

## Comments on Official Declaration-2

It is well known the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints formerly did not permit those of African Negro descent to be ordained to the Priesthood. No official statement of policy or revelation concerning why this was the case has been made, and long-standing traditional explanations were repudiated (e.g., Negroes were lineage of Cain, who's seed was preserved because Ham married a woman of this lineage, the curse was permanent in mortality, as a result of them being less valiant in the pre-existence) after the revelation which prompted OD-2.

The prevailing sentiment among contemporary historians is to "Blame Brigham" for the policy. However, there is ample evidence Smith held the view that Negroes were lineage of Ham and cursed with respect to the Priesthood. But, Smith's views on slavery and Blacks and the Priesthood were equivocal. Blaming Brigham is unfair, given Smith's various statements on the matter. But, since he is the one who enforced the position publicly and provided the only available documentary evidence, he is the one saddled with the blame. Young also serves as a convenient scapegoat, protecting the Church's founder from an unpopular doctrine.

Another prevailing sentiment among academics is the publication of various articles in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought in the late 1960s had a significant impact on the Church's willingness to rescind the prohibition. However, the known history of the leadership of the Church makes it clear they were consistently seeking revelation on the matter, not additional input from scholars. If any human action is to be attributed to swaying the matter, it is the persistence of Black Africans in Ghana and Nigeria requesting the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints send missionaries to their countries, as well as the continuing requests of faithful black members of the Church in the United States. The Scriptures teach plainly the Lord pays attention to the importuning of the humble and righteous.

Setting aside the traditional explanations which have been rejected, a rationale for the prohibition can be derived from the Scriptures and available documentary history. This work is intended to be the presentation of a reasonable working hypothesis that is internally consistent and Scripturally based.

It is not intended to be the final word on the matter, or a conclusive statement of fact.

It is an attempt to discern the doctrinal underpinnings of a poorly understood practice in the early Church, without resorting to traditional positions that have been repudiated. The presentation is chronological, based on extracts from available Scriptural and historical records.

#### Pre-Deluge Ham Considered Righteous

27 And thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 28 The earth was corrupt before God, and it was filled with violence. 29 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. 30 And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth. (Moses 8:27-30)

Previous to the Flood, Noah and all three sons, including Ham, "walked with God". This suggests previous to the Deluge, Ham was an exceptionally righteous man. Then the earth became corrupt and wicked, and Ham apparently went with it. Thus, an extremely righteous man is persuaded by the world and ultimately corrupted by it.

In the Law of Moses and Pearl of Great Price accounts paralleling the Law, only Enoch and the residents of Enoch's Zion and Noah and his sons are explicitly presented as "walking with God". One would assume by implication Moses did as well.

#### Ham Instigates Curse from Noah

20 And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. 23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. 25 And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. 26 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. 27 God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. (Gen. 9:20-27)

Verse 22 states Ham saw "the nakedness of his father". What does this mean? In Lev. 18:7 it states the "nakedness of your father" is in fact the nakedness of your mother:

The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

In Deut. 27:20 a similar statement is made, but is inclusive of your father's wife, which may or may not be your mother:

Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt.

And in Ezek. 22:9-11 the men of Israel are indicted for various acts of lasciviousness, some associated with idolatry, including adultery, fornications, and incest:

And in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for [menstruation]. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

This clearly categorizes "discovering [i.e., uncovering] their father's nakedness" an act of sexual immorality.

To lend further credence to this reading, note in Gen. 9:21 when it says "he was uncovered within his tent", the "his" in the KJV is in fact gender ambiguous in Hebrew and can just as fairly be translated "her" as "his". The "his" is simply a traditional translation. Taking all of this together with the statements of Abr. 1 and elsewhere in the Law, it is safe to conclude the offense Ham committed was that of incestuous lust

for Noah's wife, presumably, but not necessarily, his own mother. The text does not indicate that he had relations with her, only that he "saw" her.

Going from the level of righteousness where Ham "walked with God" to this level of wickedness might make Ham eligible for distinction as "Perdition".

#### Ham's Descendants Cursed

And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan, the lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers." And he did not curse Ham. But rather his son, because God had already blessed the sons of Noah. [The Dead Sea Scrolls, Wise, Abegg and Cook, Harper Collins, 1996, page 273]

This Dead sea Scroll fragment indicates the reason Canaan was cursed was because Ham had already been blessed by God, presumably as one who walked with God, so out of deference to this, Noah curses Canaan. This agrees with the statement in Abr. 1:26 concerning the blessings and cursing dealt out to Ham:

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 [via his lineage] with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. (Abraham 1:26)

Thus, Noah curses Canaan, son of Ham. This type of lineage-based curse is common to the Bible as it is plain that children tend to walk in the footsteps of their parents, so as long as the bad example of a parent persists to influence their offspring they are cursed (cf. Exod. 20:5). It is worth noting these types of lineage-based inter-generational curses answer the sins of the children upon the heads of the rebellious parent (cf. 2 Ne. 4:6, D&C 68:25).

## Curse Persists because Lineage Incestuous

21 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. 22 From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land. 23 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; 24 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. 25 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. 26 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. 27 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 1:21-27)

Ham fathers Egyptus who is mother of Pharaoh. But v. 25 states Egyptus is the daughter of Ham. Thus, a case of incest. The first Egyptus referenced in v. 23 might be the daughter of her mother, also named Egyptus, but even then it is still incestuous as she would then be grand-daughter instead of daughter. Thus, Ham's character is revealed.

There is also the positive identification of a curse pertaining to the Priesthood which is lineage based, through Canaan. The text states "he could not have the right of Priesthood". The "right" means "a just or legal claim to". Thus, Pharaoh, while be a righteous man (v. 26), his lineage precluded any just or legal claim to the Priesthood (v. 27).

For additional context, it is interesting to note the lineage of Ham is equated with Egypt Biblically (cf. Ps. 78:51, 105:23-27, 106:22). Also, Biblical references to the land of "Cush" are of interest to us on this subject. The Hebrew word "cush" literally translates to the English "black". Ancient Cush is modern day Ethiopia, neighbor to Egypt. Also, Egyptians and Canaanites (note: Canaanites are inhabitants of Canaan, Egypt's neighbors, and not necessarily lineage of Canaan, the literal lineage of Canaan would have been part of that group labeled as "Canaanites", but that group would have also included various Semites and immigrant populations) are repeatedly categorized as depraved in the Law with incest being one of the foremost sins among them, e.g., Pharaoh's kidnapping of Sarai in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20), Abimilech's perversions (Gen. 20; 26:7-11), offenses of Er and Onan, sons of Judah's Canaanite wife (Gen. 38), Sodomites (Gen. 19:5-8), Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph (Gen. 39), and the prohibitions against committing the kinds of acts found among the Canaanites among which matters of incest receive detailed treatment (Lev. 18; 20).

#### Modern African Negroes Identified as Lineage of Canaan

The first Sabbath after our arrival in Jackson county, Brother W. W. Phelps preached to a western audience over the boundary of the United States, wherein were present specimens of all the families of the earth; Shem, Ham and Japheth; several of the Lamanites or Indians--representative of Shem; quite a respectable number of negroes-- descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country, and fully represented themselves as pioneers of the West. At this meeting two were baptized, who had previously believed in the fulness of the Gospel. (History of the Church, volume 1, page 191)

"And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:25, 26). Trace the history of the world from this notable event down to this day, and you will find the fulfillment of this singular prophecy. What could have been the design of the Almighty in this singular occurrence is not for me to say; but I can say, the curse is not yet taken off from the sons of Canaan,

neither will be until it is affected by as great a power as caused it to come; and the people who interfere the least with the purposes of God in this matter, will come under the least condemnation before Him; and those who are determined to pursue a course, which shows an opposition, and a feverish restlessness against the decrees of the Lord, will learn, when perhaps it is too late for their own good, that God can do His own work, without the aid of those who are not dictated by His counsel. (History of the Church, volume 2, pages 438-439)

Noah was a righteous man, and yet he drank wine and became intoxicated; the Lord did not forsake him in consequence thereof, for he retained all the power of his priesthood, and when he was accused by Canaan, he cursed him by the priesthood which he held, and the Lord had respect to his word, and the priesthood which he held, notwithstanding he was drunk, and the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day. (History of the Church, volume 4, page 446)

Smith equates the modern African Negro as lineage of Ham through Canaan, and states they are cursed with respect to the Priesthood to the modern day.

