

**THE MORMON CHURCH
AND
THE
AFRICAN AMERICAN**



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FOR NEARLY 140 YEARS, Mormonism (the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints") has taught that the black people are "inferior" and are "cursed" by God. The Mormon leaders who have taught these things in the name of Christianity are revered as "prophets, seers and revelators" by their Church, and their plain words about these cruel, unscriptural teachings remain for the world to judge.

However, in June, 1978, Mormon leaders attempted to erase over a century of outside resentment with the announcement that "worthy" black persons could receive privileges and secret initiations which had always been denied them in Mormonism. This strange, unexpected turnabout came as Mormon leaders were planning to initiate their final drive to send their "missionaries" into the remaining lands of the world where Mormonism has been most resisted—particularly Africa.

Surely, this cannot be mere coincidence. Nevertheless, the firm Mormon teaching that an entire race of people are "cursed with a black skin" for sins committed by them before *they were born* remains to this very day, no announcement or "revelation" has removed it.

The following quotations, taken from authoritative doctrinal writings and speeches by Mormon Prophets (*their supreme earthly leaders*) and Apostles, should serve as a sobering warning of the true nature of Mormonism. It is a religion which curses an entire people one day,

and offers them greater privileges" the next.

May true Christians beware of all such hypocrisy!

What follows are solid statements by LDS authorities establishing the true doctrines of the church regarding the African American.

After that, I have included several LDS documents explaining their old/new positions on this matter.

BRIGHAM YOUNG

Second Prophet and President of the Mormon Church

“I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the Children of men, that they may not call scripture!” *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 13, page 95.

“You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable, sad, low in their habits, wild, and seemingly without the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any one of the children of Adam.

Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would

have put termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be and the Lord put a mark on him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then other curse is pronounced upon the same race - that they would be the "**servant of servants;**" and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree." *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 7, pages 290 291

“In our first settlement in Missouri, it was said by our enemies that we intended to tamper with the slaves, not that we had any idea of the kind, for such a thing never entered our minds.

We knew that the children of Ham were to be the "*servant of servants,*" and no power under heaven could hinder it, so long as the Lord would permit them to welter under the curse and those were known to be our religious views concerning them." *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 2, page 172.

“Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is **death on the spot.**

This will always be so." *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 10, page 110.

JOSEPH SMITH

First Prophet and President and Founder of the Mormon Church

“Had I anything to do with the negro , I would confine them by strict law to their own species and put them on a national equalization.” *History of the Church*, Volume 5, pages 218 - 219.

BRUCE R. McCONKIE

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church

"Those who were less valiant in the pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the *negroes*. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, **the mark put upon him for his rebellion against Cod and his murder of Abel being a black skin....** Noah's son Ham married Egyptus, a descendant of Cain, thus preserving the negro lineage through the flood....**The negroes are not equal with other races when the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned,** particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, **but this inequality is not of man's origin. It is the**

Lord's doing, based on His eternal laws of justice, and grows out of the lack of spiritual valiance of those concerned in their first estate." *Mormon Doctrine*, 10th printing, pages 527-528.

"Racial degeneration, resulting In differences In appearance and spiritual aptitude, has arisen since the fall. We know the circumstances under which the posterity of Cain (and later of Ham) **were cursed with what we call negroid racial characteristics."** *Mormon Doctrine*, page 616.

"Though he was a rebel and an associate of Lucifer in the preexistence, and though he was a liar from the beginning whose name was *Perdition*, *Cain* managed to attain the privilege of mortal birth....**As a result of his rebellion, Cain was cursed with a dark skin; he became the father of the negroes**, and those spirits who are not worthy to receive the priesthood are born through his lineage. He became the first mortal to be **cursed** as a son of perdition." *Mormon Doctrine*, page 109.

"Through Ham (a name meaning *black*) "the blood of the Canaanites was preserved" through the flood, he having married Egyptus, a descendant of Cain....Negroes are thus descendants of Ham, who himself also was cursed apparently for marrying into the forbidden lineage." *Mormon Doctrine*, page 343.

"....in a broad general sense, **caste systems have their root and**

origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and *segregation* are right and proper **and have the approval of the Lord**. To illustrate: **Cain Ham, and the whole negro race have _ *cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain***, so they can be identified as a caste apart, a people with whom the other descendants of Adam should not intermarry." *Mormon Doctrine*, page 114.

MARK E. PETERSON
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of
the Mormon Church

"Who placed the Negroes originally in darkest Africa? Was it some man, or was it God? And when He placed them there, He segregated them.... The Lord segregated the people both as to blood and place of residence.

At least in the cases of the Lamanites and the negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that *He placed a dark skin upon them as a curse - as a punishment and as a sign to all others*. He forbade intermarriage with them under threat of extension of the curse

"....And He certainly segregated the descendants of Cain **when He cursed the Negro** as to the Priesthood, and drew an absolute line. You may even say He dropped an Iron curtain there. **The Negro was**

cursed as to the Priesthood, and therefore, was cursed as to the blessings of the Priesthood. Certainly God made a segregation there.

"Think of the Negro, cursed as lo the Priesthood. Are we prejudiced against him? Unjustly, sometimes we are accused of having such a prejudice. But what does the mercy of God have for him? This Negro, who, in the pre-existence lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin, and possibly being born in darkest Africa , if that Negro is willing when he hears the gospel to accept it, he may have many of the blessings of the gospel.

In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel with real, sincere faith, and is really converted, to give him the blessings of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost....

"If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be *cursed* as to the priesthood. **Do I want my children cursed** as to the priesthood? **If there is one drop of negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse,** There isn't any argument, therefore, as to intermarriage with the Negro, is there? There are 50 million Negroes in the United States. If they were to achieve complete absorption with the white race, think what that would do. With 50 million Negroes inter-married with us, where would the priesthood be? Who could hold it, in all America?

Think what that would do to the work of the Church!....

"Now we are generous with the Negro. We are willing that the Negro have the highest kind of education. I would be willing to let every Negro drive a Cadillac if they could afford it. I would be willing that they have all the advantages they can get out of life in the world. But let them enjoy these things among *themselves*. I think the Lord segregated the Negro and who is man to change that segregation?" *Race Problems - as They Affect The Church* (address given at Brigham Young University)

JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

Tenth Prophet and President of the Mormon Church

"I would not want you to believe that we bear any animosity toward the Negro. **"Darkies" are wonderful people,** and they have their place in our church." *Look* magazine, October 22, 1963, page 79.

"There is a reason why one man is born black and with other disadvantages, while another is born white with great advantage. The reason is that we once had an estate before we came here, and were obedient, more or less, to the laws that were given us there. Those who were faithful in all things there received greater blessings here, and those who were not faithful received less.... There were no neutrals in the war in heaven. All took sides either with Christ or with Satan.

Every man had his agency there, and men receive rewards here based upon their actions there, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body. **The Negro, evidently, is receiving the reward he merits.**" *Doctrines of Salvation*, Volume 1, pages 66-67.

“President Brigham Young, answering a question put to him by Elder Lorenzo D. Young in a meeting held December 25 , 1869, in Salt Lake City, said that Joseph Smith had declared that the Negroes were not neutral in heaven, for all the spirits took sides, **but the posterity of Cain are black because he (Cain) committed murder.**" *The Way to Perfection*, pages 105-106.

“That negro race, for instance, have been placed under restrictions because of their attitude in the world of spirits, few will doubt. It cannot be looked upon as just that they should be deprived of the power of the Priesthood without it being **a punishment for some act, or acts, performed before they were born.**" *The Way to Perfection*, page 43.

“Not only was Cain called upon to suffer, but because of his wickedness he became the father of **an inferior race**. A curse placed upon him and that curse has been continued through his lineage and must do so *while time endures*. Millions of souls have come into this **world cursed with a black skin** and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain. Moreover, they have been made to feel their

inferiority and have been separated from the rest of mankind from the beginning.... we will also hope that blessings may eventually be given to our negro brethren, for they are our brethren—children of God—not withstanding **their black covering emblematical of eternal darkness.** " *The Way to Perfection*, pages 101-102.

"Ham, through Egyptus, continued the curse which was placed upon the seed of Cain. Because of that curse this dark race was separated and isolated from all the rest of Adam's posterity before the flood, and since that time the same condition has continued, and they have **been 'despised among all people.'** This doctrine did not originate with President Brigham Young but was **taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith** we all know it is due to his teachings that the negro today is barred from the Priesthood."

The Way to Perfection, pages 110-111.

JOHN TAYLOR

Third Prophet and President of the Mormon Church

" . . . after the flood we are told that the **curse** that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Ham's wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? **Because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation a upon a the earth as well as God;....** " *Journal of*

Discourses, Volume 22, page 304.

"When he (Satan) destroyed the inhabitants of the antediluvian worlds, he suffered a descendant of Cain to come through the flood in order that he might be properly represented upon the earth." *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 23, page 336

ORSON PRATT
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of
The Mormon Church

" among the Saints (i.e., Mormons] is the most likely place for these [pre-existent) spirits to take their tabernacles, through a just and righteous parentage....The Lord has not kept them in store for five or six thousand years past, and kept them waiting for their bodies all this time to send them among the Hottentots, **the African Negroes**, the idolatrous Hindoos, **or any other of the fallen nations of the earth.**

They are not kept in reserve in order to come forth to **receive such a degraded parentage** upon the earth; no, the Lord is not such a being." *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 1, page 63.

**THERE ARE OTHER TEACHINGS OF MORMONISM
That separate it forever from Christianity and the Holy Bible.**

Specifically, Mormonism also teaches:

That God the Father has a body of flesh and bones,
and was once a sinful man on another planet.

That Jesus Christ Is the brother of Lucifer, the Devil.

That the sayings of their inspired leaders are superior to the Bible.

That *"there are more gods than there are particles on a million earths"*

That men can become gods themselves by joining the Mormon church,
and can create and populate their own earths.

That the shed blood of Christ is not sufficient to save us from our sins,
and that men cannot be saved by grace through faith,
but by our works of righteousness.

That the Mormon Church is the only true church on earth,
to the exclusion of all others.

That man cannot gain eternal life and enter the presence of the Lord outside of Mormonism.

