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“Why then introduce them into our inner temple?": The Masonic Influence on Mormon Denial of Priesthood Ordination to African American Men¹

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When Mormonism was founded in 1830 the nation was in the midst of an intense debate concerning slavery. Both slaveholders and abolitionists appealed to the Bible to justify their positions. Although they disagreed concerning the morality of slavery many in both camps believed that Ham was the ancestor of black slaves.² While Noah's curse of Canaan, son of Ham, to be a "servant of servants" implied slavery it is less clear why it was connected to skin color as well.³ But, as Winthrop Jordan notes, "when the story of Ham's curse did become relatively common in the seventeenth century it was utilized almost entirely as an explanation of color rather than as justification of Negro slavery."⁴ Nevertheless, skin color became a convenient justification for slavery. For many, "slavery was perpetual also in the sense that it was often thought of as hereditary."⁵

Joseph Smith, as early as February 1831, retranslated portions of the Old Testament which reconfirmed that blacks were the descendants of Cain and

¹ Michael W. Homer acknowledges the contributions of Lavina Fielding Anderson, Newell Bringham, Rick Grunder, Massimo Introvigne, H. Michael Marquardt, Gregory A. Prince, Gregory Thompson, and Kent L. Walgren.

² The idea that blacks were descended from Ham can be traced to Hebraic literature written between 200 and 600 A.D.; to sixteenth century English writings; and to seventeenth century American observers. See, Lester Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8:1 (Spring 1973), 16, as well as the references he cites in notes 22 and 23. See also, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966, 64-5, 217, 316-17, 451-3; and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black, American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968, 16-56. In addition stories that Ham practiced the "black arts" date from at least the twelfth century. See, Bernard E. Jones, *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*. N.p.: Dobby, 1956, 316.

³ Jordan, *White over Black*, 17-18. Noah's curse of Canaan is recorded in *Genesis* 9:30.

⁴ Jordan, *White over Black*, 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

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Ham.⁶ But, even though Smith believed in this genealogy, his views on slavery vacillated from "seeming neutrality," "anti-abolitionist, proslavery sentiment to a final position strongly opposed to slavery."⁷ Despite Smith's changing views Lester Bush has demonstrated that "there is no contemporary evidence that the Prophet limited priesthood eligibility because of race or biblical lineage; on the contrary, the only definite information presently available reveals that he allowed a black to be ordained an elder, and later a seventy, in the Melchizedek priesthood."⁸ Nevertheless, subsequent church leaders clearly believed that the exclusionary policy Brigham Young announced in 1852 was sanctioned by God, that it would have been approved by Smith, and that a revelation was therefore necessary to reverse it.

Most of those who have studied the origins of the Mormon priesthood ban (which prevented African Americans from attending the temple and receiving priesthood from 1845-1978) have not evaluated a possible Masonic influence on that policy. The policy to ban blacks from temple and priesthood was announced after a new temple endowment was made available to general church membership. This essay will consider evidence which suggests that the practices of Freemasonry influenced not only the content of the new endowment but the priesthood ban as well.⁹ For most of the nineteenth century, the lodges of Freemasons in the United States maintained a policy that prevented African Americans from joining their lodges or practicing ancient rituals in their temples. Joseph Smith believed that the ancient landmarks and practices of the Craft were "remnants" from an earlier time when masons were temple workers and that the new temple endowment, which was initially revealed to the Holy Order on the second floor of Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store, was a restoration

⁶ Old Testament Manuscript 1, p. 25, JST Genesis 9:30, does not appear in KJV or LDS Moses: "Canaan shall be his servant and a vail of darkness shall cover him that he shall be known among all men."; Old Testament Manuscript 1, 15; JST Genesis 7:10, LDS Moses 7:8: "there was a blackness come upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people"; Old Testament Manuscript 1, p. 16; JST Genesis 7:29, LDS Moses 7:22: "save it were the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them." Joseph Smith Translation, Community of Christ Archives. The last two references that the seed of Cain were black appeared in: "Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch," *The Evening and Morning Star* 1 (August 1832):2; and "Olden Time," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (April 1833): 5.

⁷ Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 21. See also, Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981, for a discussion concerning Smith's changing views. Bringhurst also argues in his essay "Four American Prophets Confront Slavery," published in this issue that Joseph Smith took a strong anti-slavery position in the *Book of Mormon*.

⁸ Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 21-2.

⁹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Mormon Studies Conference, University of Nottingham, Derby Hall, 6-8 April 1995, Nottingham, England; and at the Conference of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), University of Utah, September 2002, Salt Lake City, Utah.

of the original temple ritual practiced in Solomon's temple.¹⁰ If Joseph Smith believed that Freemasonry's exclusion of African Americans from its temples was one of the surviving remnants of Solomon's Temple then he might have extended that policy to the temples of Mormonism.

Freemasonry's "ancient landmarks" and African Americans

One rationale for the exclusion of blacks by Freemasons and a justification articulated by American lodges for maintaining this policy can be traced to eighteenth century Masonic writings. The Grand Lodge authorized James Anderson, a Presbyterian minister, to write *Constitutions of Freemasons* in 1723. In *Constitutions* he outlined the legends of Freemasonry as well as its regulations or charges, including the "ancient landmarks."¹¹ Among these landmarks was the requirement that a candidate for Freemasonry "must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondmen, no Women, no immoral or scandalous Men, but of good report."¹² The history of Freemasonry, which Anderson took from various manuscripts which were written prior to the organization of the Grand Lodge, began with Adam and continued to contemporary times. According to these legends:

No doubt Adam taught his Sons Geometry, and the use of it, in the several Arts and Crafts convenient, at least for those early Times; for Cain, we find, built a city, which he called consecrated, or dedicated, after the name of his eldest son Enoch; and becoming the Prince of the one Half of Mankind, his posterity would imitate his royal Example in approving both the noble Science and the useful Art.... Noah, and his three sons, Japheth, Shem and Ham, all Masons true, brought with them over the Flood the Traditions and Arts of the Ante-deluvians, and amply communicated them to their growing Offspring.¹³

¹⁰ Michael W. Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry: The Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism," *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27:3 (Fall 1994), 1-113.

¹¹ See, Douglas Knoop and G. P. Harris, *A Short History of Freemasonry to 1730*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1940, 26-38.

¹² *Anderson's Constitutions of 1723, with Introduction by Bro. Lionel Vibert*. Washington D.C.: The Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1924, p.51. According to one Masonic writer: "There is general acceptance in many places that the word [free] is used to indicate that the society is open only to free men — men under no form of bondage to others — for, at the time of Masonry's first organization, servitude and slavery were still in existence... [I]t is true that Masonry has always been restricted to men who were free — and until 1848 the qualification in England was actually was to be *born free*." Colin Dyer, *Symbolism in Craft Masonry*. London: Lewis Masonic, 1983, p. 10. This charge did not originally relate exclusively to black slaves since "the Old Charges were written in full consciousness of the existence of feudal serfdom." Nevertheless, it eventually took on that meaning. In England slavery was not abolished until 1772 with full emancipation occurring only in 1833. See, Bernard K. Jones, *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*. N.p.: Dobby, 1956, 152-58.

¹³ *Anderson's Constitutions of 1723*, 3.

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In 1738, Anderson wrote a second edition of *Constitutions* which, according to Masonic commentator Lewis Edwards, "followed the Scriptures more closely" and the wording is less tentative.¹⁴ Anderson also slightly modified the requirement for candidacy: "The Men made Masons must be Freeborn (or no Bondmen), of mature Age and of good Report, hail and sound, not deform'd or dismember'd at the Time of their making. But no Woman, no *Eunuch*."¹⁵

Anderson's legendary history prompted critics of Freemasonry (most of whom did not believe in its antiquity) to argue that Masons, in their own writings, claimed that the Craft was founded by Adam, after his encounter with the Devil, and that it was thereafter practiced by the wicked descendants of Ham. These critics also lampooned Freemasonry for claiming ancient origins.¹⁶ In 1726 an anonymous pamphlet published by a rival society called Khaibarites ridiculed, in verse, Anderson's history of Cain and Ham:

Hence Cain was for the Craft renown'd,
 And mighty Nimrod was a Mason.
 Cain founded not his City fair,
 Till mark'd for murdering of Abel:

...
 Cain was their Head before the Flood,
 And Ham the first Grand Master after.

...
 No Ham accurs'd or Vagrant Cain,
 In the *Grand Khaibar* can you see,
 No Nimrod with Ambition vain
 E'er tainted this Society.¹⁷

A rival Grand Lodge of "ancients," was organized in London in 1751, which remedied some of these "historical" difficulties. The "ancients" did not accept changes which had been made in the ritual in response to published exposés, and some lodges (which had never recognized the authority of the Grand Lodge) objected to the initiation of non-Christians and believed that the "Moderns" had deviated from the "ancient landmarks."¹⁸ Thereafter, until their eventual

¹⁴ Lewis Edwards, "Anderson's Book of Constitutions of 1738," in *Anderson's Book of Constitutions of 1738, A Facsimile of the original text with commentaries by Lewis Edwards and W. J. Hughan*. Bloomington, Illinois: The Masonic Book Club, 1978, 369.

