

nating in the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which disincorporated the LDS Church and forfeited to the federal government all church property worth more than \$50,000. With their feet held fast to the fire, the Saints ultimately had no choice but to renounce polygamy. But even as LDS leaders publicly claimed, in 1890, to have relinquished the practice, they quietly dispatched bands of Mormons to establish polygamous colonies in Mexico and Canada, and some of the highest-ranking LDS authorities secretly continued to take multiple wives and perform plural marriages well into the twentieth century.

Although LDS leaders were initially loath to abandon plural marriage, eventually they adopted a more pragmatic approach to American politics, emphatically rejected the practice, and actually began urging government agencies to prosecute polygamists. It was this single change in ecclesiastical policy, more than anything else, that transformed the LDS Church into its astonishingly successful present-day iteration. Having jettisoned polygamy, Mormons gradually ceased to be regarded as a crackpot sect. The LDS Church acquired the trappings of a conventional faith so successfully that it is now widely considered to be the quintessential American religion.

Mormon Fundamentalists, however, believe that acceptance into the American mainstream came at way too high a price. They contend that the Mormon leaders made an unforgivable compromise by capitulating to the U.S. government on polygamy over a century ago. They insist that the church sold them out—that the LDS leadership abandoned one of the religion's most crucial theological tenets for the sake of political expediency. These present-day polygamists therefore consider themselves to be the keepers of the flame—the only true and righteous Mormons. In forsaking Section 132—the sacred principle of plural marriage—the LDS Church has gone badly astray, they warn. Fundamentalist prophets bellow from their pulpits that the modern church has become “the wickedest whore of all the earth.”

Mormon Fundamentalists probably cite Section 132 of *The Doctrine and Covenants* more than any other piece of LDS scripture. Their second-most-popular citation is likely Section 85, in which it was revealed to Joseph that “I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong . . . to set