

Race Controversy

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This is a very delicate topic to discuss. Let's start at the end and work our way backwards.

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.¹

They want us to forget what has happened in the past and focus on the new things in the world. How can we forget the past? If we forget the past we are doomed to repeat it. They would like to act like it never happened. If it didn't take place, then there's no problem right? Yeah, that's not how it works.

Then there are the words spoken by Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland:

From the mid-1800s, the Church did not ordain men of black African descent to the priesthood or allow black men or women to participate in temple endowment or sealing ordinances. Over the years, a variety of theories were advanced to justify the restriction. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has emphasized that those theories given in an attempt to explain the restrictions are "folklore" that must never be perpetuated: "However well-intended the explanations were, I think almost all of them were inadequate and/or wrong. . . . We simply do not know why that practice . . . was in place."²

¹Bruce R. McConkie, "New Revelation on Priesthood," Priesthood (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 126-137; republication of original address of Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike Unto God," address at CES Religious Educators Symposium, 18 August 1978.

²Jeffrey R. Holland, "Extending the Blessings of the Priesthood," Ensign June 2018

I don't know how he can say they don't know why it was in place. There is a message from the first presidency from 1949 that clearly states that the ban was revelation from God and was doctrine.

August 17, 1949

The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. The prophets of the Lord have made several statements as to the operation of the principle. President Brigham Young said: "Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the holy priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to."

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

The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality and that while the details of this principle have not been made known, the mortality is a privilege that is given to those who maintain their first estate; and that the worth of the privilege is so great that spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be as to the kind of bodies they are to secure; and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth. Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the priesthood by the Negroes.

The First Presidency³

Though never officially published, this statement was often used in correspondence as answers when people had questions.

³Statement of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, August 17, 1949, Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

They blame Brigham Young for starting the ban in 1852, always casting blame on others because of their racist words. They were men of their time, and such nonsense get passed around a lot. Well, when it's taken and put forth as doctrine is that really speaking as men of their time?

This is more than just a priesthood ban. It was a temple ban on both men and women of black colored skin. They could get baptized into the church, but that was it. They were not allowed to enjoy the blessings of the temple.

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form.⁴

It's good they no longer hold such thoughts or practices. I mean, that's a good thing. But the fact that it was there to begin with? That's where the problem lies. One would think if God is never changing, then why all the change? Why were these things in there to begin with if the end result was for them not to be there anymore?

Do you see the problem with all of this? I hope you eventually see it.

⁴Race and the Priesthood Gospel Topic Essay, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints