

Bruce Story

MEMORANDUM

To: President Spencer W. Kimball

Date: June 30, 1978

From: Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Pursuant to your request I have prepared the attached document entitled, "The Receipt of the Revelation Offering the Priesthood to ^{Worthy} Men of All Races and Colors." It summarizes what I said in the home of Dr. LeRoy Kimball in Nauvoo on Wednesday, June 28, 1978.

Sincerely,



Bruce R. McConkie

BRM:vh

June 30, 1978

THE RECEIPT OF THE REVELATION
OFFERING THE PRIESTHOOD TO MEN ^{Meeting} OF ALL RACES AND COLORS

In recent years the counselors in the First Presidency and all members of the Council of the Twelve ^{and Presidency} have had an acute awareness of the desire of President Spencer W. Kimball to learn the mind and will of the Lord relative to conferring the Holy Priesthood upon worthy males of every race and color. In recent months one aspect or another of this matter has come up for informal discussion in various regular meetings of the First Presidency and the Twelve. There have been discussions for instance, about patriarchal blessings for Negroes and about the problems we might encounter in Brazil after the dedication of the Sao Paulo Temple. As a matter of historical fact, many of the early settlers in Brazil were Portuguese and African Negroes. There was extensive intermarriage. It is generally felt that an appreciable part of the Brazilian nation is now composed of people who have some degree or other of Negro blood in their veins. Many of these have no facial or other physical characteristics to indicate in any way that they have Negro ancestry. Many of our Church congregations, particularly in Northern Brazil, have in them full and part blood Negroes. The social problems existing in the United States are not found in Brazil to any appreciable degree and so this intermixture of races has not caused problems except with reference to priesthood ordinations and the prospects of temple blessings.

On two occasions in recent months President Kimball has invited the members of the Twelve, if they felt so inclined, to give him written memorandums expressing their personal views together with any doctrinal explanations as to whether it would be appropriate to give the priesthood to worthy members of all races and colors. Some of the Brethren responded to this invitation and sent documents to the President.

The normal Thursday meeting schedule involving the Presidency and the Twelve is as follows: The Twelve meet by themselves from 8 to 10 a.m. During this period they transact their business and prepare matters for presentation to the First Presidency. At 10 a.m. the Presidency come in to the meeting. All of the Brethren then dress in their temple clothes. They then sing, have a kneeling opening prayer followed by a prayer at the altar. Then they dress back into their ~~street~~ normal clothes and conduct the business matters which come before them. At the end of the business which is normally about the middle of the afternoon, the Brethren retire to a dining room for lunch after which they leave the temple.

On the first Thursday of each month the Twelve meets as usual at 8 a.m., then at 9 a.m. the Presidency and all of the General Authorities come in to the meeting. On this occasion any matters of general interest and concern for all of the Brethren are presented by the Presidency or others assigned by them. Then it is the practice for President Kimball to call on various of the Brethren to bear testimony or make such expressions as they feel proper. This meeting is climaxed by the sacrament and a

formal prayer circle in which all of the Brethren participate. ^{in their temple} ~~clothes~~

At the conclusion of the prayer circle it is the practice for President Kimball to dismiss all of the Brethren except the Presidency and the Twelve. After these latter Brethren have changed back into their street clothes they return for the usual meeting to transact their business. On a normal first Thursday of the month, this means they are dressed again and ready to transact the usual business just before or at about noon.

On Thursday, June 1, 1978, the Twelve met as usual at 8 a.m. All of the Brethren came in at 9 a.m. and the normal meeting including testimonies was held. There were about fifteen Brethren invited to speak and bear testimony. With all the Brethren dressed in their temple clothes and at the appropriate time, the sacrament was administered and a prayer circle held. The meeting on this day seemed to have a particularly high spiritual tone. All of the Brethren who expressed themselves did so with faith and testimony and the Spirit of the Lord was present in manifold abundance.

At the conclusion of the prayer circle, President Kimball took the ^{unusual} step of inviting the members of the Presidency and the Twelve to remain in the room in their temple robes and ^{excused} the other Brethren. Always on these first Thursdays, all of the Brethren come to the meeting fasting. On this occasion on the first of June, President Kimball said to the Twelve, that he would like them to continue during the balance of that day to fast with the Presidency and that the normal luncheon at the end

of the business meeting had been cancelled. President Kimball then advised the members of the Presidency and the Twelve that in recent months he had been giving extended serious, prayerful consideration to the matter of conferring the priesthood upon the Negroes and that he felt the need for divine guidance. He said that in recent weeks he had spent many hours alone there in the upper room in the temple pleading with the Lord for counsel and direction. He said he hoped the Lord would give a revelation one way or another and resolve the matter. He indicated that if it was the mind and will of the Lord that we continue in the present course, denying the priesthood to the descendants of Cain, that he was willing to sustain and support that decision and defend it with all its implications to the death. He said however, that if the Lord was willing to have the priesthood go to them, he hoped for a clear affirmation of this so there would be no question in anyone's mind.

