

# The Mormon Priesthood Revelation and the São Paulo, Brazil Temple

*Mark L. Grover*

FEW BRAZILIAN MEMBERS of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will forget 1978, the year when two events significantly changed the Church in this South American country. The June announcement granting the priesthood to males of African descent eliminated a doctrine and policy that had touched most Brazilian members in a personal way, relieving them of a difficult historical burden and allowing the Church to move into a different and more comfortable future. That same year in November, the São Paulo, Brazil Temple, in construction since 1975, was dedicated, making temple ordinances available locally to South American members for the first time. The opening of the temple culminated years of growth and seemed to indicate that the Church in Brazil had reached a significant level of spiritual and institutional maturity. The year was filled with hard work, excitement, and joy.

To broaden our general understanding of the events surrounding the change in Church policy towards blacks, we must examine the international environment of the Church in 1978. That understanding requires an evaluation of the relationship between the Church in Brazil, the construction of the São Paulo Temple, and the priesthood revelation. In this article, I will explore the possibility that events in Brazil

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MARK L. GROVER is the *Latin American Studies* bibliographer at the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

were part of a larger context that resulted in the historic June 1978 change. This examination will not attempt to establish relationships where none existed, nor will it try to secularize or diminish in any way the important spiritual experience the revelation was to all involved. It should, however, illuminate the role that Church members outside of the United States play in the evolution of Church policies, programs, and organization.

Both secular and sacred variables have been shown to influence Church policy and practices. The importance of each and their ultimate effect on ecclesiastical decisions are often difficult to determine. Nonbelievers generally rely on only secular, environmental factors to interpret an event, while the faithful often ignore influences not part of the religious experience and deemphasize nonspiritual factors. Believing historians are thus in a dilemma as they examine events such as the priesthood revelation. An individual receiving a revelation often does not recount the very personal details of the experience. If descriptions are given, they are generally brief and without a discussion of the process leading to the revelation. Historians, thus left to work with spotty details and little source material, out of necessity must focus on the secular elements that only partially explain the process. I write this article with those difficulties and limitations in mind.

What was occurring in Brazil in 1978 is, of course, only part of a much larger picture. I will not attempt to determine the influence or the role of the Brazilians in the overall revelation process but will only show that the events occurring in Brazil were unique in the Church and could have influenced the 1978 occurrences.

#### BLACKS IN BRAZIL

Few non-African countries have been more influenced by Africa than has Brazil. Slavery was legal until 1888, and between 1550 and 1850 over three million African slaves were brought to Brazil to provide a work force for the country's plantations and mines. The scarcity of European women during the colonial period encouraged miscegenation and resulted in a society with a small white minority and a majority that was black, mulatto, and mestizo. Important European and Asian migrations between 1884 and 1957 altered the racial picture in some areas of Brazil but did not diminish the importance of the black and mixed population (Smith 1963, 62-74).

The sheer size of the black population significantly affected Brazilians' attitudes towards race. Estimates suggest that over 40 percent of the population is either black or some combination of black,

white, and/or Indian. The latest Brazilian census that included racial categories (1950) showed 26 percent of the population to be racially mixed. In actuality this figure is much higher since Brazilians classify many as whites who are actually mixed. Interracial marriage is an acceptable and common practice within most classes of Brazilian society. The large, mixed population has engendered a society which considers any form of racial segregation illegal; prejudice, though not eliminated, is less of a social factor than in most other countries of the world (Smith 1963, 68-73, 126; see also Bergmann 1978; Azevedo 1968).

### THE CHURCH IN BRAZIL

Mormon missionaries came to Brazil in 1928 and proselyted among recent European immigrants. Small German colonies in southern Brazil attracted Mormon missionaries from Argentina who believed they could teach Germans and avoid the surrounding Brazilian population. Once the Church was established in Brazil, however, missionaries did not leave, even though a 1938 governmental policy restricted their work with the German immigrants. Instead they focused on the Portuguese-speaking population, remaining in the south, the region with the largest number of European migrants and the least amount of miscegenation (see Grover 1985; Peterson 1961; Flake 1975).

Once missionaries began teaching Brazilians, two racial issues surfaced. First, it was impossible to avoid contact with persons of African descent in most parts of the country. The illegality of segregated housing meant that there were neither official nor unofficial residential areas for blacks as had occurred in South Africa or parts of the United States. Consequently missionaries could not work in any area without inadvertently contacting blacks or their descendants. This was generally not a problem with contacts who had obvious African physical traits, but many investigators who looked European had distant black ancestors.

Second, American missionaries ran into problems when their identification of blacks differed from that of Brazilian members. Faithful Church members respecting the policy on priesthood restrictions would interest family and friends in the Church only to discover that the missionaries believed the potential investigators had African ancestry. The Church established strict guidelines in an effort to limit, as much as possible, the inevitable conflict. By the 1960s an uneasy but workable system was in place. In general, priesthood leaders considered physical appearance first and then family and genealogical records. If these methods were not successful, spiritual means such as patriarchal bless-

ings and the inspiration of Church leaders were used to make the final determination. Though not always appreciated by the members, this system was acceptable and insured that Church policy was followed (see Grover 1984; Amorim 1986).

Most Brazilian members, however, were uncomfortable with the Church's policy. Their association with an American-based Church that had a policy denying certain spiritual and institutional rights to blacks led friends and relatives to accuse them of racism, a label difficult for a Brazilian to live with. At the same time, they did not feel they had a right or even the possibility to question or work towards a change in the policy (Alcover 1982, 11). The priesthood restriction was a revelation from God and could only be changed when new revelation was received through the proper religious channels (Camargo 1976, 13). Brazil's traditional patrimonial political and social system conditioned Brazilians to accept decisions made by higher authorities, even when they did not agree, and to learn to live with the policy (Roett 1984).

The situation remained essentially unchanged until the Church announced in 1975 that they intended to build a temple in São Paulo. This landmark announcement helped create an environment in which change could be contemplated. To understand the relationship between the Church in Brazil, the São Paulo Temple, and the priesthood revelation, we must examine: (1) experiences of President Kimball and other General Authorities with blacks, (2) the potential expansion of missionary work into northeastern Brazil, and (3) events during the temple construction.

### *General Authorities in Brazil*

Only one General Authority visited Brazil in an official capacity prior to the 1954 world tour visit of President David O. McKay. President McKay's visit signaled an important shift in attitude among the General Authorities toward South America. The area was now seen as a region of potential growth and development. After 1954 members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other General Authorities visited fairly regularly, especially following the 1966 organization of the first stake in São Paulo. Almost without exception, members of the Church's hierarchy were confronted with questions and problems of race when in Brazil. President McKay was asked by a young priesthood holder whether he should marry a young woman of African descent (Howells 1973, 79). During his tour of the Brazilian Mission in 1961, Joseph Fielding Smith was questioned regularly by missionaries and members about the priesthood restrictions. After meeting an active

Brazilian family of African descent, Gordon B. Hinckley reportedly became concerned about the policy in general (Sá Maia 1982, 17).

Spencer W. Kimball, however, had the greatest number of such experiences. Beginning in 1959, he visited Brazil regularly as its ecclesiastical administrator and/or as a mission and stake conference visitor. He worked to get the São Paulo Stake ready for organization in 1966 and persuaded some hesitant colleagues in the Quorum of the Twelve of the need for its organization. He maintained an interest and concern for the Brazilian members of the Church while serving as president of both the Quorum of the Twelve and of the Church. He was by far the most well known and beloved Church administrator in Brazil.

His experiences with black members of the Church began with his first visit to Brazil in 1959. A young black member approached Elder Kimball asking whether there was any useful way for him to serve in the Church. Kimball wrote in his journal, "My heart wanted to burst for him. I think I helped him with tithing and drink and . . . I think he went away less perturbed, more sure of himself" (in Kimball and Kimball 1977, 317).

Elder Kimball's frequent visits to South America over the next twenty years and his close friendship with Brazilian members made him sensitive to the priesthood problem. He counseled mission presidents and stake leaders concerning the ramifications of the priesthood restrictions. During his visits he would meet with black members and discuss the need for continued faithfulness. His experiences in Brazil were a constant reminder not necessarily of the doctrinal aspects of priesthood denial, but of the administrative, personal, and often tragic ramifications of this policy.

