit adultery against Him. Therefore I have asked myself, If polygamy is sinful, why would God describe Himself in this manner? If God describes Himself as a polygamous husband in the OT, it does not make sense to say that polygamy is a sin in the OT. As such, since God is both omniscient and immutable, it



Heaven's Embassy – The Divine Plan & Purpose of the Home

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it (Psalm 127:1).

This book represents many years of work. The author believes that it is one of the most important books that he will ever be privileged to write, simply because it is about one of the most vital scriptural subjects that could ever be addressed.

250 pp., PB. \$20 The home is central to all of God's dealings with man throughout the course of time. It is His Divine "institution" and "organization" on the earth; for the believer, it is the *Embassy of Heaven*. An embassy is **"the residence or office of an ambassador."** Since the believer is an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:14-21), his home is thus the *Divine Embassy* of heavenly ministry.

Pauline ministry is centered in the homes of believers. This is even the true sphere of the Body of Christ; for this reason our apostle speaks of *"church in thy house."* This book doesn't focus upon the *external* specifics of the ministry of *Heaven's Embassy* (such as *hospitality*); that will be saved for another volume. Instead, it looks at the inner-workings of the *Embassy* itself, focusing on its very nature, *internal* purpose and function. (See order form on back page.)



stands to reason that polygamy is not a sin in the NT. If I choose to believe otherwise, I fear that I would be questioning God's nature.

I understand that polygamy is a taboo topic, but the main question I have had to ask myself is, Does the Bible prohibit polygamy, or is it my culture's prohibition of polygamy that gets inserted into biblical interpretation and the text itself? This question is not only relevant for polygamy but for any topic. I am accountable for what I hear, read, teach and believe. If I don't take the time to understand what Scripture has to say (or not say) about polygamy, my decisions and interpretations (particularly on the mission field) can continue to have a negative impact on cultures that practice polygamy. In many cases over the last 100+ years, missionaries have either suggested or demanded that polygamous husbands divorce all but their first wife if they want to be baptized or participate at all in the church. This has led to devastating results. Some wives have had no other option than to become prostitutes to take care of themselves. In a number of these cultures most men do not want to marry a divorced woman (divorce is often viewed as dishonorable), which is quite a foreign concept for Western societies. Divorce also has a negative impact on children who are either torn from their father and live with their poor mother (and possibly her extended family) or are torn from their mothers and live with their father. I'm not writing this to be condemning but rather to illustrate that if we interpret Scripture based on our cultural values, rather than biblically-founded values, there may be serious con-

sequences. People have already interpreted Scripture in this way about divorce, abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, etc. In this present age, Scripture has become whatever we want it to say, and this mindset carries many dangers. 

TOPICS: Book Reviews

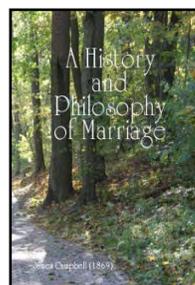
SCRIPTURE: II Samuel 12:7-23; Genesis 29:31-30:24; Ezekiel 23:1-4



Lauren K. Heiligenthal has earned her B.A. in Intercultural Studies and a minor in TESOL from *Lee University* (Cleveland, TN) and completed her MAR in Biblical Studies from *Cincinnati Christian University*. Lauren has participated in missions work in Hungary, Romania, Peru, Thailand and South Africa.

Her book, *Evaluating Western Christianity's Interpretation of Biblical Polygamy*, is available from (also see ad in this issue):

<http://www.patriarchpublishinghouse.com/>



A History and Philosophy of Marriage: Polygamy and Monogamy Compared

by — James Campbell

(originally published in 1869)

142 pages, PB. \$20 (See order form on back page.)

A reprint of Christian philanthropist James Campbell's classic work, originally published in 1869 in Boston, Massachusetts.



Patriarchs' Journal

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A literal wealth of study material on the biblical family. In addition to personal use, it can be used for teaching material, or for family reading times. It also serves as a great reference work as it has an issue, article, author, topic and Scripture index.

Patriarchs' Journal is dedicated to the definition, defense, support and encouragement of the God-ordained family as an autonomous, sovereign entity that existed before civil governments and religious organizations, and is independent of their approval and direction. (See order form on back page.)

Love Wherever Your Feet Are

by — Dan Sheridan

Where are your feet right now? Love on that very spot. When you move from that spot to another, love there. Repeat every step. This is what the Apostle Paul encouraged us to do:

Walk in love ... (Ephesians 5:2).

The Greek word for “walk” is *peripate* . It’s a verb which means, “to tread all around,”¹ “to walk about.”² It refers to every sphere of life that you occupy at any given moment. So wherever your feet are, love. Every square inch of human life was designed for love.

1. James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*.
2. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*.

What is love? The Greek word is *agap* . It’s a noun which means,

A complex emotion arousing appreciation or delight in and desire for the presence of its object, as well as to please and promote its welfare.³

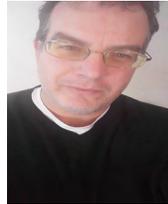
Love is defined by giving of yourself for others. This word is to be distinguished from mere *affection*, which is aroused by the qualities of its object, while *agap* love may go out to the utterly unworthy.

Paul finishes his statement by saying,

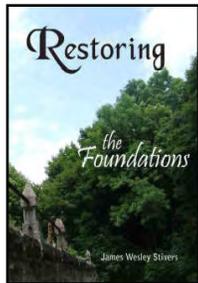
Walk in love as Christ loves you and gives Himself for us. 

TOPICS: Major: Fruit of the Spirit; Love
SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:2

3. A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Keyword Concordance*.



Dan – husband, father, and grandfather – is a dedicated, independent student and teacher of Scripture and history. For many years he has traveled the country teaching Bible and history classes at public schools, home-school gatherings, political events, Colleges, Churches, conferences, and other public meetings, as well as on several radio stations.



Restoring the Foundations: *Essays in Relational Theology*

by — James Wesley Stivers
(originally published in 1995)
94 pages, PB, \$13

A companion book to *Eros Made Sacred*, this is a study of the Christian Man’s relation to God, woman, his children, his firstborn, social order, etc. (See order form on back page.)

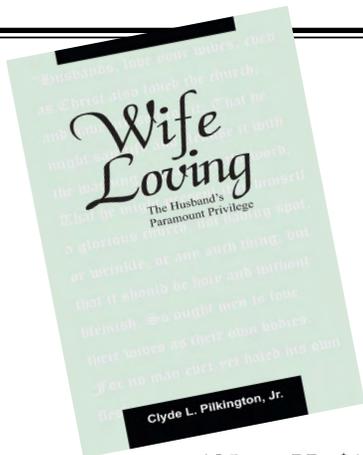
Wife Loving: The Husband’s Paramount Privilege

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

This book is about Christ-mentored husbandry; a look at husbands’ important and honored role of loving their wives. So lofty and divine is its pursuit, Paul presents none other than Christ Himself as the mentor: “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.*”

“What wonderful thoughts. They are so true and practical. I love it!” – *The Netherlands*
“I have seldom read so much wisdom on marriage in relation to biblical principles.” – *Denmark*

“Powerful, powerful stuff! As a woman I am honored by it. I am deeply grateful for your boldness to honor women and to portray the marriage relationship as simply yet profoundly as God intended.” – *CA* (See order form on back page.)



185 pp., PB, \$10

Sharing More than a Meal

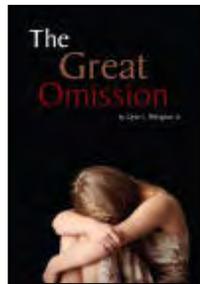
by — Peter G. Rambo, Sr.

The TV or print ads concerning aid for the hungry weigh heavily on the average person's conscience. We are often quickly moved to open a checkbook or make a donation. Many churches or home fellowships have a system to help the known needs of those in the community. Most would react quickly and easily if they knew of a local family without food. We are familiar with James' admonition,

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (2:15-16).

Or, in more modern English,

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?



The Great Omission: *Christendom's Abandonment of the Biblical Family*

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

204 pages, PB. \$15 (See order form on back page.)

This book presents twenty years of study, taking a candid look at the issue of multiple wives in Scripture and society. The book chapters are:

- The Problem: The Sad, Ignored Epidemic
- The Divine Provision
- The Marital Gift
- The Old Testament Scriptural Precedent
- The New Testament Scriptural Precedent
- The Religious System's Destruction of the Biblical Family
- The History of Its Practice
- The Cultural Issue
- The Benefits of Plural Marriage
- Who Is Immoral?

This book also has 14 appendices.

We know that everything that we have comes from the Father and that we are merely obedient stewards.

What if the need is a bit more? Maybe the neighbor's only vehicle is broken down and you have two? Do you loan them a vehicle while they work things out?

How about something even bigger? You find out that you are a perfect match as a kidney donor for someone who desperately needs a good kidney. Are you willing to part with one, or, like James rebukes in the verses above say, "I'll pray that God provides you with a kidney donor."?

Most of us are quite familiar with at least one bigger need, but instead of taking serious steps to fill it, we say, "I'll pray for you. May God help you in this area ..."

Numerous books, Clyde Pilkington Jr.'s [The Great Omission](#) being one of the best, detail from one angle or an-



www.BiblicalFamilies.org

Biblical Families

Biblical Families is a ministry dedicated to encouraging and strengthening Biblical marriages, including, but certainly not limited to, plural marriage. We see

plural marriage as a good, and caring, option for believers – ensuring that no one need be left without a family.

Biblical Families places a strong emphasis on fellowship and supporting each other, as per the New Testament, and organizes national retreats and regional meetings.

Our website includes many helpful resources:

- Online Articles
- Discussion Boards
- Newsletters
- Retreat Information
- Local contacts
- Links to other helpful resources

other the blindingly obvious fact that single marriageable women in the church far outnumber single marriageable men. Most of those women ask for prayer all of the time as they deal with the weight of single parenthood, daily tasks and provision, security and loneliness. As a class of people, they have clearly defined needs.

The response from the Body of Christ is uniformly, “I’ll pray for you.”

But, what if you are a stable loving family with the means and ability to “take the leap” and become the covering and solution for some lady’s need? What if you have studied the Scriptures and are convinced that plural marriage is righteous and acceptable before God? Is it sin to then turn a blind eye and “let someone else take care of the problem?” Is it sin to say, “I see it in Scripture, but I just can’t do it?” At what point are we held accountable for ignoring the needs of those around us?

This is very hard material to consider, but maybe knowing what we know obligates us to share more than a meal.

Marinate. 

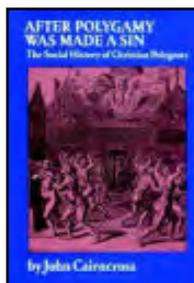
TOPICS: Singles; Widows

SCRIPTURE: James 2:15-16



Peter, 52, married for 28 years to Kelly and the father of four boys, is a graduate of Columbia Biblical Seminary (M.Div.), as well as a combat veteran, Airborne Ranger-qualified, former US Army officer. With 17 years of ministry experience, providing leadership to a home fellowship, he is the author of two books: *Repairing the Breach*

and *Ten Parts in the King*.



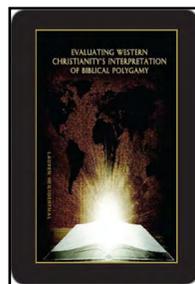
After Polygamy Was Made a Sin

The Social History of Christian Polygamy

by — John Cairncross

260 pages, PB. \$30

Cairncross contends in this fascinating historical analysis that it was when the Church became centered in Rome that “polygamy” became a “sin.” Based on rigorous research he demonstrates, however, that there is a strong underground polygamous Christian tradition, including support from such prominent figures as Milton, Newton, Spinoza and others. (See order form on back page.)



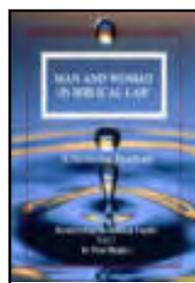
Evaluating Western Christianity's Interpretation of Biblical Polygamy

by — Lauren Heiligenthal

88 pages, PB. \$10

This book demonstrates that the popular Western worldview regarding marriage affects biblical interpretation. While most Western societies uphold monogamy as God’s ideal form of marriage, a number of other cultures practice polygamy. Western Christianity often perceives polygamy as a threat to the monogamist ideal; therefore, this book evaluates whether the Bible clearly advocates that polygamous men should become monogamous through divorce.

After interpreting Scripture through the lens of the biblical audience, this book then applies the interpretations from the five biblical texts to a modern situation involving polygamy. Since there is no biblical text that explicitly prohibits polygamy or promotes monogamy, this book argues that the interpretation of the monogamist ideal tends to derive from one’s worldview rather than the Bible. (See order form on back page.)



Man and Woman in Biblical Law

by — Tom Shipley

268 pages, PB. \$30

The goal of this book is to lay the foundation for the establishment of a truly biblical social order, especially within the community of Bible-believing, Christ-honoring families. The subject matter is patriarchy. The biblical exposition contained herein is devoted to establishing the proposition that it is patriarchy which was and is mandated by God ever since the original creation of man and woman. The scriptural discussion on polygamy here serves as a supporting role to the fundamental proposition of God-ordained and mandated patriarchy. (See order form on back page.)

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	<i>Morality of Biblical Polygyny</i>	Nwem	&7	aaaaaa
	<i>Patriarch's Journal Volumes:</i>			
	<i>Volume 1 (Issues 1-9)</i>		&37	aaaaaa
	<i>Volume 2 (Issues 10-18)</i>		&37	aaaaaa
	<i>Restoring the Foundations: Essays in Relational Theology</i>	Uvkxgtu	&35	aaaaaa
	<i>Wife Loving</i>	Rknmkp i vqp	&32	aaaaaa

Uwdvqvcn"aaaaaa"

Ucngu"Vcz"*8 ' "RC+"aaaaaa"

U (J "WU<"37 ' "/"&50; ; " o kp0+"aaaaaa"

VQVCN"aaaaaa"

Pcog<"aaaaaa"

Cfftguu<aaaaaa"

Ekv{aaaaaa"Uvcvg"aaaaaa"\kraaaaaaa"

Rjqpg"*aaaaaa+"aaaaaa"aaaaaa""G/o ckn"aaaaaa"

METHOD OF PAYMENT" "Ejgem"" "Oqpg{"Qtfgt"" "Xkuc"" "Ocuvgtectf"" "Fkueqxt"" "C o Gz

Etgfkv"qt" Fgdkv"Ectf" Pw o dgt<"aaaaaa""aaaaaa""aa aaaaaaa""aaaaaa"

Gzrktcvkqp"aaaaa" 1 "aaaaa""5/Fkikv"Ugewtkv{"Eqfg"aaaaaa"