

Polygamy in Mexico as Practiced by the Mormon Church, 1895-1905

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The history of polygamy in the Mormon Church has long been shrouded in secrecy. Details of this practice have remained hidden from the time of its introduction by Joseph Smith down to the present. Joseph Smith, himself, laid the pattern for this secrecy, denying its existence within the Church, while historians of the Utah Branch maintain that he was practicing and teaching the doctrine for several years before his death.

So effective was this deception that one branch of the Latter Day Saints Church, commonly known as the Reorganized Church, the branch led by the Prophet's immediate family, has been able to build a flourishing organization on the seemingly convincing basis for a non-polygamous doctrine to which it adheres with great conviction.

The pattern of secrecy introduced by Joseph Smith may have been modified at times by the Utah Mormons when circumstances seemed to permit. These patterns admittedly were not often of long duration. Certainly, during the troublesome times following the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act and up to the time Utah attained Statehood, secrecy was considered vital to the success and, perhaps, to the very survival of the Utah Church. Since attaining Statehood, however, the Church has prospered and grown in membership and in material wealth, and it now stands on firm ground, secure in its status as a vigorous and successful organization of devoted and faithful members. Indeed, it appears to enjoy high public esteem in many fields as manifested by frequent favorable references in the press to its accomplishments both in cultural and economic endeavors.

Achievements of Mormons in various fields as typified in the Tabernacle Choir, the Brigham Young University, and business and political leaders of national prominence also make it clear that present conditions no longer justify continued secrecy as to what actually took place during the trying times resulting in the Woodruff Manifesto, and during the years between the promulgation of that statement and the so-called Smith Manifesto of 1904.

Certainly the time has come when such secrecy is no longer vital to the survival or the success of the Church. The true stand of the Church on the practice of polygamy has never been made public. However, many facts are available and will, no doubt, be assembled by scholars and published for public consumption. It would appear to be the part of wisdom and sound policy for the Church itself to be the first to make known the true story of polygamy as practiced not only in Utah during the period prior to the migration west, but throughout the entire Church, including Mexico and Canada.

The confusion existing in the minds of many members of the Church, even among those born in polygamous families between the years 1890, the date of the Woodruff Manifesto, and 1904, when the Smith Manifesto was promulgated, seems justification for publication of the story of polygamy in Mexico. Many of those born in Mexico have been exposed to expressions of doubt, sometimes even to ridicule, as to the legitimacy of the marriages of their parents. And many Church members not involved directly in this matter have put questions to me about what transpired in Mexico during the period under discussion.

These questions have been asked of me because my father played an important part in the history of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico between the years 1896 and 1908, during which period he served as Stake President there. If for no other reason than to record his activities concerning the practice of polygamy during this period, some of which has been much misunderstood, for these reasons, I consider myself justified in undertaking this task, and I hope it will also be historically valuable.

Much of the story of polygamy, as practiced in Mexico, revolved about my father, although he himself was not a polygamist. It is a story that could well die with the passing of those who lived through this period. Some of it is recorded; much must be salvaged from the memories of the observers of the incidents herein related. Historians must depend on the spoken word of some of the principal participants, as written records were often purposely destroyed to protect those involved.

What I here record about an epoch in the history of polygamy in Mexico is written from my memory of events which took place there. To supplement and confirm my recollections of these events I have had access to the diary kept by my father, and I have not hesitated to refer to his record.

In relating the story, I have at times refrained from the use of names when I thought that the descendants of those involved might be unduly embarrassed by the facts it is necessary to record. Where the names and activities of those involved were well known to their fellow citizens I have not considered it a breach of confidence to mention them. If I err in this respect, the blame is mine alone. I can only vouch for the accuracy of what I write.

When the Mormons went into Mexico to establish permanent colonies there, they did so at the direction of President John Taylor, and for only one purpose: to find a place where they could practice polygamy without

interference from the government under whose protection they lived. They settled in the northern part of Mexico as near to the United States as possible, and yet where they could find suitable land on which to carry out their farming and ranching operations. There were no laws in Mexico prohibiting the practice of polygamy, and the colonists, as they came to be called, could practice that part of their religion in peace. The first settlers went into Mexico in 1885, and by the time the Church Presidency decided to organize a Stake there in 1895, there were six colonies, five in the State of Chihuahua, and one in Sonora.

In the summer of 1895 my father received a letter from the Church Presidency consisting of Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, informing him that he had been appointed to act as President of a Stake to be organized in Mexico and instructing him to be ready to leave to take up his duties there after the October conference of that year. Almost incidentally they told him that before he left they would like to confer with [him] about his appointment.

My father had performed three missions to Mexico. He was a member of the first Mormon expedition to enter Mexico in 1875. This group had travelled on horseback from St. George, Utah, as far south as the Casas Grande Valley, making a report as to the availability of places suitable for colonization. Among other places, they reported on the suitability of the famous Salt River Valley in Arizona where the Mormons later established thriving colonies. He had served a mission in the City of Mexico and was later called to act as President of that mission. (Here it might be said that the oft repeated rumor that he was "banished to Mexico" to remove him from the political field in Utah and that he was sent to Mexico for the sole purpose of performing plural marriages there are not accepted by members of his families.) He was imminently qualified to perform a much needed service in the Colonies, and his contribution to the success and the history of these colonies seems ample justification for his appointment.

The story of my father's part in the practice of polygamy while he was in Mexico must begin with his interview with the Church Presidency when he responded to their invitation to meet with them. This meeting took place on October 5, 1895 in Salt Lake City. After perfunctory instruction as to the general duties of the Stake President he was told that occasionally the Presidency would send to him in Mexico a couple bearing a letter instructing him to marry them. He was informed that he would have the authority to perform this ceremony "for time and eternity" although this "sealing" was usually performed in one of the temples of the Church. This unusual authority was, no doubt, delegated to him because of the great distance of the Mexican colonies from any temple. It was plainly understood that these marriages were to be performed in Mexico because it would be against the law to perform them within the borders of the United States.

To indicate the desire on the part of the Church Presidency to keep these marriages secret and even to maintain secrecy as to the practice of polygamy, my father told me, "almost in the same breath, George Q. Cannon said, 'Now Brother Ivins, if you have occasion to meet Porfirio Diaz, President of Mexico, we want you to tell him that we are NOT practicing polygamy in Mexico.'" At a much later date, during the Smoot Investigation, my father was invited (I use the word advisedly) to come to Washington and testify that they were not practicing polygamy in Mexico. I use the word "invited" because my father did not go to Washington. He told me that he refused to go on two grounds: "It is none of the Senate's business what the Mormons were doing in Mexico, and further, I refused to perjure myself."