¹⁵ Edwards, "Anderson's Book," 395.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-77. These included Dr. Robert Plot's opinion in 1686 that the legendary history was "false and incoherent" and the poem lampooning the history by the author of *An Ode to the Grand Khaibar* in 1726.

¹⁷ Douglas Knoop, G. P. Jones, and Douglas Hamer, *Early Masonic Pamphlets*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1945, 186-7.

¹⁸ For a summary of the conflict between the Moderns and Ancients see Jones, *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*, 193-229. See also Harry Carr, ed. *Three Distinct Knocks and Jachin and Boaz* Bloomington [IL]: Masonic Book Club, 1981, 61-68.

union in 1813, there were two distinct, independent, and often hostile Grand Lodges in England. In 1756, Lawrence Dermott, published *Ahiman Rezon*, which was the rival Grand Lodge's answer to Anderson's *Constitutions*. In his book Dermott attacked the pretensions and authority of the Grand Lodge of England.¹⁹

But the Ancients and Moderns did not disagree about everything. The Ancients agreed with the Moderns concerning the requirements for candidates and with many of the legends summarized by Anderson. Significantly, Dermott modified the history as it pertained to Cain and Ham: "It is certain that Freemasonry has existed from the creation, though probably not under that name; that it was a divine gift from God; that Cain and the builders of his city were strangers to the secret mystery of Masonry, that there were but four Masons in the world when the deluge happened; that one of the four, even the second son of Noah, was not a master of the art."²⁰ There was even less agreement about the history of Freemasonry in England and it has been noted that Anderson's history "provoked...sarcastic references from Dermott in *Ahiman Rezon*."²¹

The differences between Anderson's *Constitutions* and Dermott's *Ahiman Rezon*, concerning the legends of Freemasonry, and particularly whether Ham had been a Master Mason, were significant. Dermott's history provided one foundation upon which some American Masons could rationalize that Ham's descendants, who they believed were black, were ineligible to become Freemasons. This modification of Masonic legend provided a partial justification which explained why African Americans, even those who were free-born, "had been rendered unfit for membership in the Order by experience of servitude."²² They were "cursed" and, as such, did not qualify under the "ancient landmarks." Their skin color set them apart and, for many American Masons, this disqualification became perpetual and hereditary.

Freemasonry and Blacks in America

When Freemasonry was introduced in America, beginning in 1730, lodges were authorized by the Grand Lodge of England (the "Moderns") and, after 1751, by the competing Grand Lodge of the Ancients. When the American colonies achieved independence from Great Britain, lodges were located throughout the eastern seaboard. The Grand Lodge of England appointed

¹⁹ William H. Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge, 1902, pp. 43-52.

²⁰ Laurence Dermott, *The Constitution of Free-Masonry, or Ahiman Rezon*. Seventh Edition revised and corrected by Thomas Harper. London: T. Harper, Jr., 1807, v. See also, Laurence Dermott, *Ahiman Rezon, or a help to all that are or would be Free and Accepted Masons*. Philadelphia: Leon Hyneman, 1855, 11.

²¹ Knoop and Jones, *A Short History of Freemasonry*, 77.

²² Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic, Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-1836*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 12.

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twenty-three provincial grand masters and the Ancients Provincial Grand Lodge in Pennsylvania authorized over fifty lodges in North America and in the Caribbean. One of the lodges warranted by the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) was African Lodge No. 459. In 1776, approximately fifteen African Americans residing in Massachusetts, who were probably initiated the previous year in Regimental Lodge No. 441 (a military lodge on the Irish Registry), formed African Lodge. These African Americans eventually applied to the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) for a charter and on September 29, 1784 it was granted. When the charter arrived in Boston on April 29, 1787, the lodge was inscribed upon the register of the Grand Lodge of England as African Lodge No. 459. The lodge was thereafter regularly organized and Prince Hall was installed as Master of the lodge.²³

Although African Lodge No. 459 was organized under warrant from England neither the Massachusetts Grand Lodge of Ancient Masons nor St. John's Grand Lodge (Moderns) invited African Lodge No. 459 to join their grand lodges. St. John's Grand Lodge excluded the lodge from its rolls even though African Lodge No. 459, like all its other lodges, had originally been warranted by the Grand Lodge of England.²⁴ In 1792 the ancients and moderns united to form the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.²⁵ Again, African Lodge was not welcomed to participate in the newly unified grand lodge because the lodges in Massachusetts (like most American lodges) were unwilling to associate with "freeborn" African Americans.²⁶

Despite its exclusion from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, African Lodge was able to maintain its regular lodge status because "it still corresponded with

²³ For the history of Prince Hall Masonry see, William Alan Muraskin, *Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975; Loretta J. Williams, *Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980. See also Donn A. Cass, *Negro Freemasonry and Segregation*. Chicago: Ezra A. Cook Publications, Inc., 1957, 20-30; William H. Upton, *Negro Masonry*, 10-13; J. G. Findel, *History of Freemasonry*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1869, 356-8; William H. Upton, "Prince Hall's Letter Book," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* XIII (1900), 54-65; and George Draffen, "Prince Hall Freemasonry," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 89 (1976), 70-91.

²⁴ In 1791 *Fleets' Almanac* published a list of Masonic lodges in Boston and stated that: "There is also a regular African Lodge in Boston." *Fleets' Pocket Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1792*. Boston: T. & J. Fleet, 1791, 94-5. It was listed as a lodge under the jurisdiction of St. Andrews Grand Lodge which Thomas Smith Webb wrote was made up of Ancients, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and which remained independent of the competing Grand Lodges when they unified. See, [Thomas Smith Webb], *The Freemason's Monitor; or, Illustrations of Masonry*. Albany: Spencer and Webb, 1797, 196-206.

²⁵ The union of the competing grand lodges in Massachusetts took place more than two decades before the ancients and moderns united in England in 1813.

²⁶ In 1792 *Fleets' Pocket Almanack* reported the unification of the two competing grand lodges and that "The African Lodge in Boston, meet the first Tuesday in every month at the Golden Fleece." *Fleets' Pocket Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1793*. Boston: T. & J. Fleet, 1792, 80-82.

London as if it were a subordinate lodge."²⁷ Because of its exclusion, African Lodge eventually began to refer to itself as African Grand Lodge and it even granted permits to other African American lodges.²⁸ In 1808, following the death of Prince Hall, the African Grand Lodge changed its name to Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge. But after the Ancients and the Moderns in Great Britain formed the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, African Lodge was erased from the rolls of the Grand Lodge of England.²⁹

Thereafter Prince Hall Grand Lodge and other black lodges were forced to establish separate organizations. Like contemporary African American churches, black Masons did not have any disagreements with Caucasian lodges over ritual. Instead they were forced to establish their own organization because of restrictive treatment. But, unlike contemporary black churches, which were considered separate but equal, Prince Hall Masons were given no recognition by their Caucasian lodge brothers because each state had a Grand Lodge, which had "exclusive jurisdiction" over all Masons. Under this practice, two Grand Lodges in the same state, one black and the other white could not co-exist. The Prince Hall Grand Lodge was therefore considered "clandestine" by white Masons and African Americans were not considered "true Masons." The Prince Hall Masons believed that the practice of "exclusive jurisdiction," which was an American innovation, was used as an excuse to deny them recognition.³⁰

²⁷ Christopher Haffner, *Regularity of Origin*. Hong Kong: The Paul Chater Lodge and Lodge Cosmopolitan, n.d. [1986], 54. Haffner notes that during this period it "started referring to itself as 'African Grand Lodge'" and that "it seems that really it was trying to act as a Provincial Grand Lodge." *Ibid.* See, also, Christopher Haffner, *Workman Unashamed, The Testimony of a Christian Freemason*. London: Lewis Masonic, 1989, 23-7. According to George Draffen, African Lodge continued to communicate with the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) until 1797. During that year the lodge number of African lodge was renumbered and it became African Lodge No. 370. See, Draffen, "Prince Hall Freemasonry," 77-8; and Roy A. Wells, *The Rise and Development of Organized Masonry*. London: Lewis Masonic, 1986, 146-47.

²⁸ Cass, *Negro Freemasonry and Segregation*, 139. Thereafter, African Grand Lodge organized at least two black lodges in Philadelphia and Newark, New Jersey. Upton mentions another lodge organized in Providence, Rhode Island. Upton, *Negro Masonry*, 11-12.

²⁹ From 1792 to 1813 African Lodge continued to be referred to as a regular lodge in Boston. See, *Fleets' Pocket Almanack* for 1794, 1795, 1796, and 1797; *Fleets Register and Pocket Almanac* for 1798, 1799, and 1800; and *The Massachusetts Register and United States Calendar* for 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, and 1813. African Lodge was also mentioned, with other Boston lodges, in *The Gentleman's Pocket Register, and Free-Mason's Annual Anthology, for the Year of Our Lord 1813*. Boston: Charles Williams, 1813, 209-49. African Lodge was not mentioned in either *The Massachusetts Register* or *The Gentleman's Pocket Register* after the unification of the Ancients and Moderns in London in 1813.

