FIFTY YEARS OF UNITED ORDER IN MEXICO

By Thomas Murphy

THE HISTORY of Mormonism in Mexico reached a new landmark early in 1997 when Colonia Industrial, a United Order community founded by Margarito Bautista Valencia, achieved its fiftieth successful year. Second, third, and fourth generations of Mexican Mormons in Colonia Industrial are celebrating through sermons and activities that remind them of their legacy. Colonia Industrial, a small, unimposing, exclusive colony of Mexican Mormons, lies in the municipio of Ozumba at the base of Popocatepetl, an active volcano in the central valley of Mexico.

With over a century of Mormon history in the area, Ozumba figured prominently in the early decades of Mormon proselyting in Mexico. In 1881, LDS apostle Moses Thatcher led missionaries and converts to the top of Popocatepetl and dedicated Mexico for the preaching of the gospel. These missionaries met some success in Ozumba where in that same year they founded the second LDS branch in Mexico. By 1937, the LDS church in Mexico split in two after efforts by Mexican Mormons to obtain greater access to education, translated materials, and temple work, and after local leadership had failed to gain the desired response from LDS church leaders in Utah. The new Mormon group, known as the Third Convention, consisted of one-third of the Mexican Mormons and operated independently of the LDS church for nearly a decade. Eventually, the convenionistas reconciled with Church leaders, and a majority of the members of the Third Convention returned to the LDS fold. Two smaller groups, however, remained independent. Lorenzo Cuautitl led a congregation of convenionistas in San Gabriel Ometozzla Puebla, which refused to reconcile with the LDS church. They took the name of La Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de la Plenitud de los Tiempos (The Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Fullness of Times). Margarito Bautista encouraged convenionistas to move to Ozumba, where he established Colonia Industrial in 1947 as a place of gathering for Mexican Mormons who desired to live the fullness of the gospel, i.e., the United Order and plural marriage.

Bautista and his followers continued to call themselves Mormons, but for legal purposes, they established a church now known as El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud (The Kingdom of God in its Fullness). Sought out by other polygamists, Bautista associated his small community with fundamentalist leader Joseph W. Musser. Musser's appointment of Bautista as an apostle of the Council and his promotion of Rulon Allred angered some fundamentalists and eventually led to a schism among Mormon fundamentalists in 1951. Bautista and his followers remained associated with the Allred faction but continued to maintain a substantial degree of autonomy until Bautista's death in 1961.

Despite predictions that the group would flounder after Bautista's death, community members continued to practice with considerable autonomy the fullness of the gospel as outlined by Bautista. Today, the Kingdom of God claims approximately nine hundred members, seven hundred of which live under the United Order in Colonia Industrial. In the early years, most members encountered prejudice outside their community and employment and security within. In recent years, their success in obtaining employment outside of the community has improved. Nonetheless, local committee members continue to coordinate financial and labor contributions to the community.

The people of Colonia Industrial have faced considerable challenges, but their successes demonstrate that the communitarian spirit still lives and thrives in places far from the Great Basin. Beautifully decorated and well-built brick and wooden homes have replaced the small huts that pioneering peasants with minimal resources constructed amidst prejudice and discrimination from both Catholics and Latter-day Saints in Ozumba. Regular harvests of corn and wheat exemplify the success of communally managed agricultural lands. In the center of Colonia Industrial, on the street named for Joseph Smith, stands an ornate temple, an endowment house, a product of the community efforts. Next to the temple, members have begun constructing a large new chapel supported by donations of money and labor.

While the enormous growth of the LDS church in Mexico (720,000 members in 1995) dwarfs the small offshoot in Colonia Industrial, these Mexican Mormons' tenacious adherence to the principles of the United Order and plural marriage is a tribute to the testimony and fervor of their founder, Margarito Bautista Valencia.

OURCES CONSULTED

Balderas, David Dominguez. Interview with author, 14 August 1996.
Balderas, Juan Dominguez. Interview with author, 15-17 August 1996.
"Stronger Than Ever": Remnants of the Third Convention

Thomas W. Murphy, University of Washington

Standing at the intersection of the paved streets named after Joseph Smith (the Mormon prophet) and Miguel Aleman (the Mexican president) I could see several well-built homes, each with an automobile parked nearby, a partially constructed church serving as a communal work-project, a communal factory for manufacturing bricks, and numerous children working or playing in the streets. Peering over a high brick wall, I could barely see the spires of a sacred building that some people told me was a temple and others called an endowment house. I came to this community, Colonia Industrial, hoping to find and interview relatives of Marganto Bautista, a dissident Mormon theologian from central Mexico. To my continued on page 8
eulogy to Zion’s Camp and the cholera victims, followed by the unveiling of the new monument. Representatives of Restoration church groups in the area will be invited to participate in laying a wreath at the monument.

The realization of this long awaited monument is a result of a collaborative effort by the Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation, 1997, with valuable assistance from Mound Grove Cemetery, Johnson and Sons Monument Company, RLDS Church, LDS Church, and numerous interested individuals.

This project is part of MMFF’s master plan to place suitable historical markers at significant Missouri Mormon history sites around Independence, Jackson County, and the state of Missouri.

We believe interested individuals and family descendants of the deceased will appreciate an opportunity to be a part of this exciting project.

Annual membership fees for MMFF are $12.00. Benefits of membership include a quarterly newsletter and “visiting scholars” lectures. MMFF is a not-for-profit foundation recognized by the State of Missouri and the Federal Government. Donations to MMFF for the Marker Fund will be appropriately receipted and are tax deductible. Send donations to MMFF Marker Fund, c/o Drew Henson, MMFF Treasurer, P.O. Box 3186, Independence, MO 64055. Please be as generous as possible in your support of this and related efforts to mark important Missouri “Mormon” history sites. For more information about how you can be involved, or for additional information about MMFF activities contact MMFF President, Ron Putz at 816-228-3512, E-mail: <pahoran@juno.com>; or MMFF Secretary William Curtis at 816-833-3065, E-mail: <curtis@kcnet.com>; MMFF Homepage- www.sunflower.org/~ronromig/mmffhp.htm.