#### Priesthood Ban Understood to be Lord's Will

Early in this dispensation, the Lord revealed that those of the black race were not to receive the priesthood and temple blessings. In 1949 the First Presidency reaffirmed the Lord's command:

"The attitude of the Church with reference to the 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." [See statement of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, 17 Aug. 1951, Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, as quoted in: Mormonism and the Negro, John J. Stewart and William E. Berrett (Orem, Utah:Bookmark-Community Press), Section 2, p. 16; Neither White Nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church, ed. Lester Bush and Armand Mauss (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1984), p. 221.]

(The Heavens Are Open: Official Declaration 2: Revelation on the Priesthood, The 1992 Sperry Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History)

The leadership of the LDS Church understood the available Scriptures and teachings of Joseph Smith to indicate a persistent ban on Priesthood participation by those of African Negro descent. There is nothing to suggest there was a modern revelation on the matter.

#### Africans Negroes Approach Church

During the 1960s there were native groups in both Ghana and Nigeria whom came upon LDS Church literature and independently petitioned the Church in Salt Lake City, Utah to send missionaries and to establish itself locally. A mission was established in Nigeria in 1962 and missionary efforts were undertaken, but political opposition (government denied visas) and civil strife (the Biafran war, 1965) forced the Church to close the mission. (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, The Story of the Latter-day Saints: Correlating the International Church, 1960-1973)

#### Church Leadership Importunes Lord on Behalf of African Negroes

Over a period of several months the General Authorities discussed at length in their regular temple meetings the matter of extending the blessings of the priesthood. In addition to these deliberations, President Kimball frequently went to the temple, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays when he could be in that holy place alone in order to plead for



guidance. "I want to be sure," he later reflected. In recalling the events associated with this time period, President Kimball explained:

I remember very vividly that day after day I walked to the temple and ascended to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies and where we have our meetings of the Twelve and the First Presidency. After everybody had gone out of the temple, I knelt and prayed. I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them into place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what he wanted. I talked about it to him and said, "Lord, I want only what is right. We are not making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until."

On 1 June 1978, nearly all the General Authorities gathered, fasting, for their regular monthly meeting in the temple. After this three-hour session which was filled with spiritual uplift and enlightenment, President Kimball invited his counselors and the Twelve to remain while the other General Authorities were excused. When the First Presidency and the Twelve were alone, he again brought up the possibility of conferring the priesthood on worthy brethren of all races. He expressed the hope that there might be a clear answer received one way or the other. "At this point," Elder Bruce R. McConkie recalled, "President Kimball asked the brethren if any of them desired to express their feelings and views as to the matter at hand. We all did so, freely and fluently and at considerable length, each person

stating his views and manifesting the feelings of his heart. There was a marvelous outpouring of unity, oneness, and agreement in the council." After a two-hour discussion, President Kimball asked the group to unite in formal prayer and modestly suggested that he act as voice. He recalled:

I told the Lord if it wasn't right, if He didn't want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I'd fight the world...if that's what He wanted.... I had a great deal to fight, myself largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life till my death and fight for it and defend it as it was. But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.

Elder McConkie further described the occasion:

It was during this prayer that the revelation came. The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon us all; we felt something akin to what happened on the day of Pentecost and at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. From the midst of eternity, the voice of God, conveyed by the power of the Spirit, spoke to his prophet.... And we all heard the same voice, received the same message, and became personal witnesses that the word received was the mind and will and voice of the Lord.

Reflecting on this experience, President Spencer W. Kimball and President Ezra Taft Benson and others of the Twelve concurred that none "had ever experienced anything of such spiritual magnitude and power as was poured out upon the Presidency and the Twelve that day in the upper room in the house of the Lord." (Richard O. Cowan, *Studies in Scripture, Volume 1, The Doctrine and Covenants*)

### Summary

Ham, son of Noah, initially very righteous was corrupted by the world and harbored incestuous desires, which desires he ultimately acted on. Noah cursed Ham's family, knowing Ham would lead them into sin, which curse prohibited them from having the Priesthood. The curse was lineage-based and persistent, because the sin persisted. In modern times the lineage of Ham, the Negro race, chose to worship the Lord of their own volition and actively petitioned membership in the Lord's Church. The leaders of the Lord's Church responded favorably to their petition and importuned the Lord to remove the curse. The Lord did so, and the lineage of Ham may once again have the Priesthood.

## Historical Material Pertaining to Official Declaration-2

### Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Few things have had a greater impact on the gospel's worldwide progress than did the revelation received in 1978 through President Spencer W. Kimball extending the blessing of the priesthood to members of all races. Over the years, Blacks had been free to join the Church and were welcomed at its activities, but they could not receive the priesthood. Latter-day Saints accepted this ban as inspired, but it increasingly became the subject of criticism and attacks, especially during the widespread agitation for civil rights in the 1960s. A few, even within the Church, tauntingly suggested that the Prophet should "receive a revelation" to change the policy. Significantly, however, the revelation did not come in the face of these pressures, but it came in due course over a decade later when such agitation had largely ceased. Just as had been the case in 1890, divine revelation rather than external pressures brought the important change.

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the same message, and became personal witnesses that the word received was the mind and will and voice of the Lord.

Reflecting on this experience, President Spencer W. Kimball and President Ezra Taft Benson and others of the Twelve concurred that none "had ever experienced anything of such spiritual magnitude and power as was poured out upon the Presidency and the Twelve that day in the upper room in the house of the Lord."

During the following week, an official announcement of this revelation was prepared under President Kimball's direction. On 9 June 1978, this inspired announcement was approved by the General Authorities and was issued to the public. "As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth," the Brethren declared, "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." Witnessing "the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld," Church leaders pleaded "long and earnestly" in behalf of these people. "He [the Lord] has heard our prayers," the Brethren affirmed, "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 off the temple" (Official Declaration 2). This revelation was approved at the fall general conference that year, and was added to the Doctrine and Covenants as "Official Declaration 2" in the new 1981 section.

The impact of this revelation was far-reaching. Faithful black Latter-day rejoiced as they received long-hoped-for ordination to the priesthood, mission calls, calls to serve in bishoprics or stake presidencies, and, of course, the eternal blessings of the temple. In November 1978, just five months after the revelation came, the First Presidency called two experienced couples to open missionary work in the black nations of Nigeria and Ghana.

Like sections 137 and 138, Official Declaration 2 was added to the scriptural canon at a particularly appropriate time in the Church's history. The introductory statement in the 1981 edition explains that sections 137 and 138 both set forth "the

fundamentals of salvation for the dead." Within a decade of their being added to the Standard Works, the number of temples in service or under construction more than doubled. Similarly, Official Declaration 2 was added to the canon at a time of unprecedented international Church growth. In this setting, the 1978 revelation paved the way for the Church more than ever before to fulfill its worldwide mission. Sections 137 and 138 bolstered the Latter-day Saints' efforts to extend gospel blessings to the dead in a greater way than ever before. Official Declaration 2 likewise opened the door to reach all the living (as well as the dead) with the privileges and opportunities of the Lord's plan for eternal progress and joy. (Richard O. Cowan, Studies in Scripture Volume 1, The Doctrine and Covenants)

From the time of Joseph Smith the Church maintained a policy prohibiting those of African Negroid descent from being ordained to the priesthood. Although Church leaders have consistently agreed that the time would come when this restriction would be lifted, they have, nevertheless, maintained that nothing short of revelation from God could alter the policy. Particular attention has been given to the restriction in recent years following the phenomenal growth of the Church in foreign lands as well as the increase in racial tensions within the United States. In 1960 stakes began to be organized in foreign nations, and today the Church is clearly an international organization. With the decision to build a temple in Brazil, the policy regarding the African blacks came into sharp focus because interracial marriage is a common practice there.

Under these conditions President Spencer W. Kimball began an exhaustive personal study of the scriptures as well as statements of Church leaders since Joseph Smith, and asked other General Authorities to share their personal feelings relative to the longstanding Church policy. Then he began to inquire of the Lord if the time was not right to extend the priesthood blessings to this restricted people. Recalling this period, President Kimball stated, "Day after day, and especially on Saturdays and Sundays when there were no organizations in the temple, I went there when I could be alone." The result was a revelation on 1 June 1978.

