

and that this is the lineage of the contemporary Negro, then it must have been accomplished essentially as B. H. Roberts proposed.

A better question is, why wasn't the Pearl of Great Price invoked earlier on this matter?¹⁴⁸ Most probably there was no need. The notion that the Negroes were descended from Cain and Ham was initially common-enough knowledge that no "proof" or corroboration of this connection had been necessary. This belief remained in evidence throughout the nineteenth century, and as late as 1908 a Mormon author could write: "That the negroes are descended from Ham is generally admitted, not only by latterday Saint writers but by historians and students of the scriptures. That they are also descended from Cain is also a widely accepted theory, though the sacred history does not record how this lineage bridged the flood."¹⁴⁹

In reality these ideas were not nearly so widespread at this time as they had been a half century before. Fewer and fewer scientists were subscribing to a literal Flood, and the evidence they presented was convincing an increasing number of laymen that there had not been a general destruction as recently as Genesis suggested. Evolutionary theories even challenged Adam's position as progenitor of the human family. This dwindling "external support" probably accounts in part for the increased attention to the Pearl of Great Price evident during this time, for the traditional beliefs regarding both Cain and the Flood were essential to the Church's Negro doctrine.

The shift of the rationale ("doctrinal basis") for the Negro policy on to firmer or at least more tangible ground developed not only at a time when traditional beliefs concerning Cain and Ham were fading from the contemporary scene, but also as fundamental assumptions concerning the Negro's social and intellectual status were being challenged. Even within the Church this change can easily be identified. As early as 1879 Apostle Franklin D. Richards departed significantly from antebellum Mormon philosophy in a discussion of slavery and the Civil War, "without any argument as to whether slavery should be justified or condemned . . . [The Negro's] ancestor said they should be servant of servants among their brethren, making their servitude the fulfilment of prophecy, whether according to the will of God or not."¹⁵⁰ Twenty years later the Church's *Deseret News* was not only questioning the old notions of racial inferiority but had become somewhat of a champion of Negro political rights.¹⁵¹ An ironic extreme was achieved in 1914 when a Mormon writer for the *Millennial Star* concluded, "Even the mildest form of slavery can never be tolerated by the one true church . . . The slavery of Catholic Rome must be looked upon as one great proof of apostacy."¹⁵² There were reservations, and even in the midst of its "liberal" period, the *Deseret News* still felt the need for "some wise restrictions in society, that each

race may occupy the position for which it was designed and is adapted."¹⁵³ Similarly, a seventy's course in theology could quote extensively from "perhaps the most convincing book in justification of the South in denying to the negro race social equality with the white race."¹⁵⁴ However, the very need for "evidence" reveals a significant change from the assumptions of an earlier time.

Notwithstanding the initial failure to cite Joseph Smith on Church Negro policy, there had never been any question among the leadership as to the lineage of the blacks nor of the implications of this genealogy. John Taylor had been editor of the *Times and Seasons* in 1845 when the "Short Chapter" marked the return of the Church to the "hard line" on the curse of Ham.¹⁵⁵ He accepted the traditional genealogy for the blacks¹⁵⁶ and as president of the Church denied them access to the temple because of their lineage. Also while president, he made the unique observation that this lineage had been preserved through the Flood "because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth as well as God . . ."¹⁵⁷

Wilford Woodruff, an apostle to Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor before becoming president, believed fully in the Cain genealogy. At one point he went so far as to cite the "mark of darkness" still visible on the "millions of the descendants of Cain" as evidence for the Bible.¹⁵⁸ As with his two predecessors, Woodruff denied blacks the temple ordinances as one of the "disadvantages . . . of the descendants of Cain."¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless he authorized the compromise allowing Jane James into the temple for an unusual sealing ordinance.

Less information is available on Lorenzo Snow. His concern for the subject is reflected in his early inquiry into the "chance of redemption" for the Africans.¹⁶⁰ As a senior apostle he proposed that a man ruled ineligible for the priesthood for marrying a black be allowed "to get a divorce . . . and marry a white woman, and he would be entitled then to the priesthood."¹⁶¹ While President of the Church he upheld the decisions of his three predecessors, citing as they had the curse on Cain.¹⁶²

Greater attention was focused on the Negro doctrine while Joseph F. Smith was president than at any time since the presidency of Brigham Young. Though several changes are evident in Mormon teachings during his administration, President Smith relied very heavily on the rulings of his predecessors in determining the fundamentals of Church policy ("he did not know that we could do anything more in such cases than refer to the rulings of Presidents Young, Taylor, Woodruff and other Presidencies . . .").¹⁶³

The most important of the new developments was the incorporation of Joseph Smith and the Pearl of Great Price into the immediate background of the Negro policy. There were also several important decisions.

Neither White nor Black

Mormon Scholars
Confront the Race Issue
in a Universal Church

Lester E. Bush, Jr.
and
Armand L. Mauss

Editors

*Signature
Books*

Midvale, Utah

Neither
White nor Black

Neither
White nor Black

Neither
White nor Black

Neither

Neither

And he inviteth them all
to come unto him, black and white,
bond and free, male and female;
and he remembereth the heathen;
and all are alike unto God.

2 Nephi 26:33