Oil Branch Completed. The New Covenant Church of God reports that the Olive Branch was handed to the publishers on 15 July 1997 with expected finished copies of the book to be available mid-September 1997. The book—years in the process—contains 470 revelations, commentary, index and micropaedia covering some 1160 pages in all.

For further information on purchasing a copy, etc., contact the church directly. They are listed in the address directory in this issue.

“Stronger Than Ever”
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surprise, I found myself standing in the center of a thriving colony consisting exclusively of over 700 Mexican Mormons practicing the United Order and plural marriage.

I first became interested in the writings of Margarito Bautista after reading LaMond Tullis’ Mormons in Mexico. Tullis reported that Bautista had been a prolific writer and expounder of Mormon theology in the early twentieth century. Interested in indigenous interpretations of the Book of Mormon, I acquired a copy of Bautista’s La Evolucion de Mexico: Sus Verdaderos Progenitores y su Origen, El Destino de America y Europa. Bautista’s treatise, which Tullis reported may have been more popular in some Mexican congregations than the Book of Mormon itself, whetted my appetite. Bautista, who wrote more like an Old Testament prophet than an agricultural laborer, blended an enticing and fascinating Mexican nationalism with an apocalyptic reading of LDS theology. I was convinced at that time that if Bautista had not been excommunicated for participation in the Third Convention that he may very well have been recognized as a preeminent theologian of Mormonism in Mexico.

Born on the 10th of June, 1878 in San Miguel Atlaautla, Mexico, Margarito Bautista joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1901 when he was baptized by Ammon Tenney, an LDS missionary who had resided in his home. In 1903 he moved to the LDS colonies in Chihuahua where he lived among many of the people who had moved to Mexico to escape the repression of polygyny by the U.S. government. Bautista studied English in the colonies, a facility which would prove beneficial when he moved to Utah in 1913. While living in Utah he worked in the temple and gained a strong interest in genealogy. His interest in genealogy brought him back to Mexico during the mid-1920s where he collected the necessary data to complete the temple work for major Mexican heroes. Back in Utah, Bautista, with only an elementary school education, began compiling his thoughts in a book that would become La Evolucion de Mexico. Disappointed but undaunted by the LDS church’s refusal to publish or endorse his treatise, Bautista returned to Mexico in 1935 where Apolonio B. Arzate, an LDS printer, agreed

Back in the central valley of Mexico Bautista encountered the Third Convention which was in the process of petitioning the LDS church in Utah for local Mexican leadership, translation of complete copies of the scriptures and other doctrinal works into Spanish, access to temples, and educational programs for Mexican children (like those found in the northern colonies settled by Anglos from the Great Basin). With his vast knowledge of LDS theology, acquired during his forays in the northern colonies and Utah, Bautista was recruited by leaders of the Third Convention as a knowledgeable representative. Although Bautista turned down leadership positions within the Third Convention he became widely known within the Convention and along with the other leaders of the Third Convention, he was eventually excommunicated for rebellion, insubordination, and apostasy in 1937 by LDS authorities (Tullis 1987; Lozano Herrera 1983; Dominguez Balderas, Juan 1996).

The leaders of the Third Convention soon expelled Bautista because he sought doctrinal justification for the schism by raising controversial issues such as the LDS abandonment of polygamy and the consecration of property. Most convencionistas rejected Bautista's more radical ideas. Although Tullis reported that a number of people followed Bautista to Ozumba where he established an independent colony, Tullis told me in 1994 that he did not think that the colony still existed. Agricol Lozano Herrera (1983) reported, furthermore, that after Bautista's death in 1961 the colony had almost disappeared.

An unrelated opportunity to work on an ethnobiology project in the southern Sierra region of Oaxaca brought me to Mexico during the summer of 1996. During a break from my efforts to learn a Zapotec language, and collect and document the plant and animal species of the Miahuatlán district of Oaxaca, I ventured off on my own to visit Ozumba and see if I could find anyone who still remembered or had been involved with the Bautista movement.

Ozumba sits near the base of the famous volcano Popocatepetl. Ozumba is a municipio, the Mexican analog of a county seat with a number of smaller communities (called colonias) in the surrounding area. I arrived by bus and collective taxi. I found out quickly that on Tuesdays the traveling market occupies the main plaza and the streets within several blocks. Carrying my luggage and a backpack, I maneuvered among the vendors who were selling fruits, vegetables, clothes, shoes, watches, toys, and various other items; and made my way towards the central plaza, stopping occasionally to ask for directions.

While there were plenty of tourists and anthropologists wandering around Oaxaca City, Huatulco, San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico City, and many of the other places I had visited that summer there were none in Ozumba. Still the community was quite unlike San Pedro Mixtepec, also off the tourist track, deep in the Sierra mountains where I had spent much of my time during the previous two months. Unlike San Pedro, the streets were paved, the houses were much larger, there were video stores, pharmacies, medical clinics, print shops, and grocery stores.

I found the only hotel in town just off the central plaza. I only needed a place to rest at night and to leave my luggage during the day. Jesus, the "patron" of the hotel was gracious and friendly despite my rejection of his offer to get me a prostitute, who it turned out noisily treated clients in the room next to mine. Changing the subject from prostitution, I asked Jesus about the churches in town. He told me that there were six Catholic churches including the ex-convent on the main plaza. He said there were about four evangelical churches in town. When I asked specifically about Mormons, he said that they had some of those, in fact, Jesus noted the
Mormons had their own colony nearby.

An independent colony sounded like just the sort of place I was looking for so I asked if this colony had any association with Margarito Bautista. Immediately recognizing the name, the patron called Bautista a mujeriego (womanizer) who he noted had even had “four wives.” Jesus had trouble recalling the name of the colony but said he thought it was called Colonia Alzate.