³⁰ Within Masonry there was disagreement concerning exclusive jurisdiction. Albert Mackey argued in favor of the "legalistic" nonrecognition of black lodges. Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *Black Square & Compass, 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry*. Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc., 1979, 62n40. German Masonic historian, Joseph G. Findel, wrote that Prince Hall Freemasonry was legally constituted before the concept of the "right of jurisdiction" had been created. J. G. Findel, *History of Freemasonry, From its origin down to the Present Day*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860, 357. Albert Pike, a Confederate

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In addition, most Grand Lodges refused to grant permission to lodges in their jurisdictions to initiate blacks into the Craft.³¹ White Masons could also prevent blacks from joining their lodges through the practice of "blackballing" under which any member of a lodge could "anonymously" prevent the admission of any candidate without giving a reason.

Although this segregation was based primarily on racial prejudice within the membership of the Caucasian lodges "there were few racial overtones in white Masons' explanation for their denial that the black fraternity was real Masonry." "Instead," explains Lynn Dumenil, "white Masons justified their position on the basis of Masonic law, claiming that Prince Hall Masonry had not been legally established." Their commitment to equality prevented them from addressing "the order's de facto racial exclusion."³² But even if most Masons advanced this legalistic argument to support their policy of exclusion, some Masons also justified the policy (particularly when African Americans petitioned for admission into white lodges) by arguing that the ancient landmark, which required a Mason to be "freeborn" (which appeared in Anderson's *Constitutions* and in Dermott's *Ahiman Rezon*) precluded all black Americans — slave and free — from becoming Masons.³³ Although the legendary history (summarized by Anderson and Dermott) was dropped from *Constitutions* after the union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813, the Ancients' belief, that "Cain and

General and the innovator of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in the United States, agreed that the concept of exclusive jurisdiction was faulty, and that "Prince Hall Lodge was as regular a Lodge as any lodge created by competent authority, and had a perfect right (as other lodges in Europe did) to establish other lodges, making itself a mother Lodge." But he also maintained that he had taken his "obligation to white men, not to negroes" and that "When I have to accept negroes as brothers or leave Masonry, I shall leave it." Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*, 214-15.

³¹ In 1796 a black lodge was organized in Philadelphia but it could not obtain a charter and was therefore considered clandestine. *Reason versus Prejudice, Morgan Refuted*. Philadelphia: R. Desilber, 1828, 25. In 1827 a committee of the Grand Lodge of Vermont recommended that a charter not be granted to a lodge made up of black freemasons. See, *Journal of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Vermont*. Montpelier, Vt: Geo. W. Hill, 1827. In 1831 the Grand Lodge of Maryland investigated whether masons were visiting black lodges and resolved to suspend or expel those who did. See, *Proceedings of the R.W.G. Lodge of Maryland*. Baltimore, 1831.

³² Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 10. Dumenil concludes that although "racism and anti-Semitism existed in Masonic circles" that "little or no racism appeared in the Masonic press or official transactions. Masonic leaders' desire to be consistent with Masonic principles constituted the major impediment to overt racism. Central to Masonic ideology, of course, was the belief in the equality of man." Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, 123. Upton notes that "race prejudice is, and always has been, the real fons et origo of the opposition to our negro brethren." Upton, *Negro Masonry*, 32. See also Haffner, *Workman Unashamed*, 24 ("It must be acknowledged that there are many racists in American masonry."); and Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, *The Freemason's Pocket Reference Book*. Third (Revised Edition) London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1983, p. 233. ("Within the regular Craft in America and South Africa a colour bar exists and this would seem to be a negation of the universality taught by our masonic forefathers.")

³³ George Wingate Chase, *Digest of Masonic Law*. Third Edition. New York: Macoy & Sickels, 1864, 211.

the builders of his city were strangers to the secret mystery of masonry" and that Ham "was not a master of the art," was incorporated by David Vinton in his *The Masonic Minstrel*, which was published in Massachusetts in 1816.³⁴ This legend supported American Masonry's claim that African Americans, as descendants of Ham, were generally ineligible to join their lodges.

After the disappearance of William Morgan, and the anti-Masonic hysteria which followed in the late 1820s, seceding Masons recognized the dichotomy in the claims of Freemasonry concerning Ham. Henry Dana Ward, a seceding Mason, and editor of New York City's *Anti-Masonic Review and Magazine*, noted in 1828, that "There is a discrepance [sic] in the traditions respecting Ham," that the Moderns taught "the first stage of Masonry was originated in the mind of Adam, descended pure through the antediluvian ages, was afterwards taught by Ham, and from him flowed, unpolluted and unstained with idolatry, to those of our times," whereas the Ancients taught that Ham "was not a master of the art," i.e. Ham was not "a master Mason."³⁵ Like Masonry's first critics, who ridiculed the legends of Craft one hundred years earlier, American detractors used Masonry's own history to argue that it had iniquitous origins. John G. Stearns, a Mason who withdrew from the movement in 1826, observed that Freemasons (William Hutchinson, Salem Town and Joshua Bradley) claimed ancient origins and from this he concluded that the Phoenicians and Egyptians were "the descendants of Ham" and through "these filthy Canaanites and Egyptians the world has received the mysteries of Masonry." He also opined that "it must appear with a high degree of certainty, that the ancient and honorable institution of freemasonry, originated among the wicked descendants of Ham."³⁶ In response, American Masons vehemently

³⁴ David Vinton, *The Masonic Minstrel*. Dedham, Mass: H. Mann and Co., 1816, p. 337. According to Knoop and Jones "the views of the two Grand Lodges on the subject were so divergent that the historical section was omitted when the sixth edition of the *Book of Constitutions*, the first to be issued after the union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813, was published in 1815, and it has been omitted from all subsequent editions." Knoop and Jones, *A Short History of Freemasonry*, 77. Nevertheless in 1823, George Oliver, a British Mason, adhered to this notion of Ham's curse and its impact on his and his son Canaan's, practice of Freemasonry. See, George Oliver, *The Antiquities of Free-Masonry*. London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1823, 132-35.

³⁵ [Henry Dana Ward], *Freemasonry*. New York, 1828, 27. For the view of the Moderns, Ward quoted William Hutchinson, *The Spirit of Masonry*. London: Wilkie and Goldsmith, 1775, 169-70. ("Masonry ... was originated in the mind of ADAM ... was afterwards taught by HAM") which is consistent with James Anderson. (The actual page citation used by Ward (119) is from the first American edition published in 1800.) But Hutchinson also taught that "the family of Cain (who bore the seal of the curse on his forehead) was given up to ignorance" (p. 7) and that the posterity of Ham forsook the doctrines of their predecessor." (p. 11) For the Ancients Ward cited *Ahiman Rezon*, 13. Significantly, Ward also cited David Vinton's *The Masonic Minstrel*. Dedham, Mass: H. Mann and Co., 1816, 337, for the position of the Ancients.

³⁶ John G. Stearns, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Tendency of Speculative Free-Masonry*, 2nd ed. Westfield, [NY]: H. Newcomb, 1828, 36-7. Another anti-Mason, Solomon Southwick, gave an oration in 1828 in which he sarcastically suggested that "Masonry was the sole cause of introducing sin into our world, in the Garden of Eden!!!!" *American Masonic Record and Albany Satur-*

of masonry" and by David Vinton in Massachusetts in 1816.³⁴ African Americans, as lodges. anti-Masonic hysteria emphasized the dichotomy of a Ward, a seceding *Review and Magazine*, conditions respecting masonry was originated from biblical ages, was noted and unstained; taught that Ham was a Mason.³⁵ Like one hundred years ago argue that it had come from the movement of Salem Town and he concluded that "Ham" and through the mysteries of degree of certainty, originated among Masons vehemently

1816, p. 337. Accordingly were so divergent that institutions, the first noted in 1815, and it has history of Freemasonry, notion of Ham's curse; George Oliver, *The* 5.

of the Moderns, Ward Goldsmith, 1775, 169-170 (right by HAM") which (119) is from the first family of Cain (who noted that the posterity of Ward cited *Ahiman Trel*. Dedham, Mass:

Free-Masonry, 2nd ed. Southwick, gave an able cause of introduction and Albany Satur-

safeguarded their temples from African Americans who they also considered to be Ham's descendants.

Not surprisingly, in the midst of this anti-Masonic hysteria, that swept the United States from 1826-1836, and the continued refusal of Masonic lodges to allow blacks to join their lodges despite dramatic decreases in their membership, Prince Hall Freemasonry drafted its own "Declaration of Independence" which proclaimed that it was "free and independent of other lodges."³⁷ One of the signers of this declaration was Walker Lewis, a former Master of African Lodge, and a future convert to Mormonism.³⁸

Mormon attitudes toward African Americans

Shortly after Joseph Smith retranslated portions of the Old Testament in 1831, which indicated that blacks were the descendants of Cain and Ham, he dispatched a new member named William Wines Phelps (who had renounced Freemasonry in New York after the Morgan affair) to publish *The Evening and the Morning Star* in Jackson County, Missouri.³⁹ Although Phelps was no longer a Mason he continued to believe that African Americans were descended from Ham. In July 1831 Phelps attended a meeting at which several blacks were present and he observed that they were "descendants of Ham."⁴⁰ Two years later Phelps embroiled the church in controversy by publishing material concerning the legal requirements for the emigration of free blacks into the state. He editorialized in *The Evening and the Morning Star* that: "In connection with the wonderful events of this age, much is doing towards abolishing slavery, and colonizing the blacks, in Africa." He also reported that

day Magazine 2:27 (2 August 1828), 215. I am indebted to Rick Grunder for these citations.