On Thursday, 1 June 1978, the First Presidency and ten of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the matter special

attention. Then, following the monthly fast meeting of the General Authorities in the Salt Lake Temple on 1 June, President Kimball "asked the Twelve not to go home," but to stay for a special prayer circle with him. It was on this occasion, at 2:45 p.m., that the Lord confirmed the wishes of the Brethren to rescind the policy that prohibited African blacks from receiving the priesthood. President Kimball declared, "I offered the final prayer and I told the Lord if it wasn't right, if He didn't want this change to come in the church, that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I'd fight the world against it if that's what He wanted.... But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.... I knew that the time had come." The following account of the event is given by Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

On the first day of June in this year, 1978, the First Presidency and the Twelve, after full discussion of the proposition and all the premises and principles that are involved, importuned the Lord for a revelation. President Kimball was mouth, and he prayed with great faith and great fervor, and this was one of those occasions when an inspired prayer is offered.... It was given President Kimball what he should ask. He prayed by the power of the Spirit and there was perfect unity, total and complete harmony, between the Presidency and the Twelve on the issue involved. And when President Kimball finished his prayer the Lord gave a revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost.... On this occasion, because of the importuning and the faith, and because the hour and the time had arrived, the Lord in his providence poured out the Holy Ghost upon the First Presidency and the Twelve, in a miraculous and marvelous manner beyond anything that any then present had ever experienced.... And the result was that President Kimball knew and each one of us knew, independent of any other person, by direct personal revelation to us, that the time had now come to extend the gospel and all its blessings of the House of the Lord, to those of every nation, and culture, and race, including the black race. There was no question whatsoever as to what happened or as to the word and message that came.

During the ensuing week a statement (Official Declaration



Number Two) was drafted by the First Presidency, and on Thursday, 8 June 1978, it was read to a joint meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve. At this meeting, in the Salt Lake Temple, the revelation "was reaffirmed by the Spirit of inspiration...when the Brethren approved the document to announce it to the world." On 9 June 1978 the official statement was read to all General Authorities in the Salt Lake City area, where it was unanimously sustained; and later that day the document was made public.

On 30 September 1978 Official Declaration Number Two was presented to a general conference of the Church, where it was unanimously approved as Church policy. (Lyndon W. Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

### **Excerpt from The Story of the Latter-day Saints**

Meanwhile, one of the most unusual conversion stories in Church history was taking place in western Africa: a part of the world where the Church was unable, at least for the time being, to open a mission, yet where perhaps thousands of people were literally begging for missionaries to come.

It began in Nigeria when several groups of black Christians somehow obtained Church books, believed them, organized churches patterned after what they read in the literature, and wrote to Church headquarters asking for missionaries. In 1960, at the request of the First Presidency, Glen G. Fisher visited some of them as he returned to Utah from his assignment as president of the South African Mission. He received a sincere and warm welcome and found that members of the various congregations he visited were anxious to be baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This presented a perplexing challenge to Church leaders. It had been Church policy almost from the beginning not to ordain blacks to the priesthood, and Church leaders believed the policy could not be changed without direct revelation. Yet here were whole congregations of sincere, faithful blacks asking to have the Church established among them. President McKay wanted to do something about it, but the question was whether a Church organization could be set up and staffed among the Nigerians when they could not hold the priesthood and therefore could not run it themselves. Ironically, when President Fisher explained the policy to them, the Nigerians were not too concerned; they only wanted more literature, help in building chapels, and to be baptized.

With letters from Nigerians pouring in, by 1961 President McKay concluded that the Church must permit the Nigerians to be baptized and confirmed members of the Church. He cogently observed to his counselors that this problem was even greater than that faced by the Twelve in New Testament times when the question of whether the gentiles should have the gospel shook the Church. The Lord would have to let them know what to do, he said, and when the Lord was ready He would open the door. Until then they could only tell the people they could go so far and no farther.

As a preliminary step, in October the First Presidency sent LaMar S. Williams to Nigeria on a fact-finding trip. After spending a month traveling from village to village through the jungle, meeting with many congregations in mud huts and tiny chapels, and hearing hundreds of fervent testimonies from expectant Nigerians who had been praying for the arrival of missionaries from Utah, Williams returned convinced. The various congregations of "Latter-day Saints" were often quite independent of each other, but, Williams reported, they were sincere and certainly worthy of baptism. Before the end of February 1962, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve decided to open a mission in Nigeria. In March, Williams was called to return there, along with his wife, Nyal, to preside over a district to be established under the umbrella of the West European Mission. Four additional couples were soon selected to assist. On November 21 Williams was set apart by President McKay as the first missionary to the black people of Nigeria and told to establish the Church, conduct missionary work, and organize all the auxiliaries, with local members supervising the auxiliaries.

The would-be Saints in Nigeria were ecstatic but, unfortunately, the long hoped-for mission was not destined to open at that time. Nigeria had only recently gained independence from British colonial rule, and government officials were suspicious of outsiders. When they learned of the priesthood policy they immediately denied visas to LDS missionaries. Williams spent the next three years trying unsuccessfully to obtain visas, and the Nigerian "Saints" mounted their own campaign to try to convince their government that the Church posed no threat. In 1964 one group even had itself officially incorporated under Nigerian law as "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Meanwhile, the Nigerians sent a few young people to Brigham Young University, supported in part by scholarship funds raised by Williams and other Saints. Each of

them was baptized before returning home. Twice Williams returned briefly on temporary visitor's visas. During his second visit in October 1965, he was suddenly recalled to Salt Lake City. The First Presidency had decided to make no further efforts at that time to open the mission. Only two months later a violent military coup in Nigeria became the opening wedge of a bloody civil conflict, the Biafran War. The war wreaked havoc with the congregations of "Saints," though many people continued to watch, wait, and pray for the day when the Church finally could be established among them.

That happy time was about twelve years away.

In nearby Ghana, meanwhile, a similar story was taking place. Sometime in 1962 a missionary tract, the "Joseph Smith Story," found its way into the hands of a black religious leader, Dr. A. F. Mensah, who was converted almost immediately. He soon converted several others, organized a "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," and began to correspond with LaMar Williams at the Missionary Department of the Church. In 1964 he gave a copy of the Book of Mormon as well as other literature to J. W. B. Johnson who, after reading it and receiving a series of dramatic personal revelations, was also converted and became equally successful in spreading the gospel among fellow Ghanians. Eventually Johnson and his followers formed several "Latter-day Saint" congregations, somewhat independent of Mensah. Mensah, Johnson, and others continued through the 1970s to preach the gospel as they understood it, and to plead with the Church for missionaries and for the official establishment of the Church among them. They were helped and encouraged, at times, by a number of Saints from Utah who were in their country on temporary teaching or other professional assignments, or on business. For the time being, however, the Church could make no official response to their continuing requests for missionaries and baptism.

Even though none of this resulted in any numerical growth for the Church, it is important to an understanding of the 1960s as a time of transition. Many things were changing as the Church faced the myriad challenges of international growth, and in that spirit Church leaders seriously considered opening a unique mission among the blacks of western Africa despite the fact that it could not yet grant them the priesthood. The mission was delayed but the Spirit was at work in Nigeria and Ghana as surely as it was elsewhere, planting seeds that eventually produced a rich harvest after the revelation on priesthood finally came in 1978. (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, The

Story of the Latter-day Saints: Correlating the International Church, 1960-1973)

**Excerpt from The Story of the Latter-day Saints**

The revelation had an immediate impact on the Church around the world. Worthy black families began to appear in the temples. Young blacks were called as missionaries, adding a rich dimension to the testimonies borne by all the missionaries. In South America, the tensions and discomforts once caused by the priesthood policy found solutions. In Brazil, for example, because of the high incidence of interracial marriage over several generations, people with black ancestry were difficult to identify; and prior to the revelation local Church policy required prospective priesthood holders to prove their ancestry through clear genealogical evidence before ordination. The policy was eventually liberalized to allow ordination for any who did not have obvious black features or whose patriarchal blessings identified them with one of the tribes of Israel, but it continued to be a test of faith for those who were still denied the priesthood. The new revelation provided a powerful reward for that faith. And in two black African states, Nigeria and Ghana, thousands of citizens who had been praying for years that the Church would send missionaries found their prayers answered before the year was out.

One story from Brazil provides a poignant illustration of the meaning of the new revelation. In 1975 the Church announced that a temple would be built in Sao Paulo, Brazil. General Authorities in Salt Lake City were deeply moved when they learned how black members donated money, assisted in the construction, and helped plan the dedication of a temple they did not expect to enter. Helvecio and Rud Martins were such a couple. Sister Martins even sold her jewelry to help with the fund-raising. Like many other blacks, the Martinses had such strong faith in a future change that they even set up a missionary fund for their son. One day they visited the temple site and, Brother Martins reported later, "we were overcome by the Spirit. We held each other and wept." President Kimball dedicated the Sao Paulo Temple on October 30, 1978, less than five months after the revelation, and the Martins family was among the first to be sealed there. On March 31, 1990, Elder Martins was sustained to the Second Quorum of the Seventy the first black to become a General Authority of the Church.

In Africa, meanwhile, the results of the revelation were

equally powerful. In August 1978 the First Presidency sent Edwin Q. Cannon and Merrill Bateman on a short fact-finding trip to Nigeria and Ghana, where they met with many blacks who had been waiting for the Church for years. A few already had been baptized in America or elsewhere, but most almost two thousand in Nigeria and a thousand in Ghana were still praying for baptism. One of the leaders with whom they met in Ghana was J. W. B. Johnson, who had been waiting for fourteen years and headed seven congregations of those who wanted to become Latter-day Saints. In Nigeria they met, among others, Ime Eduok, who since his baptism in California had been coordinating several groups in his area. After these visits they reported to the First Presidency that the people of these two nations were ready for baptism. In November, Edwin and Janath Cannon and Rendell and Rachel Mabey became the first official representatives of the International Mission in West Africa, and on November 21 nineteen Nigerians were baptized. Johnson became the Church's first distinct leader in Ghana, and Eduok was the first in Nigeria. Over seventeen hundred Nigerians and five hundred Ghanians were members of the Church when the Cannons and the Mabeys returned to Utah in 1979. (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints: Correlating the International Church, 1960-1973*)

#### **Excerpt from The Heavens are Open**

The gospel has not always been sent to all people, however. From the beginning, the Lord has sent the gospel to people according to his priorities, and the priesthood has been given selectively. During the fourteen centuries from Moses to Christ, only the house of Israel had the gospel. Only the tribe of Levi was permitted to hold the Aaronic priesthood, and a few others were chosen to hold the Melchizedek priesthood. Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed:

"Not only is the gospel to go, on a priority basis and harmonious to a divine timetable, to one nation after another, but the whole history of God's dealings with men on earth indicates that such has been the case in the past; it has been restricted and limited where many people are concerned."

Early in this dispensation, the Lord revealed that those of the black race were not to receive the priesthood and temple

blessings. In 1949 the First Presidency reaffirmed the Lord's command:

"The attitude of the Church with reference to the 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."

That position has not always been understood or accepted, even by some in the Church. Because it did not receive specific scriptural status in the Doctrine and Covenants, some question its origin; however, not all revelations are made public. In 1977, President Kimball said, "We testify to the world that revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day."

Statements by the prophets in this dispensation suggest that there were some unanswered questions relating to blacks and the priesthood. Fifteen years before receiving the revelation, Elder Spencer W. Kimball expressed his views about this delicate and difficult matter: "The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of men.... I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter. But for me, it is enough. The prophets for 133 years of the existence of the Church have maintained the position of the prophet of the Restoration that the Negro could not hold the priesthood nor have the temple ordinances which are preparatory for exaltation.... The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory.... I know the Lord could change his policy.... If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure."

Then Elder Kimball caustically rebuked members of the Church who were pressuring Church leaders to make a change regarding blacks and the priesthood: "These smart members who would force the issue, and there are many of them, cheapen the issue and certainly bring into contempt the sacred principle of revelation and divine authority."

In 1973, when President Kimball became president of the Church and was asked about the position of the Church regarding the blacks and the priesthood, he answered:

"I am not sure that there will be a change, although there

could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change. "

A few months later President Kimball gave a powerful and visionary address. He spoke of "armies of missionaries" taking the gospel to areas of the world, even to lands where the Church had never been. But no mention was made of one continent Africa. The revelation on the priesthood had to precede the gospel message being spread through out Africa. David M. Kennedy, who served as a special representative of the First Presidency to help move the gospel to foreign nations, told of a large atlas that President Kimball kept in his office. When they studied it together, Brother Kennedy would place his hand over sub-Saharan Africa, saying, "We can't go there unless they have the priesthood." Returning from the temple after receiving the revelation of June 1978, President Kimball stopped at David Kennedy's office and said, "You can take your hand off that map, David. We can now go to Africa!"

In this dispensation some Church leaders believed the blacks would not receive the priesthood before the Millennium. Similarly, the prophets and apostles at Jesus' time did not fully comprehend some of the basic principles of the gospel or the Lord's timetable. It wasn't until after glorious revelations were received that they completely understood the doctrines of the Atonement, resurrection, or of taking the gospel to all nations. Elder McConkie said that because the gospel had been only for the house of Israel, the earliest apostles were not able to envision that after the resurrection the gospel should then go to all the world. But Peter was still a prophet, even though he had to receive a vision before he fully understood that the gospel was to be taken to the gentiles at that time.

In this dispensation, some Church leaders spoke from limited understanding regarding when the priesthood would be given to the blacks. Elder McConkie spoke of that matter: "There are statements in our literature by the early brethren that we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things.... We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. (The Heavens Are Open: Official Declaration 2: Revelation on the Priesthood, The 1992 Sperry Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History)

### **Excerpt from Adventures of a Church Historian**

On June 1, 1978, at a regular temple meeting of the general authorities, Kimball asked the members of the First Presidency and the Twelve to stay for a private conference. In a spirit of fasting and prayer, they formed a prayer circle. Kimball opened by saying he felt impressed to pray to the Lord and asked their permission to be "mouth." He went to the altar. Those in attendance said that as he began his earnest prayer, they suddenly realized it was not Kimball's prayer, but the Lord speaking through him. A revelation was being declared. Kimball himself realized that the words were not his but the Lord's. During that prayer some of the Twelve--at least two have said so publicly--were transported into a celestial atmosphere, saw a divine presence and the figures of former president of the church (portraits of whom were hanging on the walls around them) smiling to indicate their approval and sanction. Others acknowledged the voice of the Lord coming, as with the prophet Elijah, "through the still, small voice." The voice of the Spirit followed their earnest search for wisdom and understanding.

At the end of the heavenly manifestation Kimball, weeping for joy, confronted the church members, many of them also sobbing, and asked if they sustained this heavenly instruction. Embracing, all nodded vigorously and jubilantly their sanction. There had been a startling and commanding revelation from God--an ineffable experience.

Two of the apostles present described the experience as a "day of Pentecost" similar to the one in Kirtland Temple on April 6, 1836, the day of its dedication. They saw a heavenly personage and heard heavenly music. To the temple-clothed members, the gathering, incredible and without compare, was the greatest singular even of their lives. Those I talked with wept as they spoke of it. All were certain they had witnessed a revelation from God. (Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, pages 176-177)



## **Chronology Pertaining to Blacks and the Priesthood**

*Circa 4000 BC.* Cain is cursed and a mark is set on him. The mark was given to protect Cain from vengeance. The precise nature of the mark is not identified in the Genesis account, cf. Gen. 4.

*Circa 1200 BC.* The Law of Moses differentiates between Israelite and Gentile with regards to the Priesthood and Temple worship, excluding Gentiles from the Priesthood and limiting Temple worship. Ultimately, the Levitical Priesthood is limited solely to firstborn sons of the tribe of Levi. Limited duration debt-induced servitude is permitted for Israelites and limited forms of slavery are permitted when dealing with Gentiles.

Moses is derided by Miriam and Aaron for marrying a Cushite/Ethiopian (i.e., Black African) woman, cf. Num. 21:1. While it is likely referring to Moses taking an additional wife and her being a literal black-skinned African woman, some Rabbis suggest the title "Cushite" could be a racial slur applied to Zipporah, a Midianite.

*Circa 700 BC.* Isaiah predicts a time when Gentiles, then excluded from the Temple, would participate in Temple rites, cf. Isa. 56.

*Circa 600 BC.* Jeremiah suggests the use of skin color as a marker of race in, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?", cf. Jer. 13:23.

*Circa 200 BC.* Job states "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat", cf. Job 30:30. Job's statement is referring to having his skin seared and burned with heat, indicating not all references to skin being "black" are literal, related to race, or connected with the Priesthood issue at hand.

*Circa 31 AD.* Jesus bestows the Melchizedek Priesthood upon the Twelve Apostles, none of whom are of Levitical lineage but all of whom are males of natural Israel, cf. Matt. 10.

*Circa 33 AD.* Jesus commissions Apostles to preach to all nations, cf. Matt. 28. Followed in Acts 10 with an additional command explicitly stating previous Israelite-Gentile divisions imposed under the Law of Moses are no longer in effect.

*Circa 34 AD.* Philip preaches to and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch, cf., Acts 8.

1830. The Book of Mormon is published. The Book uses a dark-skin motif as a sign of sinfulness by the Lamanites, descendants of Israel through Menasseh, "The Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon [the Lamanites]", cf. 1 Ne. 5:21.

The dark skin is equated with a curse which was a result of rebellion, "And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them", cf. 2 Ne. 5:21.

The dark skin is explicitly presented as a "mark", a "curse...because of...transgression" and as a means of separating different cultures, "And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men. And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women. And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction", cf. Alma 3:6-8.

The Book of Mormon also states that it was "against [Nephite civil] law" to hold slaves, cf. Alma 27:9 and Mosiah 2:13.

*Circa 1830.* Joseph Smith begins working on the translation of the Bible, which ultimately becomes the text of Pearl of Great Price book of Moses. (See 1842 for material on contents.)

*February 1831.* A man named "Black Pete" joins the Church in Kirtland. In 1864 LDS Apostle George A. Smith discusses him, saying, "There was at this time in Kirtland, a society that had undertaken to have a community of property; it has sometimes

been denominated the Morley family, as there was a number of them located on a farm owned by Captain Isaac Morley. These persons had been baptized, but had not yet been instructed in relation to their duties. A false spirit entered into them, developing their singular, extravagant and wild ideas. They had a meeting at the farm, and among them was a negro known generally as Black Pete, who became a revelator. Others also manifested wonderful developments; they could see angels, and letters would come down from heaven, they said, and they would be put through wonderful unnatural distortions. Finally on one occasion, Black Pete got sight of one of those revelations carried by a black angel, he started after it, and ran off a steep wash bank twenty-five feet high, passed through a tree top into the Chagrin river beneath. He came out with a few scratches, and his ardor somewhat cooled (Journal of Discourses, volume 11, pages 3-4). This event among others resulted in D&C 43.

*July 1831.* Smith identifies Negroes as lineage of Canaan, "The first Sabbath after our arrival in Jackson county, Brother W. W. Phelps preached to a western audience over the boundary of the United States, wherein were present specimens of all the families of the earth; Shem, Ham and Japheth; several of the Lamanites or Indians--representative of Shem; quite a respectable number of negroes--descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country..." (History of the Church, volume 1, page 190).

*November 1831.* Revelation on the Priesthood indicates firstborn sons of Aaron, and only firstborn sons of Aaron, have a patrilineal right to the office of Bishop in the Aaronic Priesthood, cf. D&C 68:15-21, D&C 107:76. This indicates patrilineal aspects of the Priesthood from prior dispensations are still in force under specific conditions.

*1832.* Joseph Smith Jr. predicts an insurrection beginning in South Carolina in which slaves would rise up against their masters and great bloodshed would result, cf. D&C 87.

*1832.* Elijah Abel[s] baptized. Census records document him as "mullato" several times and "black" once. See 1879 entry below.

*July 1833.* W. W. Phelps editorial in the [Evening and Morning Star](#), "Free People of Color" expresses an anti-slavery viewpoint

and outlines procedures for the migration of free Blacks to Missouri: "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."

1834. According to Zebedee Coltrin (as recalled in 1879, 45 years later) Joseph Smith in the presence of Coltrin receives a revelation that Blacks are not to be ordained to the Priesthood. See 1879 entry for quote.

March 1835. LDS Church publication [Messenger & Advocate](#) uses "black skin" motif, indicating that it is a mark of sinfulness that can come on members of any race. No mention of a racial ban on the Priesthood related to race. W. W. Phelps writes in January that Ham married a black wife.

God causes the saints, or people that fall away from his church to be cursed in time, with a black skin? Was or was not Cain, being marked, obliged to inherit the curse, he and his children, forever? And if so, as Ham, like other sons of God, might break the rule of God, by marrying out of the church, did or did he not, have a Canaanite wife, whereby some of the black seed was preserved through the flood, and his son, Canaan, after he laughed at his grand father's nakedness, heired three curses: one from Cain for killing Abel; one from Ham for marrying a black wife, and one from Noah for ridiculing what God had respect for? Are or are not the Indians a sample of marking with blackness for rebellion against God's holy word and holy order? And can or can we not observe in the countenances of almost all nations, except the Gentile, a dark, sallow hue, which tells the sons of God, without a line of history, that they have fallen or changed from the original beauty and grace of father Adam?

August 1835. In a general declaration concerning governments and civil laws, the following statement is made, "We believe it just to preach the gospel to the nations of the earth, and warn the righteous to save themselves from the corruption of the world; but we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the will and wish of their masters, nor to meddle with or influence them in the least to cause them to be

dissatisfied with their situations in this life, thereby jeopardizing the lives of men; such interference we believe to be unlawful and unjust, and dangerous to the peace of every government allowing human beings to be held in servitude (cf. D&C 134)."

*September 1835.* Church publication Messenger & Advocate declares that the Gospel's "order was the same; it produced the same effect among all" and its "order was the same; it produced the same effect among all people, whether they were Seythian, Barbarian, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, Greek or Roman, it mattered not what they were; for in this respect, there was neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, male nor female; but they were all one in Christ Jesus, and the same blessings belonged to all, and the same fruits followed all, and the order was the same, whether it was in Africa, Asia, or Europe".

*November 1835.* Joseph Smith reaffirms his earlier proclamation of an "official" anti-abolitionist position for the Church in the Church publication Messenger and Advocate entitled [To the Elders of the Church](#). He says Elders are to avoid going "unto...slaves or servants...unless granted permission by their masters."

*1835-39.* Various sections of Doctrine and Covenants present a "universalist" view of the gospel being for all peoples and races and of all peoples being equal in the Gospel (e.g., D&C 1:2; 38:16; 1:10; 10:51; 1:23; 1:34; 112:4)

*1836.* Kirtland Temple's initial rules of conduct were addressed inclusively to "old or young, rich or poor, male or female, black or white, believer or unbeliever".

*March 1836.* In a discourse on the subjects of slavery and abolition, Smith states that the curse of Ham is "not yet taken off" from the Negroes. "After having expressed myself so freely upon this subject, I do not doubt, but those who have been forward in raising their voices against the South, will cry out against me as being uncharitable, unfeeling, unkind, and wholly unacquainted with the Gospel of Christ. It is my privilege then to name certain passages from the Bible, and examine the teachings of the ancients upon the matter as the fact is uncontrovertible that the first mention we have of slavery is found in the Holy Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in

his generation, and walked with God. And so far from that prediction being averse to the mind of God, it remains as a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah, to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude. 'And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.' 'Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant' (Gen. 9:25, 26). Trace the history of the world from this notable event down to this day, and you will find the fulfillment of this singular prophecy. What could have been the design of the Almighty in this singular occurrence is not for me to say; but I can say, the curse is not yet taken off from the sons of Canaan, neither will be until it is affected by as great a power as caused it to come; and the people who interfere the least with the purposes of God in this matter, will come under the least condemnation before Him; and those who are determined to pursue a course, which shows an opposition, and a feverish restlessness against the decrees of the Lord, will learn, when perhaps it is too late for their own good, that God can do His own work, without the aid of those who are not dictated by His counsel." (History of the Church, volume 2, pages 438-439).

*March 1836.* Elijah Abel ordained an Elder. The certificate of ordination was dated 3 Mar 1836. Newell G. Bringhurst (Saints, Slaves and Blacks, p. 60) notes that certificates were sometimes delayed, so the ordination could have been sooner than this, but Abel is still listed among the recently licensed elders in June 1836 (Messenger & Advocate, volume 2, page 335). Smith signed the certificate, so, at the very least, he was aware of Abel ordination.

*March 1836.* Elijah Abel given a Patriarchal Blessing by Joseph Smith Sr. No lineage is declared, rather, Abel is proclaimed "an orphan". Patriarchal blessing states, "Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren, and thy soul be white in eternity and thy robes glittering." Sometime in the Kirtland era, Abel is washed and anointed in the Kirtland Temple by Zebedee Coltrin.

*April 1836.* Joseph Smith's front-page editorial in the [Messenger and Advocate](#) says "we have no right to interfere with slaves, contrary to the mind and will of their masters."

*June 1836.* The [Messenger and Advocate](#) lists the names of

several Elders including "Elijah Abel".

*December 1836.* Elijah Abel advances to the rank of Seventy and becomes a "duly licensed minister of the Gospel" for missionary work in Ohio. He also serves missions to New York and Canada. Ordination was performed by Zebedee Coltrin according to certificate. Abel was apparently reordained on April 4, 1841.

*1837.* Apostle Parley P. Pratt expresses his desire to preach the gospel "to all people, kindreds, tongues, and nations without exceptions" in [A Voice of Warning](#). No indication of differentiation between races with regard to system of preaching the Gospel of the kind that accompanies the Priesthood ban in later times.