The following day I sought directions to Colonia Alzate. When I found it was only a fifteen minute walk from the center of Ozumba I set out on foot with my olive green backpack in which I carried a copy of Bautista’s Evolucion de Mexico and Tullis’ Mormons in Mexico. I followed Calle Alzate south out of town. There was no break in occupation along the street except for the large public school building on the eastern side of the street. No signs indicated at which point I may have reached Colonia Alzate but I could see that if I proceeded much further that I would reach the main highway that stretched from Cuautla, Morelos to Amecameca, Mexico. Only by inquiring of a passersby on the street was I able to determine that I had finally reached Colonia Alzate.

I entered a small store and told the attendant that I was looking for relatives of Margarito Bautista who had lived in the area forty or fifty years ago. The response I received was only bewildered looks so I mentioned that he had been associated with the Mormons. That got a response, but only to point out that I was in the wrong colony. They said I wanted Colonia Industrial, a neighboring community to which I quickly obtained directions.

Immediately, I recognized Colonia Industrial as the name listed on various publications of Margarito Bautista so I knew I must be headed in the right direction. Up to this point I was not at all sure that I was going to encounter anyone. Skeptics in Mormon scholarly circles had suggested that there was no longer an active group associated with Bautista. Nonetheless, I was convinced by the strength of his writings and by the suggestions of a few e-mail correspondents who said they knew people who knew people who claimed to be associated with Bautista, that there must be somebody left around the area who had been involved with Bautista. What I was about to encounter, though, exceeded all of my expectations!

I walked across the bridge between Colonia Alzate and Colonia Industrial. As I walked along the street I passed a brick factory, a large construction site, and then stopped in front of a high white wall behind which I could barely see the top of an elegant and ornate white building. Two boys stood in the street sweeping. I asked them where I could find relatives of Margarito Bautista. They said that I should ask a woman who was approaching. When I asked the woman she told me that she was new in town but asked me to wait while she consulted with some men working at the construction site.

When the woman came back she said that the bishop was not home. I asked to speak with someone else and so she led me to the home of the first counselor in the bishopric. At the door I introduced myself as an anthropologist who was interested in writing a book about Margarito Bautista. David Dominguez Balderas, the man who answered the door, asked me questions about where I was from, what my association with Mormonism was, how I had heard about them, etc. Finding my answers satisfactory he invited me in.

We sat in his living room and talked about Margarito Bautista and the community for a couple of hours. While we were talking, several of his wives and children came and went, occasionally joining in the conversation. I learned that the group not only had not disappeared but was thriving. There are over 700 people in Colonia Industrial, 100% Mormon and 100% Mexican. Another 200 members lived in Puebla and as far away as Utah and Arizona. When I told David that scholars reported that Bautista’s group had disappeared, he asked me to tell scholars of Mormon history that “somos mas fuerte que nunca” (“we are stronger than ever”).

Colonia Industrial’s religious institution is legally recognized as El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud (The Kingdom of God in its Fullness) but the members prefer to call themselves Mormons. The community practices both the laws of consecration and celestial marriage. Members consecrate all property to a civil organization which oversees the community property. The communal organization deeds individual titles back to families on the basis of need. This civil organization has legal arrangements to prevent the sale of any of the land to non-Mormons outside of the community. The civil organization owns agricultural lands and three communal factories. All members have the guaranteed security of employment, home, and subsistence.

David gave me a tour of the community. The relative affluence of Colonia Industrial compared to the
indigenous community in which I had been working in Oaxaca impressed me. The streets were paved, the homes were sturdy and medium sized, and each home appeared to have an automobile nearby. By Mexican standards this communal society was doing remarkably well. Many of the people work outside the community as lawyers, doctors, and accountants. One person is even pursuing a Ph.D. in mathematics in England. Those who work outside the community donate their surplus to the community to support projects such as the new chapel which I saw them constructing. Others donate their labor as decided by local committees (Dominguez Balderas, David 1996).

I spent the next several days visiting with relatives and friends of Margarito Bautista such as Juan Dominguez Balderas and Anna Hernandez de Dominguez. I collected several hours of interviews with people who knew Bautista well and I obtained permission to return for a long-term ethnographic study of the community. I encountered some people who had spent some time living in Arizona and Utah. They told me that they recognized Owen Allred as a prophet and that the Musser and Allreds have been in Mexico on various occasions since the founding of Colonia Industrial in 1947.

Community members were not eager to discuss former relations with the LeBarons. Other sources, however, record extensive interactions between Margarito Bautista and the LeBarons, especially Ervil and Joel (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981; LeBaron 1981; Van Wagoner 1989; Altman and Ginat 1996). Although Bautista apparently converted the LeBaron brothers to fundamentalism, Bautista and his followers rejected the numerous prophetic claims that later emerged from members of the LeBaron family. By 1958 Bautista printed anti-LeBaron tracts on a printing press that Ervil and Joel had apparently donated to his community (Bautista 1958, 1961).

During a return trip to Ozumba in January of 1997, I learned that a second splinter group remained independent from the LDS church after the Third Convention reconciled with central authorities. Lorenzo Cuauhtli’s congregation in San Gabriel Ometeotzil, Puebla refused to accept the negotiated reconciliation and chose autonomy instead. Today they are known as La Iglesia de los Santos de la Plenitud de los Tiempos (The Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Fulness of Times) and claim approximately 300 members (Gomez 1997; Lozano Herrera 1983:81).

When compared in terms of numbers to the 720,000 members of the LDS church in Mexico (at the end of 1995) these two small indigenous remnants of the Third Convention appear rather insignificant. But to deny or minimize their existence is to overlook the impressive diversity spawned by the restoration during its first decades in the central valley of Mexico. Bautista’s followers did not disappear, they endured immense challenges and persecution from Latter-day Saints and Catholics alike, to create an impressive communal society that is thriving in the midst of greater Mexico’s embrace of neo-liberal economics in a world market.

Fifty years after peasants who collected and sold firewood for a living took up Bautistas challenge and founded Colonia Industrial, the relative affluence of their descendants and a few additional converts stands as a testament to the enduring influence of Margarito Bautista, Mexico’s first Mormon theologian.