³⁷ Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons*. New York: New York University Press, 2005, 64.

³⁸ I am relying on Connell O'Donovan's essay in this issue for all of the information and references concerning Walker Lewis. See, Connell O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis: An example for his more whiter brethren to follow," in this volume.

³⁹ Joseph Smith met William Wines Phelps on December 24, 1830. See, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 96. When they met Phelps was editor of the *Ontario Phoenix*, an anti Masonic newspaper in Canandaigua, New York. But in April, 1831 Phelps became embroiled in a fight with other anti-Masons over a debt and he left New York the following June. This controversy is described by Phelps in a letter he wrote to *The Geneva Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser* which was republished by Egbert B. Grandin in *The Wayne Sentinel*. See, "Retribution," *The Geneva Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser* 22 (11 May 1831), 2; and *The Wayne Sentinel* 8 (13 May 1831), 3. Phelps arrived in Kirtland, Ohio in June 1831.

⁴⁰ Phelps wrote this in the *Manuscript History* (this extract is in his handwriting) concerning a meeting he attended in July 1831. *Manuscript History* (July 1831). But it was not published in the *Times and Seasons* until March 1, 1844, and the phrase "descendants of Ham" was edited out. "History of Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons* (1 March 1844), 448. But when B.H. Roberts published the first volume of his *History of the Church* in 1902 he restored the phrase "descendants of Ham." See Joseph Smith, Jr. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B.H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1902-32), I:191.

there was "no special rule in the Church, as to people of color."⁴¹ This material was interpreted by local citizens as an invitation by Phelps to free blacks to join the LDS Church and to immigrate to Missouri. They therefore drafted a list of grievances against the Church. Phelps reacted by publishing an "extra" edition of his paper in which he claimed that the material he had previously published was intended to discourage the immigration of blacks into the state "to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church" and that "none will be admitted into the Church."⁴² Phelps' inept treatment of this sensitive issue created friction between Mormons and their neighbors, which resulted in their expulsion from Jackson County, and the transfer of the *The Evening and the Morning Star* to Kirtland.

Even so the Mormon attitude toward African Americans continued to be confusing. On February 6, 1835 Phelps wrote a letter to Oliver Cowdery that "Ham, like other sons of God, might break the rule of God, by marrying out of the church [had] ... a Canaanite wife, whereby some of the *black seed* was preserved through the flood."⁴³ This was followed in August by a statement of church policy "to [not] interfere with bondservants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the wish of their masters."⁴⁴ But the following month Joseph Smith published a letter to missionaries in which he reaffirmed the mission of the church to preach "both to old and young, rich and poor, bond and free" and he also stated that masters who prevented their slaves from joining the church would be responsible for their decision.⁴⁵

The following year a non Mormon abolitionist spoke in Kirtland. Joseph Smith did not want to repeat the mistakes made by Phelps in Jackson County three years earlier, so he published a letter in the April 1836 issue of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (which he had written to Oliver Cowdery) in which he tried to distance the church from the abolitionist activities. In the letter Smith identified African Americans with the sons of Canaan and Ham and wrote that they were cursed with servitude. He also instructed the traveling elders to "search the book of Covenants, in which you will see the belief of the church concerning masters and servants."⁴⁶ Warren Parrish and Oliver Cowdery also wrote articles in the same issue in which they also opposed abolitionism. Parrish argued that slavery was premised on the curse of Ham

⁴¹ "Free People of Color," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (July 1833), 109.

⁴² "Extra," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, reprinted in *Times and Seasons*, 6:818. See also *History of the Church*, I: 378.

⁴³ *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, 1 (March 1835):82. (Italics in original).

⁴⁴ *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 102 (currently D&C 134:12).

⁴⁵ *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (September 1835), 1:180-81; and (November 1835), 2:210-11. See, Dean C. Jessee, ed. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002, 371, 378-79.

⁴⁶ *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (April 1836):289-91; *The Essential Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995, 85-90. He also cited Genesis 8:25-27.

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and that it would continue until God removed it. Cowdery, in an editorial, noted that: "The fourth son of Ham was cursed by Noah, and to this day we may look upon the fulfillment of that singular thing. When it will be removed we know not, and where he now remains in bondage, remain he must till the hand of God interposes. As to this nation his fate is inevitably sealed, so long as this form of government exists." He also queried: "Must we open our houses, unfold our arms, and bid these degraded and degrading sons of Canaan, a hearty welcome and a free admittance to all we possess!"⁴⁷

Despite Smith's belief that blacks were descended from Ham, he did not enunciate a doctrine or policy that prohibited all blacks (particularly those who were free) from being ordained to the priesthood. To the contrary, an African American named Elijah Abel joined the church in 1832, was ordained an elder soon thereafter, and on March 3, 1836, was given a renewed elder's license. The following May Joseph Smith, Sr. gave him a patriarchal blessing in which he was promised: "Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren and thy soul shall be white in eternity and thy robes glittering: thou shalt receive these blessings because of the covenants of thy fathers."⁴⁸ On December 20, 1836 he was ordained a seventy, and that same year he was allowed to participate in the ordinances given in the Kirtland Temple.⁴⁹ But, despite these developments Smith wrote, in the July 1838 issue of the *Elders' Journal*, that "we do not believe in setting the Negroes free."⁵⁰

After Smith arrived in Nauvoo he began to refine his teachings concerning priesthood and temple. In October 1840 he announced that "Persons of all languages, and of every tongue, and of every color; ... shall with us worship the Lord of Hosts in his holy temple."⁵¹ But later statements concerning blacks and priesthood must be evaluated in the context of the developing endowment. During the final four years of Smith's life W. W. Phelps was both his clerk and trusted confidante. During this same period Smith repeated and redefined the teaching that Ham was cursed. On November 7, 1841 he mentioned the curse of Ham and noted that Noah cursed Canaan "by the priesthood which he held... and the curse remains upon the posterity of Canaan until the present day."⁵²

⁴⁷ "The Abolitionists," *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (April 1836):301.

⁴⁸ Patriarchal Blessing of Elijah Abel given by Patriarch Joseph Smith, Sr. circa May 1836. Patriarchal Blessing Book 1:49.

⁴⁹ General Record of the Seventies Book A. Meeting of December 20, 1836. LDS Archives.

⁵⁰ *Elders' Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* 1 (July 1838): 43, Far West, Missouri.

⁵¹ "Report of the Presidency," *Times and Seasons*, I: 188. See also *History of the Church*, 4:213.

⁵² *History of the Church*, 4:445-6. This entry must be treated with some caution since it is not taken from either Wilford Woodruff's *Journal*, which was written contemporaneous to the events described, or from the *Manuscript History*, which was written in 1845, which were the sources used by Roberts for other entries during this period. Instead it was added to the *Manuscript History* in an addenda book which was started in October 1854, almost thirteen years after the relevant time period and more than ten years after Smith's death. See, *Addenda Book*, p. 19.

During a two month period in 1842 there were three developments which would have important consequences for priesthood and temple eligibility: Joseph Smith published the *Book of Abraham*, he became a Freemason, and he introduced the endowment to the Holy Order. On March 1, 1842, the Mormon prophet began publishing his translation of certain Egyptian papyri. The *Book of Abraham* contained teachings which connected, for the first time, the curse of Ham with priesthood eligibility. Specifically it taught that the "king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth" and that from "Ham, sprang the race which preserved the curse in the land" and that Pharaoh was "cursed ... as pertaining to the Priesthood."⁵³

Two weeks later, on March 16, 1842, Smith became a Master Mason. Most other church leaders also became Masons in Nauvoo. Some had already joined the Craft before becoming Mormons, including W. W. Phelps, Heber C. Kimball, George Miller, Hyrum Smith and Newell K. Whitney. With the exception of Phelps, these men had not renounced Freemasonry during the 1820s, and they joined the Nauvoo Lodge when Smith became a Mason. When Hyrum Smith, Heber C. Kimball, and W. W. Phelps became Freemasons in New York (before the Morgan episode) the Grand Lodge prohibited blacks from becoming masons. Two decades later most Masonic lodges, including those which were organized in Illinois after anti-masonry began to subside in the mid 1830s, continued to maintain the same policy. Mormon Masons, including Smith and Young, were certainly aware that some justified this exclusionary policy because blacks were believed to be descendents of Cain through Ham, were not inherently freeborn, and were therefore ineligible to enter their temples. This policy was followed in free and slave states and in lodges where there were anti-slavery and pro-slavery Masons.

On May 4, 1842 Smith introduced a new endowment to nine followers (all of whom were Master Masons) which became the Holy Order. Because they were Masons it would not have been possible for any African American to be an original member of the Holy Order. During the remaining two years of his life Smith gradually increased the membership of the Holy Order to include both men and women. He planned to introduce this new order of priesthood to church leaders before making it available to the general church membership in the Nauvoo Temple. From May 4, 1842 until June 27, 1844 (when Joseph Smith was murdered in Carthage, Illinois) 37 men and 32 women had been

But the entry does demonstrate how strong the tradition of Ham's curse was in LDS thought during this period.