This obsession that secrecy was necessary at all times dominated the Church for many years, and the conflict between honesty and the practice of a doctrine prohibited by law was indeed a difficult one for many Church people and leaders to resolve. It is even reported, and on very good authority, that within the past fifty years one of the Presidents of the Church made the statement in a meeting of high Church leaders, "I would lie any time to save one of my brothers." This view of virtue is not new to the Mormon Church, of course. Six hundred years before the time of Christ, Confucius is reported to have advocated the lie as a virtue. I quote from page 181 of the Rongo, published by Yamano, Tokyo, Japan. "The duke of Shee informed Confucius, saying, 'Among us there are those who may be styled upright in their conduct. If their father have stolen sheep they will bear witness to the fact.' Confucius said, 'Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this' "

Loyalty to family, country or church has often been placed above simple honesty. The long struggle, amounting to a state of war at times, between the Church members and their neighbors, often even their government, *made deception and subterfuge a virtue in their eyes.*

Returning now to the matter of polygamy in Mexico from the years 1896 to 1908, the years my father served as Stake President, let us look into the record. In keeping with the instruction given to him during his interview with the Presidency, before assuming his duties as Stake President, my father was frequently confronted with a couple from the United States bearing a letter from the Presidency instructing him to marry them. When such a couple appeared, my father performed the marriage ceremony as instructed. The only evidence available that these marriages were performed on instruction of the Presidency is the word of my father. While a careful record was kept of all such marriages the letters authorizing them were destroyed, with the exception of one. This sole letter which was kept by my father was, in turn, destroyed by him before his death. It was, however, seen by some members of his family.

We have one written statement made by my father as to the authority by which he performed these plural marriages. In 1932 he carried on a correspondence with a woman in Mexico who had married in polygamy after the Joseph F. Smith Manifesto. This woman had written him regarding the fact that she had been excommunicated from the Church. In a letter dated July 5, 1932 my father wrote this woman as follows:

I am speaking thus plainly in order that you may know the truth. You have my sympathy. Nothing that I could do justly would I refuse to do. I realize the unfortunate condition in which this has placed you and your family. It is heart-breaking and heart-rending. The difference between these people (those who performed plural marriages after 1904) and myself and others is that we acted with authority from the Church. No person who ever received these ordinances at the hands of men who were authorized has ever been molested.

This written statement conforms fully with what my father has told members of his family repeatedly in discussing his part in the performance of plural marriages after he was sent to Mexico.

A careful record was kept by my father of all these marriages, the original of which was found in his desk at the time of his death. When my brother, Antoine, took this record into the office of President Heber J. Grant, President Grant said to him, "Take it away, take it away, we want nothing to do with it." The record was returned to Antoine's office. The next day a messenger was sent from the office of President J. Reuben Clark with instructions to bring the record to the President's office. The record was turned over to this messenger, and purportedly now lies in the archives of the Historian's office.

A copy of this letter or record was made by my brother, the late Stanley S. Ivins, and is now on deposit in the Library of the Utah Historical Society, where it is available for scrutiny by any interested person. This record shows the name, place and date of birth of each party to the marriage and the witnesses to the ceremony. The information set forth in this discussion is taken from this copy.

A study of this record shows that the first three marriages were performed on June 22, 1897 at Ciudad Juarez, just across the border from El Paso, Texas. All those involved were residents of Utah, and they remained in Mexico just long enough for the ceremony to be performed. Four more marriages were recorded for the year 1897, three of them being solemnized in Ciudad Juarez and one in Colonia Juarez, headquarters of the Juarez Stake.

During 1898 ten marriages are recorded, all of them performed either at Colonia Juarez or Colonia Dublan. One of these marriages was a "sealing" of a resident couple formerly married for time only and one was a plural marriage of this man, formerly sealed to his first wife. The other seven marriages were evidently performed for couples from the United States.

Six marriages were recorded in 1899, all performed in the Colonies. Two of the couples married in this year were residents of Mexico. It is interesting to note that one of these ceremonies was performed by A. O. Woodruff, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles and son of President Wilford Woodruff in Colonia Oaxaca.

Only two marriages were performed in 1900, and only two in 1901, all of which were solemnized in the Colonies, Colonia Juarez and Colonia Dublan. Nine marriages were performed in 1902, eleven in 1903 and five in 1904, prior to the Smith Manifesto.

At this point it is interesting to coordinate the Mexican plural marriages with the administrations of the three Presidents in office during the period covered by this discussion. President Woodruff was in office during the first three years of my father's administration in Mexico, October 1895 to September 1898. From September 1898 to October 1901, Lorenzo Snow was President, and from that date until April, 1904 when the last Manifesto was promulgated, President Joseph F. Smith was in office. These dates are important when an analysis of my father's record is being considered.

It will be noted that for the three years of the Woodruff administration seventeen marriages are recorded, for the three years of Lorenzo Snow's incumbency four were performed, and during the two and a half years during which Joseph F. Smith was in office before issuing the Manifesto thirty-one marriages were performed, more than half of all those recorded.

This record reveals a condition well known to all residents of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico: that on the assumption of office by Joseph F. Smith in 1901 there was a relaxation of the policy of discouraging plural marriages. Up to 1902 only five of the twenty five marriages recorded can definitely be identified as performed for residents of the Colonies. From that date to the time of the Smith Manifesto twenty two of the thirty one couples can definitely be identified as members of local wards. Moreover, there were other plural marriages performed (not by my father) in the Colonies during this period, well known and accepted by all members of the local communities. I have no knowledge as to who performed these marriages.

There were also several young men who were on the verge of contracting plural marriages (such things were not kept secret in the community) when the Smith Manifesto was issued. To my knowledge most of these plans were abandoned. It was generally understood throughout the Colonies that the Smith statement in April, 1904 put an end to all authorization of plural marriages throughout the entire Church, and my father, for one, adhered strictly to this interpretation of the declaration. The fact that all members of the Church in Mexico did not so adhere to this new policy will be discussed later.

It was never understood by the Mormons in Mexico that the Woodruff Manifesto of September 1890 in any manner prohibited the practice of polygamy by Church members residing outside the United States. His statement, "I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise . . . And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter Day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriages forbidden by the law of the land" was

understood to have no bearing on plural marriages contracted in countries where no law prohibited the practice.

Those living in Mexico were not the only ones so interpreting the Woodruff Manifesto. In his *Comprehensive History of the Church*, Brigham H. Roberts quotes a letter written by John W. Taylor at the time of his "resignation" from the Council of Twelve in which this concept of the Manifesto is upheld. Roberts says that Mathias F. Cowley, who resigned from the Council at the same time, wrote a similar letter of "resignation". That the members of the Mormon Colonies in Mexico interpreted the Manifest[o] in this way is evidenced by the fact that many men of the highest standing, leaders in the community, men who would never have gone against the advice of the Church leaders, took second and in some cases a third and fourth wife during this period. These marriages were entered into with the full approval of the community, and the plural wives were given equal standing with the other members of the household. Among those outstanding citizens, whose loyalty to Church authority can [n]ever be questioned, I list the following: Miles P. Romney, Joseph C. Bently, George C. Naegle, and Edward Eyring, father of the noted scientist, Henry Eyring, Orson P. Brown, Guy C. Wilson, Helaman Pratt and Henry E. Bowman. This list could be easily extended, but it is ample evidence of the quality of the men engaged in the practice of polygamy, and taking plural wives after the Woodruff Manifesto.

That the practice carried on in Mexico was known to the General Authorities cannot be doubted. Many of them visited the Colonies where they could not fail to become aware of what was going on. Among those who came to Mexico on official Church business, some of them many times, were John W. Taylor, Mathias F. Cowley, Hyrum Smith, son of Joseph F. Smith, A. Owen Woodruff, son of Wilford Woodruff, Heber J. Grant, Amasa M. Lyman, B. H. Roberts of the Council of Seventy, and President Joseph F. Smith. These men, with few exceptions, preached with fervor the doctrine that plural marriage was a pre-requisite to celestial exaltation. They urged the young men in the Colonies to accept and practice the principle. Many of them brought pressure to bear on my father to take a second wife, a pressure which he steadfastly resisted. He once said to me, "The *Doctrine and Covenants* says that those to whom the doctrine is revealed should accept and practice it. It has never been revealed to me that I should do so."

As previously stated, my father always assured members of his family that he never performed a marriage without the full authorization of the President of the Church. One incident, known to all members of our family, illustrates this fact. One evening a man and a woman appeared at our home saying that they had come from Salt Lake City for the purpose of being married by him. When asked to show their letter or authorization, they said they carried no such letter; upon learning that fact, my father informed them that he could not perform the marriage.

Reference to a similar case is made in father's diary. In recording the proceedings of a Stake Conference held at Colonia Diaz in May, 1900, he referred to a joint meeting of the YMMIA and the YWMIA, at which he says "Sister (?) Cluff (?) made good remarks." My brother Antoine, who compiled this diary attaches the following footnote, "This question mark doubtless refers to the fact that Pres. Cluff of the BY Academy had come to Mexico with a Reynolds girl and tried to get father to marry them, which he had refused to do. He therefore, did not know whether or not they were married."

A further evidence that my father's activities in the performance of marriages were approved by the general authorities of the Church may be found in the fact that in October, 1907, he was made a member of the Council of Twelve. The appointment was made by Joseph F. Smith who had issued the proclamation doing away with plural marriages throughout the entire Church and who had asked John W. Taylor and Mathias F. Cowley to resign from the Council in October 1905 because they refused to conform to his pronouncement of 1904. President Smith, with many other members of the Presidency and the Council had long been aware of what was taking place in Mexico, and the fact of my father's appointment seems positive proof that the part he played met with their approval. He was later appointed to the First Presidency of the Church.

It must be recorded here that as long as the Mormons remained in Mexico, the difficulties of practicing polygamy were minimal. All wives making up a polygamous family had equal status in the home and in the community. At public gatherings all wives attended without embarrassment and were accepted by their neighbors, most of whom were likewise members of polygamous families. Seldom did two wives live in the same house, but each, with her own family occupied a separate home. These homes were usually, though not always, located on the same block.

If ever polygamy had an opportunity to function in a modern western community, it had that opportunity in the Mormon Colonies in Mexico. There the secrecy which had prevailed in the United States since the inception of the practice was not necessary. No outside influences were present to inhibit the open and peaceful practice; the great majority of the community members were taking part in what was publicly proclaimed to be a holy institution dictated by revelation from God. Parents and children alike were proud of the fact that they were participants in a program which ultimately would exalt them above any who were unfortunate enough to be unable or unwilling to enter into this holy covenant of celestial marriage.

Fortified by deep religious conviction, centered around the doctrine of celestial marriage, which they interpreted to mean plural marriage, members of the communities experienced relatively little marital conflict, no more than occurs in the average monogamous family. To those who took part in the practice, polygamy was definitely successful in Mexico.

But when the colonists left Mexico in 1910 and came to live in the United States, conditions immediately changed. A man could no longer acknowledge his several wives in public. Sooner or later one had to be

chosen as the recognized wife, while the others were forced to remain in the background without social standing. Many a woman, who in Mexico had every social privilege, was now forced into relative obscurity. Families were disrupted, some of the wives deserted. Visits of the husbands were secret, and the children were often the objects of whispered ridicule. It was a high price to pay, even for the promised reward in the hereafter, a reward, according to their beliefs, not to be shared by women of monogamous families.

An interesting interlude to the story of Polygamy in Mexico must here be recorded, although it is in no way connected with the marriages performed there. It does, however, have to do with those solemnized during the period 1896-1904, the years under discussion herein. This bit of history indicates that Mexico was not the only place where plural marriages were being performed during this period, and bears out the statement previously made that during the administration of Joseph F. Smith many Church members felt free to enter into such marriages, not only in Mexico, but even in the United States.

During the Smoot Investigation in Washington which ran from January 1904 to February 1907, there appeared in Colonia Juarez a group of women bringing with them children, most of them mere babies, but without husbands to accompany them. It was soon common knowledge that these women were in the Colonies because they could not legally live in the United States as wives of the fathers of their children. We called these new members of our community the "Exiles". Some of them were known by their married names, while others were known by such names as "Sister Jones" or "Sister Brown" or "Sister Mae" and "Sister Peart", obviously not the names of their husbands.

It should be no source of embarrassment to the children of those women who openly assumed the names of their husbands to record those names here. Three of these women were wives of John W. Taylor, then a member of the Council of the Twelve, and two were wives of Joseph E. Robinson, President of the California Mission. The Taylor women occupied two of the best houses in the town, two who were sisters, occupying a large stone home, and the third a smaller stone house in an adjoining block. The two wives of Joseph Robinson lived together in a very modest home.

Where these women were married was unknown to us, but it was evident that the ceremonies were not performed in Mexico, for all of them brought babies with them when they came to live there. It was evident, too, that the Church leaders knew of their presence there and of their marital status. During the time these women were living in Juarez, President Smith, among other leaders, visited and talked with these women. It soon became known that the husbands of the "Exiles" were, without exception, men of prominence in the Church who continued to hold important positions even after their wives had returned to the United States.

It would be quite impossible for me to remember the exact date when the women whom we called "Exiles" first came to Juarez, I have therefore, gone to my father's diary, which he kept for many years, in search of some mention of their presence there. The search proved definitely rewarding, and I here record some of those references.

Under date of February 1903, is found the following: "We invited Apostle Taylor & family, Sister Morris & her daughter, & Sister Peart & Cannon to eat wild turkey dinner with us." This reference is to John W. Taylor whose three wives, Nellie, Rhoda and Roxey were living in Juarez. Sister Morris was the mother of the woman known to us as "Sister Mae". She was the wife of Frank Y. Taylor, brother to John W. Taylor. Sister Peart was the wife of John M. Cannon. She was known to the people of Juarez as Sister Jones." With the exception of John W. Taylor, none of these men appeared in public with his wife; as far as I can recall, and none of the women was ever known in the community by the name of her husband.

Under date of Nov. 12, 1903, we find this entry in the diary, "We started for Sonora this a.m. Nooned (sic) about 8 miles W. of Ramos. Camped on the Janos River. Our party consisted of Apostle Taylor & wife Nellie, Apostle Woodruff & wife Avery, Jno. M. Cannon & wife, Bp. Bently, wife Maggie & four children, Sister Cannon's daughter Marguerite, Sister Eyring, Bro. H. Pratt, Guy C. Wilson, Dan Skousen, Bro. Jos. C. Davis & myself & Don LeBaron."

Here are found the names of two of the women we termed "Exiles". Nellie Taylor was the oldest of John W. Taylor's three wives who lived in Juarez. John M. Cannon's wife was "Sister Peart" Avery, referred to as the wife of Apostle Woodruff, was known to us as Miss Clark. She had come to Juarez in the fall of 1903 as a teacher at the Juarez Stake Academy, and was not known even by members of our family, with the possible exception of our father and mother, that she was a married woman, wife of A. O. Woodruff. She lived at our home during her stay in Mexico, and the first intimation that she was married came as the result of a visit from her husband. Even after this visit the townspeople did not know that she was married.

The men who openly acknowledge[d] their wives came often to visit them and participated in the religious activities of the community. Those whose wives were living under assumed names, as I have said, never to my knowledge, appeared in public to be recognized. My knowledge as to the identity of some of these men came about by mere accident.

My father and I were travelling by buckboard toward Casas Grandes, the County seat, when we met a three-seated "whitetop" carrying three men and three women. I recognized the women as members of the "Exile" group, but had never before seen either of the men. We stopped beside the road, father alighted and greeted the men by name. He was informed that the group had been on a trip to Mexico City and were returning to Juarez. As we continued on our way my father remarked: "I would like to give each of those men

a good kick in the pants and send him scooting back to Utah. I have no objection to polygamy as such, but I have no respect for men who will come to Mexico in order to break the laws of the Country where they claim citizenship.”

The diary entry of November 19, 1903 is “We started from Oaxaco to Colonia Diaz. We drove to the Las Varas, Bros. Woodruff and Cannon killed 3 deer.” There is no entry between Monday, November 16 and Thursday, November 19. But the record of marriages performed by my father contains the following:

George Conrad Naegle. B. at Lehi, Utah October 1, 1860

Philinda Keeler. B at North Kamas, Utah, May 6, 1878

Jennie Dora Jameson. B. at Goshen, Ut. Feb. 15, 1886

Married at Colonia Oaxaca, Nov. 18, 1903. A. O. Woodruff officiating.

These references place the individuals concerned in Mexico in 1903, just one year before the Joseph F. Smith Manifesto was issued. In this party were the sons of two former presidents of the Church, John W. Taylor, son of John Taylor, and A. Owen Woodruff, son of President Wilford Woodruff. Both of these men were members of the Council of Twelve Apostles. John M. Cannon was a son of George Q. Cannon, Councilor to Wilford Woodruff. All three were traveling with plural wives to whom they had been married within a few years of the date of this visit. Avery Clark Woodruff gave birth to her first and only child by Woodruff in May 1904.

The exact dates of these marriages and the names of the men who performed the marriage ceremonies are unknown to me. My efforts to obtain this information has resulted in complete frustration. Having contacted some of the children resulting from these unions I was able to obtain nothing more than statements like, “My father always assured members of his families that his marriage to my mother was authorized by the Church authorities.”

Evidence that the Church authorities did not consider the Woodruff Manifesto a prohibition against plural marriages, whether in the United States or in other countries, is abundant. In corroboration for this conclusion, I quote from my father’s diary; under date of Jan. 11, 1911, (He was then a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles):

Spent Christmas at home. The time between my arrival home (Dec. 20) & Jan. 7th, I have been in council with my quorum considering various matters which came before us. The question of plural marriages was discussed & it was decided that in the cases where plural marriages were entered into prior to 1904, the parties to such marriages should not be molested unless they be cases where the interests of the Church were involved. Where men are in prominence in the Church who have taken plural wives since Pres. Woodruff’s manifesto, they are to be removed where it can be done without giving unnecessary offense.

Later (see previous page) after our return to Utah, I became acquainted with all three of these men. (Not one of them was ever disciplined for his polygamous practices.)

This incident illustrates a fact well known by members of our family: that my father performed marriages for those coming temporarily into Mexico from the United States with real reluctance; at times with a feeling approaching rebellion. Many who knew him have asked how he justified this compliance with instructions from Church officials, while convinced that his doing so was nothing short of a subterfuge to make possible a practice which was contrary to the pronounced policy of the Church, yet, perhaps not in violation of any United States law. To perform a plural marriage in Mexico could not constitute a breach of U. S. law or of the Woodruff Manifesto which declared that members of the Church would be urged not to enter into any plural marriages “in violation of the law.” But my father would not quibble about the words, “enter into any plural marriages.” He considered the spirit of the Manifesto to mean that polygamous marital relations should not be approved in the United States.

The answer to this question of my father’s willingness to perform these marriages should be obvious to those who understand the traditional, unquestioning acceptance of the dictation by the President of the Church. My father was nurtured from childhood on this tradition. To refuse any “Call” from the Prophet or to fail to obey any specific instruction from him was next to unthinkable.

When my father was but eight years of age his father’s name was announced from the pulpit as one of a group “called” to go to Utah’s Dixie for the purpose of establishing a City there. Israel Ivins, his father, had not been consulted regarding his willingness to undertake such an assignment, but he accepted it with little hesitation and immediately disposed of his home and land in Salt Lake City and outfitted himself for migration to the southland. In like spirit my father accepted without hesitation a “Call” to go to Mexico in 1895, which “Call” made it necessary for him to dispose, at great sacrifice, of his extensive cattle and other business interests and to abandon a promising career as a leader in political circles in Utah.

This immediate and unquestioned acceptance of direction from the head of the Church was only typical of the faithful members, and was, in no way, peculiar to my father. It does, however, explain his willingness to perform some duties at the direction of the Presidency which he would much rather not have been asked to perform.

It must be stated here that three principles which influenced my father’s entire life were loyalty to the

TRUTH, loyalty to the Church, and loyalty to the United States. Add to these loyalties--to truth (honesty), Church, and the United States--a compassion for his fellow man, and we have the motivating forces of his life.

In my many years of intimate association with him I never once observed an act on the part of my father which could possibly be interpreted as anything but absolute honesty. On one occasion when a call from the Church leaders seemed to him to demand a departure from this complete loyalty to the truth, he chose truth as his course of action. Reference has already been made to his refusal to go to Washington during the Smoot Investigation to testify that the Mormons were not practicing polygamy in Mexico. How great the inward struggle resulting in this decision we shall never know.

The performance of plural marriages for couples coming from the United States involved no act of dishonesty or secrecy on his part, even though he in no way approved of the policy of sending these people to Mexico for the performance of a Church sanctioned ceremony which could not be lawfully performed in the United States. To those who knew his complete devotion and loyalty to the Church it is a matter of wonder that he even chose to refuse an "invitation" to go to Washington and there testify to an untruth. He did not choose to "lie to save" one of his brothers. He seemed to take at face value the many statements in Church literature to the effect that "he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out." Doc. & Cov. 42:2.

One thing that my father could not forget was that he had been a member of the State Convention which drafted the Constitution for the State of Utah. That fact made it imperative in his mind that he stand for strict compliance with that constitution. Article III of that Document states:

The following ordinance shall be irrevocable without the consent of the United States and the people of this State. First, Perfect toleration of religious sentiment is guaranteed. No inhabitant of this State shall ever be molested in person or property on account of his or her mode of religious worship, but polygamous or plural marriages are forever prohibited.

In a letter to the woman to whom we have previously referred, as one caught in the web of post-1904-polygamy, my father says:

I was a member of the Constitutional Convention and know that this clause was incorporated in it under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, that we were placed in the unfortunate condition, we must either discontinue the practice of plural marriage or be regarded as violators of the law and suffer the consequences of it. The government kept its word. They restored our property. They restored the franchise to those who had been deprived of it. The unfortunate condition which followed was that some of these very men who had been disfranchised were the first to advocate that the law was not applicable to them, that they would not obey it, that it was better to obey the laws of God than to recognize the laws of men. And so, those people started a propaganda by which secretly and too often by falsehood and deceit plural marriages were continued.

To return now to the story of the women married to men in the United States who came to Mexico to live temporarily; in at least two cases, young women sent to teach in the Juarez Stake Academy proved to be plural wives of men residing in Utah. These women were known by their maiden names, and their marital status was unknown to the students and townspeople. It may be important and no breach of confidence to record that one of these teachers proved to be the wife of A. Owen Woodruff, member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. She was still living in Juarez, having just completed her year of teaching, when her husband and his first wife died of smallpox, he in El Paso, Texas, and she in Mexico City, in June, 1904.

Solemnization of plural marriages did not cease even after the Smith Manifesto of 1904. Neither in Utah nor in Mexico did all Church members accept President Smith's pronouncement as authoritative. Evidence indicates, however, that no marriage performed after April, 1904, was officially recognized by the Church. Although some members of the Council of Twelve were involved in these marriages, the Church has refused to recognize them.

It is generally understood and recorded in the *Comprehensive History of the Church* that the reason for the dropping of John W. Taylor and Mathias F. Cowley from the Council was their refusal to conform to the edict of the Presidency banning the performance of polygamous marriages throughout the entire Church.

Two incidents known to me illustrate the complete confusion existing at this time: Two young ladies living in Mexico were caught up in this net of confusion and underwent a most distressing experience as a result. Both of the incidents involving these girls occurred after 1904. Both girls were my personal acquaintances, one a close friend of one of my sisters. The other was my own friend at the Juarez Stake Academy.

After a most confusing experience, details of which would seem ridiculous had they not been near the tragic, one of these girls was married to Mathias F. Cowley and bore him a son. Years later, this woman, wishing to marry another man, appealed to my father to aid her in obtaining a divorce from Cowley. When my father presented this matter to the Presidency, he was informed that the woman's marriage was never recognized by the Church. Since there was no record of a civil marriage the woman was married for the second time without either a Church or a civil divorce. Referring to this case, father made the following entry in his diary:

Jan. 25, 1911. I called on ---- ----. She says she was married in Canada by a Patriarch. He was sick in bed & not expected to live. Bro. Cowley took her to the house and went in, leaving her on the outside, & told the wife of the sick man he wished a private interview

with her husband. The woman went out and ---- entered. The Patriarch was propped up in his bed with bandages around his head. He spoke in a voice so low that she could not hear a word he said. Brother Cowley told her when to say "yes." After the man finished she asked Brother Cowley if that was all. He said, "yes." She thought it a singular way to get married. Later Bro. C warned her to be careful to not violate the covenants she had entered into. She said she had made no covenants and called attention to the fact that she did not hear a word of what he, the Patriarch, said.

The second case is similar, except in detail. The girl involved in this episode said that she was married in the Manti temple to the Bishop of the ward in which she lived in Mexico. She did not know the name of the "old man" who performed the marriage ceremony, but she was told by him as soon as it was over that she should not divulge the fact to anyone. She says that she became suspicious as to the validity of the marriage and refused to live with her new husband. Years later when she wished to marry a fellow school teacher, she, like the lady to whom I have previously referred, wrote to my father seeking a Church divorce. She, likewise, was informed that she had never been legally married, which, upon learning, she proceeded to marry without obtaining any kind of a divorce.

A brief entry in the diary refers to this episode:

Sept. 2, 1907--Sunday 1st, John W. Taylor came to my office. Had been in communication with Bp. Bentley--M. F. Cowley. Accused me of connecting him with Bp. ---- case. Said I wanted to make capitol with the present Quorum of Apostles by going to Prest. Smith with story. Would soon be a vacancy to fill in the quorum of Apostles. Evening meeting with Bently, Wilson, Taylor, Cowley.

This entry refers to the Bishop who took the girl to whom I have referred to the Manti temple and married her there.

Both of the marriages herein narrated took place after the 1904 Manifesto, a fact which cannot be overlooked in its bearing upon the entire history of polygamy.

As previously mentioned, while the great majority of Mormons living in Mexico accepted the Smith Manifesto as a prohibition of plural marriages throughout the Church, there were those who refused to acknowledge this pronouncement as binding on them. Members of this small group have continued to practice polygamy in defiance of the announced policy of the Church. Their reasons for refusing to abandon the practice were based on the same arguments put forth by the so-called "Fundamentalists" who are still carrying on the practice in Utah and other states.

The basic thesis on which these objectors state their case is that polygamy is essential to the highest exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom, and God would not allow the law of the land to nullify a commandment on which the very highest exaltation of His children depends. They argue that God could have foreseen the opposition to this practice, but in spite of this fore-knowledge, saw fit to give the commandment. They refer to the words of the Book of Mormon Prophet, Nephi, to the effect that God gives no commandment to "the children of men" unless He opens the way for its accomplishment. This argument they apply to the practice of polygamy, accepting the original revelation on this matter as the word of God, but refusing to acknowledge the pronouncements of later Church leaders.

Reference has already been made to correspondence carried on by my father with a woman involved in post-1904 polygamy. In her letter to my father this woman gives her reasons for her belief that she is obeying God's commandment by entering into polygamy, and since they represent the "Fundamentalist" point of view, they may well be quoted somewhat at length. She writes in a letter dated March 13, 1932:

About eighteen years ago, A. D. LeBaron was living with John W. Taylor in his home south of S. L. City working to help make his young wife more comfortable. After many serious Gospel conversations, Bro. Taylor gave Dayer a letter to one of the patriarchs in that County advising him to give him three revelations that were given to Wilford Woodruff and his father John Taylor just before the manifesto. If it wasn't for these sacred papers I would be very satisfied, but I must tell you all about them and if you can clear this matter up I will be very humble and appreciative, and will right, so far as it is sensible every wrong the people think I have done. I am tearing a page from a little booklet called Plural Marriage because it is convenient and I wish you to know that these revelations caused me to be as I am and are causing more people to pray for the opportunity to live this law than any other thing. ... Now it is proof positive to me that when the Lord said, "my everlasting covenants *cannot* be abrogated nor done away with, but they stand forever," He knew what He was saying and all saints must go back and be willing to abide even until death.

We may assume that one of the revelations to which the author of this letter refers is an unpublished document bearing the date, September 27, 1886, and the "revelation" is said to have been given to John Taylor then President of the Church. This revelation, while never presented to the Church members in general conference, is one of those relied upon by those refusing to acknowledge the Smith Manifesto as binding on them. It is worthy of quotation, in full, here.