Changed Faces: the Official LDS Position on Polygamy, 1890-1990

By Martha S. Bradley

Sunstone 14:1/26 (Feb 90)

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LEGRAND RICHARDS EPIGRAMIZED the contemporary Church's attitude toward polygamy in answer to the question, "What was the most significant development in the Church during your lifetime?" when he responded, "We have finally overcome the stigma of polygamy." In reviewing the one hundred years since the Manifesto in 1890 there is a conscious effort by Church leaders to remove the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from any association with polygamy.

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September 26, 1990, marks the centennial of the Manifesto ending the practice of polygamy. Yet the doctrine of polygamy remains a part of our mythic historical past and a continuing principle of the gospel. It is a subject of persistent interest to those watching the Church from inside and out. During this century the Church's attitude has changed dramatically, from one of actively advocating the practice of polygamy to one in which polygamists are feared as a threat to the integrity of the Church. In their contempt for twentieth century polygamists, Utah Mormons have become typical of conservative middle America.

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The changes in the Church's policy and attitude have been largely reactions, reflecting changed times rather than a change in doctrine. These adjustments also reflect a sort of "changing of the guard" in which a new generation of ecclesiastical leaders met the demands of the Manifesto by emphasizing the Church's American patriotism and loyalty to the laws and moral standards of American society.

Through this transition, the Church entered the mainstream of conservative American society.

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When Wilford Woodruff assumed leadership of the Latter-day Saints in 1890, the Church was in disarray. Most Church leaders were in prison or in exile. President John Taylor had died in hiding. The United States government had claimed the property of the Church and rejected five attempts at statehood. After years of resistance, in response to personal revelation, President Woodruff was willing to change.

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Originally, the Manifesto sought to end both the teaching and the practice of plural marriage without specifying Church punishment for the disobedient. Successive Church presidents assumed Saints would feel obligated to obey the measure when they considered its revelatory source. The Manifesto also declared the intention of the Church to comply with the laws of the land. Hence, the period of active civil disobedience sanctioned by John Taylor formally ended. The Manifesto created the first breach between the official Church body and the polygamist; by the mid-twentieth century that division would become both broad and deep.

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Interestingly, the document raised almost as many questions as it answered. Many Saints stubbornly refused to accept it as a revelation from God. Others were confused by its vague and ambiguous instructions for the future. In the event, General Authority-sanctioned secret polygamous marriages continued to be performed 1890-1904, although in greatly reduced numbers.

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In 1891, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles sent a petition to the president of the United States seeking amnesty for all violators of the federal anti-polygamy legislation. The petition, endorsed by a number of non-Mormons, including Utah territorial governor Arthur L. Thomas and Judge Charles S. Zane, was favorably received by President Benjamin Harrison. On 4 January 1893 he granted amnesty to all Saints who had been in compliance with the law since the Manifesto.

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After the amnesty there followed a carefully qualified truce between the government and the Mormon church, it could not be called an era of good will. To marry polygamously or to cohabit with more than one woman continued to be a state crime, despite efforts by the Utah State Legislature in 1901 to repeal the territorial cohabitation law which had been inadvertently codified into state statute.

The calm ended when polygamy again became the subject of heated debate during the Reed Smoot U.S. Senate confirmation hearings in 1904-1907. In response to the pressure generated by the publicity surrounding the hearings, and in an effort to re-emphasize the legitimacy of the revelations ending the practice, Church President Joseph F. Smith issued what is often called the "Second Manifesto" in April 1904. This document denied allegations that any new polygamous marriages had been sanctioned by the Church, and declared that from that time forward all violators would be excommunicated. The force of the Second Manifesto rested on the coercive power of the threat of excommunication rather than the persuasive power of divine revelation. As polygamists themselves, Joseph F. Smith and other General Authorities felt particularly strong pressure to prove their willingness to enforce the prohibition of polygamy. Both President Smith and Apostle Francis M. Lyman were chided on the witness stand at the Smoot hearings for not being firm enough with offenders.

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Although the official relationship between polygamy and the Latter-day Saints had been severed, polygamy was still a major concern of Church leaders. One indicator is the hardening of official policy in public addresses, including general conference talks by the First Presidency. The Church leaders slowly moved from advising against the practice to actively using excommunication. Their remarks shifted from preaching a faithful testimony of the principle (later without advocating its practice) to a secular detachment from the issue altogether, illustrating how far and how quickly the Church moved from its nineteenth century antecedents.

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In a 1907 general conference, President Joseph F. Smith gave a lengthy reiteration of the patriotic posture of the Church, emphasizing the constitutional question of freedom of religion as the justification for polygamy rather than the traditional emphasis on the revelatory nature of the principle. Smith said:

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What our people did in disregard of the law and the decisions of the Supreme Court affecting plural marriages was in the spirit of maintaining religious rights under constitutional guarantees, and not in any spirit of defiance or disloyalty to the government.