(All of the above teachings are well-documented. Just ask for the details.)

"And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many." *Matt: 24:11*

"But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." *Galatians 1:8*

"Test all things; hold fast that which is good." *I Thessalonians 5.21*

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This is the first of two Mormon documents, pulled from the Internet and I include them here so that the reader can clearly see both sides of this issue .

The Church and the Negroid People

**Historical information (from LDS Church records)
concerning
the doctrine of the Church toward the Negroid people.**

By

William E. Berrett

About the Author

William E. Berrett is former Vice President of Brigham Young University and former Vice-Administrator of the Unified School System of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is also a member of the Utah Bar Association.

As a Church Historian he is the author of THE RESTORED CHURCH, widely used as a textbook in church schools, and co-author of the three-volume, READINGS IN L.D.S. CHURCH HISTORY, used widely in church colleges.

He is well informed in the area about which he has written in the enclosed treatise. This treatise should be read by all who are interested in getting at the facts in a much-disputed area.

So much has been said concerning the attitude of the Church toward those of Negroid blood, and so often without regard for the facts, that I have deemed it wise to set out in simple fashion some of those events, documents, decisions, and opinions upon which the Church policy rests.

This is done without any pretension that these matters when so portrayed will satisfy every inquiring mind, but rather in the hope that those who feel obliged to discuss the subject will not base their opinions and conclusions on false premises.

The problem of the races is not new. The various races have been with us since written history began. While these races have intermingled to some degree, one of the remarkable facts of history is their preservation in rather distinct lines of cleavage.

Those who have tried to find explanation as to why one race is white, another black, another red, another yellow, or another brown, have run into real difficulties.

The old explanation that coloring was due to climatic conditions under which the races lived giving rise to certain pigments in the skin has been discarded as man has learned more of the history and distribution of peoples. The long history of the White race living in the tropics and the dark skinned Eskimo living in the frozen north has pushed such theories into the discard. Frankly, we appear to be without any generally accepted scientific explanation.

Nor does the Bible assist us much in this direction. In Genesis we read that Cain was cursed of the Lord for his murder of Abel.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the Lord, my Punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and vagabond in the

earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. 1

What the mark was that came upon Cain and which enabled others to distinguish him from the other children of Adam is not made clear.

The Bible does not mention if or how the curse and mark placed upon Cain survived the great flood. In the account of Noah and his sons there is a curse referred to as being placed on Canaan, son of Ham by his grandfather Noah.

And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.²

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

The Biblical account indicates a separation of the descendants of Canaan from the lands occupied by the descendants of Shem and Japheth.

The Biblical writers make little attempt to record the history of other than Israelite peoples and distinguish these as descendants of Shem. These we find very conscious of racial streams. Thus Abraham sends for a woman from among his own people at Haran as wife for his son Isaac. And Isaac's son finds a wife in the same land. The Jews returning from Babylon after the captivity re—established Jerusalem but purged out all who could not trace their genealogy to Israel.⁴

While the Bible contains no account of a Negro bearing the Priesthood of God, one would find rather scant materials upon which to base any policy limiting the rights and participation of the Negro in God's Church.

Thus when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was established under Joseph Smith's leadership in 1830, there did not exist in Christian churches generally any policy forbidding Negroes from membership and leadership in Christian churches.

True, wherever the Negro existed under conditions of slavery as in the Southern States of America he was considered as inferior to the Whites and was usually segregated in Church services.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had its origin north of the slave belt. The New England of that day was not only a place where the Negro could be free, it was also the seed bed for the abolitionists, those fiery advocates of freedom and equal rights for the

dark race in America.

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that we find the early members of the Church often referred to by the slaveholders as “Negro-lovers.” Certain it is that most of the early members of the Church were opposed to the principle of slavery.

The Book of Mormon strengthened that position:

.and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. 5

The zeal to establish the new Zion, however, found a part of the Church almost at once settling near Independence, Missouri, in the heart of a slave state. Here all northerners were looked upon with suspicion as “abolitionists” and feared at the polls. This opposition was enhanced by the speed and fervor with which the Saints were pouring into that part of Missouri and their openly avowed purpose of acquiring the land solely for those of the “faith.”

It is little wonder, therefore, that any expression written or otherwise, on the part of the Saints, which seemingly defended the Negro, was seized upon by the slaveholders of Missouri as proof of abolitionist leanings.

Thus, when the July number of THE EVENING AND MORNING STAR for 1833 published in Independence, contained an editorial on “Free People of Color” it was the signal for violent action. The editorial quoted the law of the state of Missouri relative to a Negro or mulatto entering the state, followed by the comment of the editor as follows:

Slaves are real estate in this and other states, and wisdom would dictate great care among the branches of the Church of Christ on this subject. So long as we have no special rule in the Church as to people of color, let prudence guide; and while they, as well as we, are in the hands of a merciful God, we say: shun every appearance of evil. 6

Publishing this law, and the above comment, was construed by the “old settlers” to be invitation to free people of color to settle in Jackson County and as carrying instructions on how to do so legally.

The Saints quickly denied that intention by publishing an extra to the July number on the 16th of that month, in which we read:

Our intention was not only to stop free people of color from emigrating to this state, but to prevent them from being admitted as members of the church. Great care should be taken on this point. The saints must shun every appearance of evil. As to slaves we have nothing to say. In connection with the wonderful events of this age, much is doing towards abolishing slavery, and colonizing the blacks in Africa.

We often lament the situation of our sister states in the south, and we fear, lest, as has been the case, the blacks should rise and spill innocent blood: for they are ignorant, and a little may lead them to disturb the peace of society. To be short, we are opposed to have free people of color admitted into the state; and we say, that none will be admitted into the church, for we are determined to obey the laws and constitutions of our country, that we may have that protection which the sons of liberty inherit from the legacy of Washington, through the favorable auspices of a Jefferson, and Jackson.⁷

Certainly the editor went too far in his denial when he indicated that the Church would not admit Negroes into membership as there were already a few Negroes in the Church and he had no authority to deny them membership. At any rate the “old settlers” considered the extra as a weak excuse and aroused mob violence which destroyed the Mormon press.

How many Negroes had joined the Church by 1833 is not known. As late as 1839 Parley P. Pratt, wrote:

In fact one dozen free Negroes or mulattoes have never belonged to our society in any part of the world, from its first organization to this day, 1839.⁸

So intense was the feeling in the country regarding the status of the

Negro that Joseph Smith cautioned the saints against the extreme view of the abolitionists⁹ and instructed missionaries to convert the master first and approach the slaves with the full knowledge and approval of the owner.¹⁰

Once the Saints had left the slave state of Missouri and were settled in the free state of Illinois, the Prophet Joseph gave voice to his views that the Government should purchase the Negroes from their masters and set them free.¹¹

At no time during the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or since, has the Church denied membership to the Negroes. There have always been Negro members of the Church, at least from 1833, although the numbers have been relatively small, and no direct efforts have been made to proselyte among them.

Membership in the Church has been open to the Negro as to all men because of the instructions to the Church, both in the primitive Church and now, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”¹²

That the gospel is for all people is made clear by the Lord in his preface to his book of Commandments:

Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say:

Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.

And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.

Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth...

For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.¹³

In setting forth the necessity for baptism and the requirements of those who are to be baptized, no restriction is placed as to race but,

“All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his Church.”¹⁴

Speaking of those unrighteous who are not permitted to partake of the sacrament, the Savior said to the Nephites:

Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out from among you, but ye shall minister unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father, in my name; and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood.”¹⁵

THE NEGRO AND THE PRIESTHOOD

During the first year of the Church the question of whether or not the Negro should be given the Priesthood did not arise, as there is no evidence of any Negroes having been baptized. Even by 1833 Negro membership could be counted on the fingers of one hand. It appears that one person of Negro blood had been ordained an Elder by William

Smith while he was on his mission in New York State as evidenced by a letter appearing in JOURNAL HISTORY, June 2, 1847:

At this place (Batavia, New York) I found a colored brother by the name of Lewis, a barber and an Elder in the Church ordained by William Smith. This Lewis, I am also informed, has a son who is married to a white girl and both are members of the Church. I wish to know if this is the order of God or tolerated, to ordain Negroes to the Priesthood and allow in our organization. If it is I desire to know it as] have yet got to learn it. 16

The only other Negro of whom we know, who was ordained to the Priesthood during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph, was an octoroon by the name of Elijah Abel. This man was one-eighth Negro and was light of color. It is not known who ordained him or whether or not it was known at the time that he had Negro blood. Concerning Elijah Abel, Andrew Jensen in his L.D.S. Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3:577 wrote:

13 April 4, 1841, as an exception having been made in his case with regard to the general rule of the Church in relation to colored people. At Nauvoo, Illinois, where he resided, he followed the avocation of an undertaker. After his arrival in Salt Lake City he became a resident of the Tenth Ward, and together with his wife, he managed the Earn ham Hotel in Salt Lake city.

In Nauvoo he was intimately acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and later in life was the special friend of the late Levi W. Hancock. In 1883, as a member of the Third Quorum of Seventy, he left Salt Lake City on a mission to Canada, during which time he also performed missionary labors in the United States. Two week after his return he died, December 25, 1884, of debility, consequent upon exposure while laboring in the ministry in Ohio. He died in full faith in the Gospel.

The entry is misleading because it does not disclose that Elijah Abel was only part Negro and does not disclose the fact that in a meeting, May 31, 1879, at the home of President A. O. Smoot, Provo, Utah, leaders of the Church reapproved that the Priesthood was not for the Negro, and that Elijah Abel was not to exercise any Priesthood rights. The fact that subsequent to that date Elijah Abel was called on a mission does not necessarily imply that he participated in any baptisms or ordinations. It appears that at the meeting at Brother Smoot's home, the whole subject of the Negro and the Priesthood seems to have been discussed, especially Joseph Smith's attitude on the subject.

The following entry appears in
JOURNAL HISTORY: NEGRO
PIESTHOOD NOT TO BE CONFERRED UPON NEGRO 1879

Saturday, May 31st, 1879, at the house of President A. O. Smoot,
Provo City, Utah, Utah County, at 5 o'clock P.M.