There followed a near two-hour period in which there was complete, extended and free discussion on the matter. President Kimball began by asking for expressions of opinion and feeling from members of the Twelve. The Brethren responded freely and without hesitation. None were in any way inhibited in setting forth their views. Each one spoke. Some questions were asked by the counselors in the First Presidency as various of the Brethren expressed their views; these were answered to the seeming complete satisfaction of all. There was a wondrous and marvelous feeling and spirit of unity in the meeting. All

of the expressions of all of the Brethren leaned and tended toward the view that it would be a wholesome and beneficial thing if the Lord felt inclined to approve the giving of the priesthood to worthy men of all races and colors. There was no divisive feeling whatever. A strong, compelling spirit of unity was in the meeting. It seemed as though all of the Brethren were in effect joining in the prayers which President Kimball had recently been making in the same room on this tremendously important matter.

After full discussion and full expression on the part of all concerned, President Kimball suggested that we go forward with the prayer circle. He said that if it was agreeable with the Brethren he would be mouth. President Kimball then importuned the Lord with great fervor and faith. All the Brethren joined in his prayer as it was recited at the altar. He asked that a revelation might be given manifesting the Lord's mind and will on this matter so that the issue could be resolved. It was one of those occasions when the one who was mouth in the prayer, prayed by the power of the Spirit and was given expression and guided in the words that were used and the sentences that were said. The spirit of unity that had prevailed first in the meeting with all the Brethren and then in greater manifestation and degree when the Presidency and the Twelve met alone, continued to increase in the hearts of all present.

While President Kimball prayed, the revelation came. When he ceased to pray, there was a great pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit such as none of those present had ever before experienced. There are no words to describe what then happened. It was something

that could only be felt in the hearts of the recipients and which can only be understood by the power of the Spirit.

When the Spirit of the Lord fell upon certain Nephite congregations, they were unable to write in language what happened and indicated that the outpouring of the Spirit could only be understood by the power of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost in the Old World it is recorded that cloven tongues of fire rested upon the people. It is thought that this is an attempt to find language which would describe the overwhelming power and impact of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of people. On this occasion in the upper room of the temple something akin to the day of Pentecost occurred. All of the Brethren at once knew and felt in their souls what the answer to the importuning petition of President Kimball was. All knew with one voice what the intent and purpose of the Lord was with reference to the priesthood. Nothing could have been more clearly and forcibly presented. Some of the Brethren were weeping. All were sober and somewhat overcome. When President Kimball stood up, several of the Brethren, in turn, threw their arms around him and each of the Brethren knew that an answer had been received and that the voice of the Lord had been heard. All knew what should be done. At this point they retired and dressed into street clothes again.

When the Brethren came back together in the meeting, it was suggested to the Presidency that perhaps in view of the spiritual experience just enjoyed by all that it would be appropriate to close the meeting without further business being

transacted. President Kimball said however, that there were some matters that needed attention and so we stayed for a short period and transacted some essential items and then adjourned. The Twelve however, refrained from bringing up a number of matters that otherwise would have been considered. All of the Brethren felt subdued and sobered.

Subsequent to the meeting President Kimball and each of his counselors and President Benson, representing the feelings of all who were present, expressed themselves to the effect that never in their experience in the Church had they ever felt or experienced anything in any way comparable to what occurred on this first day of June in 1978, in the upper room in the Salt Lake Temple.

On Thursday, June 8, 1978, at the next regular meeting in the temple of the Presidency and the Twelve, after the opening formalities which included the usual prayer circle and after the Brethren had dressed again into their street clothes to transact the business of the day, President Kimball announced to the Presidency and the Twelve that the decision had been made that the priesthood should now go to the Negroes and to all men on the basis of personal worthiness. He had Brother Frank Gibbons read a letter addressed "To All General and Local Priesthood Officers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Throughout the World." This letter was considered carefully. Some slight editorial amendments were incorporated in it. It was approved and became the document which announced the receipt of the new revelation. In the course of a careful consideration,

phrase by phrase, of this letter there was a renewal in the heart of each person present of some of the same feeling that had been poured out upon the group the week before on June 1st. The Lord reaffirmed and recertified to all present that he had given the initial revelation and that it was his mind, his will and his purpose that the Church go forward now into the new era in which the priesthood would go to all on the basis of worthiness.