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According to him, the period of civil disobedience had ended when "every means of constitutional defense had been exhausted." It was only then that "the Church abandoned the controversy and announced its intention to be obedient to the laws of the land." Citing the twelfth article of faith, he pledged loyalty to the American system. What about the revelation and loyalty to God before country? What about the fourteen years between the Reynolds vs. the United States U.S. Supreme Court ruling and the Manifesto? What about Woodruff's personal battle with the idea? Apparently, by 1904 the Church's perspective on polygamy had somehow altered, perhaps as a result of the pressure generated by the Smoot hearings.
In any event shortly after the turn of the century the Church paraded a new aggressive patriotism before the nation.
Sunstone 14:1/27 (Feb 90)
The problem of polygamy, nevertheless, would not disappear.
Twenty years after the Manifesto, some ecclesiastical leaders both in and out of the Church were still performing plural marriages without the official sanction of the president of the Church. Again President Smith felt it was necessary to clarify the Church's position on plural marriage, to warn of the consequences of disobedience, and to increase vigilance in enforcing the policy. A 5 October 1910 First Presidency letter directed stake presidents to actively search out those who were actually performing plural marriages and had so far evaded detection. This letter was primarily directed against those who were bringing others into the practice, although it also prescribed punishment for those who only "advise" or "counsel." It was now very clear that continued adherence to the practice was no longer a matter of personal discretion; it had become a point of disloyalty to the Church and a failure to defer to the direction of the prophet. Disobedience was described as being "not only an individual transgression, but a dishonor to the Church as well."6
Sunstone 14:1/27 (Feb 90)
President Smith reminded Church leaders of those instructions again in 1911, and strengthened the directives by insisting that offenders be brought before Church courts. Subsequent operational instructions and policies were described as "precepts, regulations, and rules" rather than as doctrine or updated revelation. These letters of policy precursors of the "Handbook of Instructions" which was first circulated in the 1910s.
Sunstone 14:1/27 (Feb 90)
In a conference address in 1918, Charles W. Penrose, second counselor in the First Presidency, went beyond what had become the typical approach of using threats and making declarations of good faith and tried to explain more fully the doctrine of plural marriage to a new generation who were less familiar with the principle. Before the Manifesto, the principle was of central importance to Church doctrine and solidarity and was taught with a single-minded passion. In the thirty years since, a new generation had grown up in the Church which had at best ambiguous feelings for both the social and sacred nature of the practice. President Penrose's discourse discussed both aspects. Divided into two main sections, it clearly delineated the issues that would have enduring significance in the Church's future attitude toward the doctrine.
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
Penrose portrayed Mormon marriage—celestial marriage, or the holy patriarchal order—as a privilege through which men and women were sealed together by the holy order of God. Hence, the doctrine of celestial marriage articulated by Joseph Smith, Jr., continued to be taught after the demise of plural marriage, despite the fact that the two were so closely linked. The purpose of celestial marriage was an abundant and faithful progeny: "They shall increase, worlds without end, in their prosperity, in knowledge, in wisdom, in understanding, in dominion, in glory. . . ."7
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
Celestial marriage, he explained, is detailed in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and is therefore sanctioned as a commandment from the Lord. This scripture defines celestial marriage as marriage for "time and all eternity and a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of the highest degree of glory in the celestial world."8
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
Penrose then referred to another portion of that revelation which mentioned "further orders" of the holy order of marriage that were under "special direction." The power, authority, and keys to perform celestial marriages were located only in the hands of the president of the Church. "Read it carefully," he said:
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
The keys of that power are given to one man at a time on the earth, and you will see sometime, if you cannot now, the wisdom of that law. He holds the key of that power, and when he turns it, as Brother Woodruff did, it closes the door.9
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
The "further order" of the patriarchal order that Penrose referred to was plural marriage. In the nineteenth century the concept of plural marriage and the concept of celestial marriage or the patriarchal order were inextricably linked. This was still true in 1918. The issue in dispute between the official Church leadership and those practicing polygamy independently was the location of the power or "keys" to perform such marriages. Penrose reemphasized this point.
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
I want to refer to this as clearly as possible, and I find it necessary to do it because of some recent occurrences—when men go around and whisper in the ears of the people that this thing is all right if you can keep it secret, keep it from the man that holds the keys—Think of it!10
He then reiterated the position of Church Presidents Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith, who both said that at that time there was no man who was authorized to perform plural marriages on the earth.
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
Obviously the purpose of Penrose's message was to combat the rumors about alternate priesthood authority and to ruin the credibility of those claiming authority to continue the practice. Recognizing the vulnerability of the new generation to these claims he said:
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
Do not believe these stories that men who are seeking to indulge their own lust are circulating among the people, but try to guard the purity of our innocent girls, many of whom have never heard of such things, and these things are whispered in their ears by some designing person who is rebel against the Church of Christ.11
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
With Penrose's address the gulf between polygamists and the Church dramatically widened.
IN 1921 Church President Heber J. Grant bluntly addressed the subject of priesthood authority, making it absolutely clear that the official Latter-day Saint position was that the "keys" remained in the person of the president of the Church. Later, in an impassioned 1925 ruling, President Grant claimed that the very integrity of the Church was being impugned. He found it necessary to repeat these straightforward and candid warnings on at least four other occasions during his administration in an attempt to make his attitude so "clear, definite, and unequivocal as to leave no possible doubt."12
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
In a 1931 talk, Heber J. Grant introduced a new approach that would become standard procedure after 1950: namely, sidestepping the subject or polygamy to avoid unnecessary publicity.
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
We have hesitated somewhat to make public statements or denials to charges and false assertions published in literature sent out by administration, because we have felt that added publicity to their pernicious statements would be gratifying to them and probably useless in stemming their activity.13
Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90)
Another important reason for the change in the public dialogue on polygamy was the nature of the opposition. Beginning in the 1930s, the Church faced the more formidable power of organized fundamentalist polygamists who made alternative claims to the
priesthood authority to perform plural marriages. From then on, any public discussion of polygamy by Church leaders was directed to the fundamentalists who were actively recruiting and circulating literature that criticized the Church leadership and encouraged members to ignore the Manifesto.

Sunstone 14:1/28 (Feb 90) In 1933, because of renewed interest in the "corrupt, adulterous practices of the members of this secret, oathbound organization," a definitive "Official Statement" from the First Presidency was drafted by second counselor J. Reuben Clark and published in the Church News section of the Deseret News. This assertion of Church policy gave a careful accounting of the history of the controversy which had raged since the 1890 Manifesto. It summarized legal action, doctrinal support of the principle, and the continued practice of polygamy outside of Mormonism—again stressing the legal contractual nature of the marriage union and the legal discontinuation of

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) the principle, rather than the fact that it had once been evidence of obedience to a commandment of God. With an erudite candor typical of President Clark, the document virtually eliminated the possibility of misrepresentation of the Church's policy.

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) The "Official Statement" also clarified the LDS doctrine of celestial marriage. The First Presidency made a careful distinction between celestial marriage and polygamous marriage saying: "Monogamous marriages for time and eternity, solemnized in our temples in accordance with the word of the Lord and the laws of the Church, are Celestial marriages." The logic that had been so carefully constructed to justify plural marriage was being just as carefully dismantled.

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) WE do not know the private deliberations and motives of Presidents Smith, Grant or Clark which led them to heighten their pursuit of offenders of the rule. But there are at least three factors which are of obvious importance.