President John Taylor, Elders Brigham Young, Abram O. Smoot, Zebedee Coltrin and L. John Nut-tall met, and the subject of ordaining Negroes to the Priesthood was presented.

President Taylor said: “Some parties have said to me that Brother Zebedee Coltrin had talked to the Prophet Joseph Smith on this subject, and they said that he (Coltrin) thought it was not right for them to have the Priesthood. Whereupon the Prophet said to him that Peter on a certain occasion had a vision wherein he saw heaven opened, and certain vessel descended unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to earth; wherein all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air— And there came a voice to him: Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call not thou common.”

And the Prophet Joseph then said to Brother Coltrin, as the Angel said to Peter, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”

President Taylor asked Brother Coltrin: “Did the Prophet Joseph ever make such a statement to you?”

Brother Coltrin: “No sir; he never said anything of the kind in his life to me.”

President Taylor: “What did he say?”

Brother Coltrin: “The spring that we went up in Zion’s Camp in 1834, Brother Joseph sent Brother J. P. Green and me out south to gather up means to assist in gathering out the Saints from Jackson County, Missouri. On our return home we got in conversation about the Negro having a right to the priesthood, and I took up the side he had no right. Brother Green argued that he had. The subject got so warm between us that he said he would report me to Brother Joseph when we got home for preaching false doctrine, which doctrine that I advocated was that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood.

‘All right,’ said I, ‘I hope you will.’ And when we got to Kirtland, we both went to Brother Joseph’s office together to make our returns, and Brother Green was as good as his word and reported to Brother Joseph that I said that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood. Brother Joseph kind of dropped his head and rested it on his hand for a minute, and then said, ‘Brother Zebedee is right, for the spirit of the Lord saith the Negro has no right nor cannot hold the Priesthood.’ He made no reference to Scripture at all, but such was his decision. I don’t recollect ever having any conversation with him afterwards on this subject. But I have heard him say in public that no person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood.

Brother Coltrin further said: Brother Abel was ordained a seventy because he had labored on the Temple (it must have been in the 2nd

Quorum) and when the Prophet Joseph learned of his lineage he was dropped from the Quorum, and another was put in his place. I was one of the first Seven Presidents of the Quorum of Seventy at the time he was dropped.

President Taylor: Brother Zebedee, you are not one of the Seven Presidents now. What have you been doing?

Brother Coltrin: I was acting then as one of the First Seven Presidents of Seventy and was ordered back into the Quorum of High Priests. I can tell you how that thing first started. Brother Winchester and Brother Jared Carter while on the Brick Yard at Kirtland (Brother Winchester a Seventy and Brother Jared a High Priest) got to contending which held the highest office. Carter was rebuking him on account of his folly, which he said he had no right to do, as he held a higher Priesthood than he did. Jared contended he didn't because he was a High Priest.

This thing came to the ears of Uncle Joseph Smith, and then they went to the Prophet Joseph with it. The Prophet then inquired of the Lord, and he afterwards directed that we be put back with the Quorum of High Priests, and other men (five) were then ordained to the Presidency of Seventies, and three out of that five apostatized. Brothers Joseph Young and Levi Hancock were retained and the other five filled the number.

In the washing and anointing of Brother Abel at Kirtland, I anointed

him and while I had my hands upon his head, I never had such unpleasant feelings in my life. And I said, "I never would again anoint another person who had Negro blood in him unless I was commanded by the Prophet to do so."

ZEBEDEE COLTRIN

Attest:

L. John Nuttall

Brother A. O. Smoot said W. W. Patten, Warren Parrish and Thomas B. Marsh were laboring in the Southern States in 1835 and 1836. There were Negroes who made application for baptism. And the question arose with them whether Negroes were entitled to hold the Priesthood. And by those brethren it was decided they would not confer the Priesthood until they had consulted the Prophet Joseph, and subsequently they communicated with him. His decision, as I understood was, they were not entitled to the Priesthood, nor yet to be baptized without the consent of their Masters.

In after years when I became acquainted with Joseph myself in the Far West, about the year 1838, I received from Brother Joseph substantially the same instructions. It was on my application to him, what should be done with the Negro in the South, as I was preaching to them. He said I could baptize them by consent of their masters, but not to confer the Priesthood upon them.

(Signed) A. O. SMOOT

Attest:

L. John Nuttall

The scriptural references which are considered as controlling in the matter of the Negro and the Priesthood are found in the visions of the text of Moses, received by Joseph Smith in 1830-1831 (Book of Moses), and in the text of the Book of Abraham, first published in 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois. The passages are as follows:

Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the Lord, and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that he that findeth me will slay me, because of mine iniquities, for these things are not hid from the Lord.

And I the Lord said unto him: Whosoever slayeth thee, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And I the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.¹⁷

And the Lord said unto me: Prophecy, and I prophesied, saying: Behold the people of Canaan, which are numerous, shall go forth in battle array against the people of Shum, and shall slay them that they shall utterly be destroyed; and the people of Canaan shall divide themselves in the land, and the land shall be barren and unfruitful, and none other people shall dwell there but the people of Canaan;

For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness there of shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people...

And it came to pass that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent.¹⁸

Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

The land of Egypt, being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies that which is forbidden.

When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and

judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry.¹⁹

Even before his translation of the Abrahamic documents, Joseph Smith taught that the Negroes were descendants of Ham. Thus we read in his documentary history, ‘~ . . Negroes, descendants of Ham. “20

And again we read: “...the Indians have greater cause to complain of the treatment of the Whites, than the Negroes, or sons of Cain. “21

The teachings of Joseph Smith that the Negro should not be given the Priesthood seem to have been well understood by those who stood closest to him in the councils of the Church. Brigham Young, second President of the Church, had no question whatever in the matter. His view is expressed in the following:

The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his

brethren will be cursed the longest of any one of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin... after the flood,.. .another curse is pronounced upon the same race—that they should be the “servant of servants;” and they will be, until that curse is removed;...

How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof... They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed.²²

And again:

...The Lamanites or Indians are just as much the children of our God as we are. So also are the Africans. But we are also the children of adoption through obedience to the Gospel of His Son. Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood, and the law of God.

They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be

*removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive the blessings which we now are entitled to.*²³

The viewpoint of the Church in 1852 is well expressed in an article appearing in the *Deseret News* for April 3rd of that year:

The descendants of Cain cannot cast off their skin of blackness, at once, and immediately, although every soul of them should repent, obey the gospel, and do right, from this day forward. The mark was put upon Cain by God himself, because Cain killed his brother Abel, thereby hoping to get the birthright, and secure to himself the blessings which legally belonged to Abel; but Cain could not obtain Abel's birthright by murder...

*Cain did not obtain Abel's birthright and blessing, though he killed him for that purpose; the blessings which belonged to Abel, descended to his posterity; and until the blessings of Abel's birthright are fully received, secured, and realized, by his (Abel's) descendants, Cain and his posterity must wear the mark which God put upon them; and his White friends may wash the race of Cain with Fuller's soap every day, they cannot wash away God's mark: yet, the Canaanites may believe the Gospel, repent, and be baptized, and receive the Spirit of the Lord, and if he continues faithful until Abel's race is satisfied with his blessings, then may the race of Cain receive a fullness of the priesthood, and become satisfied with blessings, and the two of them become as one again, when Cain has paid the uttermost farthing.*²⁴

President Wilford Woodruff taught the same doctrine in regard to the Negro. Mathias F. Cowley in his biography of Wilford Woodruff states the following:

He said in his journal of October, that year (1894) that 'Aunt Jane,' the colored sister, had been to see him. She was anxious to go through the Temple and receive the higher ordinances of the gospel. President Woodruff blessed her for her constant, never changing devotion to the gospel, but explained to her her disadvantages as one of the descendants of Cain.

In after years when President Joseph F. Smith preached the funeral sermon of this same faithful woman he declared that she would in the resurrection attain the longings of her soul and become a white and beautiful person.²⁵

President Woodruff made the statement: "The day will come when all that race will be redeemed and possess all the blessings which we now have."

The position of the First Presidency in 1951 is clarified by the following announcement:

Statement by the First Presidency of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
on the Negro Question

August 17, 1951

The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. The prophets of the Lord have made several statements as to the operation of the principle.

President Brigham Young said: “Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the holy priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to.”

President Wilford Woodruff made the following statement: “The day will come when all that race will be redeemed and possess all the blessings which we now have.”

The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the pre-mortal existence has some determining

effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality, and that while the details of this principle have not been made known, the principle itself indicates that the coming to this earth and taking on mortality is a privilege that is given to those who maintained their first estate;

and that the worth of the privilege is so great that spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be as to the kind of bodies they are to secure; and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood, is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth. Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the priesthood by the Negroes.

Why the Negro was denied the priesthood from the days of Adam to our day is not known. The few known facts about our pre-earth life and our entrance into mortality must be taken into account in any attempt at an explanation.

Not all intelligences reached the same degree of attainment in the pre-earth life.

And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; Jam the Lord thy God, I am more

intelligent than they all.

The Lord thy God sent his angel to deliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah.

I dwell in the midst of them all; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to deliver unto thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen.

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born....

And we will prove them herewith to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they

*who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.*²⁶

2. Man will be punished for his own sins and not for Adam's transgression. (2nd Article of Faith.) If this is carried further, it would imply that the Negro is punished or allotted to a certain position on this earth, not because of Cain's transgression, but came to earth through the loins of Cain because of his failure to achieve other stature in the spirit world.

3. All spirits are born innocent into this world. *Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.*²⁷

4. The Negro was a follower of Jehovah in the pre-earth life. (There were no neutrals.)

One of the best explanations is that given by President David O. McKay:

November 3, 1947

Dear Brother:

In your letter to me of October 28, 1947, you say that you and some of your fellow students "have been perturbed about the question of why

the Negroid race cannot hold the priesthood.”

In reply I send you the following thoughts that I expressed to a friend upon the same subject:

Stated briefly your problem is simply this:

Since, as Paul states, the Lord “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,” why is there shown in the Church of Christ discrimination against the colored race?