*Circa 1837.* Joseph Smith begins working on the Pearl of Great Price book of Abraham. (See 1842 for material on contents)

*May 1838.* Joseph Smith answering questions states: Question 13th. Are the Mormons abolitionists. Answer. No, unless delivering the people from priest-craft, and the priests from the prower [sic] of satan, should be considered such.— But we do not believe in setting the Negroes free. ([Elders' Journal, May 1838, page 43](#), reprinted in July, 1838)

*July 1838.* The term "black" is used in a blatantly figurative statement referring to the spiritual condition of apostates, "Therefore, rejoice ye Elders of Israel. Believe not the slangs and foul reports against our beloved brethren, Joseph Smith, Jr. and Sidney Rigdon. They are groundless and as black as the apostate authors who will not protect that little stone that is hewn out of the mountain without hands and who exerts their utmost endeavors to impede the progress of the kingdom which God has set up for the salvation of man in these last days" (A. Ripley, [Elders' Journal](#), page 39 [the [Elders' Journal](#) was an official periodical of the church edited by Joseph Smith. There were four issues, two in Kirtland in 1837 and two in Far West, Missouri in 1838; A. Ripley was a bishop]).

*Jun 1839.* Elijah Abel's activities discussed, but his holding the Priesthood is not documented as being questioned, in a meeting attended by Joseph Smith, Jr.

*1839.* Elijah Abel made a member of the Nauvoo Seventies Quorum.

1839. Apostle Parley P. Pratt reports there are fewer than "one dozen free negroes or mulattoes" in the Church in *Late Persecution of the Church of Latter-day Saints*, printed 1840.

1839. Apostle Parley P. Pratt refers to the "mission of the Twelve" to all nations including those on "India's and Afric's [sic] sultry plains...where darkness, death, and sorrow reign" (from *The Millenium and Other Poems*).

1839-46. Nauvoo reported to have 22 Blacks, including free and slave.

*June 1841.* Regarding the events surround an arrest, Smith refers to one "Elijah Able", note the different spelling of the last name. It seems likely that Smith was referring to "Elijah Abel", but it is not entirely clear that is the case as no direct references to Elijah Abel[s] appear in *History of the Church*. "News of my arrest having arrived in Nauvoo last night, and being circulate through the city, Hosea Stout, Tarleton Lewis, William A. Hickman, John S. Higbee, Elijah Able, Uriel C. Nickerson, and George W. Clyde started from the Nauvoo landing, in a skiff in order to overtake me and rescue me, if necessary. They had a heavy head wind, but arrived in Quincy at dusk; went up to Benjamin Jones's house, and found that I had gone to Nauvoo in charge of two officers." (*History of the Church*, volume 4, page 365)

*October 1841.* In a discourse on fault-finding among the brethren, Smith tangentially comments upon the curse Noah laid upon Ham, and states the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day. "I referred to the curse of Ham for laughing at Noah, while in his wine, but doing no harm. Noah was a righteous man, and yet he drank wine and became intoxicated; the Lord did not forsake him in consequence thereof, for he retained all the power of his priesthood, and when he was accused by Canaan, he cursed him by the priesthood which he held, and the Lord had respect to his word, and the priesthood which he held, notwithstanding he was drunk, and the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day" (*History of the Church*, volume 4, page 446).

1842. *Pearl of Great Price* completed (work on the *Pearl of Great Price* began about 1837). The work makes two references



relevant to the issue at hand:

Enoch (circa 3000 BC) ministers the gospel to surrounding nations but does not go to those of the lineage of Cain, which are identified as being "black", cf. Moses 7:12 for Enoch not calling on the people of Canaan to repent; Moses 7:22 for the seed of Cain being "black". Regarding the "seed of Cain were black", the LDS community has traditionally interpreted Moses 7 as referring to a black skin color rather than "black" in deeds or spirituality.

Lineage of Ham via Canaan is cursed by Noah (circa 2400 BC) for "seeing the nakedness of his father". This curse is equated with a black skin and Priesthood ban by inference, cf. Abr. 1.

1842. Walker Lewis is baptized, apparently by Parley P. Pratt. Lewis is a successful, educated barber in Lowell, Massachusetts who is actively involved in abolitionist and equal rights movements.

*January 1842.* Smith enters various comments into the history and tangentially remarks upon Negroes being "sons of Cain", which may or may not be intended literally, "Signed deeds for lots, to Law; transacted a variety of business in the city and office. In the evening debated with John C. Bennett and others to show that the Indians have greater cause to complain of the treatment of the whites, than the negroes, or sons of Cain" (History of the Church, volume 4, page 502).

*March 1842.* Smith writes the following in a letter on the subject of slavery, "I have just been perusing your correspondence with Doctor Dyer, on the subject of American slavery, and the students of the Quincy Mission Institute, and it makes my blood boil within me to reflect upon the injustice, cruelty, and oppression of the rulers of the people. When will these things cease to be, and the Constitution and the laws again bear rule? I fear for my beloved country—mob violence, injustice and cruelty appear to be the darling attributes of Missouri, and no man taketh it to heart! O tempora! O mores! What think you should be done?" (History of the Church, volume 4, page 544)

1843. Apostles Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt and John Page

restrict Elijah Abel's missionary work to his own people. There is no indication from the documentation of this meeting that any of these three Apostles remark upon there being something wrong with Abel[s] holding the Priesthood.

1843. Elijah Abel[s] serves another mission.

1843. Sometime in the Nauvoo era, Elijah Abel[s] participates in at least two baptisms for the dead.

*Jan 1843.* Regarding Negroes in general, Smith states, "At five went to Mr. Sollars' with Elders Hyde and Richards. Elder Hyde inquired the situation of the negro. I replied, they came into the world slaves mentally and physically. Change their situation with the whites, and they would be like them. 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 of many of those they brush and wait on.

"Elder Hyde remarked, 'Put them on the level, and they will rise above me.' I replied, if I raised you to be my equal, and then attempted to oppress you, would you not be indignant and try to rise above me, as did Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and many others, who said I was a fallen Prophet, and they were capable of leading the people, although I never attempted to oppress them, but had always been lifting them up? 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 217-218). As Elijah Abel had taken up residence in Cincinnati it is possible Smith is referring to him.

*1844 or earlier.* Walker Lewis ordained an Elder by William Smith the younger brother of Joseph Smith Jr. as reported by William L. Appleby in a letter to Brigham Young dated June 2, 1847 and in his Journal History dated 19 May 1847 (both documents in LDS Church archives). However, according to Jane Elizabeth Manning James in a letter dated 7 Feb 1890 addressed to Joseph F. Smith, "Parley P. Pratt ordained Him and Elder" (as reported by Wolfinger in A Test of Faith, p. 149).

*November 1844.* Apostle Wilford Woodruff visits Lowell,

Massachusetts and observes "a Coloured Brother who was an Elder", presumably Walker Lewis, was present and raised his hand in support of the leaders of the Church. No remark about the existence of a Black Elder being contrary to doctrine or practice.

1844. Joseph Smith Jr. campaigns for the presidency of the United States and espouses an anti-slavery platform aimed at ending all slavery by 1850. His earlier position had been anti-slavery but also anti-abolitionist. Smith states, "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 deduction of pay from the members of Congress, break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire him to labor with other human beings, for an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage...."

June 1844. Assassination of Joseph Smith Jr.

April 1845. Article addressing issue of abolition appears using a mix of apparently literal (i.e., "black skin") and figurative (i.e., "black hearts") "black" references. No author is cited, but the periodical at that time was edited by John Taylor. "The descendants of Ham, besides a black skin which has ever been a curse that has followed an apostate of the holy priesthood, as well as a black heart, have been servants to both Shem and Japheth, and the abolitionists are trying to make void the curse of God, but it will require more power than man possesses to counteract the decrees of eternal wisdom" (Times and Seasons, volume 6, page 857). Note the author identifies Negroes as lineage of Ham and not Cain.

October 1845. Apostle John Taylor, editor of Times & Seasons, characterized Africa as a "meadow of black flowers [used] to beautify white gardens" and lamented the buying and selling of people (Nauvoo Neighbor, October 29, 1845).

1844-45. Sometime in 1844-45 the Lowell, Massachusetts area was visited by Apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Brigham Young, neither of mentioned anything amiss about Elijah Abel being an elder.