One black Brazilian Church member from Rio de Janeiro, Helvécio Martins, had a particular impact on Elder Kimball. Helvécio and his family were baptized in the early 1970s and quickly became active in the local ward and stake. Unlike many blacks who had joined the Church in Brazil, the Martins family was neither poor nor uneducated. Helvécio had taken advanced studies in economics and worked as an upper management accounting administrator for Petrobras, a publicly owned oil company and the largest corporation in Brazil. He also taught economics at one of Brazil's major universities and maintained a high social status in the financial community. Martins was probably the most prominent Latter-day Saint in Brazil (Martins 1982).

The Martins family presented an interesting dilemma for Church leaders. They completely accepted the Church's doctrines, including the restrictions on their activities. They became a model Latter-day Saint family, attending most Church functions and doing all they were

asked to do, seemingly without reservations. The Church, thus, was restricting participation not of a poor or uneducated black, but of a family whose education, prestige, administrative ability, and financial standing was higher than most other members of the Church in Brazil. The family had in turn reacted to the restrictions with a level of faith and devotion few members could claim. The Martins family soon became well known throughout the Church in Brazil for their dedication to the gospel (Alcover 1982; Vaz, Roselli, and Erbolato 1982).

The Martins also became prominent in the Church for other reasons. Helvécio was given responsibility for public relations of the Church in Rio de Janeiro and became the spokesman for the Church in the second largest population center of the country. Rio de Janeiro had important Brazilian television stations and newspapers, and consequently Helvécio Martins became the Church's most visible spokesperson. In this position, he gave interviews to the press explaining doctrine and activities, brought dignitaries to visit the Church, and worked to familiarize the country with Mormonism.

Church leaders in Brazil made sure that most American General Authorities traveling in the country met and talked with Martins. Helvécio visited several times with President Kimball, who took a special interest in the Martins family, making sure they had a positive understanding of the priesthood restrictions. The Martins became not only the Church's answer to outside critics but unknowingly the Brazilian advocate to Church leaders for the need of a racial policy change (Alcover 1982; Vaz, Roselli, and Erbolato 1982).

### *The Brazilian Northeast*

The Brazilian northeast provided a second pressure point for the Church's racial policies. One of the most prominent doctrines emphasized during the presidency of Spencer W. Kimball was expanding missionary work throughout the world. The Church increased the number of missionaries and moved into new areas and countries. An obvious obstacle to worldwide expansion was the restrictions toward blacks. The Brazilian northeast historically provided one of the first examples of the difficulties the Church would encounter moving into predominately black areas and continually reminded Church authorities how difficult Church expansion would be without a change in the priesthood policy.

The demographic makeup of Brazil was an important variable in Church growth and expansion. Traditionally, Brazilian mission presidents had always been careful to send missionaries only into areas with large populations of recent European immigrants. With the formation of a second mission in 1959, however, an increased number of mission-

aries entered Brazil. William Grant Bangerter, president of the northern mission, sent missionaries into areas that had earlier been rejected primarily for racial reasons. Missionaries first went to the center-west cities of Brasília and Goiânia, and the next logical step was the large population centers of the northeast (Grover 1985, 255).

The demographic differences between the immigrant towns of the south and the traditional cities of the northeast are significant. During much of the colonial period through 1720, sugar plantations made the coastal region of the northeast the economically strongest area of the country. Most African slaves imported into the country went to this section. But as the economy of the northeast declined in the eighteenth century, coffee plantations in the south expanded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as slavery was gradually eliminated, the bulk of immigrants, Europeans, settled in the south. Consequently, the population of the northeast more than any other area of the country exhibits the characteristics of miscegenation that occurred during the colonial period between the Portuguese, Indian, and black. According to the 1950 census, over 50 percent of the population of the state of Pernambuco was black or mixed, compared to 5 percent in the southern state of Santa Catarina (Smith 1963, 70).

These census figures indicating over 40 percent white in the northeast were based on the Brazilian perception of white, which was essentially physical appearance, not genealogical lineage. Consequently, the population classified as white in the census included a percentage with African lineage but not obvious African physical features. This was not a segment of the population Mormon missionaries would be able to work with. The missionaries became so sensitive that they began to consider anyone without obvious European physical characteristics to have the "lineage." This left only about 10 to 20 percent of the population in the northeast as potential investigators of Mormonism.<sup>1</sup>

Bangerter suggested the possibility of introducing missionaries into the northeast to Henry D. Moyle of the First Presidency when he visited Brazil in 1960. Bangerter informed Moyle that he had recently visited a number of the larger cities and felt that in at least three or four there was the potential for success. Moyle suggested that missionaries be sent into one city for a short time as an "isolated experiment, . . . to learn how well we could work in the northern areas where Negroes predominate and to be better acquainted with this vast country" (Bangerter 1964).