My son [John]: you have asked me as concerning the New and Everlasting Covenant and how far it is binding upon my people. Thus saith the Lord: All commandments that I give

must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by me or by mine authority, and how can I revoke an everlasting covenant, for I the Lord am everlasting and my everlasting Covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with, but they stand forever.

Have I not given my word in great plainness on this subject? Yet have not great numbers of my people been negligent in the observance of my law, and the keeping of my commandments, and yet have I born with them these many years and this because of their weakness, because of the perilous times, and furthermore; It is now pleasing unto me that men should use their free agency in regard to these matters. Nevertheless I, the Lord, do not change and my word and my Covenant and my Law do not; and as I have heretofore said by my servant Joseph, all those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey my law.

And have I not commanded men that if they be of Abraham's seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the works of Abraham. I have not revoked this law, nor will I, for it is everlasting and those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereof. Even so Amen.

A second unpublished revelation, entitled, "A Revelation to Wilford Woodruff In the Wilderness, January 26, 1880, is a long and vindictive document in which the Lord swears vengeance on the officials of the United States government and on the nation as a whole, mentioning specifically, "the presidents of the United States, the Supreme Court, the Cabinet, the Senate and House of Congress of the United States. ..."

A few quotations from this revelation will serve to indicate how those who have refused to give up the practice of polygamy in Mexico use it as justification for their stand in this matter. Following are some of those quotations:

The hour is at the door when my wrath and indignation will be poured out upon the wicked of the nation. ... I have decreed plagues to go forth and waste mine enemies, and not many years hence they shall not be left to pollute my heritage.

Continuing the warning of punishment to come upon the enemies of the Church, this revelation says:

And I say again, woe unto the nation or house or people who seek to hinder my people from obeying the patriarchal law of Abraham, which leadeth to celestial glory, which has been revealed unto my Saints through the mouth of my servant Joseph, for whosoever doeth these things shall be damned saith the Lord of hosts, and shall be broken up and wasted away from under heaven by the judgements which I have sent forth and which shall not return to me void. And thus, with the sword, and by bloodshed, and with famine and plagues and earthquakes and the thunder of heaven, and the vivid lightnings shall this nation and the nations of the earth be made to feel the chastening hand of Almighty God and until they are broken up and destroyed and wasted away from under heaven, and no power can stay my hand. Therefore, let the wicked tremble, let them that blaspheme my name hold their lips, for destruction will swiftly overtake them. All that I the Lord have spoken through the mouths of my prophets and apostles since the world began, concerning the last dispensation and fullness of time, concerning my Church which has been called out of the wilderness of darkness and error, concerning the Zion and Kingdom of God and concerning Babylon the Great, and what I have spoken through the mouth of my servant Joseph shall all be fulfilled. And though heaven and earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall be fulfilled, saith the Lord.

As has been repeatedly mentioned, the Mormons living in Mexico had been so thoroughly indoctrinated in the concept that plural marriage was an absolute pre-requisite to the highest exaltation in the celestial kingdom, a glory toward which every Church member should aspire, that it was understandably next to impossible for them to adjust to the idea that the Church itself, had now prohibited the practice. That the Church should abandon a "doctrine" for which the great majority of the older members of the Mormon communities had left the United States and moved to a "foreign country" was a stunning blow to old and young alike. A universal struggle went on within the minds of these colonists. They had to choose, as it appeared to them, between their most cherished and most often proclaimed idea of how to obtain exaltation and a desire to acknowledge the divine source of President Smith's proclamation doing away with the practice of polygamy throughout the entire Church. It is little wonder that the acceptance of this pronouncement was not universal.

Church leaders have consistently denied the authenticity of the professed revelations to which we have referred. In a pamphlet issued June 17, 1933, the Presidency, then consisting of Heber J. Grant, A. W. Ivins (my father) and J. Reuben Clark Jr., say regarding the revelation attributed to John Taylor:

It is alleged that on September 26-27, 1886, President John Taylor received a revelation from the Lord, the purported text of which is given in publications circulated apparently by or at the instance of the same organization.

As to the pretended revelation, it should be said that the archives of the Church contain no such revelation, nor any evidence justifying a belief that any such revelation was ever given. From the personal knowledge of some of us, from the uniform and common

recollection of the presiding quorums of the Church, from the absence in the Church archives of any evidence whatsoever justifying any belief that such a revelation was given, we are *justified* in affirming that no such revelation exists.

In this same pamphlet we find this statement:

We affirm as true today and as being true since it was made in 1904, the statement of President Smith which was endorsed by the General Conference of the Church "that no such marriages have been solemnized with the sanction, consent or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

It is important here to recall that the statement of President Woodruff the so-called Manifesto says:

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have [been] pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise. . . . And I now declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriages *forbidden by the law of the land*.

The statement of President Smith, made in April, 1904, says:

Inasmuch as there are numerous reports in circulation that plural marriages have been entered into contrary to the official declaration of President Wilford Woodruff of September 24, 1890, commonly called the Manifesto, which was issued and adopted by the Church at its General Conference, October 6, 1890, which forbade any marriage violative of the law of the land, I, Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, do hereby affirm and declare that no such marriages have been solemnized with the sanction, consent, or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And I hereby announce that all such marriages are prohibited and if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize or enter into any such marriage he will be deemed in transgression against the Church, and will be liable to be dealt with according to the rules and regulations thereof, and excommunicated therefrom.

It must be emphasized that both statements on the subject of plural marriage--the one by Wilford Woodruff and that by Joseph F. Smith--use the terms, "any marriages forbidden by the law" and "pretended marriage violative of the law of the land." That the marriages were in violation of the law of the land seems to be the determining factor as far as the sanction of the Church was concerned. But the interpretation of the two statements seems to have been quite different; in the case of the Woodruff Manifesto marriages outside the United States, in countries where there was no law prohibiting polygamy were in no way affected by the new Church policy. On the other hand, the Smith Manifesto was interpreted by Church authorities as banning the practice of polygamy throughout the entire Church, even though the wording of the two statements was essentially similar.

A student at Brigham Young University, making a study of some aspects of polygamy in Mexico, recently wrote me asking if there was any truth to the rumor that my father had asked President Smith, at the time his Manifesto was issued, to give him a written statement that polygamy in Mexico was prohibited. As far as any member of our family knows, no such statement was ever requested.

Circumstances have made it desirable for the officials of the Church to make several statements on the subject of plural marriages within the Church since the Smith Manifesto. Reference has already been made to one such statement in pamphlet form. Another was made by George Albert Smith, then President, at the General Conference, October 5, 1947. In his speech at the Sunday afternoon session of that conference, President Smith referred to the Woodruff Manifesto, quoting that part which has already been quoted herein, and then going on to say, "That was the action of the Church at that time. The practice of plural marriage ceased because the government of the United States forbade it." And continuing, he said, "From then until now there has been little said by us, and now, after these years, I would like to say from that time on, approximately fifty years, there have been no plural marriages solemnized in *violation of the laws of this land* by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . If you hear anybody say that the leadership of the Church is not in harmony with the Manifesto of Wilford Woodruff as sustained by the Church, then you may know that he is mistaken."