April 27, 1845. Orson Hyde refers to Negroes as the cursed lineage of Canaan and says the curse of servility which they bore was for actions in the Preexistence ("Speech Delivered

Before the High Priests Quorum in Nauvoo", manuscript in Utah State Historical Society). He also expressed the fear the curse of Cain would come on him and his posterity if he did not repent his apostasy, clearly differentiating between the lineage of Canaan and the curse of Cain.

*October 1846.* Warner "William" McCary, who was half-black, born of a slave mother and his father who was her owner, baptized and ordained by Apostle Orson Hyde (reported by Voree Herald, October, 1846). Some reports suggest McCary represented himself as Native American, and not Negro.

*April 15, 1847.* Apostle Parley P. Pratt writes in a letter to Brigham Young concerning William McCary, "This black man has got the blood of Ham in him which lineage [sic] was cursed as regards to the Priesthood."

*March 26, 1847.* Brigham Young responds to Pratt in letter "its nothing to do with the blood for of one blood has God made all flesh, we have to repent (and) regain what we av [sic] lost--we av [sic] one of the best Elders an African in Lowell." making reference to Walker Lewis of Lowell, MA.

*June 2, 1847.* William L. Appelby a missionary serving in the area visits Lowell, MA and discovers Walker Lewis' son is married to a white woman. Appelby questions the right of Lewis to hold the Priesthood in a letter to Brigham Young and inquires whether it is acceptable. He also questions racial intermarriage, stating, "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." The letter arrives at Winter Quarters after Young's departure, so it is not replied to by Young.

*Fall 1847.* William McCary poses as a prophet, is excommunicated and subsequently seduces a number of Mormon women into his own polygamy rites.

*1847.* Brigham Young declares Blacks ineligible for certain temple ordinances, potentially reactionary to the William McCary affair.

*1847.* Elijah Abel arrives in Utah, a free man. A carpenter by

trade, he works on building the Salt Lake Temple. He and his wife Mary Ann manage the Farnham Hotel. Mary Ann Abel was Negro according to the 1850 Hamilton County Ohio census and 1860 Utah census.

1847. First slaves brought to Utah by Church members. Slavery is practiced until 1862, when it is abolished by Congress in all territories.

*February 1849.* Brigham Young declares "because Cain cut off the lives [sic] of Abel...the Lord cursed Cain's seed and prohibited them from the Priesthood". This is currently the earliest known documented statement by a Church President explicitly making a Church policy of a Priesthood ban for Blacks.

1850. Twelve Mormon slave owners possess between 60 and 70 black slaves in Deseret Territory. There is one Apostle, Charles C. Rich, among these slave owners.

1851. Walker Lewis migrates to Utah, leaving March, arriving October.

1852. The document [An Act in Relation to Service](#) gives legal recognition to black slaveholding in the Territory of Deseret. Young states, "I am as much opposed to the principle of slavery as any man in the present acceptation or usage of the term. It is abused. I am opposed to abusing that which God decreed, to take a blessing and make a curse of it. It is a great blessing to the seed of Adam to have the seed of Cain as servants, but those they serve should use them with all the heart and feeling, as they would use their own children and their compassion should reach over them and round about them, and treat them as kindly, and with that human feeling necessary to be shown to mortal beings of the human species. Under these circumstances their blessings in life are greater in portion than those that have to provide the bread and dinner for them."

1852. First documented public statement by Brigham Young that Blacks may not hold the Priesthood. Though it is couched in phraseology that implies it was not a new policy, Brigham Young says, "in the name of Jesus Christ I know it is true." [Ronald K. Esplin](#) suggests this was not a novelty, and the knowledge and understanding of the doctrine was widespread at the time.

1852. Brigham Young, in a speech regarding slavery before the territorial legislature declares "The seed of Canaan will inevitably carry the curse which was placed upon them until the same authority which placed it there, shall see proper to have it removed". He also expresses his personal opposition to slavery: "that no property can or should be recognized as existing in slaves" (Brigham Young's father had been a bond servant to a man who also held slaves and who had mistreated both).

*Spring 1852.* Walker Lewis returns to Lowell, MA.

1853. Elijah Abel not allowed by Brigham Young to receive his endowment.

1860. Utah census lists 59 Blacks, 29 of whom were slaves.

1862. Slavery becomes illegal in Utah when Congress abolishes slavery in all territories.

1865. Joseph Smith III, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint Church, ordains Blacks and asserts his father never instituted a ban on Blacks holding the Priesthood.

*October 1868.* The Juvenile Instructor asserts "Figi [sic] Islanders" and New Zealanders were a problem because they were "greatly mixed...with the Negroes".

*Circa 1879.* Joseph F. Smith personally interviews Elijah Abel and takes handwritten notes documenting parentage and history of ordination in the Priesthood. According to notes, Abel is one eighth African Negro descent, through his mother. ([Joseph F. Smith, Notes on Elijah Able, undated, Joseph Smith Papers](#))

*June 4, 1879.* During a meeting of the council of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency, Abraham Smoot, owner of 2 slaves, and Zebedee Coltrin claim Joseph Smith instituted the Priesthood ban in the 1830s (L. John Nuttall, *Diary*, May 31, 1879, p. 170, Special Collections, BYU). The Smoot affidavit, attested to by L. John Nuttall, appears to refer only to a policy concerning slaves, rather than to all Blacks, since it deals with the question of baptism and ordination of Blacks who had "masters". This affidavit says that Smoot, "W. W. Patten,

Warren Parish and Tomas 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...it was decided they would not confer the Priesthood until they had consulted with the Prophet Joseph; and subsequently they communicated with him. His decision 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 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" (quoted in Wm. E. Berret, Historian, BYU VP of the CES, in *The Church and the Negroid People*).

Coltrin more emphatically generalizes that the ban was applied to all Blacks. The Journal of L. John Nuttall (pages 290-293) reads, "Saturday, May 31st, 1879, at the house of President Abraham O. Smoot, Provo City, Utah, Utah County, at 5 O'Clock p.m. President John Taylor, Elders Brigham Young, Abraham O. Smoot, Zebedee Coltrin and L. John Nuttall met,.... Coltrin: I have heard him [Joseph Smith] say in public that no person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood." According to Coltrin, "...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.'... Brother Coltrin further said: 'Brother (Elijah) Abel was ordained a Seventy because he had labored on the Temple...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 1st Seven Presidents of the Quorum of Seventy at the time he was dropped.'" Coltrin claims that Abel was dropped from the quorum of Seventy sometime before or during 1837 when Joseph Smith Jr. learned that Abel was Black. Apostle Joseph F. Smith successfully argues against this point on the grounds of Abel's two additional certificates of ordination to the office of Seventy, one dated 1841 and the other from some time in the 1850s after Abel arrived in Salt Lake City. Coltrin's memory is shown to be unreliable in at least two specifics: His claimed date (1834) for Joseph Smith's announcing the alleged ban is impossible, since Coltrin himself ordained Abel a Seventy in

1836. Also, he incorrectly identifies which of the quorums of Seventy Abel was ordained to. Abel, on the other hand, claims that "the prophet Joseph told him he was entitled to the priesthood." President John Taylor, on the other hand, said that Abel's ordination as a Seventy "was allowed to remain".

1880. Elijah Abel again denied the endowment, this time by the Quorum of the Twelve.

1883. Elijah Abel still on record as a Seventy.

1884. Elijah Abel sent on a mission. He returns home and dies in Dec of 1884

August 22, 1895. As a result of a request of a black sister of Church Jane Manning James to receive her temple endowment, Elijah Abel[s], now 10 years dead, is again discussed by the Quorum of Twelve and First Presidency. Joseph F. Smith again rebuffs claims that Abel had been dropped from the Priesthood. On the contrary, he makes two new, otherwise unverifiable claims: that Abel's original ordination was done under the direction of Joseph Smith Jr., and that Abel was ordained a High Priest after being a Seventy. At this meeting, George Q. Cannon makes the first known claim, other than by Coltrin, that Joseph Smith himself instituted the ban. Cannon later clarifies that his statement was not firsthand information, as Cannon was 17 when Joseph Smith Jr. died, but that he "understood" that to have been the case, citing John Taylor as his source.

December 15, 1897. As a result of an enquiry, the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency decide that if a white man marry a black woman then he should not be permitted to have the Priesthood, so as to prevent his children from obtaining the Priesthood and from him performing proxy ordinances for her family. If he divorces and marries a white woman, then he may receive the Priesthood.

November 27, 1900. Enoch Abel, son of Elijah Abel[s], ordained an Elder (photocopy of ordination certificate published by Modern Microfilms).

1902. Jane Manning James, a faithful Black member of the Church since the days of Joseph Smith Jr, is given a special temple endowment as a "servant" to Joseph Smith Jr.