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<sup>1</sup> This figure was most commonly given during oral interviews conducted by the author in 1982 with members, missionaries, and mission presidents.

A few months later, missionaries were sent to Recife, Pernambuco, the largest city of the northeast. They experienced minimal success at first due to the large number of blacks, strong anti-American feelings in the area, and an almost complete lack of local knowledge about Mormonism. Missionary success improved when they taught and baptized the family of Milton Soares, Jr., a local businessman with a young family. His devotion to the Church was strong and contagious, and within a year the missionaries had baptized a small but committed group. Soares was set apart as branch president on 27 October 1961 by A. Theodore Tuttle, who remarked at the time: "There was a feeling of great strength and promise for stability in the future due to such a fine and capable group of leaders. . . . People really look fine although we well know there are some who have a mixture of blood" (Manuscript History 1961).

Encouraged mission presidents sent missionaries into other cities in the north. Branches were opened in João Pessoa in 1960, Maceió in 1966, and Fortaleza and Campina Grande in 1968. Though the degree of proselyting success varied, all these branches were continually plagued with the problems of racial mixture. Bangerter wrote in his diary 26 November 1958: "In some of the branches, particularly in the north where a man or woman of white blood received the gospel[,] it frequently happened that their companion and children were colored and to bring in the whole family gave membership to many who could not hold the priesthood."

Racial restrictions made branches in the northeast different from those in the south. The distances between rich and poor were much more pronounced than in the south, and social classes were loosely structured by color, with the darker population occupying the lower social strata. Racially mixed marriages were more common in the lower classes, and the missionaries found that the white Brazilians they had to work with were of a higher social class than those in the south. Though missionaries in the north had fewer baptisms, those converts they did baptize were generally of a higher economic and educational level than those found elsewhere in Brazil. With a higher percentage of professors, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals in the Church, finding capable lay leaders with administrative experience to fill branch and district positions was less of a problem.

Until 1978 established branches remained small but active, and missionary success remained essentially the same. Proselyting remained limited to the largest cities because of the high percentage of blacks in the area. It was obvious to both Brazilian and American Church leaders that until the priesthood restrictions were removed, Church growth in



areas such as the northeast would not be possible (Amorim 1986).<sup>2</sup>

### *The São Paulo Temple*

The pivotal event in the history of the Church in Brazil was the March 1975 announcement of the forthcoming construction of the São Paulo Temple. Unlike Mormon chapels, entrance to the temple required that male members hold the priesthood and be judged worthy and that female members not have African ancestry. Construction of the temple brought to the forefront the issue of the priesthood restriction. Some observers have suggested that officials became concerned that the difficulty of racial identification to determine who could enter the temple would make it hard for the Church to keep members with African ancestry out of the temple. Though this was a concern to a few, the major issue presented by the construction of the temple does not appear to have been administrative. The Church already had a method in place to determine priesthood eligibility that would only have had to have been extended to determine temple eligibility. The role of the São Paulo Temple in the Church's priesthood policy change probably had more to do with compassion than with administrative problems. President Spencer W. Kimball undoubtedly was most concerned with how to allow blacks into the temple, not how to keep them out.

Several incidents during the last phases of the temple construction indicate that President Kimball and other General Authorities were interested in the priesthood issue. Several black members helped with selected tasks in the temple construction, and the prophet was kept informed of their activities by Brazilian authorities. Elder James E. Faust, the General Authority supervisor for Brazil, stated in 1977 that black members helped "to make blocks for the temple just like anybody else. They have made their monetary contributions for the construction of the temple and they've made their sacrifices just the same as everybody else. And I've advised President Kimball and Brother McConkie of the faithfulness of these people" (1977, 26). Bruce R. McConkie had administrative responsibility for Brazil at this time.