This is a perplexing question, particularly in the light of the present trend of civilization to grant equality to all men irrespective of race, creed, or color. The answer, as I have sought it, cannot be found in abstract reasoning, for, in this case, reason to the soul is “dim as the borrowed rays of moon and stars to lonely, weary, wandering travelers.”

I know of no scriptural basis for denying the priesthood to Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham (1:26); however, I believe, as you suggest, that the real reason dates back to our preexistent life.

This means that the true answer to your question (and it is the only one that has ever given me satisfaction) has its foundation in faith—(1) Faith in a God of Justice, (2) Faith in the existence of an eternal plan of salvation for all God’s children.

Faith in a God of Justice Essential

I say faith in a God of *Justice*, because if we hold the Lord responsible for the conditions of the Negro in his relationship to the Church, we must acknowledge justice as an attribute of the Eternal, or conceive Him as a discriminator and therefore unworthy of our worship. In seeking our answer, then, to the problem wherein discrimination seems apparent, we must accept the Lord as being upright, and that “Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.” (Psalm 89:14),

and we must believe that He will “render to every man according to his work,” and that He “shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Eccl. 12-14) Accepting the truth that God is just and righteous, we may then set our minds at rest in the assurance that “Whatsoever good thing any man doeth the same shall be received of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” {Eph. 6:8.}

I emphasize *Justice* as an attribute of Deity, because it is the Lord who, though He “made of one blood all nations,” also “determined the bounds of their habitation.” In other words, the seeming discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something that originated with man, but goes back into the Beginning with God.

It was the Lord who said that Pharaoh, the first Governor of Egypt, though “a righteous man, blessed with the blessings of the earth, with the

blessings of wisdom could not have the priesthood.”

Now if we have faith in the justice of God, we are forced to the conclusion that this denial was not a deprivation of merited right. It may have been entirely in keeping with the eternal plan of salvation for all of the children of God.

The Peopling of the Earth is in Accordance with a Great Plan

Revelation assures us that this plan antedates man’s mortal existence, extending back to man’s pre-existent state. In that pre-mortal state were “intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said:

“These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good.”

Manifestly, from this revelation, we may infer two things: first that there were many among those spirits different degrees of intelligence, varying grades of achievement, retarded and advanced spiritual attainment; second, that there were no national distinctions among those spirits such as Americans, Europeans, Asiatics, Australians, etc. Such “bounds of habitation” would have to be “determined” when the spirits

entered upon their earthly existence or second estate.

In the “Blue Bird” Materlinck pictures unborn children summoned to earth life. As one group approaches the earth, the voices of the children earthward tending are heard in the distance to cry: “The earth! the earth! I can see it; how beautiful it is! How bright it is!” Then following these cries of ecstasy there issued from out of the depth of the abyss a sweet song of gentleness and expectancy, in reference to which the author says: “It is the song of the mothers coming out to meet them.”

Materlinck’s fairy play is not all fantasy or imagination, neither is Wordsworth’s “Ode on Intimations of Immortality” wherein he says:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;

For, as we have already quoted, it is given as a fact in revelation that Abraham was chosen before he was born. Songs of expectant parents come from all parts of the earth, and each little spirit is attracted to the spiritual and mortal parentage for which the spirit had prepared

itself.

Now if none of these spirits was permitted to enter mortality until they all were good and great and had become leaders, then the diversity of conditions among the children of men as we see them today would certainly seem to indicate discrimination and injustice. But if in their eagerness to take upon themselves bodies, the spirits were willing to come through any lineage for which they were worthy, or to which they were attracted, then they were given *the full reward of merit, and were satisfied*, yes, and even blessed.

Accepting this theory of life, we have a reasonable explanation of existent conditions in the habitations of man. How the law of spiritual attraction works between the spirit and the expectant parents, has not been revealed, neither can finite mind fully understand. By analogy, however, we can perhaps get a glimpse of what might take place in that spirit world. In physics we refer to the law of attraction wherein some force acting mutually between particles of matter tends to draw them together and to keep them from separating.

In chemistry, there is an attractive force exerted between atoms, which causes them to enter into combination. We know, too, that there is an affinity between persons—a spiritual relationship or attraction wherein individuals are either drawn towards others or repelled by others. Might it not be so in the realm of spirit— each individual attracted to the parentage for which it is prepared. Our place in this

world would then be determined by our advancement or conditions in the pre-mortal state, just as our place in our future existence will be determined by what we do here in mortality.

When, therefore, the Creator said to Abraham, and to others of his attainment “You I will make my rulers,” there could exist no feeling of envy or of jealousy among the million other spirits, for those who were “good and great” were but receiving their just reward, just as do members of a graduation class who have successfully completed their prescribed courses of study. The thousands of other students who have not yet attained that honor still have the privilege to seek it, or they may, if they choose, remain in satisfaction down in the grades.

By the operation of some eternal law with which man is yet unfamiliar, spirits come through parentages for which they are worthy—some as Bushmen of Australia, some as Solomon Islanders, some as Americans, as Europeans, as Asiatics, etc., etc., with all the varying degrees of mentality and spirituality manifest in parents of the different races that inhabit the earth.

Of this we may be sure, each was satisfied and happy to come through the lineage to which he or she was attracted and for which, and only which, he or she was prepared.

The priesthood was given to those who were chosen as leaders.

There were many who could not receive it, yet who knew that it was possible for them at sometime in the eternal plan to achieve that honor. Even those who knew that they would not be prepared to receive it during their mortal existence were content in the realization that they could attain every earthly blessing—progress intellectually and spiritually, and possess to a limited degree the blessing of wisdom.

George Washington Carver was one of the noblest souls that ever came to earth. He holds a close kinship with his heavenly Father, and rendered a service to his fellowmen such as few have ever excelled. For every righteous endeavor, for every noble impulse, for every good deed performed in his useful life George Washington Carver will be rewarded, and so will every other man be he red, white, black or yellow, for God is no respecter of persons.

Sometime in God's eternal plan, the Negro will be given the right to hold the priesthood. In the meantime, those of that race who receive the testimony of the Restored Gospel may have their family ties protected and other blessings made secure, for in the justice and mercy of the Lord they will possess all the blessings to which they are entitled in the eternal plan of Salvation and Exaltation.

Nephi 26:33, to which you refer, does not contradict what I have said above, because the Negro is entitled to come unto the Lord by baptism, confirmation, and to receive the assistance of the Church in living righteously.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed by) David O. McKay.²⁸
DOM:cm

References

Genesis 4:11-15.

bid. 9:25-27.

bid. 10:15-20, 32.

Ezra 2:61-63; 10: 10-17.

2 Nephi 26:33.

‘Evening and Morning Star,’ Kirtland Reprint, July, 1833, pp. 218-219.

3.H. Roberts, “A Comprehensive History of the Church,” Vol. I, p. 328.

Parley P. Pratt, “Late Persecution of Church of Latter-day Saints,” New York; J.W. Harrison, 1840, p. 28.

‘Times and Seasons,’ Vol. III, No. 15, pp. 806-808.

See - Kirkpatrick, “The Negro and the L.D.S. Church,” Utah Historical Quarterly.

See - Joseph Smith, Memorial to Congress, “History of the Church,” Vol. 6, pp. 197-209.

St. Matthew 28:19.

D&C 1:1-6, 35.

D&C 20:37.

3 Nephi 18:30.

I haven’t had opportunity to check this letter as to date, etc. but have had a copy in my files as above for some time.

Moses 5:39-40.

Moses 7:7-8, 12.

Abraham 1:21-27.

Joseph Smith, "History of the Church," Vol. I, p. 191.

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Brigham Young, "Journal of Discourses," Vol. 7, pp. 290-291.

Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 272.

"Deseret News," Vol. 2, No. 11, Saturday, April 3, 1852.

"Wilford Woodruff" by M.F. Cowley, p. 587.

Abraham 3: 19-23, 25-26.

D&C 93:38.

For publication of this letter see "Home Memories of President David O. McKay," by Llewelyn R. McKay, pp. 226-231. Published by Deseret Book Company.

**Announcement of the Revelation
that Males of all Races may be
Ordained to the Priesthood**

The policy of the Church concerning who is eligible to receive the blessings of the priesthood was changed in June, 1978, when the following letter of instruction was issued by the First Presidency:

To All General and Local Priesthood Officers of The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints Throughout the World

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple.

Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood

leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known His will for the blessings of all His children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of His authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.

Sincerely yours,

Spencer W. Kimball

s/ N. Eldon Tanner

s/ Marion C. Romney

The First Presidency

Announcement of the revelation was made through local and national news media the following day. Salt Lake City's "Deseret News" reproduced the letter in a front-page release headlined "LDS Church extends priesthood to all worthy male members." The letter was repeated in the "Church News" for the week ending June 17, 1978 under the headline "Revelation extends blessings of gospel."

Supporting articles in the same issue concerning the new availability of the Priesthood to Negro members included "Priesthood news evokes

joy,” “News bring excitement,” “Temple goal closer now,” “Interracial marriage discouraged,” “Prophets tell of promise to all races,” and “Since early Church days, blacks have set an example.”

The weekend edition of the “Deseret News” for June 10, 1978 told of the interest on a national scale which the announcement received in an article captioned “Priesthood news spurs calls, stops the presses:”

News media across the nation held up editions and 17 telephone operators in the Church Office Building took a steady stream of calls as news swept across the country that the LDS Church would no longer ban blacks from the priesthood....

In New York City, Time and Newsweek magazines stopped the presses on their weekend editions to get stories in, and the news made the front page of the New York Times.

2

NEW REVELATION

Various Church spokesmen were quoted as they told of calls received by the Church:

LeFevre said a local church leader in Mississippi called church headquarters to ask if the report was true. “When told it was, he said it was a great blessing,” the church spokesman said, adding that it was

typical of calls received throughout the day.

Joan Kleinman, another spokesman said that from 11 am. until 1 p.m. the phones never stopped ringing on the 17 incoming lines.

“Most said they were thrilled, that this was the best news they could imagine, and some were just awed,” she said. “There were no negative reactions.”

A front page article in that edition bannered “Carter praises LDS Church action” revealed the content of a telegram from U.S. President Jimmy Carter:

“I welcomed today your announcement as president and prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that henceforth all worthy men in your church without regard for race or color may have conferred upon them the priesthood in your church.