1908. Joseph F. Smith, on unspecified grounds, reverses his former position about Elijah Abel's status and now claims that Joseph Smith himself declared Abel's ordination "null and void".

July 5, 1934. Elijah Abel, grandson of Elijah Abel, is ordained a priest (Modern Microfilms document).

September 29, 1935. Elijah Abel, grandson of Elijah Abel, is ordained an Elder (Modern Microfilms document).

1940. Apostle J. Ruben Clark, Jr., recommends the appointment of a sub-committee to the council of Twelve to "make some ruling or re-affirm whatever ruling that has been made on this question in the past as to whether or not one drop of negro blood deprives a man of the right to receive the priesthood" ("Council Meeting" 25 Jan 1940, George Albert Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives).

1947. A Church First Presidency investigation concerning the racial situation among Brazilians finds "the races...badly mixed" because "no color line is drawn among the mass of the people" and that "a great part of the population of Brazil is colored." In Brazil, a shift occurs to using Patriarchal Blessings as the means for determining whether the Priesthood ban applies.

August 17, 1951. First Presidency statement issued stating the Church's position is a result of revelation, "The attitude of the Church with reference to the 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." No specific revelation is cited.

Circa 1955. Melanesian "Blacks" (e.g., Fijians) defined by the Church, under David O. McKay, as not under the Priesthood ban. Previously were banned from the Priesthood.

June 1958. B. R. McConkie publishes Mormon Doctrine. Under heading for "Negroes" it states Negroes are lineage of Cain through Ham's wife, they were less valiant in the pre-existence,

are banned from the Priesthood, and the gospel message is not to be carried to them. He cites passages from Moses 7 and Abraham 1 as proof texts.

*January 1959.* M. G. Romney delivers report authorized by Pres. D. O. McKay on McConkie's Mormon Doctrine. The report identifies "controversial issues" which "might have been omitted...[or] modified" if "the work been authoritatively supervised." McConkie's comments concerning the Negro are not explicitly cited in the report while others are. Unsold copies of the edition are recalled and destroyed.

*Circa 1960-1970.* The Church actively engages in proselyting African Negroes. "In 1960, at the request of the First Presidency, Glen G. Fisher visited...[Nigeria] ...as he returned to Utah from his assignment as president of the South African Mission.... by 1961 President McKay concluded that the Church must permit the Nigerians to be baptized and confirmed members of the Church.... Before the end of February 1962, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve decided to open a mission in Nigeria. In March [1962], [Lamar S.] Williams was called...along with his wife, Nyal, to preside over a [mission] district to be established under the umbrella of the West European Mission. Four additional couples were soon selected to assist. On November 21 Williams was set apart by President McKay as the first missionary to the black people of Nigeria and told to establish the Church, conduct missionary work, and organize all the auxiliaries, with local members supervising the auxiliaries.... Nigeria had only recently gained independence from British colonial rule, and government officials were suspicious of outsiders. When they learned of the priesthood policy they immediately denied visas to LDS missionaries.... Twice Williams returned briefly on temporary visitor's visas.... [In Dec. 1965 the Biafran War erupted and precluded any missionary efforts.]

"Sometime in 1962 a missionary tract, the Joseph Smith Story, found its way into the hands of a black religious leader [in Ghana], Dr. A. F. Mensah, who was converted almost immediately. He soon converted several others, organized a 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints', and began to correspond with LaMar Williams at the Missionary Department of the Church. In 1964 he gave a copy of the Book of Mormon as well as other literature to J. W. B. Johnson who, after reading it and receiving a series of dramatic personal revelations, was

also converted and became equally successful in spreading the gospel among fellow Ghanians. Eventually Johnson and his followers formed several 'Latter-day Saint' congregations, somewhat independent of Mensah. Mensah, Johnson, and others continued through the 1970s to preach the gospel as they understood it, and to plead with the Church for missionaries and for the official establishment of the Church among them." (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints: Correlating the International Church, 1960-1973*)

1963. Apostle Hugh B. Brown quoted as saying that the Church was "looking toward the possibility of admitting Negroes" to the Priesthood. (*New York Times*, June 7, 1963)

1963. Joseph Fielding Smith addresses a question concerning the Church's position towards Negroes (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, Volume 4, pages 169-172). He states "the Latter-day Saints... have no animosity towards the Negroe. Neither have they described him as belonging to an 'inferior race.' There are Negroes in the Church who are respected and honored for their integrity and faithful devotion. The door into the Church is open to all." He also states "if a Negroe joins the Church through the waters of baptism and is confirmed by the laying on of hands and then he remains faithful and true to the teachings of the Church and in keeping the commandments the Lord has given, he will come forth in the first resurrection and will enter the celestial kingdom of God."

1963. Spencer W. Kimball states, "The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of men.... I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter. But for me, it is enough. The prophets for 133 years of the existence of the Church have maintained the position of the prophet of the Restoration that the Negro could not hold the priesthood nor have the temple ordinances which are preparatory for exaltation.... The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory.... I know the Lord could change his policy.... If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure." Concerning members who were pressuring Church leaders to make a change regarding blacks and the priesthood Kimball states, "These smart members who would force the issue, and there are many of them, cheapen the issue and certainly bring into contempt the sacred principle of revelation and divine authority."

September 1966. The Second Edition Mormon Doctrine is published, with a number of the controversial items noted in M. G. Romney's report to the First Presidency edited out. However, statements concerning the Negro remain unedited and intact from the First Edition.

1969. Hugh B. Brown, First Counselor to President David O. McKay, proposes Church policy be reversed allowing Blacks to have the Priesthood. The policy change is approved by the Quorum of Twelve and the First Presidency with the exception of President David O. McKay, owing to disability, and Apostle Harold B. Lee, who was traveling on Church business. When Lee returns he calls for a re-vote, arguing the policy cannot be changed without revelation, and the resolution fails.

1973. Upon becoming President of the Church, S. W. Kimball was asked about the position of the Church regarding the blacks and the priesthood, he states, "I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change."

1978. "In 1960 stakes began to be organized in foreign nations, and today the Church is clearly an international organization. With the decision to build a temple in Brazil, the policy regarding the African blacks came into sharp focus because interracial marriage is a common practice there. Under these conditions President Spencer W. Kimball began an exhaustive personal study of the scriptures as well as statements of Church leaders since Joseph Smith, and asked other General Authorities to share their personal feelings relative to the longstanding Church policy. Then he began to inquire of the Lord if the time was not right to extend the priesthood blessings to this restricted people. Recalling this period, President Kimball stated, 'Day after day, and especially on Saturdays and Sundays when there were no organizations in the temple, I went there when I could be alone.' The result was a revelation on 1 June 1978.

"On Thursday, 1 June 1978, the First Presidency and ten of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the matter special attention. Then, following the monthly fast meeting of the General Authorities in the Salt Lake Temple on 1 June, President Kimball 'asked the Twelve not to go home,' but to stay for a

special prayer circle with him. It was on this occasion, at 2:45 p.m., that the Lord confirmed the wishes of the Brethren to rescind the policy that prohibited African blacks from receiving the priesthood." (Lyndon Cook, Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comments on OD-2)

*June 1, 1978.* Revelation is received granting the Priesthood to those of African Negro descent. Concerning the revelation Kimball states, "I offered the final prayer and I told the Lord if it wasn't right, if He didn't want this change to come in the church, that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I'd fight the world against it if that's what He wanted.... But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.... I knew that the time had come."

*June 8, 1978.* Under the direction of President Spencer W. Kimball, the First Presidency announces a revelation extending the Priesthood to "every faithful, worthy man in the Church". See Official Declaration-2.

*August 1978.* In a public lecture, B. R. McConkie states, "We have revelations that tell us that the gospel is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people before the second coming of the Son of Man. And we have revelations which recite that when the Lord comes he will find those who speak every tongue and are members of every nation and kindred, who will be kings and priests, who will live and reign on earth with him a thousand years. That means, as you know, that people from all nations will have the blessings of the house of the Lord before the Second Coming.

"We have read these passages and their associated passages for many years. We have seen what the words say and have said to ourselves, "Yes, it says that, but we must read out of it the taking of the gospel and the blessings of the temple to the Negro people, because they are denied certain things." There are statements in our literature by the early brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, "You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?" And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past

that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.

"We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don't matter any more.

"It doesn't make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year." (All Are Alike Unto God, a Symposium on the Book of Mormon, The Second Annual Church Educational System Religious Educator's Symposium, August 17-19, 1978)

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