Without specifically so stating, these pronouncements by Church leaders have implied that plural marriages were never sanctioned after the Woodruff Manifesto. The words of President George Albert Smith, "The practice of plural marriage ceased because the government of the United States forbade it" seems more than an implication that all plural marriages in the Church ceased in 1890, "approximately fifty years" before 1947.

When I saw the report of this speech in the daily Salt Lake papers, I addressed a letter to the First Presidency of the Church, calling attention to the plural marriages that had taken place in Mexico between the years 1897 and 1904. I voiced the opinion that statements declaring that no such marriages had been sanctioned by the Church did a great injustice to hundreds of children born of polygamous parents during that period. I further stated that I was certain that the Church presidents and members of the Council of Twelve Apostles were fully aware of the plural marriages which were solemnized in Mexico, and gave full approval to these marriages.

In response to this letter I received a brief note of about six lines which said in substance: "We have your letter regarding our statement on the subject of plural marriages after the 1890 Manifesto. All the world knows the stand of the Church on the polygamy question.

"If you have any further information on this subject, we shall be glad to receive it."

This letter was signed by George Albert Smith, J. Reuben Clark, Jr. and David O. McKay.

At this point it is well to review briefly some of the history having to do with the decision to abolish polygamy and the pronouncements made by Church leaders in regard to the meaning of the Manifesto. The matter is discussed at some length by B. H. Roberts in his *Comprehensive History of the Church*, the events leading up to the declaration of Wilford Woodruff and subsequent statements regarding the meaning and intent of that pronouncement.

On page 217 of volume six of his history, Roberts reports that, "There was a certain restiveness manifested among many of the Church membership that desired the cessation of the conflict by concessions to the demands of the country respecting the plural marriage practices of the Church. This was manifest by the number of those who were willing, against the general policy of the Church leaders, to promise obedience to the anti-polygamy laws for the future and thus escape punishment. ..."

The territory of Idaho had passed a so-called "Test oath" law requiring all voters to swear that they were not "members of any sect or organization which teaches, advises, or encourages the practice of bigamy, polygamy or any other crime defined by law, as a duty or privilege resulting or arising from the faith or practice of such order or organization." As a result of this law many Mormons residing in Idaho chose to sever their Church membership.

As previously mentioned, the government had confiscated all the property of the Church, and it was only by issuance of the Manifesto that the property of the Church was returned. When the time came to consider terms on which this return could be brought about, a hearing was held before the master of chancery. The Church authorities had petitioned for return of the escheated property, and this hearing was held to determine terms on which the return could be made. Roberts says:

This attempt to have the escheated property returned to the Church, brought the Presidency and other prominent brethren upon the witness stand, and raised the question of the interpretation of, and the scope of, the recently issued Woodruff Manifesto, a matter of grave importance. The witnesses were under oath and both direct and indirect examination and cross examination were most searching. The Presidency, Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith; Lorenzo Snow, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Anthon H. Lund, of the same council, all testified with the following results:

1. It was established most positively that all regarded the Manifesto as the result of the inspiration of God upon the mind of President Woodruff; that in effect it was the word of the Lord to the Church forbidding the practice of plural marriage; but it did not deny the rightfulness nor the Divinity of the doctrine of plural marriage. The same authority had directed the discontinuance of plural marriage by the Church as had inaugurated it in the first instance.
2. In effect, though not in express terms, the Manifesto went to the matter of polygamous living in violation of the law, as well as to contracting of plural marriages; the counsel of President Woodruff covered the whole scope of the laws of congress forbidding unlawful marriages and the relationships established thereby.
3. The practice of plural marriage by the Church was definitely abandoned without expectation of its renewal as long as the present order of things remains.
4. The prohibition of polygamy was to be universal, as well in foreign countries as in the United States--the decrees against the practice were effective in all countries of the world.

Replying to Mr. Varian, who with Mr. Joseph L. Ralins, represented the federal government in the hearing, President Woodruff said, "The Manifesto was intended to apply to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints everywhere in every nation and country. We are giving no liberty to enter into polygamous relations anywhere."

Roberts goes on to comment on this statement:

It could not be otherwise. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Church Universal. It is not the Church, etc., for the United States or of England, but of the whole world; and when its general conference acted in this matter it acted for the Church in all nations--the Church in the whole round world. Its action prohibited plural marriage everywhere.

Then continuing tabulation of pronouncements before the hearing commissioners, Roberts says:

5. Anyone violating the inhibition of polygamy, promulgated by the Manifesto, was liable to excommunication from the Church.

“Thus,” says Roberts, “the practice of the system of plural marriage in the Church, clung to so tenaciously by the Church leaders and the Latter-day Saints generally, terminated.”

What can be said about such history, when within five years after the issuance of the Manifesto, President Woodruff, George Q. Cannon (acting as mouth) and Joseph F. Smith tell my father that they will send men and women to him in Mexico with instructions for him to marry them, knowing full well that these marriages were contrary to all the statements they had made before the master of chancery at the time they were being interrogated regarding the meaning of the Manifesto? If they were sincere at the time of the aforementioned statements to the effect that polygamy was to be prohibited throughout the entire Church, or even in the United States, a change of mind had certainly taken place before October, 1895.

But let us examine the evidence of such a change in attitude as revealed by the same historian who has declared that the Woodruff Manifesto “terminated” the “practice of the system of plural marriage in the Church.” When Reed Smoot was elected to the United States Senate in 1904, an investigation was begun as to his eligibility, on the ground that he was practicing polygamy. In the course of this investigation, many leaders of the Church, including President Joseph F. Smith, were called to Washington to testify before the committee conducting the hearings. The fact was brought out there that the Woodruff Manifesto had not been interpreted as Roberts indicated, but that polygamous relations had been continued by those married into polygamy before the Manifesto and that some new marriages had been performed. Quoting Roberts’ history again, we read:

One thing was demonstrated by this Smoot investigation, viz: that the Utah Constitutional Convention settlement of the Mormon Polygamy question was the one that was being adhered to in Utah, viz: that there should be a cessation of polygamous marriages for the future; but that in the polygamous families where the plural relations were established previous to the Woodruff Manifesto of 1890, they should not be disturbed by prosecutions under the law. That is to say, as to the latter part of the statement, and to quote the words of the minority members of the Senate Committee on privileges and elections-- “The conditions existing in Utah have been such that non-members (Mormons) and Mormons alike have acquiesced in polygamous cohabitation on the part of those who married before the Manifesto of 1890, as an evil that could best be gotten rid of by simply tolerating it until in the natural course of events it shall have passed out of existence.”

One other thing also was disclosed by this investigation, viz: that as to new polygamous marriages, by which is meant such polygamous marriages as had been contracted since the Woodruff Manifesto of 1890, the injunction of said Manifesto had not been strictly adhered to even by some high officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and people misled by them.

Roberts then goes on to quote a letter written by John W. Taylor at the time of his resignation as one of the Twelve Apostles:

I have always believed that the government of the United States had jurisdiction only within its own boundaries, and that the term ‘laws of the land’ in the Manifesto means merely the laws of the United States. I find now that this opinion is different to that expressed by the Church authorities, who have declared that the prohibition against plural marriages extended to every place and to every part of the Church. It is doubtless true that this view of the matter has been given by President Woodruff and others, but I have never taken that as binding on me or the Church, because it (such interpretation) was never presented for adoption by ‘common consent’ as was the Manifesto itself, and I have disputed its authority as a law or a rule of the Church.

Roberts states that Mathias F. Cowley, who also was asked to resign from the Council of Twelve, wrote a letter similar to that one submitted by John W. Taylor. And these two high Church officials were not the only ones to so interpret the Woodruff Manifesto, in spite of statements that polygamy was banned throughout the entire Church. If we take the facts as evidence, we must doubt that any of those in power during the years 1890 to 1904 intended the practice of polygamy or the polygamous marriages to be prohibited, either in the United States or in other countries. It is a difficult conclusion for one reared to honor--almost to worship--those presiding over the Church, but it is one which becomes inevitable in the light of the facts.

Failure of the Church leaders to make a frank and honest disclosure of the official policy on polygamy during the years [from] 1890, [the] date of the Woodruff Manifesto, to 1904, the time the Joseph F. Smith Manifesto was issued, has left hundreds of men and women, now in their mature years, born during this period, confused and bewildered. Typical of this confusion is the statement of a prominent Salt Lake City man, born of polygamous marriage during the years under discussion. In referring to the situation in which he found himself he said (I paraphrase his statement in much milder terms than those used by him), “The statements of the Church leaders make me the illegitimate son of a very immoral man.” His parents were not married in Mexico, but his mother was one of the women to whom I referred as “Exiles” who spent some time in Mexico during the Smoot Investigation.

If the statements of the Church leaders on this subject mean what they certainly imply, that no plural marriages were performed in the United States with Church sanction, then, indeed, those children born of parents married in polygamy in the United States during the years 1890--1904 are placed in a most embarrassing position. No civil marriage could have been legally performed, and if the Church ceremony uniting their parents was not approved, or was performed without the authorization of the one man who presumably holds the keys to the performance of such marriages, these people can not be blamed for their concern.

Turning to the polygamists living in Mexico, if plural marriages performed there [were] unauthorized, additional hundreds of men and women must question the legitimacy of their birth. It is a situation in which no one would choose to be placed, and one that could be cleared up were all the facts frankly made known.

The facts herein related leave no room for doubt that the plural marriages performed in Mexico from the time of the first settlement of Mormons in that country, 1885, until April, 1904, were fully sanctioned by the Presidents directing the Church during this period. Not only were these marriages sanctioned, but many of them were performed on direct instruction from the Presidency. My father performed such marriages during the incumbancy of three Presidents: Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and Joseph F. Smith. We have no reason to doubt his statement that he never performed such a marriage without the full authorization of the President of the Church. Not only did my father perform plural marriages during this period, but A. Owen Woodruff, son of Wilford Woodruff, and Mathias F. Cowley, both members of the Council of Twelve apostles at the time, officiated in some of the ceremonies recorded by him.

There can be no doubt that Wilford Woodruff did not intend his Manifesto to put an end to plural marriages throughout the entire Church. It is further evident that he did not forbid the practice of polygamy or the performance of plural marriages by citizens of the United States. He sat in the presence of his two counilors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith and listened as President Cannon told my father that they would send men and women to him in Mexico to be married there. During the three years during which Wilford Woodruff presided over the Church seventeen (17) such marriages were performed.

While these marriages were not performed in the United States, "in violation of the law of the land", those involved returned to Utah to continue to live in polygamy.

Evidence is abundant that plural marriages were performed in the United States immediately prior to the time of the Smoot Investigation, 1904. Most of the women, who came to Mexico to live there temporarily during the time this investigation was going on, brought with them their first babies, evidence of their recent marriages. Only last evening (Nov. 28, 1967) I was looking through a family album where I found two pictures, one of five women holding infants in their arms. Under this picture in the hand writing of my late brother, Stanley, was the inscription, "The Exiles." The second picture shows the five babies sitting on the lawn in front of our home, with the title "The Orphans."

If my memory serves me correctly, these pictures were taken at the time [of] a visit of President Smith to Colonia Juarez, at which time these "Exiles" were invited to meet him at our home. I have memories of President Smith and the "Exiles" standing together, the ladies holding their babies in their arms.

As previously related, two of the young women and one older woman residing temporarily in Juarez, [were] wives of John W. Taylor, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles, and son of John Taylor, third President of the Church. Two were wives of Joseph E. Robinson, President of the California Mission of the Church. One of the school teachers to whom I have referred was the wife of A. Owen Woodruff, member of the council of twelve, and son of Wilford Woodruff. A postle Woodruff and his first wife both died of small pox in June 1900, at which time his young wife had not yet given birth to her first child.

Other members of the "Exile" group (those in the kodak picture to which I have referred) were wives of men holding important positions in the Church. None of these men lost his position in the Church because of his polygamous practices, though their wives all returned to Utah after the heat of the Smoot Investigation had blown over. To me, it seems unthinkable that the marriages of these men could have been unknown, and I might say unauthorized, by President Smith or by his immediate associates.

I have talked with some of the children of the men whose wives were sent to Mexico regarding the marriages of their fathers. All I can learn from them is that: "We have full confidence in the statements of our father that he was properly married to his plural wives." But all the facts seem to point to the conclusion that these marriages were fully sanctioned, and that the children involved have no reason to doubt the legitimacy of the marriages resulting in their births.

From the civil standpoint these marriages could not hope to be considered legal, as both the Utah State Constitution and the laws of the United States prohibited them. But as to the authority of the priesthood which performed them (the marriages), there can be no doubt.

Certainly, persons born to polygamous parents in Mexico should harbor no doubts as to the authority by which the marriages of their parents were performed. According to the Mormon Theology, there is but one man at a time who holds the keys to the authority to perform such marriages. This authority resides in the President of the Church. The authority to perform such marriages in Mexico came directly from the President of the Church. Of this fact there can be no reasonable doubt.

As to the authority by which plural marriages were performed in the United States during the years 1890 to 1904, it must be stated that reliable information is difficult to obtain. There can be no doubt that marriages were performed in Mexico for men and women living in the United States, these couples returning to their homes, usually in Utah, immediately after their marriage. As stated previously, the evidence from what happened in Mexico is that there was a marked relaxation in this matter when President Joseph F. Smith came to office in 1901. The marriages to which I have referred, which brought the "Exiles" to Mexico, would all have been performed after President Smith took office.

When one considers the men involved in these marriages and the fact that none of them was disciplined for such action, the indication is that they were performed with the approval of those in authority at that time.

The case of [the] dropping of John W. Taylor and Mathias F. Cowley from the Council of Twelve Apostles was the result of their refusal to abide by the terms of the Smith Manifesto of 1904, not because of their marriages previous to that date.

Everything points to the conclusion that plural marriages were performed in Utah with the approval of the Church between 1900 and 1904. I think it is possible to state that those Church members who accept the doctrine that such plural marriages must be performed with special authority of the President of the Church, need have no doubt as to the authority by which their parents were married.