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) First, Church leaders must have tired of the continued harassment by the government and media, with their continued base accusations and distrust of motives. They probably were embarrassed by their impotency in stopping the practice.

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) Second, they wanted to resolve the constant confrontation with the fundamentalists whose strident claim to priesthood authority directly challenged the position of the prophet who, according to official Church policy and doctrine, had sole possession of the "keys of the sealing."

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) Finally, these men were surely affected in more personal ways as relatives and friends continued on a path that seemed to lead them from the fold. The highly publicized Church court of Alpha Higgs, President Grant's personal friend and colleague and also the general secretary of the Church's Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association and assistant manager of The Improvement Era, must have particularly grieved and embarrassed Grant. The Church excommunicated J. Reuben Clark's eighty-year-old uncle, John W. Woolley, for performing plural marriages, a double-edged sword which must have both personally saddened Clark and caused him great public embarrassment in his career in the East.

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) Concern over internal dissension prompted one rather extraordinary gesture in the 1930s when the Church subjected selected members to a loyalty oath. Obviously, the First Presidency was willing to try anything to stop the practice of polygamy. Local leaders required suspected fundamentalists to repeat the words:

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) I solemnly declare and affirm that I, without any mental reservation whatever, support the Presidency and Apostles of the Church; that I repudiate any intimidation that anyone of the Presidency or the Apostles of the Church is living a double life . . . That I denounce the practice and advocacy of plural marriage . . . and that I myself am not living in suchallethree marriage relationship.

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) The concept for the loyalty oath originated in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona where clusters of polygamous Mormons had gathered to live. Zion Park Stake President Claude Hirshi excommunicated twenty-one members of the Short Creek Branch for failing to sign a similar pledge. This series of excommunications led to the arrest and conviction of three polygamists, Price W. Johnson, Carling Spencer, and Sylvia Spencer, on charges of cohabitation. County Attorney Elmo Bollinger commented that "the officials of the regular (Mormon) Church were assisting to bring about the arrest and conviction of polygamists."17

Sunstone 14:1/29 (Feb 90) Directions to local ecclesiastical leaders included in the Handbook of Instructions for dealing with polygamists have changed very little since 1935. Instructions have always called for direct and immediate action—plural marriages are branded "adulterous relations" and are dealt with as such. In the 1934 Handbook particular attention was directed at those "teaching, encouraging, or entering into the practice of plural marriage. If, after prompt and diligent investigation, evidence of violation was found, immediate excommunication from the Church resulted. The gentler disciplines of probation or disfellowship were disallowed for such cases. The excommunicated polygamist could be re baptized only with special permission of the First Presidency. The new 1989 General Handbook of Instructions states that a disciplinary council (formerly Church court) is mandatory for "apostasy" by individuals who "continue to follow the teachings of apostate cults (such as those that advocate plural marriage) after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority. In such cases, excommunication may be necessary when repentance is not evident after counseling and encouragement." As in the past individuals excommunicated for "advocating or teaching the doctrines of apostate sects that practice plural marriage, or affiliating with such groups" must obtain First Presidency permission to be re baptized.18

Sunstone 14:1/30 (Feb 90) Surprisingly, there was never a temple recommend question specifically about polygamy. As early as 1946, however, questions about sustaining the General Authorities, and whether the applicant had any connection or sympathy with apostate groups, were intended to weed out fundamentalists. Whether they did in fact prevent polygamists from receiving recommends is debatable. Nevertheless the instructions to bishops were very clear: when a person was determined to be a believer in or practicing polygamy, he or she was to be uncategorically excommunicated and very definitely excluded from the Church's temples.

Sunstone 14:1/30 (Feb 90) BY 1940 the group named the Fundamentalists presented the most united threat to the Church from a schismatic group. Formed in 1929, the group still called themselves Mormons. The Fundamentalists ordained four excommunicated Mormons as leaders: J. Leslie Broadbent, John Y. Barlow, Joseph W. Musser, and Charles F. Zitting. In the 1940s the group was actively recruiting new members through public meetings and through their publication, Truth magazine. Earlier, when the group had been restrained about proselyting their beliefs, the government and the Church ignored them. However, when they appeared to be growing
and threatening the status quo, both the government and the Church took action to limit the organization.
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In 1944 Federal and State law enforcement officers in Utah, Idaho, and Arizona arrested forty-six polygamists. As in the judicial crusade of the 1880s and 1890s the charges against the polygamists were severe. Aside from polygamous living itself, the accusations included Mann Act and Lindbergh Kidnapping Law violations, mailing obscene literature, conspiracy, and finally the old catchall, cohabitation, which was the most obvious charge to level against members of the cult. The cohabitation cases were grouped together for appeal.
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Barlow vs. State et al. (1944) focused on the constitutional argument that cohabitation was a religious belief, and therefore protected by the freedom of religion clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Both the arguments and the proceedings had a familiar ring. They duplicated the polygamy trials of the 1880s, in which Mormon polygamists claimed protection under the U.S. Constitution. Also in the 1880s the government stretched the law in the effort to quash the practice. But this group of cases was different in a very important way. Not only did the state ostracize Barlow and his fellow defendants, but for the first time the polygamist faced prosecution without being able to claim the powerful sanction of the Mormon church. In fact, in an interesting twist of procedure, Mormon jurors seemed to pose a particular threat to the defendants in this case, and an effort was made to impeach them from service on the jury. The trial judge allowed Claude Barnes, the attorney for the defendants, to ask three questions about the juror's prior knowledge of the case:
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1. That some of the defendants had been excommunicated from said church for advocating or practicing polygamy; 2. That noone is ever excommunicated without a trial at which evidence is produced, and the member charged with misconduct is given an opportunity to defend; and 3. That judgement of excommunication is based on a finding that the communicant has been guilty of "teaching" preaching or practicing polygamy.19
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The defense counsel believed that the trial was over before it began because of the make-up of the jury, the Mormon church's support of the prosecution (as the polygamists perceived it), and what they called the "campaign against the group." Many of these accusations were false, or at best alarmist. There is, however, evidence that the Church did supply information to the prosecution and cooperated in the government's effort against the group. In a statement to the United Press which would later become part of the case file, Apostle Mark E. Peterson remarked:

The Church has actively assisted federal and state authorities in obtaining evidence against the cultists, and helping to prosecute them under the law. . . . Among the witnesses for the prosecution are men who have been appointed by the Church to search out the cultists, turning over such information as they gather to the prosecution for their use; these men have also been appointed by the Church to do all they can to fight the spread of polygamy.20
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At the time the Church was supplying information from its internal surveillance activities to the state attorney general it was publicly denying any part in the action. In these public statements the Church stressed that it had already dealt with the men in Church courts with the most severe punishment—excommunication. They also reasserted the importance of the separation of church and state.
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Similar procedures were used during the famous 1953 raids on the fundamentalist community of Short Creek, Arizona. Again, state and federal officials conducted the raids. At the time the Church made a firm public statement that it had no involvement in the official raid, and that it had already dealt with the fundamentalists in Church courts. The implication was, of course, that there was no connection between the Church and the raid. However, Arizona Governor Howard Pyle did keep Church leaders informed about every step of the planning and the execution of the raid. In daily phone calls to Elder Delbert Stapley, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Pyle shared details and information to ensure that the Church would not be offended by any of the steps taken. J. Reuben Clark and other Church leaders knew of the raid at least ten days in advance.21
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THE policies presented in the 1940 edition of the Handbook of Instructions reflected the effort to deal expeditiously with the Fundamentalist threat. The less specific attack against the individual polygamists was strengthened by directing future efforts against the source of their support and the center of power—those claiming to have continued authority to persist in the practice.
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Polygamists posed a threat to the Church in three basic ways. The Church's first concern was the question of loyalty. In many ways the Church was like a large family bound by doctrine, ordinance, and custom. But fundamentalist polygamists were openly and stridently disclaiming both the Church and the prophet. The schism between fundamentalists and the LDS church was like a bitter and destructive divorce in which both parties felt betrayed and misunderstood.
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A second concern of the LDS leaders was the numerical growth of the fundamentalist movement. Most new recruits to the group came from the ranks of the Church itself. As fundamentalists recruited Church members they increased in both strength and influence. This growth encouraged Church leaders to stress again the importance of keeping the members informed about the threats posed by polygamy so that "no one will be in ignorance of the falsity of the doctrines or of the illegality of the practices of this group, nor in doubt as to the spiritual falling away of its members and those who follow them, nor unaware of the Church's disciplinary measures which must be taken against them."22
Finally, Church leaders wanted to insure that the polygamists could not partake of any of the rights and privileges appertaining to members, particularly entry into the temples, payment of tithes (with its subsequent blessings), participation in the activities of the priesthood quorums or auxiliary organizations of the Church, or any other ward, stake, or Church activities.23 This measure served to socially and spiritually ostracize the polygamist from the official Church body. This rule sought to punish and to preserve the integrity of the sacred rites and ordinances for obedient members.
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It is a curious phenomenon that, while the individual fundamentalists scorned the Church for its "unrighteous" denial of the principle, at the same time many continued to believe in the importance of LDS temple work and other Church programs—taking enormous risks and making tremendous sacrifices to secure recommendations to enter the temples and to continue wearing the official temple garments. An uneasy connection persists, if at no more than an unconscious psychological level, between those who practice the principle and those who believe in the doctrine but not the practice.
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STARTING in the 1950s, Elder Mark E. Peterson aggressively worked to eliminate the practice of plural marriage by searching out the individual believer and utilizing surveillance techniques similar to those used by private investigators. After searching for and identifying a suspected polygamist, Elder Peterson encouraged local leaders to watch their homes, to follow them to meetings or other gatherings, and to question them about their unexplainable behavior. This information would then be used in a Church court.

The most obvious and immediate result of this reactionary crusade was the excommunication of a large number of fundamentalist polygamists. An important residual result of this campaign was that it discouraged many members from having healthy dialogue on the subject of polygamy. At a time when only one-sided discussion of polygamy prevailed, when differing viewpoints were misconstrued or seemed suspicious, the subject, in a very subtle but unmistakable way, became off-limits for members.

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For example, a 1976 letter from the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, Ezra Taft Benson, to his fellow General Authorities discussed how offenders were dealt with in a way that ultimately affected every member:

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We have had called to our attention the recent case of a man excommunicated for polygamy who reported that he had been told by his priesthood leaders that it made no difference whether he believed in polygamy and talked about it privately as long as he did not do so in Church meetings and classes.

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We suggest that the General Authorities be instructed to counsel local authorities on this subject while attending stake conferences. A member is subject to Church discipline for advocating plural marriage whether it is done in private or in public.24

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There is very fine line between the advocacy of an idea and simply discussing its favorable aspects. For many Saints, any form of discussion about polygamy was simply too difficult to handle.

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After 1950 Church leaders rarely mentioned the subject of plural marriage in general conference or in other public addresses to the Saints. When it was mentioned, as in a 1974 talk by Church President Spencer W. Kimball, another specialist in dealing with the fundamentalists, it was again to warn members not to associate with the various cults. Avoiding the subject rather than dealing with the questions it presented was one way to prevent confusion among the members or difficulties with the doctrine.

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TODAY, Saints no longer hear elaborations on the doctrine of a plurality of wives in conference addresses. Nor do they listen to amusing anecdotes about the intricacies of polygamist pioneer life. The polygamist Joseph Smith or Brigham Young is rarely acknowledged. It is as if the modern Church has been divorced from a large and important part of its historical past.

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The official policy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints toward the polygamist is essentially the same in 1990 as during the 1930s. Despite the confused and extended period of ambiguity that followed the manifesto in which many polygamous marriages were performed, since the 1930s the Church has consistently and determinedly moved in an undeviating course of separation from both the practice and the history of Mormon polygamy.

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As early as 1935 the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage no longer fit into the missionary plan for the "good life." It was relegated to a position of relative obscurity as a hypothetical condition of the afterlife that should not be questioned, or necessarily understood, until another time.