⁵³ *Book of Abraham* 1:26-27. *Book of Abraham* 1:1 to 2:18 was dictated to scribes in November 1835. *Book of Abraham* 2:19 to 5:21 and explanations of the facsimiles were dictated in Nauvoo in 1842. The *Book of Abraham* was first published in *Times and Seasons* 3:9 (1 March 1842):705. The *Book of Abraham* was not canonized until 1880. Nevertheless, the passage relating to Ham was alluded to by Parley Pratt to justify the exclusion of blacks from priesthood as early as 1847. See footnote 81 and accompanying text.

ere three developments which initiated into the Holy Order.⁵⁴ All but three of the men were Masons and all of the women were their wives or plural wives.⁵⁵ During the same period when he became a Freemason, and these momentous events were taking place, Walker Lewis, a Prince Hall Mason, in March 1, 1842, the Mormon and a resident in Lowell, Massachusetts, was baptized. He was later ordained in Egyptian papyri. The Book of Mormon an elder by Mormon Apostle, and Joseph Smith's younger brother, William Smith.⁵⁶

taught that the "king of Egypt Even if Smith did not prohibit African Americans from being ordained to as a partaker of the blood of the priesthood before he introduced the endowment, the Masonic policy which prohibited blacks from entering their temples may have influenced Smith's thinking concerning who would be eligible to be endowed in the Nauvoo Temple.⁵⁷ During the creative two-month period from March 1 through May 4, 1842 Smith may have connected his longstanding belief that blacks were descended from Ham, with the teaching of Abraham that the descendants of Ham were "cursed" as pertaining to the priesthood, and the Masonic practice which prohibited African Americans from entering their temples.

came a Master Mason. Most of the people who had already joined the Nauvoo Temple, including W. Phelps, Heber C. Kimball, and others, were Masons. With the exception of a few, they had been Masons during the 1820s, and they had been Masons in New York (before the Nauvoo Temple) before they came to Nauvoo. Those which were organized in the mid 1830s, continued to follow the policy of Smith and Young, were not inherently freeborn, and were not inherently freeborn. This policy was followed by the Nauvoo Temple, and were anti-slavery and pro-

ment to nine followers (all of whom were African American) to be initiated into the Holy Order. Because they were remaining two years of his absence, the Holy Order to include new order of priesthood members. The general church membership was 27, 1844 (when Joseph Smith died) and 32 women had been initiated into the Holy Order.

The Exclusion of African Americans from Illinois Freemasonry

After Joseph Smith died Brigham Young continued to invite new members to join the Holy Order in preparation for the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple.⁵⁸ During this same period the Grand Lodge of Illinois became embroiled in a controversy which sheds light on Masonry's rarely discussed exclusionary policy. These events in Illinois demonstrate that even Masons who lived in Free states, and were opposed to slavery, were convinced that blacks were not entitled to enter their temples because of their racial heritage. Brigham

⁵⁴ See, Devery S. Anderson and Gary J. Bergera, eds., *Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed, 1842-1845, A Documentary History*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005, xxxviii. See also Devery S. Anderson and Gary J. Bergera, eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845-1846, A Documentary History*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005.

⁵⁵ The only men who were not Masons were Orson Pratt, Almon W. Babbitt, and W.W. Phelps. Phelps had previously renounced the Craft.

⁵⁶ O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis," in this volume. O'Donovan believes that Lewis was baptized by Parley Pratt during the summer of 1843 and that he was ordained an elder by William Smith later that same year.

⁵⁷ Concurrent with temple restoration Joseph Smith instructed missionaries who were preaching against the works of John C. Bennett to confine themselves "to the free States & mostly to New England & the canidas [sic] [and] not to go to any of the indians or Slave States." *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983, 2:186-7, (10 August to 19 September 1842). A broadside *Affidavits and Certificates* was published to respond to John C. Bennett's letters published in the *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, Illinois).

⁵⁸ From Joseph Smith's death to the introduction of the endowment to the general church membership in the Nauvoo Temple on December 10, 1845 an additional five men and sixteen women became members of the Holy Order. When endowments were given in the Nauvoo Temple the Holy Order consisted of 42 men and 48 women. See, *Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed*, xxxviii.

Young, and other Mormon Masons, were undoubtedly aware of these events which were taking place in the lodges of their Masonic brethren. It is therefore plausible that they may have influenced Young's decision, shortly thereafter, to adopt an exclusionary policy concerning temple eligibility.

In the spring of 1845 an African American man named A. B. Lewis, who was a Master Mason in a lodge located outside of Illinois, was admitted as a visitor in the lodges of Chicago.⁵⁹ In May 1845, one of these lodges, Apollo Lodge No. 32, received the petitions of two black candidates (named Johnson and Davidson) to be initiated as Freemasons. Within days of receiving these petitions the lodge voted to take no action until it had procured "an expression of the Grand Lodge on the subject."⁶⁰ On November 21, 1845, following proceedings of the Grand Lodge in October, Apollo Lodge No. 32 appointed a committee which reported favorably on the petitions. However, when a member of Apollo Lodge, who attended Grand Lodge, reported that he had not "obtained an expression from the Grand Lodge on the subject" the lodge passed a resolution, unanimously, that the two petitioners should be allowed to withdraw their petitions for initiation into the lodge.⁶¹

Despite this decision Harmony Lodge No. 3, of Jacksonville, passed resolutions on December 2, 1845, which stated, in relevant part, that "*we cannot recognize any individual of the African race as being 'free-born,' as they are, by the constitution and laws of our country, denied the rights and privileges of citizens. Neither can we extend to them the hand of fellowship and brotherly love, believing that by so acting ... we would be trampling upon all the landmarks of the Institution.*"⁶² Significantly, this resolution stated that all blacks, slave or free, were not "freeborn" as required by the ancient landmarks, and that they were therefore disqualified from becoming freemasons or entering Masonic temples. The lodge authorized the publication of fifty copies of these resolutions which were sent to the other lodges in Illinois. The lodges reacted to these resolutions with near unanimity by expressing their agreement with the general proposition that African Americans should not be allowed into any Masonic lodge in Illinois. Nevertheless, the specific rationale used by each lodge ranged from the position taken by the three lodges located in Chicago (which met together to address this issue), i.e. a "desire to respect the feelings and scruples of a portion of the members of the Fraternity, and to continue that harmony which is the strength of our Institution,"⁶³ to the belief of Friendship Lodge No. 7 of Dixon, that the admission of blacks would be "in opposition to

⁵⁹ John C. Reynolds, *History of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Illinois*. Springfield, Ill.: H. G. Reynolds, 1869, 382. (Hereafter *History of Masonry*).

⁶⁰ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 383.

⁶¹ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 383.

⁶² Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 365. (Emphasis added).

⁶³ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 383.

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the fundamental principles of Masonry."⁶⁴

The rationale used by some lodges was similar to justifications later given by Brigham Young and other apostles for denying black Mormons the right to be endowed in Mormon temples. For example, St. John's Lodge No. 13 of Peru, Illinois passed a resolution that "the admission of negroes to such privileges would in our opinion be in violation of ancient usage, and that the legal and other disabilities under which they labor, will forever prevent their admission upon equality with others."⁶⁵ St. Clair Lodge No. 24 of Belleville, Illinois concluded that the "Masonic tie is too sacred, the Union is too close, to admit to the inner chamber of our hearts, those whose blood the Almighty has by an immutable law declared should never traverse our veins."⁶⁶ But the most striking rationale was articulated by the Grand Lodge itself when it met in October 1846. Reacting to what it perceived as the Chicago lodges' argument "in favor of the rights of negroes to admission, basing their views on the oft-repeated declaration, that whoever is in possession of our universal language is entitled to admission into our halls throughout the habitable globe" the Grand Lodge adopted a resolution that lodges must do nothing "that would tend to create social discord and disrupt the political relations of the confederate state" and that the "Author of all has placed a distinguishing mark upon them, clearly indicating that there was a distinctiveness to be kept up; and it is repulsive to the finest feelings of the heart to think that between them and us there can be a mutual reciprocity of all social privileges. And why then introduce them into our inner temple, where the closest connections are inculcated and solemnized? Other objections might be urged, but your committee deem the above hints sufficient."⁶⁷

Six years later the Grand Lodge of Illinois passed a resolution which stated categorically that "all subordinate lodges under this jurisdiction be instructed to admit no negro or mulatto, as visitor or otherwise, under any circumstances whatever."⁶⁸ Grand lodges in other free states in the North also adopted written

⁶⁴ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 368.

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 371. (Emphasis added).

⁶⁶ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 375. (Emphasis added).

⁶⁷ Reynolds, *History of Masonry*, 390. (Emphasis added). This statement is similar to Oliver Cowdery's concern, expressed ten years earlier, that emancipation would require white men to open their homes to African Americans and to allow "free admittance to all we possess." See, "The Abolitionists," *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (April 1836):301. When temple rites were opened to women it undoubtedly added a new complexity to the fear that blacks and whites would associate together in the temple. In fact, Connell O'Donovan believes that one of the main catalysts for Brigham Young's decision to prohibit African Americans from participating in the temple was the 1846 inter-racial marriage between Walker Lewis' eldest son and a white Mormon woman in Cambridge, Massachusetts. See O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis," in this volume.