Gordon B. Hinckley, in a talk at the dedication of the temple, indicated that he knew of the sacrifices and contributions of black members and was impressed that they were willing to work on the temple (Sá

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<sup>2</sup> The effect of the priesthood restrictions on growth becomes obvious when we examine the number of baptisms before and after 1978. In the area that became the Brazil North Mission, seventy baptisms were recorded in June 1978. One year later, the mission organized in July 1978 baptized over 900 in the month of June. The Brazil North Mission between 1979-82 was one of the highest baptizing missions in the Church. The area that included one mission in 1978 now includes five (Klein 1982).

Maia 1982, 17). Other General Authorities were also aware. According to Elder LeGrand Richards, "All those people with Negro blood in them have been raising the money to build that temple. . . . With this situation that we feel down there in Brazil—Brother Kimball worried a lot about it—how the people are so faithful and devoted" (Richards 1978, 3-4).

Church authorities also noted the activities of Helvécio Martins and his family. Helvécio was asked to serve on the temple dedication public relations committee that coordinated information for media exposure. Consequently he was at the cornerstone-laying ceremony in March 1977, which was attended by several General Authorities, including President Kimball. Before the ceremony began, President Kimball noticed Martins in the audience and asked him to come to the podium. Martins sat with President Kimball briefly and received this counsel: "Brother, what is necessary for you is faithfulness. Remain faithful and you will enjoy all the blessings of the Church." Martins returned to his seat pondering the reason for the counsel and preoccupied with the experience (Martins 1982, 23).

That preoccupation increased significantly when a few months later Elder James E. Faust, in Rio for meetings, asked Martins to accompany him to the airport. Asking Martins if he remembered the words of President Kimball, Faust stated that all members of the Church should heed the counsel, but it was especially important for Martins to remain faithful and keep the commandments. Faust did not indicate any special reason for his advice, and Martins remained concerned over these unusual experiences (Martins 1982, 23).

Martins continued to work with the publicity committee, making several trips to São Paulo to attend meetings with members of the full committee. During one such visit, he and his wife walked on to the partially constructed main floor of the temple. He described what happened.

I went onto the Temple construction with my wife, walking among the construction metals and wood and stopped at a certain place. We felt an unusually strong spirit at that time. We held each other and cried for some time. We realized later we were standing at the exact spot of the Celestial Room of the Temple. We felt a strong undescrivable feeling in that place. Impressive! Extraordinarily strong. It was one of the most spiritual experiences of our lives. (Martins 1982, 16)

They had no idea what the experience meant. Others observing the scene placed their own interpretation on what had happened and spread the word of the incident throughout the Church. This experience was recounted to Church leaders who took it back to Salt Lake City (Alcover 1982, 11; Puerta 1982, 16).

Martins was again surprised in March 1978 to learn of a change in the Home Teaching policy. His stake president received a call from William Grant Bangerter, the General Authority administrator for Brazil, advising him that worthy black males could now act in the formerly restricted priesthood positions of junior companion home teacher. Though this appeared to be a very simple change, it was significant to Martins. He noted:

Well, this worried us even more. I remember in our family home evening that night we decided something was about to happen. We didn't know what. We did not think it would be anything related to the priesthood. We had conditioned ourselves to believe the granting of the priesthood to Blacks would occur only in the millennium, but we felt something special was about to happen. We didn't know what it was but felt we should get ready. (1982, 24)

These incidents suggest that the General Authorities were actively concerned with the priesthood problem. Martins sensed that something major was about to occur. Just what was happening and who was involved is not yet completely clear. Notice this comment by Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Obviously, the Brethren have had a great anxiety and concern about this problem for a long period of time, and President Spencer W. Kimball has been exercised and has sought the Lord in faith" (1981, 127). James E. Faust indicated that he knew that the issue of the priesthood was being discussed (1984, 291). Finally, in a talk to missionaries in South Africa in October 1978, President Kimball described the process he was going through:

I remember very vividly that day after day I walked to the temple and ascended to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies and . . . our meetings of the Twelve and the First Presidency. After everybody had gone out of the temple, I knelt and prayed. I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them into place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. (in E. Kimball 1982, 450-51)

### *The Priesthood Revelation*

In June the priesthood revelation was announced. In Brazil, as in most of the Church at large, the announcement was met with a joyous shock. Many Brazilians had hoped something would happen to allow faithful black members to participate fully in the temple opening and dedication ceremonies, but few expected such a monumental change.