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Under the Priesthood Correlation Movement of the 1970s, the trend consolidated. Correlation uniformly limited polygamy in official Church literature, lesson manuals, pamphlets, and public discourse. This omission was not backed by any written or official directive. It was more a general unspoken yet pervasive assumption that difficult doctrinal or historical topics were not to be mentioned, including polygamy. One instance of purposeful removal of the subject of polygamy from official literature was the deletion of a group picture of proud jailed pioneer polygamists from the second edition of My Kingdom Shall Roll Forth. In contrast to the fiery defense of pioneer times, this quiet movement away from the topic has resulted in almost complete neglect.

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As it is taught today, the ideal of celestial marriage centers on the coupling of two righteous spirits whose ultimate destiny (in terms of paradisaical glory) depends, in large part, on the success of that union. Books like Marriage and Divorce by Spencer W. Kimball make no mention of the "further order of the patriarchal order of marriage"—that is, the contingency of plural marriage in eternity (D&C 132). The concept of plural marriage is not part of the oral or written traditions of the modern day public Church. Except for descendants of pioneer polygamists with a sense of history, polygamy is as foreign to the contemporary Mormon as it might be to someone outside the Church. For some it is barely part of their mythic past.

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Nevertheless, questions about plural marriage never totally disappear. They continue to be raised by investigators and other non-members. Polygamy is the one subject that universally precedes the Church's advertised public image. Despite this fact, in the last two decades important Church representatives like mission presidents have usually received no written or formal direction about how to deal with questions investigators ask about the Church and polygamy.25

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Potentially combative confrontations with the outside world are sometimes addressed by the Church's Public Communications Department, which when pushed would briefly acknowledge that polygamy was once practiced but now is forbidden. Understandably, the public relations policy is to present an upbeat image of the contemporary Church and to avoid difficult subjects. During the 1970s, Charles Gibbs, a Public Communications representative, used a modified approach—the frontal attack. He addressed the issue straight on, answering questions by referring to the official ending of polygamy with the Manifesto, or by stating that no more than 10 percent of the Saints ever practiced plural marriage. By providing slightly more information than requested he seized control of the discussion. Few media personalities were sufficiently schooled in Mormonism to ask him difficult and probing questions about polygamy.26

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Although the official Church stopped talking about plural marriage in its meetings, manuals, and other publications in the 1950s, this does not mean that the individual member forgot it. Since the Church only resurrected polygamy as an issue to warn the Saints of the dangers of associating with members of the fundamentalist cults, where then do believing Saints find answers to their questions? For many members Elder Bruce R. McConkie's Mormon Doctrine is the primary place. On the subject of plural marriage, Elder McConkie
refers the reader to two definitive scriptural justifications for the practice: Isaiah 4 and Doctrine and Covenants 132. According to him, these two passages state that polygamy is accepted by the Lord when administered by those with the proper keys. The scriptures also describe polygamy as part of "the restitutio of all things." Elder McConkie concludes by saying, "Obviously the holy practice will commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man and the ushering in of the millennium." 27
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Hence, today's Saints are left with the same unanswerable doctrinal questions as the Saints 100 years ago. The Manifesto suspended the practice of polygamy, but made no mention of the principle itself. Successive presidents of the Church struggled with this inconsistency either by trying to make the principle fit into Mormon theology or avoiding the topic altogether. However, they spent most of their energy punishing offenders and trying to halt the practice, a policy which divided the fundamentalists from official Church society and identified the Church as a mainstream group which, like most of the rest of middle America, scorned the practice. The Mormons moved from persecuted to persecutor. Ultimately, the Church's accommodation to the world—the reaching out for recognition—centered sharply on shared Christian experiences, rather than on those practices which functioned as too severe of boundaries.
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In the last decade polygamy was frequently in the news. Each time it made the headlines the Church pointed to its history of separation rather than shared tradition. Of course there was the notorious violence of the LeBaron clan. The trial of the
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former Murray City, Utah, policeman and polygamist Royston Potter resurfaced the troubling questions of freedom of religion which polygamy raises. The bombing of the Kamas Stake Center by John Singer's son-in-law Adam Swapp eerily demonstrated the explosive tension that exists for these people so willing to sacrifice all for their beliefs. In reaction to these stories, each of which received national attention, the Church, as it had in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, quickly denied having any connection with polygamy explaining that it had already dealt with these men and women in private Church courts.
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Polygamists continue to be unilaterally excommunicated and denied both entrance into temples and into fellowship with the body of Saints. Yet at face value these facts belie the incredible distance the two groups have moved in that fifty-year time period. The lines dividing the polygamist man from his parent church are both wide and deep, and probably unbridgeable. Yet, as the Church moves into the second century after the Manifesto, and as Utah fundamentalists become less of a concern for the growing international Church, one wonders if past is prologue. How will the Church confront the unavoidable existence of plural marriage in its doctrine? Will growing feminist values eventually repudiate the doctrine? How will the Church deal with polygamist converts in cultures where polygamy is a legal and accepted practice? (The RLDS church, which historically denied even Joseph Smith's revelations on plural marriage, baptizes African polygamists if they promise to take no new wives and teach monogamy to their children. 28) Although the challenge of the next century definitely ensures that Mormonism will continue to confront polygamy, still, given the current historical trend, it is likely that polygamy will become even more of a curious historical relic.
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NOTES

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2. Journal History, 6 April 1904, 6.


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5. Clark, 4:151.


7. Conference Reports, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Spring 1918, 16.

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8. Conference Reports, 17.


10. Conference Reports, 17.

11. Conference Reports, 19.

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12. Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, 5 (3 September 1925, 3 October 1926, 4 April 1931):194.

13. Clark, 5:293.

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15. Clark, 5:327.


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18. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, General Handbook of Instructions, (Salt Lake City: LDS Corporation of the President, 1989), 10-3, 10-11.

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19. Musser vs. State et al., 110 Utah Reports 534.


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22. Handbook of Instructions (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1940) 139.


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27. Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 578.