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New, Improved Mormonism

📅 December 11, 2013 👤 Denver 💬 Off 📄 Thoughts

Lots of excitement arises from the statement by the church denouncing past practices and teachings in its editorial on its website titled "Race and the Priesthood." Lots of buzz on the Internet and in news outlets. The thesis of the editorial is that the church, which today is headquartered in a nation with a black president, has overcome racism, which was a sin, and now can denounce it (and past president's of the church) with passion, like others in modern society.

The LDS position is that the church leaders can never lead its members astray, except in the past – and then it can correct it – in the here and now. When corrected, the LDS church can then consign its past leaders to condemnation for their sins. Sort of *ex post facto* "we're still not going to lead you astray" as long as you are living when we fix it... or something like that. It's really hard to keep up with the "we're not going to lead you astray" component of modern Mormonism with all the dramatic changes and strong denouncements of past errors and sins and mistakes by racist, sexist, polygamous church presidents. But, trust them, they're somehow not going to lead you astray.

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The minions in the faceless editorial composition unit (I envision them as little yellow chaps who are constantly engaged in slapstick shenanigans) need to move forward now to continue their fix of the LDS position. I'd like to point out for their revisionism some more editing now needed:

The new editorial explained: "*According to one view, which had been promulgated in the United States from at least the 1730s, blacks descended from the same lineage as the biblical Cain, who slew his brother Abel. Those who accepted this view*

believed that God's 'curse' on Cain was the mark of a dark skin." This view was based on a verse in Genesis. But they can leave Genesis 4: 15 alone, because the "mark" put upon Cain is not defined there. It is only in LDS scripture the mark is clarified. It was blackness: "And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them." (Moses 7: 22.) This uniquely LDS scripture clarifies what Genesis does not make clear. For the Christians "in the United States from at least 1730's" this idea of blacks descending from Cain was merely a theory. But for Latter-day Saints it was a matter of actual canonized scripture. So the purging of the LDS sins is only partial. They need to condemn Enoch as yet another past, false leader who subscribed to a now discredited view.

The editorial continues, describing "*Black servitude was sometimes viewed as a second curse placed upon Noah's grandson Canaan as a result of Ham's indiscretion toward his father.*" This is derived from the account in Genesis 9 where Noah curses Canaan with these words: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." (Moses 7: 22.) These Biblical words have been used to justify slavery. This raises two issues: first, slavery, and second, a cursed lineage. These are two altogether different topics.

As to the first, slavery was practiced throughout the Old and New Testaments. Further, if you look at the specific curse of Noah's, it did not relate to Ham. Nor to all of Ham's descendants. Ham

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married Egyptus, a descendant of Cain. However, the curse of servitude Noah pronounced did not target Ham, nor Ham's sons Cush, Mizraim, or Phut. (Gen. 10: 6.) The curse of servitude was only on his grandson Canaan, the youngest son of Ham. Examples of servitude in scripture are too numerous to list, but the Law of Moses adopted rules governing how to treat slaves because slavery was permitted. Even Christ presumed slavery, using slaves in His parables. Most telling of all, however, is the unique future LDS heaven which envisions servitude for the unworthy. (See, e.g., D&C 132: 16-17.) So there's some work left to do for the editorialists in conforming LDS scripture to the newly enlightened position. We will need for them to condemn past leaders like Moses, Christ, Joseph Smith and the God of the future LDS heaven for their errant positions if they expect to make full recompense for LDS past errors.

On the second idea of a cursed lineage, there's more work to be done with LDS scriptures as well. In Abraham we read of the "Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry." (Abr. 1: 27.) This makes it plain enough there was a "cursed lineage"—an idea which survives in LDS scripture despite the editorial.

The editorial continues: "*Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse,*" Stopping just there, we need to have the following language taken from the Book of Mormon: "And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them." (2 Ne. 5: 21. There's also mention in 2 Ne. 26: 33 and 3 Ne. 2: 15) This was designed by God to prevent intermarriage ("that they might not be enticing unto my people"). In the LDS scriptures the

word “enticing” is footnoted to the Topical Guide subject “Marriage, Temporal.”

Then there is the editorial remark denouncing “*that mixed-race marriages are a sin.*” This brushes up against the verse in 2 Ne. 5: 21 as well as Abraham’s commandment concerning his chosen son, Isaac. For that son and the chosen lineage Abraham commanded: “I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.” (Gen. 24: 3.) Strong, even racist language from father Abraham. He refused intermarriage for his son. The editorialists announce that “*Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form.*” The word “unequivocally” means without any hesitation or limit. So we now have the editorialists speaking for the “Church leaders today” denouncing Abraham. It was a racist demand imposed by Abraham, while swearing by the God of heaven and earth, that his son must not marry a Canaanite.

I’m impressed with the LDS leader’s bold, historic, revolutionary break with their past, their scriptures and their future heaven as well. This is courage and drama on a scale seldom seen in religion. We are witnessing revolutionaries in the very act of overthrowing their past beliefs.

There’s a lot of the LDS past now denounced, unequivocally, by the “Church leaders today.” They’ve judged and dismissed God, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Joseph Smith, along with past church presidents Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Councilor J. Reuben Clark, and even President Spencer W. Kimball who made the change in 1978 (because he denounced interracial marriage).

I was excommunicated after being accused of among other things “denigrating every church president since Joseph Smith.” I don’t think the accusation was true. In fact, I merely quoted them or their diaries. But even if you accept the accusation against me, I managed to stop short of denigrating Enoch, Abraham, Moses,

Christ and Joseph Smith along with “every church president since Joseph Smith.” The “Church leaders today” have raised their game to a whole new level. I know when I’ve been outdone. I’m an underachiever by comparison. These “Church leaders today” will even take on God in their denigration of past leaders!

The trouble I see the LDS church editorial writers now making for the church is conflating racism (which everyone should recognize as bad) with priesthood. They ought to have stopped short of this overreaching effort to fix their public reputation. One (racism) is decidedly bad. The other (priesthood) is not at all related to racism. Racism which results in afflictions visited by one group upon another merely based upon their racial status is invidious. That should be something all mankind can overcome at some point.

But priesthood is something quite different. It is so narrowly distributed that even the lesser priesthood was limited to one tribe (Levi) and even then could not be given to a man with a withered limb, or some other physical defect. Higher priesthood was yet more restrictive, almost never given to anyone, in any age. It is extraordinarily limited in numbers. God controls that Himself, directly.

For mankind to complain about God’s control over His own power is beyond arrogant. The LDS church asserts it has some control over God’s priesthood (a position that is increasingly dubious with each act of rebellion against God, and usurping power and control over the conscience of its members). On the assumption the LDS’ claim is true, then they are merely stewards. They have no right to tinker with something God alone controls.

Fortunately, the highest form of priesthood requires a visit from God, who alone confers it. Therefore, no policy change, or enlightened new political position, will ever have an effect on who receives such an ordination. When (if) it reappears on the earth, it will have only one purpose: To bring about Zion and enable God’s promises to be fulfilled. It won’t be for empowering priestcraft and

enabling multi-billion dollar purchases of land and buildings by an elite group who fare sumptuously while the poor are left begging

This is a great moment – and another example of the LDS church’s “continuing revelation,” because it surely is revealing.



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