⁶⁸ Chase, *Digest of Masonic Law*, 212; Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*, 34. For the complete resolution see *Transactions, The American Lodge of Research Free and Accepted Masons IV*: 1 (October 29, 1942-April 27, 1944, 129-30).

policies, which confirmed long standing practices, excluding blacks from their temples. In 1852 the Grand Lodge of New York passed a resolution which provided that the exclusion of "persons of the negro race ... *is in accordance with masonic law and the Ancient charges and Regulations*" and that it is "not proper to initiate them in our lodges."⁶⁹ Similar resolutions were either recommended or passed by Grand Lodges in Ohio (1847),⁷⁰ Rhode Island (1848),⁷¹ Iowa (1852),⁷² and Delaware (1867).⁷³

Of course these resolutions not only prohibited African Americans (slave or free) from being admitted into regular lodges of Freemasonry but also prevented black Masons, who had already been initiated in Prince Hall Freemasonry, from being admitted into white lodges as visitors. In 1855 Albert Mackey, a Masonic commentator, noted that in America, to be considered freeborn, one "must be in the unrestrained enjoyment of his civil and personal liberty, and this too, by the birthright of inheritance, and not by its subsequent acquisition, in consequence of his release from hereditary bondage."⁷⁴ A decade later George Wingate Chase, another Masonic writer, specifically applied this standard to African Americans: "It is an ancient rule, that candidates for Masonry must be *free-born*. A slave cannot be made a mason. It is established as a general rule, in the United States, that *persons of negro blood* should not be made Masons, even though they may have been *free-born*."⁷⁵ More recently, Joseph A. Walkes,

⁶⁹ Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*, 34 (Emphasis added); Chase, *Digest of Masonic Law*, 212-13.

⁷⁰ Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*, 34. ("Resolved, That, in the opinion of this Grand Lodge, it would be inexpedient and tend to mar the harmony of the fraternity to admit any of the persons of color, so-called, into the fraternity of Free and Accepted masons within the Jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge."). See also, Chase, *Digest of Masonic Law*, 212. ("No Grand Lodge has authorized subordinates to initiate negroes.")

⁷¹ See, *Abstract of the Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of the State of Rhode Island*. Providence: Joseph Knowles, 1848. A committee recommended that the "Grand Lodge deem it inexpedient ... for subordinate lodges ... to initiate in the mysteries of Masonry persons of color" but that they could admit them as visitors if they were initiated masons from other jurisdictions.

⁷² Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*, 34. (In 1852 "the Grand Lodge of Iowa adopted a report on foreign correspondence which embodied and endorsed the action of the Grand Lodge of New York.")

⁷³ Upton, *Negro Freemasonry*, 35.

⁷⁴ Albert G. Mackey, *The Principles of Masonic Law: A Treatise on the Constitutional Laws, Usages and Landmarks of Freemasonry*. Fourth Edition. New York: Jonathan R. Neall, 1859. British Masons, on the other hand, recognized the right of blacks to become masons. See, A. F. A. Woodford, *Kenning's Cyclopaedia of Freemasonry*. London: George Kenning, 1878, 508-09; Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, *The Royal House Cyclopaedia of History, Rites, Symbols and Biography*. New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877.

⁷⁵ Chase, *Digest of Masonic Law*, 1864, 211. (Emphasis added). But Chase did caution that this policy was "a matter which most Grand Lodges have wisely refrained from legislating upon, as it is at least doubtful whether they can interfere with the right of the individual members of a lodge to select their own members. Within the United States there are no *regular* lodges of negroes, and but few regular Masons among that class, though there are many *irregular* lodges and irregular masons among them. The abstract right of a lodge to initiate a negro, mulatto, Indian, Chinese, or individual of any blood or complexion, cannot be denied. The question of such admission

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Jr., a Prince Hall Freemason, observed that "American Masons reasoned with Judge Taney that there are 'slave races,' that black men were by right as well as by law, slaves, and that they could never be participators in the institutions intended for the benefit and happiness of white men. This was the generally accepted sentiment of American Masons, and they knew no 'higher law.'"⁷⁶

The Ban of Priesthood to Blacks

While Freemasons in Illinois were discussing their policy which prevented blacks from entering their temples, Mormon Church leaders made at least two statements which echoed the *Book of Abraham*. In April 1845 the *Times and Seasons* published an unsigned article which referred to: "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."⁷⁷ During the same month, on April 27, 1845,

is one of expediency merely, and is wisely left to the conservative judgment of each individual member of the lodge where such persons may apply for admission to the order." *Ibid*, 211-12. Chase's advice was not always followed. Even after the Civil War, many Grand Lodges continued to prohibit black members and even passed resolutions which had the effect of prohibiting lodges from entering into regular correspondence with any Grand Lodges (even those that were recognized as regular) if they admitted black members. In 1866, the Grand Lodge of North Carolina complained that the Grand Lodge of New York had authorized the establishment of black lodges in North Carolina, not realizing that the black lodges being authorized were Prince Hall lodges which were not recognized by the regular Grand Lodge of New York. The Grand Lodge of New York denied that it had authorized such lodges and recognized that southern Grand Lodges, for more than half a century, had denounced northern Grand Lodges, "who admitted blacks into their lodges as visitors, who had been made Masons in foreign countries and by lawful authority." "Negro Lodges," *The Mystic Star: A Monthly Magazine*, 4:6 (June 1866), 162-3. The Grand Lodge of New York also asserted that the words "free born" meant that the mother must have been free at the time of the birth. "This would, of course, exclude all the negroes of the South who were born into slavery; and this fact should quiet the nerves of our brethren of the North-Carolina committee against having their sensibilities disturbed by being required to take their former slaves into their embraces as brethren, should there ever arise such a preposterous movement as they so credulously attribute to the Grand Lodge of New York." *Ibid*, 163. In 1870 the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi wrote that "Negroes are not Masons, but by the laws of Congress, they are voters." Walkes, *Black Square & Compass*, 81. Nevertheless, some Grand Lodges — mostly in the north — took the extraordinary step of extending some recognition to Prince Hall Lodges after the Civil War. When the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri claimed in 1871 that it had received some form of recognition from the Grand Lodges of Missouri, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa and other states, a Freemason from Mississippi wrote that it would not happen in his state and he challenged the legitimacy of all black lodges by contending that "the Founder of this negro — so called Masonic colony, if he received any fees" then they were "at the expense of his fellow descendents of Ham." Walkes, *Black Square & Compass*, 85.

⁷⁶ Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *A Prince Hall Masonic Quiz Book*. Rev. ed. Richmond VA.: Macoy, 1989, 136.

⁷⁷ "A Short Chapter on a Long Subject," *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 April 1845):857.

Apostle Orson Hyde, a New Englander, characterized "the curse upon the blacks" as "among the mysteries of the kingdom."⁷⁸

In December 1845 the new endowment was finally given to the general church membership in the Nauvoo Temple. From December 10, 1845 until February 8, 1846 an additional 5,000 men and women were endowed.⁷⁹ Regardless of the statements made in the *Times and Seasons*, and by Orson Hyde, concerning the curse, it is unlikely that any African Americans requested their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple since there were only a handful of black members and neither Elijah Abel nor Walker Lewis, who had previously been ordained, were living in Nauvoo.

After the endowment was given in Nauvoo church authorities gradually began to discuss the new policy which made all blacks ineligible to either receive the new temple endowment or to be ordained to the priesthood.⁸⁰ On April 15, 1847, Parley P. Pratt mentioned a "Black man [William McCary] who has got the blood of Ham in him which lineage was cursed as regards the priesthood."⁸¹ The following month William Appleby, a Mormon missionary, wrote that while he was in Lowell, Massachusetts, he encountered Elder Walker Lewis "a coloured brother" who had been ordained an elder "contrary though to the order of the Church or the Law of the Priesthood, as the Descendents of Ham are not entitled to that privilege."⁸²

After Brigham Young arrived in Salt Lake City he continued to discuss the "curse." On February 13, 1849, Young instructed the Twelve Apostles that "the Lord has cursed Cain's seed with blacknes[s] & prohibited them the priesthood that Abel and his progeny may yet come forward & have their dominion Place and Blessings in their proper relationship with Cain & his race in a world to come."⁸³ Several years later, in September 1851, one of the two African Americans

⁷⁸ Orson Hyde, "Speech of Orson Hyde Delivered before the High Priests Quorum in Nauvoo, April 27th 1845" (Liverpool, 1845), p. 30, quoted in Ronald K. Esplin, "Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial: An Alternate View," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19:3 (Spring 1979), 398.

⁷⁹ See, *Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed*, xxxviii. See also *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies*.

⁸⁰ Elijah Abel was not living in Nauvoo when the endowments were introduced in that temple. He moved from Nauvoo to Cincinnati in 1844 and did not immigrate to Salt Lake City until 1853.

⁸¹ *Quorum of Twelve Notebook, 1849-1869*, "Minutes for 15 April 1847, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Archives, quoted in Esplin, "Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial," 395.

⁸² *Journal of William Appleby*, 19 May 1847, LDS Archives, quoted in Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 56n85. O'Donovan cautions readers about relying on this journal entry to conclude that the "curse" of Ham was used as a rationale to exclude blacks as early as 1847. He notes that this journal entry was apparently not written until the mid-1850s, and that Appleby made an entry twelve days later which referred to a letter to Brigham Young in which he asked whether the ordination of Blacks was tolerated in the church. O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban."

