

Ethics

All which the said Thomas Clarke does hereby promise and *bind* himself to all of and perform as a *covenant* upon their marriage.

The marriage covenant between Clarke and Nicholls is *ethical*. Both parties are responsible to provide certain tangible items. But again it should be underscored that the Lord was the final authority of this covenant. They were living according to some sort of transcendent *law*. Recalling what we said about the ethical character of the covenant in the last chapter, ethical stands in contrast to magical. We can work our way into the significance of this distinction with our "totem pole" analogy.

Mormonism is a classic example of a modern religion that has a magical view of authority, since it believes that man evolves and becomes a "god" on other planets.⁵ Lorenzo Snow, former president of the Mormon Church, said, "As man is, God once was: as God is, man may become."⁶ This is a totem-pole religion. It has a "chain of being" view of life and the world. This means the family plays an important role, and specifically the father. The following diagram is somewhat like the totem-pole analogy used earlier. This time we will not draw a totem pole, just a column representing the static, vertical, continuum of life.

CHAIN OF BEING VIEW OF FAMILY

| | |
|---|--|
| GOD | |
| FATHER (HIS SEED POSSESSES BEING OF GOD) | FAMILY VIEWED AS CENTRAL INSTITUTION |
| STATE | OTHER INSTITUTIONS HAVE LESS BEING. THEY MUST GO THROUGH THE "PATRIARCH" TO GET TO GOD. |
| CHURCH NON BEING (NO FAMILY) | |

5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1958), pp. 346-47.

6. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, 1965), p. 178.

In the diagram, the reader should notice that the father is the "link" between god and the rest of the family. Remember that since god is in time and part of creation, the father is a *physical* extension. He contains within him the "stuff" out of which god is made. When he impregnates his wife, he is passing the spark of the "divine" into her womb. The pantheon of the gods is being extended. As one Mormon leader said, "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy."⁷ Brigham Young even said,

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed unto me—namely that Adam is our father and our *God* . . .

"Well," says one, "Why was Adam called Adam?" He was the first man on the earth, and its framer and maker. He with the help of his brethren, brought it into existence. Then he said, "I want my children who are in the spirit world to come and live here. I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state. I was faithful, I received my crown and exaltation."⁸

This is a magical, perverse view of the family. Adam is "God," as well as man. Each male is infused with Adamic deity. His children are "spirit babies," brought into existence by procreation, and so sex deifies humanity.

There are many ramifications, but the governmental and ethical ones are of particular interest. If the father is deity in the home, then the way to god is through the father. Ultimately, the way to god is through sexual union with the male. The hope of the female is to find a man who can impregnate her with the very "being" of god. This is one of the reasons that Mormons have so many children. They are literally putting, according to their theology, little Mormon "gods" on the earth.

Also, since the father is the divine connection between heaven and earth, his authority is *absolute*. It cannot be contradicted. For example, Mormon books on the role of father and mother, like *Man of Steel and Velvet* and *Fascinating Womanhood*, give the father *absolute* authority.

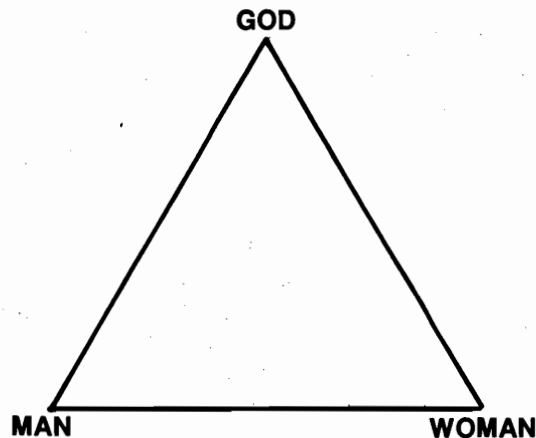
Biblical authority is not this way. The authority of the home is

7. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 269.

8. *Deseret News*, June 18, 1873, p. 308. Cited in *Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 179. Emphasis added.

God, not the father. Whatever the father has is delegated to him. He is a *representative* of God, not an extension of Him. There are *checks and balances*. He *might sin*, and ask his family to do the wrong thing. So, there is a time to disobey the father. The Biblical example is the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1ff.). Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, and asked his wife to follow him in his disobedience. Because she obeyed her husband, she was executed by God.

The Biblical picture of authority is perhaps best illustrated with a triangle. God is at the top of the pyramid. Father, mother, and children have access to and are directly responsible to God. The father is the legal representative as opposed to magical leader. The father has certain limits and checks and balances on him.



The clearest check and balance is that the family can appeal the decisions of the father. Where? In the Church court (I Cor. 6:1ff.), and if civil matters are involved, in the State. Take the Biblical example of Ananias and Sapphira. Because Sapphira had an opportunity to contradict her husband in front of the officers of the Church, this means the Church is a higher court, an appeals court for the family. Significantly, this legal structure broke up the old clan system of Europe. When Christianity began its trek across this barbaric part of the world, there was a constant "Hatfield vs. McCoy" type of feuding. The family had absolute power to convict and even execute its own members. The Church broke down the clans through its court system. It argued that the father does not have

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absolute authority. The check and balance on his power is the court of the Church.

Such a system developed because the marriage covenant is ethical. The historical marriage covenant, by the fact that there is a set contract, limits the powers of the father, and the mother for that matter. They could not do anything they wanted with each other, or with their children. There were ethical boundaries that defined the limits of their power.

Unfortunately, there are Christians in places of great influence today who continue to teach a clan view of the family, a kind of "almost Mormonism." They do not acknowledge the Protestant principle of *multiple authorities*. They teach that the father's word is law, that a pagan father can, for example, keep a Christian son from marrying a Christian woman, no matter what the girl's parents say, or the son's and girl's church courts say. This simply transfers to the father the kind of authority which the Roman Catholic Church officially invests in the Pope. A father becomes a final court of earthly appeal, one who can veto a marriage. This is radically anti-Biblical. There are always multiple human courts that are established by God to speak in God's name, and no single earthly governmental authority has a monopoly on speaking God's covenantal word, and therefore absolute authority to create or dissolve a marriage.

Sanctions

In witness of all which, the said Thomas Clarke has signed and sealed this present writing to Peter Oliver and William Bartholmew of Boston, for the use and behoof of the said Alice Nicholls. Dated this twentieth day of January 1664.

"Signing and sealing" is a process of sanctioning. Both parties of this early American marriage covenant are taking a solemn *oath*. The example being used is similar to other documents of that era. There was some sort of ceremony; there was the actual "cutting" of the covenant, just as we have already seen in Deuteronomy. It is still today called a *wedding ceremony*. In our society, all three institutions participate in it. The minister officiates at the ceremony because the Church is the "guardian" of marriage. The families draw up the contract. The State is a witness because marriage is an institution of *society* as well. In the event there is a divorce, or the settlement of the family's estate, the State may be drawn into the legal process. So marriage does not belong exclusively to any of these institutions.