When the revelation was made public, Bruce R. McConkie called William Grant Bangerter with the news. Bangerter stated, "I was overwhelmed with the implications of what actually happened. How could I imagine that this moment had really come?" (1981, 12). He immediately called a meeting of mission and stake presidents in the area and read the letter from the First Presidency. According to José Puerta, a local stake president who was present, "It was a very emotional day for all of us. Most cried on that occasion. One man I believed could not cry. . . . Even he had tears in his eyes when Elder Bangerter read President Kimball's announcement. It was very emotional" (1981, 72).

Word spread rapidly among Church members. The revelation had its official reading the following Sunday, and Bangerter described the reactions:

I was present on a few occasions where the announcement was made in priesthood meeting or in public meetings. People didn't respond as they would in the spirit of the Fourth of July or something like that, with excitement and tears, but their emotions were very deep. I think their response would be characterized by heaving great sighs of emotion and raising their eyes to heaven in the spirit of thanksgiving and prayer and tears flowing freely from their eyes and just quietly trying to absorb the meaning of all that had taken place. (1981, 12)

The relationship between the revelation and Brazil became clear when the São Paulo Temple was dedicated five months later. All worthy members of the Church, including blacks, were invited to attend the ceremonies, held in the Celestial Room with an overflow audience in the chapel of a nearby stake center. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted one of the last of ten dedication ceremonies. During President Kimball's dedicatory prayer, President Hinckley thought of the revelation and noted that throughout the sessions blacks had been in attendance. As President Kimball finished the prayer, Elder Hinckley was in tears and noticed that a black family in attendance was also in tears. He then spoke to the congregation about his feelings and described an experience in Brazil when he had received an understanding of why the priesthood restrictions had occurred. He also described how the First Presidency had been aware of the significant contributions of time and money that black members had made toward the temple construction. He believed that their contributions to a building they would not be allowed to enter was the greatest test those members would ever have to endure.

During a subsequent dedicatory session, President Kimball continued on the same theme. He told how he had gone several times to a special room in the Salt Lake Temple, explaining in prayer to the Lord that this doctrine had been one he had defended and was willing to continue to defend. He stated that he understood it, had supported it,

and that the leaders of the Church were willing to continue to support it if required to do so. He then asked if there was any way at this time that the destiny of this people in the Church could be changed. He explained that it was during these sessions that the revelation came to him (Sá Maia 1982, 16-17; see also Avant 1979; McConkie 1981, 126-37; Faust 1984; and Barton 1985, 176).

## CONCLUSION

We will probably never know the actual role of the events I have described in the priesthood revelation. We can, however, suggest some possibilities.

First, since 1940 the Church in Brazil had presented to the General Authorities the internal, institutional, and personal results of the priesthood restrictions throughout the Church. In other areas of the world, such as the United States, the internal consequences tended to be overshadowed by the external, outside pressures.

Second, President Kimball's several visits allowed him to feel very comfortable in Brazil and with Brazilians, in spite of a language barrier. He was therefore aware of what was happening there and generally sensitive and concerned about the effects of the priesthood restrictions on individual members, both black and white.

Third, Church leaders recognized that the priesthood policy significantly restricted growth in Brazil, particularly in the northeast. This fact conflicted with the emphasis President Kimball was placing on missionary work.

Fourth, the São Paulo Temple presented the Church for the first time with the dilemma of restricting from entrance into a temple large numbers of members who were morally worthy. Many of those who would not be allowed to enter had offered labor and financial contributions to the temple construction.

Fifth, Helvécio Martins became a symbol of a faithful member with significant leadership potential who was unable to participate fully in the blessings of the Church.

In the eleven years since the revelation, much has happened in Brazil. Without the priesthood restrictions, the Church has expanded into all parts of the country. The growth has been the most notable in the northeast, where small branches became stakes within a couple of years. Five missions now administer the northern area where one existed in 1978. Congregations mirror the demographic makeup of their individual regions. Blacks serve in all executive positions in the Church—as bishops, stake presidents, and regional representatives.

Black male and female missionaries are serving in Brazil and Portugal. Helvécio Martins and his wife are presiding over the Brazil Fortaleza Mission. The priesthood restrictions of ten years ago are a fading memory for members of the Church. Since more than half of the Brazilian members were baptized after 1978, many are not even aware that restrictions ever existed. For those who are, 1978 will be remembered as a year of important change.

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