⁸³ Record of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, February 13, 1849, 12-13. Brigham Young, *Journal History* (13 February 1849), LDS Archives, quoted in Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 25. Newell Bringhurst has written that "Brigham Young alluded to this same position during the fall of 1847 when he suggested that blacks in general were ineligible to participate in certain

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who had previously been ordained an elder arrived in Salt Lake City. Walker Lewis received his Patriarchal blessing from Church Patriarch John Smith on October 4, 1851 and he was told that he was of the "tribe of Canan [sic]."⁸⁴ During Lewis' short stay in Utah Brigham Young spoke openly to the territorial legislature about his views on slavery and he finally publicly announced that African Americans could not hold the Priesthood. On February 5, 1852, the same year the church began giving endowments at the Council House, Young addressed the Utah Territorial Legislature, and stated that "any man having one drop of the seed of [Cain] in him cannot hold the priesthood & if no other Prophet ever spake it before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ." Young also insisted that this policy could only be reversed by revelation from the Almighty.⁸⁵ Although there is no record concerning Lewis' reaction to these events, he returned shortly thereafter to Lowell, Massachusetts where he reopened his barber shop.⁸⁶

Elijah Abel, the other African American priesthood holder, arrived in Utah in 1853. When he became aware that endowments were being given in the Council House he asked the church president if he could receive his endowments. Young denied his request but he did allow Abel to continue to function in his priesthood office and as a member of the Third Quorum of Seventy. In 1880 Abel made the same request to John Taylor who also denied him access to the Endowment House. When Abel died in 1884 he still held the priesthood but he was never allowed to receive his endowments.⁸⁷

The shrouded origins of the Priesthood ban

Eventually the policy of excluding African Americans from the Mormon Priesthood caused some anxiety within the church prior to its reversal in 1978. Since Elijah Abel and Walker Lewis were ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith's lifetime, and since Abel was allowed to participate in the Kirtland Temple (when women were excluded), many have asked when "the 'Negro doctrine' actually originated."⁸⁸ While Elijah Abel was ordained, and he

sacred temple rituals." Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981, 86. Although Bringhurst cites to a document in the possession of Ron Esplin he does not specifically identify it. Young made numerous references to the servitude of Can, Ham and their descendants before he officially announced that African Americans could not be ordained to the priesthood. See, e.g. Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 4:30 (1 June 1851); 4:43 (29 June 1851).

⁸⁴ O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis," in this volume.

⁸⁵ Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 4:97-99 (16 January 1852), quoted in Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 26; and quoted in Esplin, "Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial," 400-01. Young's address was summarized in the *Deseret News* on April 3, 1852.

⁸⁶ O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis," in this volume.

⁸⁷ See Council Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1879; Journal History of the Church, LDS Archives.

⁸⁸ Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Whence the Negro Doctrine? A Review of Ten Years of Answers," in Lester

participated in the Kirtland temple, it is also true that priesthood and temple changed dramatically in Nauvoo.⁸⁹ Because of these developments and the untimely death of Joseph Smith scholars disagree concerning whether Smith or his successor introduced Mormonism's exclusionary policy and whether it was based on revelation or racial prejudice.⁹⁰

Ronald Esplin believes that Joseph Smith revealed the policy to the Holy Order. He notes that many, if not most, of Smith's teachings — particularly on temple-related subjects — were private rather than public and that the doctrine of priesthood denial, because of its links with the temple, would have been treated cautiously by Smith while the temple was still under construction. The numerous private sessions Smith held with the Twelve and others, especially during 1843-1844, "were the proper forum for the teaching of the 'mysteries of the kingdom' those temple-related teachings that were not to be taught abroad and could not go to the broader membership of the Church until the completion of the temple and the removal of the Church to the relative isolation of the West."⁹¹ The private nature of these teachings, according to Esplin, explains why Brigham Young articulated the policy only after the endowment was made available to the general church membership. Young would have had a "private understanding" of Joseph Smith's teaching on this subject even if it was not publicly announced until 1852.⁹²

In contrast, Lester Bush, Newell Bringhurst, and others have argued that the practice of denying blacks priesthood ordination did not begin until after the death of Joseph Smith and the exodus to Utah. They note that Brigham Young, not Joseph Smith, first articulated the policy of priesthood denial, that Brigham Young never specifically attributed it to Joseph Smith and, perhaps most significantly, that the underlying motivation for the policy was Young's racial attitudes. They also note that although "the evidence for 'racist' attitudes among nineteenth century Mormon leaders is indisputable"⁹³ that "Brigham

E. Bush, Jr. and Armand L. Mauss, *Neither White nor Black: Mormons Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church* (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1984), 193. Jessie Embry has concluded that Abel "remains an obstacle to those who try to trace priesthood denial to Joseph Smith." Jessie L. Embry, *Black Saints in a White Church, Contemporary African American Mormons*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994, 39.

⁸⁹ Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).

⁹⁰ Ronald K. Esplin, has argued that "the doctrine was introduced in Nauvoo and consistently applied in practice at least by 1843." Esplin, "Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial," 399. But Esplin also admits that the problem in attributing the priesthood policy to Joseph Smith is that "one cannot point to a specific date or place where Joseph Smith taught the principle." Esplin, "Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial," 397. See also, Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 186-87.

⁹¹ Esplin, "Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial," 398.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 398.

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Young was more willing than Joseph Smith to embrace certain anti-black racial concepts and practices prevalent in American Society."⁹⁴ Bringhurst maintains that there was an "intensification of Mormon anti-black attitudes during the 1840s," and that Young reacted negatively to "the flamboyant activities of William McCary." Thereafter, "the exposure of the Latter-day Saints to a large number of blacks — both slave and free — following the Mormon migration to the Great Basin" was a catalyst Brigham Young's decision to announce the policy of black priesthood denial in Utah.⁹⁵

Clyde Forsberg has argued that Mormonism's priesthood ban was based on the policy which excluded blacks from Masonic temples, and that both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young believed that Masonry had preserved valid practices which began in the Temple of Solomon. According to Forsberg "the debate over whether the priesthood ban was a practice or a doctrine, whether Smith — who ordained a few black men — would approve or disapprove, may indeed be somewhat beside the point. If the Temple is the priesthood, then those who contend for a gentler, kinder Smith on the issue of blacks in priesthood do not have a single leg to balance on."⁹⁶ Although Forsberg did not analyze the evidence which supports this connection he did recognize that it was relevant in studies concerning the policy of priesthood denial.

While the debate concerning the origins of priesthood denial subsided after the policy was reversed, and some even maintain it is now irrelevant, others continue to believe that it is still important to understand the origins of this policy in order to determine if it ever had any revelatory underpinnings or if it was based on anachronistic legends that were widely believed during the nineteenth century but which have been subsequently debunked.

The Connection between the two bans

Since Joseph Smith was killed before he achieved his goal of introducing the endowment to the general church membership, and there is no direct evidence that he taught the exclusionary policy, we shall never fully know his innermost thoughts on this subject. But Smith, as a newly initiated Mason understood, at

⁹⁴ Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel," in Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, 134-37.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134-37. According to Bringhurst Parley P. Pratt reported that between 1830-39 there were only a dozen black members of the church.

⁹⁶ Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr., *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 220. Forsberg concluded that: "Mormonism could and would discriminate against men of color in good faith as the cursed offspring of Cain and the apostate priesthood — Sons of Perdition. That Smith ordained black men to offices of the priesthood but drew the line at the Temple suggest that he and Young were in agreement. Men of African (Cainite/Cainanite/Canaanite) were apostate Masons and thus to be barred from priesthood. For Smith, however, the priesthood was the temple. Under Young, it was extended to include the offices of deacon, teacher, priest, elder, seventy and high priest. Young's was not a harder line but rather a broader one." Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 223. Smith did not ordain black men and he failed to provide any evidence to support this connection.

least by March, 1842, that African Americans were not permitted to enter the temples of Freemasonry. During the same month, he published *The Book of Abraham*, which contained new teachings which connected, for the first time, his longstanding belief that blacks were descended from Ham with the belief that his descendants were "cursed . . . as pertaining to the Priesthood." Shortly thereafter, Smith introduced an endowment similar to Royal Arch Masonry in which his closest associates (who were all Masons) were anointed in the Holy Order of the High Priesthood.⁹⁷

Brigham Young could have made the same connections as Smith. The new Mormon Prophet carried out Smith's plans and prepared to introduce the new endowment to church members in the Nauvoo temple during the same year that the lodges of Freemasonry in Illinois debated their exclusionary policy. While no African Americans attempted to enter the doors of the Nauvoo Temple, Young finally declared in 1852 that African Americans were not eligible to receive the Mormon priesthood and he refused to allow them to receive their endowments in the Council House.