“I commend you for your compassionate prayerfulness and courage in receiving a new doctrine.

“This announcement brings a healing spirit to the world and reminds all men and women that they are truly brothers and sisters.”

The article also gave further insight on the events which preceded the announcement:

The announcement came after several months of careful study and consideration by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve.

A major problem the church has faced with its policy regarding blacks was in Brazil, where the church is building a temple. Many people there are mixed racially, and it is often impossible to determine whether church members have black ancestry.

3

NEW REVELATION

The practice of denying blacks the priesthood has long been a difficult public issue for the church, and in the past the church has been severely criticized for it.

However, the announcement changing the practice came at a time when comparatively little pressure was being received by the church to change it.

Shortly after the announcement was released, President Spencer W. Kimball was in Hawaii to dedicate the remodeled Hawaiian Temple. Reporters interviewed him there, and his clarifying comments were released in a June 13th "Deseret News" article titled "Not for women:"

The priesthood is something sacred and was established by the Lord for the men of his kingdom,. We pray to God to reveal his mind and we

always will, but we don't expect any revelation regarding women and the priesthood.

Further comments by President Kimball were summarized by the reporters as follows:

He said the church, which opposes the Equal Rights Amendment, gives women just as much prominence and importance as men, but said it is a different kind of prominence.

President Kimball refused to discuss the revelation that changed the church's 148-year-old policy against ordination of blacks, saying it was "a personal thing."

There is no reason why a black entering the priesthood could not move up into the church's administrative hierarchy "if the person is worthy," he said.

President Kimball said the revelation came at this time because conditions and people have changed.

"It's a different world than it was 20 or 25 years ago. The world is ready for it," he said.

President Kimball said the church will extend its missionary work in Africa and also in America's inner cities.

June 8, 1978

To all general and local priesthood officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world:

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man

in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.

Sincerely yours,
Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney
The First Presidency

Mormonism and the Negro

**An explanation and defense of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
in regard to Negroes and others of Negroid blood.**

By John J. Stewart

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To all seekers after truth who believe that

God is both just and merciful

Foreword

The two treatises brought together in this little volume were produced independently. Mr. Stewart's treatment of *Mormonism and the Negro* was originally delivered as a discourse and later published upon request.

Mr. Berrett's treatise of the *Church and the Negroid People* was written primarily to provide needed historical information to the many teachers in the educational system of the Church. Inasmuch as the two treatments tend to supplement each other, there have been many requests that they be published under one cover for the convenience of the reader.

Both writers wish it to be understood that they are writing as individuals and not as official spokesmen for the Church, except insofar as they have included quotations from various presidents of the Church. It is hoped that thoughtful people will find herein understanding of a difficult problem, insofar as understanding is possible without further revelation pertaining to

man's pre-earth and post-earth life, and with that understanding work intelligently to promote the welfare of all peoples. The writers have great respect for the Negroid people, many of whom are counted among their friends, and in whose welfare they are deeply concerned.

—*The Authors*

Mormonism and the Negro

Part I

There is nothing in the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about which any member need feel any shame, apology or embarrassment. Perhaps in the individual failings and weaknesses of some who profess to be members, there may be cause, but not in the Gospel itself. As the Apostle Paul said,

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . ." (Romans 1:16)

Yet because of the popular beliefs and traditions of the world, there are at least two points of doctrine and history of this Church about which many LDS themselves - to say nothing of many non-members - feel ill at ease or critical. One of these is its doctrine regarding the Negro.

If we properly understood this doctrine, and the reasons for it, we would not feel critical of it. "*And ye shall know the truth,*" taught Jesus, "*and the truth shall set you free.*" (John 8:32) We would become free of any misgivings about these teachings, and readily proclaim to the world what they are, and why.

Part II

Briefly, the LDS policy on Negroes is this: Negroes and others with Negroid blood can become members of the Church, and through righteous works receive patriarchal blessings, enter the temple to perform baptisms for the dead, become heirs to the Celestial kingdom and otherwise partake of many blessings afforded worthy members of the Church, but they cannot be ordained to the Priesthood, nor are they eligible for marriage in an LDS temple; Negroes and Non-Negroes should not intermarry.

In regard to this policy on Negroes, members of the Church face three alternatives:

(1) Be apologizers for the Church: say that it is old fashioned, outmoded on this point: prejudiced.

(2) Confess that we do not know the reasons for this policy, although we accept it; that we have blind faith in it.

(3) Proclaim that it is a correct and reasonable doctrine, that it is tenable, that we have no reason either to apologize for it nor evade questions about it. We

must then explain the reasons for it and show that it is consistent with the rest of LDS doctrine.

The first two alternatives are totally unacceptable to me:

If we are apologizers for the Church on this point, then *we admit in effect that all Gospel doctrine is not sound*; we say in effect that either the original position of the Church was incorrect on this matter, or, if it was correct, that we as a Church do not enjoy continuous revelation and thus have become out-dated on this doctrine.

If we deny continuous revelation in the Church then we place ourselves in much the same position as all other so-called Christian sects, and isolate ourselves from God, the head of our Church.

If we accept the second alternative, that of blind faith in the doctrine, something that we do not understand but do not question, then we place ourselves in much the same position as churches that favor blind faith. And we find ourselves having to evade rather than face issues. But LDS theology teaches us that our faith should be an intelligent faith, not a blind faith. For instance, we read in the Book of Moses:

"And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said, I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying, This thing

is a similitude of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth . . ." (Moses 5:6-7)

From this scripture and many others, it can be seen that God does not wish us to be content with blind faith. He desires that we have intelligent faith and understanding. *"The glory of God is intelligence,"* observed the Prophet Joseph Smith. (D. & C. 93:36)

So, the true Church member rules out the first two alternatives and moves to the third: to proclaim that it is a correct doctrine, then explain why this is so.

Part III

We must consider and give satisfaction on this problem from five different points of view:

- (1) Loyal LDS Church members, who deserve reassurance that all Gospel teachings are true and just.
- (2) Interested Negro investigators of Mormonism.
- (3) Other honest investigators of Mormonism, whose acceptance of Gospel truths may, as with group 2, be thwarted by their misunderstanding of this doctrine.
- (4) Negroes at large, who are not investigators of the Gospel, but are nonetheless fellow human beings and members of our society.
- (5) Skeptics or "Mormon-baiters," whether in or out of the Church.

This last group, the "Mormon-baiters," we can dismiss in a hurry. They have already closed their mind to truth and reason. You cannot prove anything to anybody who is determined not to believe a thing.

Consider the foolishness and hypocrisy of their position. They are denouncing the LDS Church for not allowing the Negro to hold the Priesthood, yet, they claim that there is no authenticity or value in the Priesthood. So, if they were really concerned about the welfare of the Negro, they should be grateful that the LDS Church does not allow the Negro to partake of such humbugery as they deem the Priesthood to be.

On close analysis we see that they are trying to have foisted onto the Negro a thing they consider to be of no worth. And I suspect that is about as much genuine interest as they have in the welfare of the Negro. Their objective, we see, is not justice for the Negro, but persecution of the LDS Church. They are partakers of the spirit of Satan.

But to the other four groups: the conscientious Church member, the investigator, the Negro investigator, and the Negro at large, we are pleased to give an explanation of this doctrine. They are each entitled to an answer.

Part IV

To gain understanding on this matter, first let us consider carefully the position of the apologizer, the conscientious member of the Church who feels badly about this particular doctrine: His stand is perhaps motivated by a high ideal, the ideal "*that all men are created equal,*" as Thomas Jefferson so nobly expressed it.

Let us say that the apologizer believes this, and to him the LDS policy of not allowing the Negro to hold the Priesthood, and enjoy its attendant blessings, seems to indicate that we are legislating against him and that we are therefore taking exception to the ideal that all men are created equal. To the apologizer it seems that we are allowing race and color prejudice to enter into Gospel doctrine, that we allow the world's prejudice against the Negro to influence us.

Now, these are high, noble motives and ideas that prompt these feelings of the apologizer, and he is worthy of commendation for such feelings. But in his desire to see justice done to the Negro, he has failed to fully explore the matter in light of historical facts and Gospel truths:

Jefferson's idealistic declaration, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . .*" (American Declaration of Independence) is consistent with LDS teachings. But where the apologizer loses his way is in forgetting that men were not created, in the proper sense of the word, at the beginning of life in this world, but rather thousands of years ago.

In fact, we were co-eternal with God Himself, and He created or organized us as spirit entities long before we came into this mortal world. Now, here is a great eternal truth that the world at large knows little about. But members of the Church know it, and cannot afford to forget it. We will return to this point later.

Part V

In supposing that LDS policy in not allowing the Negro to hold the Priesthood was the result of, or influenced by, world prejudice against the Negro, and especially by the fact that Negroes were slaves in America at the time the Gospel was restored - in believing this is to be so, the apologizer not only shows an ignorance of historical facts, but he reveals a personal doubt in the validity of the inspiration and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors in the presidency of the Church.

He also betrays a lack of reasoning. A careful study of the life and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith would show the fallacy of this supposition. Let us consider this for a moment:

The Prophet's whole life shows beyond doubt that he was not afraid of persecution nor public censure nor ridicule. He openly taught his convictions of truth, no matter how much trouble and hardship it brought upon him. He even gave his life rather than yield to such pressure or to compromise on truth.

To suppose that he would curry the favor of the world by manifesting a prejudice against the Negro is an affront to this courageous man, and to the known facts of history. Let us ask the apologizer this: if Joseph Smith denied the Negro the right to the Priesthood, as a means of currying favor with the world, or as a means of satisfying his personal prejudice, then why did he allow the Negro to hold membership in the Church at all?

Surely the popular thing would have been for him to declare that no Negro could join the LDS Church. We must keep in mind that in the United States in the 1830's, the unpopular person in society was not the slave owner, but rather the abolitionist. By and large, slavery was still popular during the entire lifetime of the Prophet, 1805-1844.

Rather than his trying to curry favor with non-Mormons over the Negro question, what was really the conduct of the Prophet Joseph in this matter?