After the document was approved, there was a discussion as to how and under what circumstances the announcement should be made to the Church and to the world. At the June 1st meeting, and at this meeting on June 8th, all of the Presidency and ten of the Twelve were present. In each instance Brother Francis Gibbons served as the clerk. In each instance Brother Mark E. Petersen was in South America on church assignments and Brother Delbert L. Stapley was ill in the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City. It was felt that Brother Petersen and Brother Stapley should be given opportunity to learn what had transpired and to be asked if they were in complete and total accord. A call was placed to South America for Brother Petersen. As it happens the call came through while the Presidency and the Twelve were seated at lunch in the dining room. President Kimball then had Francis Gibbons read to Brother Petersen the letter of announcement which the Brethren had approved. Then President Kimball talked to Brother Petersen about what had transpired. He received from him a total and complete concurrence and approval. Brother Petersen expressed himself as being in accord and as glad that the

revelation had come and that the priesthood would now go to ^{and the Negroes be the recipients} the Negroes. Later that day the entire First Presidency called upon Elder Delbert L. Stapley in the hospital. They found him in a good frame of mind and prepared and ready to discuss and understand completely what the Brethren were doing. At that time he also expressed concurrence and approval.

In the regular business meeting on Thursday, June 8, it was determined to make an immediate announcement to the Church and the world. It was decided to invite all of the General Authorities who were in Salt Lake into a 7 a.m. meeting on Friday, June 9, in the ^{upper room} upper room in the temple. They were to come fasting. At that time the announcement would be made to them and their concurrence and approval solicited.

At 7 a.m. on Friday, June 9, the Presidency and the Twelve and all of the General Authorities who were in the city assembled pursuant to appointment. This meeting held in the ^{upper room in the temple} upper room in the temple lasted for two hours and forty minutes. President Kimball had Brother Francis Gibbons read the document. The opening song was "We Thank Thee O God For a Prophet," and the closing song was "The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning." President Ezra Taft Benson offered a very fervent and eloquent opening prayer giving thanks to the Lord for the revelation which had come and pleading for a unity among all the Brethren where it was concerned. It was at this point that President Kimball had Brother Gibbons read the letter. The President announced that the revelation had come to give the priesthood to the Negroes. He then invited any of those present including members of the Twelve, to express themselves on the matter. In the course of

the meeting, all members of the Presidency, of the Twelve, of the Seventy, the Patriarch to the Church, and the members of the Presiding Bishopric expressed themselves affirmatively, giving support and concurrence and approval to what had been determined and decided. There was a great spirit of unity and faith in this meeting. For the third time the outpouring of the Spirit bore witness to all who were participating that the voice of the Lord had manifested his will where the priesthood is concerned. There was once again a feeling of unity and conformity and of gratitude and appreciation where the whole matter was concerned. The minutes of this meeting will indicate the expressions and views and feelings of the various Brethren.

During the course of this meeting, President Tanner went out to give a copy of the announcement letter to Heber Wolsey, Director of Public Communications. When President Tanner came back, he said that he had given the copy to Brother Wolsey and told him to read it to him out loud. Brother Wolsey began to read and got half way through and began to cry. As it turns out this has been a rather typical reaction on the part of fervent and faithful people. The announcement was carried in the Deseret News of Friday, June 9, 1978, without editorial comment and without being written up in a newspaper style, simply the words of the letter over the signature of the First Presidency.

It is the feeling of many of the Brethren that the Lord chose to give this revelation to President Kimball and to all of the Presidency and the Twelve in the manner in which he did so that all concerned would be independent witnesses of

what had transpired. If the revelation had come to the President alone, the Brethren of course would have sustained completely his announcement that it had been received. In view however, of the tremendous import of what was involved, of the fact that it would change the whole course the Church has pursued from the beginning, and of the great missionary, social, cultural and other implications that will arise in the future, it seems clear that the Lord chose to give the revelation in a dramatic and forceful way to the President of the Church and those associated with him as prophets, seers and revelators, so that each individual would be able to bear witness that the voice of the Lord had been heard.

The reaction throughout the Church has been wholesome and edifying. Everywhere almost without exception, there has been rejoicing and a spirit of gladness that the day at last has come when the priesthood can go to all worthy males. It appears to many that this is one of the signs of the times. Heretofore when we have read the revelations saying that the gospel is to go to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, before the second coming of the Son of Man, we have done it reading out the Negro race. Now these revelations can be fulfilled in the literal and complete sense of the word. Now we can see a fulfilment of the scriptural promise that when the Lord comes he will find among every nation, speaking every tongue, and mingling with every kindred, those who will be kings and priests, who will live and reign with him on earth a thousand years.

Many people throughout the Church are now thanking the Lord

that they have lived to see the day when this great step has been taken that will enable his Church and Kingdom to fulfil completely, the obligation placed upon them to carry his word to all people, so that in due course as Joseph Smith promised, the day may come when the great Jehovah will say, the work is done.