It is questionable whether Brigham Young would have introduced an exclusionary policy unless he believed that Smith would have supported it. Although Young did not claim that Smith introduced the ban he did state that "if no other prophet ever spake it before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ."⁹⁸ Thus, even if Young "showed none of the variability" on the subject of slavery that was "manifest by Joseph Smith," he clearly felt he had a celestial mandate and he undoubtedly believed that Joseph Smith would have agreed with the policy because of similar policies followed by many lodges in Freemasonry.⁹⁹

Even after blacks were emancipated (Amendment XIII), given citizenship, guaranteed due process and equal protection (Amendment XIV), and received the right to vote (Amendment XV), neither the temples of Freemasonry nor the temples of Mormonism were opened up to them.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the rationale for the bans adopted by these institutions gradually eroded. Clearly, it became more difficult for Freemasons to argue that blacks were not "freeborn" especially two or three generations after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. In addition, when the Authentic School of Masonic History debunked the notion that the rituals of Freemasonry originated before

⁹⁷ Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry," 40.

⁹⁸ *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:97-99 (February 1852).

⁹⁹ Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 25.

¹⁰⁰ It is ironic that Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith and President of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, received a revelation in 1865 which authorized "ordaining men of the Negro race." This revelation was included in the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1878. See, *Reorganized Doctrine and Covenants*, section 116. Although the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (now the Community of Christ) followed the teachings of Joseph Smith in ordaining men to church offices it did not adopt the temple endowment as a church practice.

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the Middle Ages it became difficult to argue that a pre-existing curse prevented blacks from being considered freeborn.¹⁰¹ Finally, after the full flowering of the civil rights movement, and internal pressure within Freemasonry, many white lodges began to modify their exclusionary policies and allowed blacks to join and visit their lodges.¹⁰²

A similar pattern is evident in the eventual abandonment of the Mormon priesthood ban. After Brigham Young's death church leaders continued to believe that it was based on something more than Young's personal racial beliefs. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why they consistently insisted that a new revelation would be necessary before they could reverse the policy. In 1900 Lorenzo Snow candidly admitted to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles that he did not know whether Brigham Young's justification for withholding priesthood from black members was based on revelation or "what had been told him by the Prophet Joseph." Five months later Snow's counselor, George Q. Cannon, assured the First Presidency that John Taylor claimed that the doctrine was taught by Joseph Smith. During the same meeting Cannon also "read from the Pearl of Great Price showing that negroes were debarred [sic] from the priesthood." And Joseph F. Smith "said that he had been told that the idea

¹⁰¹ For examples of works by authors in the Authentic School of Freemasonry see, J. G. Findel, *History of Freemasonry, From its Origin down to the Present Day*. 2nd Ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1869; and Robert Freke Gould, *The History of Freemasonry*. 4 vols. New York: John C. Yorston & Co., 1885-89.

¹⁰² Many Masons now recognize the right of African Americans to become masons. Some have even recognized the regularity of Prince Hall Masonry. British commentators Fred L. Pick and G. Gordon Knight have noted that "in several states ... there has been dialogue and there have been occasions when, outside their respective lodges, white and negro brethren have been able to co-operate in community projects." In addition "The two Grand Lodges of Connecticut have removed all barriers and intervisitation is now permitted." Pick and Knight, *The Pocket History of Freemasonry*. Ninth ed. London: Hutchinson, 1992, 301. In 1871, the Grand Lodge of New Jersey approved the charter of a lodge founded by white masons with the intention of initiating blacks. Alpha Lodge No. 116 now consists of almost entirely black masons. Henry Wilson Coil, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*. New York: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Company, 1961, 441. Coil also identifies six African Americans who were initiated into Freemasonry (but not Prince Hall lodges) from 1872 to 1940. Coil, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, 441-42. Nevertheless, some Masonic writers believe that race prejudice still exists among some Freemasons. Walkes, *Black Square & Compass*, 81, quoting Sibley, *The Story of Freemasonry*, 72. While the situation has improved since 1904 when one Masonic writer believed that race prejudice still existed among some Freemasons (Walkes, *Black Square & Compass*, 81, quoting Sibley, *The Story of Freemasonry*. Gallipolis, OH: The Lions Paw Club, 1904, 72), it is also true that the great majority of black masons in the United States are member of Prince Hall Freemasonry. Ironically, some black Freemasons now claim that the origins of Freemasonry can be traced to the earliest period of the Ethiopian and Egyptian dynasties, that it was first practiced by blacks, and that its rituals are an allegory for their slavery and emancipation. Walkes, *Black Square & Compass*, 119-20; Mustafa El-Amin, *African-American Freemasons: Why They Should Accept Al-Islam* (Jersey City, N.J.: New Mind Productions, 1990). In fact, Masonry has grown rapidly in some parts of Africa, particularly among government bureaucrats.

originated with the Prophet Joseph but of course he could not vouch for it."¹⁰³

These same leaders were willing to reinterpret the policy, both in the context of temple and priesthood, in very pragmatic ways when new factual situations arose. For example, blacks were allowed to perform baptisms for the dead soon after the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple.¹⁰⁴ George Albert Smith authorized the ordination of a native group in the Philippines ("Negritos") because even though they had black skin they had no known African ancestry.¹⁰⁵ David O. McKay made similar decisions concerning White South Africans, Fijians, Australian aborigines, and Egyptians, when there was no evidence that they had black African ancestry.¹⁰⁶ McKay also allowed black men to serve in leadership roles in church auxiliaries and continued to allow black children to participate in proxy baptisms.¹⁰⁷ Harold B. Lee approved a policy under which adopted black children could be sealed to their white parents in the temple.¹⁰⁸

Despite these modifications church leadership always insisted that a new revelation would be necessary to completely reverse the policy.¹⁰⁹ But after the civil rights movement began, and the United States Supreme Court determined that a policy of "separate but equal" was unconstitutional, it became more difficult to ignore the issue. Even though the LDS hierarchy refused to reverse the policy, it effectively abandoned arguments — that the descendants of Ham were cursed — which had previously been advanced to justify it. David O. McKay's statement in 1954 that "There is not now, and there never has been a doctrine in the Church that the Negroes are under a divine curse," but that there was scriptural precedent that would "some day be changed" demonstrates that the hierarchy was struggling to find a rational explanation for the policy as well as a viable solution to the problem.¹¹⁰ Fifteen years later the First Presidency

¹⁰³ Lorenzo Snow's observations are contained in Council Meeting, March 11, 1900, George Albert Smith Papers, Manuscript Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah. George Q. Cannon's remarks are recorded in Council Meeting, August 11, 1900, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library.

¹⁰⁴ Armand Mauss, "The Fading of the Pharaohs' Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban against Blacks in the Mormon Church," in Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, 186n73. See also Council Meeting, November 10, 1910, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library. ("President [Joseph F.] Smith remarked that he saw no reason why a negro should not be permitted to have access to the baptismal font in the temple to be baptized for the dead, inasmuch as negroes are entitled to become members of the Church by baptism.")

¹⁰⁵ Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 200.

¹⁰⁶ Gregory A. Prince and William Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 94.

¹⁰⁷ Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 95.

¹⁰⁸ Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 206.

¹⁰⁹ Prince and Wright have demonstrated that although David O. McKay struggled with the rationale for the policy he always insisted that a revelation would be necessary to reverse it. See Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 60-105.

¹¹⁰ Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 79-80.

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admitted that the exclusionary policy was taught by Joseph Smith "for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which he has not fully made known to man" and that it could only be changed by revelation.¹¹¹

But even during the civil rights movement there was little internal pressure to reverse the policy. While it was always framed in the context of priesthood, the real catalyst for the practice was the temple endowment. Thus, a turning point did not occur until 1975 when Spencer W. Kimball announced that the LDS Church would build a temple in Brazil. Although Kimball later said "he was not thinking in terms of making an adjustment" when he made known that the temple would be built he certainly recognized that the continuation of the exclusionary policy would create great difficulties in Brazil since it would be necessary to differentiate between members who had black ancestry and those who were otherwise eligible to receive their endowments. This produced internal pressure-from the top- to reverse the policy.¹¹²

Three years later, when Kimball received a revelation, he could dedicate the São Paulo Temple without fear that the exclusionary policy would complicate or even disrupt temple work in Brazil. Since the only surviving justification for excluding African Americans was that the policy could only be modified through revelation there was no attempt to repudiate prior folklore that African Americans were descended from Ham or that they were cursed "as pertaining to the priesthood." Instead, the church determined that it was sufficient to reverse the long-standing policy by announcing the revelation without further explanation.

Although Lester Bush and Newell Bringhurst are undoubtedly correct that there is no direct evidence that Joseph Smith originated the Mormon policy of priesthood exclusion, there is an apparent connection between that policy and the ban of blacks from the lodges of Freemasonry. The exclusionary policies of Freemasonry and Mormonism prevented blacks from entering temples whose rituals were believed to be similar to those practiced in Solomon's Temple, both were premised, in part, on the notion that blacks were somehow disqualified from entering temples because they were descended from Cain and/or Ham, but neither policy was premised on a consistent rationale, and both became increasingly controversial during the Civil Rights Movement. Regardless of whether Mormonism's policy was decreed by Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, if it was inspired by Masonic legends, it is easier to understand why the rationale for the policy was abandoned when it was recognized as an anachronism, and why the policy only continued until a formalistic prerequisite (unconnected to the prior rationale) was realized.

¹¹¹ Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 101.

¹¹² See Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 214-24. As early as January 25, 1940 J. Reuben Clark observed that "he was positive that it was impossible with reference to the Brazilians to tell those who have Negro blood and those who do not, and we are baptizing these people into the Church." Council Meeting, January 25, 1940, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library.