In the early 1830's he wrote and published in the Messenger and Advocate, the Church newspaper at Kirtland, Ohio, an editorial suggesting that leading men in the southern states should take measures to liberate the slaves, so that the Negro could enjoy the blessings of a free nation. He also invited an abolitionist to give a public speech at Kirtland, at a time when abolitionists were generally hated in the North as well as in the South.

Do you know what the immediate cause was of the Latter-day Saints being driven out of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, when they lost thousands of dollars worth of property, and some of them forfeited their lives?

It was an editorial published in the LDS newspaper there, The Evening and Morning Star, entitled, "Free People of Color," and an editorial filler in the same edition of the paper, in which the editor noted that, *"In connection with the wonderful events of this age, much is doing towards abolishing slavery, and colonizing the Blacks in Africa."*

This, remember, was published in the slave state of Missouri by a people already being persecuted. Was this done, do you suppose, to curry favor? As soon as this edition was published, the mobs, prodded by the ministers of the Protestant sects there, destroyed the Church's printing office there, tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge, and began their destruction of the Saint's property, finally driving them from the state.

In their ultimatum to the Mormons, demanding that they leave or be exterminated, the Missourians declared that the Mormon's policy of allowing the Negro to hold membership in the LDS Church *"exhibits them in still more odious colors."*

And at the time of this popular prejudice against the Negroes, what did the prophet Joseph Smith declare?

"They have souls, and are subjects of salvation. Go into Cincinnati or any city, and find an educated Negro, who rides in his carriage, and you will see a man who has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability. The slaves in Washington are more refined than many in high places, and the black boys will take the shine off many of those they brush and wait on." (History of the Church, Vol. 5, p. 217)

When, at the age of 38, the Prophet was seeking the presidency of the United States in 1844, sixteen years before the beginning of the Civil War, and when most of the nation still favored slavery, he strongly advocated that the Negroes be freed. In his political manifesto, Views on the Powers and Policy of Government, which was widely published in the spring of 1844, the Prophet implored:

"Petition also, ye goodly inhabitants of the slave states, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850, or now, and save the abolitionist from reproach and ruin, infamy and shame. Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress. Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire them to labor like other human beings; for an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage!" (History of the Church, Vol. 6, p. 205)

The Prophet had Negro servants and friends who were devoted to him, recognizing in him a champion of their race and rights. It is interesting to not, too, that among the very first company of Saints to make the famous Mormon pioneer trek across the plains to Utah there were three Negroes.

Now, in view of the historical facts, can the apologizer reasonably believe that the LDS doctrine enunciated by Joseph Smith on the Negroes' not holding the Priesthood - that this was actuated by his desire to please the public, or to satisfy some personal prejudice? If this was not the reason, then what was?

The fact is that every doctrine the Prophet Joseph announced for the organization and direction of the LDS Church was revealed to him by the Lord. Many were his teachings and practices which displeased the world, but he held fast to them because the doctrines were of divine origin.

So, the apologizer finds himself in an awkward position, that of not only apologizing for the Church but for God Himself. It is a precarious position to be in, to say the least.

If we as members of the Church are going to pick and choose among the Prophets teachings, and say *"this one is of God, we can accept it, but this one is of man, we will reject that,"* then we are undermining the whole

structure of our faith, and for our own personal sake we cannot afford to do that.

Besides, I have shown that the Prophet's own attitude, as demonstrated in both speech and action, was one of fairness and kindness toward the Negro.

Part VI

I now propose to show three important truths: (1) that the LDS doctrine of not allowing the Negro to bear the Priesthood is entirely consistent with both of the two great attributes of God Himself, the attributes of Justice and Mercy; (2) that in this matter of the Negroes' not holding the Priesthood we can gain a much clearer insight into those basic Gospel principles of Free Agency, Fore-Ordination, and Eternal Progress; (3) that a belief in the correctness of this doctrine is consistent with other beliefs and practices in daily life which we seldom, if ever, question.

Now, let us see whether we agree upon certain fundamentals, so that we have a common premise from which to work:

We believe that God is our Creator, that He is an all-wise God, that He is concerned about the eternal welfare of all His Children, one as well as

another. We believe that He is all-powerful, and controls in the destiny of mankind and all that pertains to it.

We further believe in the concept of eternal progress: that as man is God once was, and as God is man may become. (May become, not necessarily will become, for that would not make allowance for free agency. We may become like God, or we may become like Satan, or we may become something in between these two extremes.)

As part of this plan of eternal progress we believe that his world - this mortal life that we are now in - is just one of several stages of eternal life: We believe that we had a pre-mortal existence, first as an intelligence, co-eternal with God Himself, and then as an organized spirit child of God, and that during that pre-mortal existence we had individual identity and were capable of doing good or evil.

For example, we believe that approximately one-third of the hosts of heaven - one-third of those spirit brothers of ours - kept not their first estate, but rather rebelled against God and His plan for our eternal progress and allied themselves with Lucifer, a son of the morning, who, through vanity and selfishness, rebelled against God.

We believe that Satan and the third of the spirit children of God who followed Satan were cast out of the presence of God, and became Perdition and Sons of Perdition. In this plan of eternal progress, we believe that this

mortal life is not the end of our existence but that we will continue on eternally, passing through other stages, as designed by God our Creator.

We believe that an essential key to this plan of eternal life is that of free agency; that God Himself developed through free agency, and that He recognizes free agency as necessary to the development of any person. It is in the very divine nature of man to insist upon free agency, as can amply be seen in our own lives and in the history of the world generally. We believe that in the great Council in heaven, one reason Lucifer's plan was rejected was because he proposed to deny man his free agency, and God realized that such a plan was neither desirable nor workable.

We believe that while man, in his present state of development or eternal progress, has only a finite mind, that God has an infinite mind, and that therefore man's ways are not necessarily God's ways. God views things from the standpoint of the eternal, not from just the immediate or mortal point of view. A thousand years with man is but a day with God - this time relationship being based upon the natural laws and structure of the universe.

We believe that God's house is a house of order and not a house of confusion; that His actions and plans are reasonable and logical, not haphazard nor happenstance.

As part of this plan of eternal progress we believe in the principle of fore-ordination - not pre-destination, for that would not conform to free agency. In this, we believe that certain personalities in the pre-mortal existence, because of their record of conduct and performance there, were chosen of God to come to earth, to this mortal state, at specified times during the world's history and to be given the opportunity to accomplish certain things as servants of the Lord in executing his plan of eternal progress for the human race.

This principle of fore-ordination is logical because it reflects the justice of God in rewarding His children for obedience and for being valiant in helping to further His plan for the good of all mankind.

Such a fore-ordained person, according to scripture, was Abraham:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born." (Abraham 3:22-23)

Abraham was not denied his free agency in this matter; he could have rejected or forfeited his favored position upon the earth, just as many others have. For instance, Thomas B. Marsh, the first president of the first Quorum

of Twelve Apostles in this the dispensation of the Fulness of Times, was fore-ordained of God, as were Joseph Smith, and others. But Marsh, exercising his free agency, and tempted of Satan - as all men are - forfeited his fore-ordination and fell from his high calling. Likewise did Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, David Whitmer, Frederick G. Williams, William Law, and many others.

We believe that we were fore-ordained to the privilege of membership in this Church and Priesthood; privileged to be born under the favorable circumstances that we have been, at such an opportune time and place. Yet, many of us, exercising our free agency, are forfeiting this birthright, this fore-ordination.

If a person does not believe in this principle of fore-ordination, then he does not believe in a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, for the very mission of Jesus Christ Himself, as Redeemer of the world and Savior of mankind, was arranged upon the principle of fore-ordination.

Or do you suppose that He, in and of Himself, after his birth upon the earth, decided that He would become the Redeemer and the Savior?

Part VII

Now, if through fore-ordination, as a result of their performance in the spirit life, certain individuals were privileged to be born under the most favorable possible circumstances, then it must necessarily follow that others would be born under less favorable circumstances, and still others under the least favorable circumstances.

It is good to be idealistic, but we should at the same time be rational: If person "A" is the tallest man in the room, it must follow that other men in the room are shorter, and person "X" is the shortest.

Is it just or unjust on the part of God, our Creator, to enable people to be born under those circumstances and with those opportunities consistent with their conduct in the spirit world?

If an individual or a business firm or government agency has a number of men working for him or it, are they all rewarded the same? Are they all made president, or vice-president, or district managers? Or are they rewarded in accordance with their integrity and ability?

We do not question the correctness, justice nor logic of varying degrees of excellence and of opportunity among men in whatsoever walk of life.

The thing that would be unjust, and illogical, and chaotic, would be God's rewarding all men the same regardless of their integrity or lack of it. Carry

this foolish notion to the ultimate and you would place Christ and Satan on a par.

Now, we believe that the old sectarian notion that when a person dies he goes to one of two places, either heaven or hell, to either an eternity of bliss or an eternity of torment - I say, we believe that this doctrine is a vicious fallacy: to say that God draws the line at a certain point and says, now all above the line come into heaven, and all below go down to hell. At what point can such a line be reasonably or justly drawn? Between the man who steals a thousand dollars and the one who steals only nine hundred?

This is one of the many false notions of the world that the Prophet Joseph Smith clarified. The Lord revealed to him the state of Perdition and the three degrees of glory: the Celestial, the Terrestrial, and the Telestial, within each of which there are innumerable degrees of salvation and exaltation, each person enjoying that degree which he has earned through his conduct in the pre-mortal and the mortal worlds.

Is this not justice? Do you rather, you apologizers, accept the old sectarian notion of justice: one heaven and one hell? Or do you indulge in muddied idealistic thinking and picture every person as being crowned in heaven, regardless of how filthy and unworthy and disobedient his conduct has been?

Is there either justice, mercy, or reason in such a notion? Do you suppose it would be merciful to the murderer, the adulterer, the unrepentant thief, or to Satan himself, to place him, or any of them, in the presence of God and Christ and their holy angels? How comfortable is the adulterer sitting in church, or in the company of God-fearing men? Why do you suppose it is so difficult for those who have fallen into sin of any kind to participate in church activities? Is it not because when we sin we sin against our own souls and create a conflict and turmoil within ourselves?

In life after death, through the justice and mercy of God, we will each seek our own level, the place in which we feel most comfortable and best suited; we will judge ourselves as well as being judged of God. This principle of human nature can be seen at work in daily life. Even in state and federal prisons, among murderers, rapists, thieves, et al, it is not uncommon to find the prisoners themselves demanding segregation.

This self-judgment is based upon a natural law, a law of human nature, which is divine nature, man being literally a child of God.

Now, I ask you, if it is logical, just and merciful, that in life after death, after this phase of our eternal existence, for us to be awarded various degrees of glory, is it not consistent, and in complete harmony with God's eternal scheme of things, that the same pattern should be followed in this mortal stage of our existence?

That is, that our positions, the circumstances of our birth into this life, be determined by our conduct in a life before this? To me, it is both reasonable and just. If you do not believe it to be so, then let me ask you how you can conceive it to be justice on the part of God to allow His children to be born under the widely varying circumstances under which they are born? Do you suppose that God, the Creator of us all, does not know that spirit "X" is going to be born into such and such family? Can you reasonably believe that the circumstances of our birth are by mere chance, or by birth?

There is neither logic nor justice in this notion of chance. It says in effect that while God is the Father of us all, He does not know just what is going on; that His house is a house of confusion, not a house of order.

Let us return to our premise that God is our Father and controls in the destiny of men; that He rewards in accordance with our merit. This we see in His selection of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world, and in His selection of Abraham, Moses, Peter, and others for their particular roles. Do you suppose that God would be solicitous of their lives, and yet not be aware of the lives of the rest of His children, including the circumstances of their birth?

Such a notion is entirely irrational and inconsistent. It makes a mockery of our prayers. For example, both publicly and privately in our prayers we thank God that we enjoy the blessings of living in a Democracy, of being free from political tyranny, of being born under the Gospel covenant or of

having had the Gospel preached unto us, etc. Now, do we offer these prayers in sincerity, or are we merely speaking words? If sincerely, then do we believe we have been so blessed in accordance with our worthiness, as determined by our performance in the pre-mortal life, or do we accredit it to a fickle God who shows favoritism rather than justice in His dealings with His children?

A God who is respecter of persons, even though He has declared that He is not? Is there any justice in a God who would just arbitrarily assign one child to birth into a fine Christian family with multiple blessings of life, and another child to birth under circumstances leading to a life of squalor or prostitution?

If we really believe the scriptures that we profess to believe, then we believe that Lucifer and one-third of the hosts of heaven rebelled against God and were thus cast out of heaven, were denied the privilege of partaking of mortal bodies, and have become Perdition and Sons of Perdition. This is not a pleasant picture, but we believe it to be a true one.

Neither are the millions of insane and afflicted people upon the earth, nor the squalor, filth, poverty and degradation in the world, a pretty picture. Yet, we know that these conditions do exist, and we believe that the people living under such unfortunate conditions are children of God and are our brothers and sisters.

If God would allow one-third of His children, through exercise of their free agency, to become Sons of Perdition and thus deprive themselves of eternal progress, is it difficult or inconsistent to believe that He would allow millions of the other two-thirds, through their own free agency, to penalize themselves as to their circumstances in this world?

We have shown the fallacy of believing that there is one heaven and one hell, with a sharp division between the two. Is it logical to believe that there was a sharp division among the hosts of heaven in the spirit world, to believe that each individual of the two-thirds who remained faithful to God were equally valiant, one compared to another, in their conduct?

We are the same spirits upon this earth as we were in the pre-mortal state, and do we find here that all are as valiant, one as much as another? Or do we find that there are all degrees and variations among us? Just as there will be innumerable degrees of progress and glory in the life hereafter?

It comes back to the difference between the two plans of salvation, the one proposed by Christ and the other by Lucifer: Lucifer said that he would compel men to obey the Gospel and would save everyone. God rejected this plan, knowing that compulsion could and should not work, that man could not and should not be compelled to progress. Christ said He would give man his free agency, would teach him the Gospel, allow him to be tried and tested. Under Christ's plan some would attain the highest degree of glory, some a lesser degree and some would be lost, for such is the inevitable result

of free agency, of a choice between good and evil. This is the plan that God the Father accepted, for He knew that man could not develop God-like attributes without free agency.

The nature of man is eternal, and every day we see about us the results of free agency, some choosing good and others choosing evil. Some being energetic in the cause of truth, and others being apathetic, indifferent. We, therefore, need not rely on faith in this principle; we know it for a certainty, for it is daily before us.

In view of the divine, eternal nature of man, what reason have we to question that the same result of free agency existed in the pre-mortal state?

Part VIII

In considering this matter we must remember that this world is not the final stage of life. Our eternal existence is much like a race of several laps or relays: we may move rapidly ahead in the first lap and fall behind in the next; or we may start out slowly in the first but speed ahead in the second. That is the way it is in this mortal stage of life: we may neglect our opportunities for a number of years, or even get off on the wrong track, then later repent and make amends, or vice versa. And so it is in immortal life, in the eternal scheme.

Satan and a third of the hosts of heaven disqualified themselves from further racing. But of the two-thirds who stayed in the race, some moved ahead swiftly and others slowly; that is, some were valiant and proved themselves worthy of favored positions in the next stage of their existence; others less so, and still others, least worthy among those who did qualify to enter that next stage - our present stage of mortality.

We were all eager for an opportunity to partake of mortality, knowing that it was a necessary step in eternal progress. And we were willing to come into mortality under those circumstances that we had merited by our conduct in that first estate - the pre-mortal existence, even though undoubtedly those who had not been valiant there wished that they had been, just as those of us not valiant in the Gospel cause in this life will have regrets in the next life.

A typical critic⁽¹⁾ of the LDS policy regarding Negroes has asserted that,

"This doctrine pressed to its logical conclusion would say that Dr. George Washington Carver, the late eminent and saintly Negro scientist, is by virtue of the color of his skin, inferior even to the least admirable white person, not because of the virtues he may or may not possess, but because - through no fault of his - there is a dark pigment in his skin."

There is nothing in LDS teaching to support or indicate a notion such as this. The circumstances of our birth in this world are dependent upon the our performance in the spirit world, just as the circumstances of our existence in

the next world will depend upon what use we make of the blessings and opportunities we enjoy in this world.

According to LDS doctrine, Dr. George Washington Carver - who incidentally, was a mulatto rather than a Negro - will be far ahead of many of us born under more favorable circumstances in this life, for he made the most of his opportunities, while many of us are forfeiting our birthright. We were ahead of him in the first lap of the race, but he has gone far ahead of many of us in the second. God has told us that He will judge men according to what they do with the light and knowledge and opportunities given them.

"For of him unto whom much is given, much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation." (D. & C. 82:3)

While the Negro and others of Negroid blood cannot hold the Priesthood, in this stage of life, apparently because of a lack of valor in the pre-mortal existence, neither are any of them likely to become Sons of Perdition - as many of the Priesthood bearers might become. Again in this we see the justice and mercy of God; that while in certain stage of existence a man cannot attain the highest blessings, neither is he so subject to the danger of falling to the lowest state.

Part IX

Those who think that the Negroes' not being allowed the Priesthood and its attendant blessings in this mortal state is due to racial prejudice might consider the fact that there have been millions of people live and die upon this earth who likewise have not had the privilege of not bearing the Priesthood here, regardless of what the color of their skin was. For centuries, the Priesthood was upon the earth, except as possessed by a few key servants of God.

The critic should note, too, that there are hundreds of millions of people upon the earth today who do not enjoy the privilege of even belonging to the Church, to say nothing of the Priesthood, for they have never heard of it, while there are many Negroes, here in the United States and elsewhere, who have had the opportunity to join the Church. This is further evidence of the fallacy of the racial prejudice accusation.

For that matter, if the critic or the apologizer is going to feign indignation about the Negroes' not being allowed to bear the Priesthood, why should he not feel even more indignant about women not having the Priesthood conferred upon them? Is this sex prejudice? The Church says that women sealed in Celestial marriage enjoy the blessings of the Priesthood in connection with their husbands.

But they do not hold the Priesthood. And there are thousands of LDS women who do not have the opportunity of entering Celestial marriage and thus of directly sharing the benefits of the Priesthood. Is this an injustice of God to them, in denying them the Priesthood?

Part X

In scripture, we read of quite a number of instances of God's placing a curse or mark upon a certain person or people because of their misconduct and disobedience to His laws. The Curse usually involves not only that particular person or generation of people, but their posterity as well.

One example is the Jews, cursed to become "*a hiss and a byword*"; another is the Lamanites, whose skin was turned dark, and that of their children after them.

Would it be justice on the part of God to just haphazardly or arbitrarily assign certain spirits to be born into these families or nations, just for the sake of carrying out His curse upon the guilty party?

Or would He assign those souls whose performance in the spirit world warrants such a circumstance of birth? Which is in keeping with God's attribute of justice? Which is reasonable?

Think of the millions of spirits born into the Lamanite race after the Lamanites had become a fallen people. How can you justify such an unfortunate circumstance of birth except on the basis of individual performance in pre-mortal life?

"WE BELIEVE THAT MEN WILL BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR OWN SINS AND NOT FOR ADAM'S TRANSGRESSION," DECLARED THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH. (LDS Article of Faith Number 2)

And so it is with the Negroes. There were those in the spirit world whose performance caused them to forfeit the right to bear the Priesthood of God and enjoy its inherent blessings in this world.

Part XI

Cain, a son of Adam and Eve, apparently had a very different record in the spirit world. He was likely one of the valiant ones there, and thus was born into this world under the most favorable circumstances, of a noble sire and mother, and was even privileged to walk and talk with God. Yet, Cain fell to the temptations of Satan, rejected God, murdered his brother Abel and thus brought upon himself a curse.

"And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?"

And she again conceived and bare his brother Abel. And Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a

tiller of the ground.

*And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying:
Make an offering unto the Lord.*

*And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the
ground an offering unto the Lord.*

*And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.
And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering;
But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect. Now Satan knew this,
and it pleased him. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.*

*And the Lord said unto Cain: Why are thou wroth? Why is thy countenance
fallen?*

*If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth
at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken
unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee
according to his desire. And thou shalt rule over him;*

*For from this time forth thou shalt be the father of his lies; thou shalt be
called Perdition; for thou wast also before the world.*

*And it shall be said in time to come--That these abominations were had from
Cain; for he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God; and this*

is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent.

And Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord.

And Adam and his wife mourned before the Lord, because of Cain and his brethren.

And it came to pass that Cain took one of his brothers' daughters to wife, and they loved Satan more than God.

And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.

And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands.

And all these things were done in secret.

And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness." (Moses 5:16-31)

After Cain had defied God's warnings, committed murder, denied the Holy Ghost and had become Perdition, to rule over Satan, God said to him, *"And now thou shalt be cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth*

to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

Cain protested, *"he that findeth me will slay me, because of mine iniquities."*

And the Lord replied, *"Whosoever slayeth thee, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And I the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him."*(Moses 5:36-40)

Later we read, in Moses' account,

"and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people." (Moses 7:8)

"And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them." (Moses 7:22)

And in the Book of Abraham we read that at the time of the great flood when Noah with his three sons and their families were the only ones preserved, that the seed of Cain was perpetuated through one of Noah's sons, Ham, and his wife, Egyptus, apparently a Negress, and that Ham and his

descendants were denied the right to hold the Priesthood. Father Abraham, chronicling the genealogy of the Egyptians in his day, states:

"Behold, Potiphar's Hill was in the land of Ur, of Chaldea. And the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and of the gods of the land, and utterly destroyed them, and smote the priest that he died; and there was great mourning in Chaldea, and also in the court of Pharaoh; which Pharaoh signifies king by royal blood.

Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, (2) and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden;

When this woman discovered the land it was under water, (3) who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, (4) the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his

people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry;" (Abraham 1:20-27)

Note that Pharaoh was a good man, just as Dr. George Washington Carver and many others of Negroid blood have been and are good men. Note, too, that Ham and his posterity, through the mercy of God, were blessed "*with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessing of wisdom,*" although denied the right of Priesthood.

Among the Negroid people, as indeed among all the races of the earth, there is infinite variety and degree of circumstances of birth, of goodness, of opportunity or lack of it. There are Negroes born into families of wealth and refinement, others who are blessed with great talents, and there are those born into the lowest classes of society in Africa, in squalor and ignorance, living out their lives in a fashion akin to that of the animals.

Does not this infinite variety of circumstances give further evidence of man's being assigned that station in life which he has merited in the pre-mortal existence?

Note, also, that part of Cain's curse was to have as his posterity those spirits unable to bear the Priesthood in this life. In view of the importance the humans rightly attach to their children, their posterity, what greater curse could come upon Cain, as pertaining to this life? And what could be more appropriate than for these spirits to have such a man as Cain as their progenitor?

To suppose that the Negroes, the descendants of Cain, are born with black skins and are denied the Priesthood merely to perpetuate God's curse upon Cain, is alike an affront to reasoning man and to the justice and mercy of God.

In the above scripture from Abraham, then, we have a reliable account of the early genealogy of the Negro race, and in Abraham's comments we have further evidence of the divine direction in the LDS policy of not allowing the Negro, the seed of Cain and Ham, to bear the Priesthood.

Part XII

This divinely directed policy has been reaffirmed by the Church leaders in our day. In answering the letter of a prominent Mormon critical of the Church policy in this matter, the First Presidency of the LDS Church, a few years ago, wrote as follows:

"We might make this initial remark: the social side of the Restored Gospel is only an incident of it; it is not the end thereof.

The basic element of your ideas and concepts seems to be that all God's children stand in equal positions before Him in all things.

Your knowledge of the Gospel will indicate to you that this is contrary to the very fundamentals of God's dealing with Israel dating from the time of His promise to Abraham regarding Abraham's seed and their position vis-a-vis with God himself. Indeed, some of God's children were assigned to superior positions before the world was formed. We are aware that some Higher Critics do not accept this, but the Church does.

Your position seems to lose sight of the revelations of the Lord touching the pre-existence of our spirits, the rebellion in heaven, and the doctrine that our birth into this life and the advantages under which we may be born, have a relationship in the life heretofore.

From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel.

Furthermore, your ideas, as we understand them, appear to contemplate the

intermarriage of the Negro and White races, a concept which has heretofore been most repugnant to most normal-minded people from the ancient patriarch till now. God's rule for Israel, His Chosen People, has been endogamous. Modern Israel has been similarly directed.

We are not unmindful of the fact that there is growing tendency, particularly among some educators, as it manifests itself in this area, toward the breaking down of race barriers in the matter of intermarriage between whites and blacks, but it does not have the sanction of the Church and is contrary to Church doctrine."[\(5\)](#)

Part XIII

Those apologizers and critics who say that the Church is unjust in refusing to permit the Negro to hold the Priesthood, might ask themselves this question:

In our society today, from which situation is the Negro suffering most: (1) In not being permitted to hold the Priesthood in the LDS Church, or (2) In having a black skin and other Negroid features, which stigmatize him in the eyes of most Whites? **The answer is obvious.**

And who controls the fact of his having these Negroid features? His Creator, of course.

When God allows a spirit to take on a Negroid body, do you suppose He is unaware of the fact that he will suffer a social stigma?

Therefore, if you say this Church is unjust in not allowing the Negro to bear the Priesthood, you must, to be consistent, likewise say that God is even more unjust in giving him a black skin.

We might ask, how many of those LDS who criticize the Church for not conferring the Priesthood upon the Negro, have ever made the effort to preach the Gospel to the Negro, to bring him into the Church, to extend brotherly love and kindness to him?

How many non-LDS critics are truly Christian toward the Negroes? Is it barely possible that those Mormons and non-Mormons who accuse the Church of hypocrisy in this matter are themselves the hypocrites?

Let the critic consider another question: can you name one Negro who has actually suffered by not having the privilege of bearing the Priesthood - suffered so far as social stigma or the other things of this world?

Is it not possible to see an act of mercy on the part of God in not having the Negro bear the Priesthood in this world, in view of his living under the curse of a black skin and other Negroid features? When a man has the Priesthood conferred upon him, Satan redoubles his efforts to destroy that man. Just

think of the weapons, the tools, that Satan would have at his command, in the prejudices of the world against the Negro.

Who is to say that, in view of these factors, the Negro is not - so far as to his temporal well-being - better off not to have the Priesthood? God has said that where much is given much is required. With the social prejudice against him, imagine the obstacles that the Negro would encounter in attempting to honor and magnify his Priesthood.

I believe that we should recognize the mercy as well as the justice of God in all things. The very fact the God would allow those spirits who were less worthy in the spirit world to partake of a mortal body at all is further evidence of His mercy. Indeed, are we not all partakers of his infinite mercy and charity?

Part XIV

We should remember that this earth life is but an extremely short, although a very important, span of time in the eternal scheme of things. Like others, the Negro who makes the most of his opportunities in righteousness in this life, however limited those opportunities may be, will have the privilege of someday bearing the Priesthood. In this regard, the Prophet Brigham Young said:

". . . I have endeavored to give you a few items relating to the Celestial Kingdom of God and to the other kingdoms which the Lord has prepared for His children. The Lamanites or Indians are just as much children of our Father and God as we are. So also are the Africans.

But we are also the children of adoption through obedience to the Gospel of His Son. Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood and law of God.

They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will come up and possess the Priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we are now entitled to." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 2, p. 272)

Part XV

In conclusion:

In the LDS doctrine regarding the Negro, we see a vivid illustration of the principles of free agency, fore-ordination, eternal progress, and the justice and mercy of God.

(2) We see the importance of the relationship of pre-mortal life to this life, and this life to the next; that the circumstances of our birth into this earth life are determined by our performance in the spirit world, and that our performance here will determine our fate hereafter.

(3) We should take warning by this as to the need of our being valiant and anxiously engaged in a good cause, so that we do not forfeit our birthright and annul the gain that we made in pre-mortal life.

(4) While the Negro suffers certain limitations in this world, as pertaining to the Priesthood and its attendant blessings, he can eventually have the opportunity of enjoying Priesthood membership.

(5) We should remember that the Negroes, like ourselves, are children of God, our brothers and sisters; that our Church has a record of kindness toward the Negro; that whatever prejudice exists against him is in the mind of individuals, and certainly does not reflect Church policy.

(6) There is nothing in Church policy that forbids nor discourages us from extending brotherly Christian love to the Negro. This, however, does not and should not include intermarriage, for we would bring upon our children the curse of Cain, or rather, we would bring unto ourselves children from those spirits destined to be of the seed of Cain.

(7) We should stand united as members of the Church bearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not allowing Satan to cause doubt and contention among us on this or any other issue, for if we know the truth the truth shall make us free - free from such doubts and contentions.

(8) We should more keenly sense the great opportunity and the tremendous challenge that we have in carrying the Gospel to all the world, to "every nation, kindred, tongue and people," sharing its blessings with all who will partake.

May god help us to do this.

MORMONISM AND THE NEGRO

References

1. Romans 1:16.
2. John 8:32.
3. Moses 5:6-7.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
5. American Declaration of Independence.

6. History of the Church V:217.
7. History of the Church VI:205.
8. Abraham 3:22-23.
9. Dr. Lowry Nelson, a nationally prominent sociologist, a member of the LDS Church, a native Utahn, and a fine Christian gentleman. Quote is from his letter to the First Presidency of the LDS Church, October 8, 1947.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 82:3.
11. LDS Article of Faith Number 2.
12. Moses 5: 16-31.
13. Moses 5:36-40.
14. Moses 7:8.
15. Moses 7:22.
16. That is, the Egyptians of Abraham's day. The present day Egyptians are another race of people, and are not Negroid.
17. Remember, this was just shortly after the great flood that had covered the earth. Apparently the waters were still receding.
18. Apparently Ham's wife and daughter each had the name of "Egyptus."
19. Abraham 1:20-27.
20. Letter of LDS First Presidency to Dr. Lowry Nelson, July 17, 1947. See also footnote 9.
21. Mimeographed letter, dated July 9, 1963, and other mimeographed statement of 1963.

22. Remarks delivered at a missionary conference of the New England Mission in Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 27, 1962.

23. Statement issued August 17, 1951.

24. Journal of Discourses 11:272.