

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

17 MAY 2018 - SALT LAKE CITY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints issues the following statement:

RACISM

Throughout history and continuing into modern times, the issue of racism has caused great suffering and division. Racism affects the hearts and minds of individuals and leads to the uncharitable and harmful treatment of God's children. Institutions may also display racism, by enacting policies and perpetuating teachings which harm minorities directly or through purposeful exclusion leading to lost opportunities for blessings.

UNIVERSAL LOVE

In His earthly ministry, the Savior, Jesus Christ, taught that the injunction to "love thy neighbour as thyself" was equal in importance to the commandment to love God Himself. In giving this instruction, Christ offered no caveats, no qualifications, and no limitations.

UNIVERSAL REPENTANCE

This central, universal teaching of Christian love was accompanied in Christ's ministry by a universal call for repentance. As all have sinned, Christ taught repentance, not only to his disciples, but also to those Apostles whom he called in his ministry, following the pattern previously established of ancient Prophets acknowledging error, humbling themselves, confessing their sins and making restitution before God and those whom they have wronged. Such admonitions for universal repentance were reinforced in the latter days when the Lord stated:

"Hearken and hear, O ye inhabitants of the earth. Listen, ye elders of my church together, and hear the voice of the Lord; for he calleth upon all men, and he commandeth all men everywhere to repent." [D&C; 133:16](#)

RECONCILIATION INITIATIVE

Five years ago, an initiative began in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to fulfill Christ's paired teachings of universal love and repentance. In the October 2013 General Conference, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, second counselor in the First Presidency stated:

"...to be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine." [Come, Join with Us](#)

CONFESSION

This admission of error by the brethren was then followed by a detailed confession in the form of a Gospel Topic Essay published on the church website just two short months later in December of 2013. This essay, entitled "[Race and the Priesthood](#)" gave further details to Elder Uchtdorf's statement by describing these specific errors in the main text and associated footnotes:

- Supporting segregation through the organization of race based congregations.
- The denial of Priesthood and Temple blessings to families of African descent.
- The perpetuation of slavery in Mormon-controlled Utah, advocated by church leaders.
- Teaching anti-miscegenation and discouraging interracial marriages.
- Teaching that dark skin was a sign of God's curse on the posterity of Cain
- Teaching that slavery was a second curse on the black skinned posterity of Cain through Ham.
- Teaching that blacks were not valiant in the premortal battle against Lucifer and consequently banned from Priesthood and Temple Blessings
- The sealing of a black woman, Jane Manning James, as an eternal servitor, or slave, to Joseph Smith after denying her requests for her personal sealing to her own family.
- Requiring South African converts to trace their ancestry and confirm had no "Negroid forebears"
- Failure of the Brethren to discern God's principle of universal brotherhood in 1954 after praying for an answer on the matter of race and the priesthood.
- Failure of the Brethren to discern the import of the Book of Mormon's declaration that the gospel message of salvation should go forth to "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." and that "all are alike unto God"

In describing these errors, the "Race and the Priesthood" essay outlined the process where church leaders in 1978 rescinded the ban on priesthood and temple blessings. The essay further acknowledged the erroneous teachings which lingered in church lessons and culture in this important statement:

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

Since the release of that essay nearly 5 years ago, the Church as a whole - both leaders and members - have been able to reflect on the significance of these past failures, allowing true sorrow and a change of heart to pave the way for true repentance.

APOLOGY

On Thursday, May 17, 2018, LDS Church President Russell M. Nelson and his counsellors and the Quorum of the Twelve met with the national leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the Church administration building on Temple Square. In a room filled to capacity by these leaders and members of the media, President Nelson issued the following statement, a transcript of which may be downloaded [here](#):

"As I look around, I am reminded that this is not the first time leaders of our church have sat in counsel with the leadership of the NAACP. The first meeting, in 1963, prior to the October general conference resulted in a remarkable statement on civil rights read by President Hugh B. Brown over the tabernacle pulpit. It was a beginning. As I ponder on it now, I recognize how much we as a church must learn from our past."

It is with a solemn heart that I address you all today. I have upon my shoulders a mantle that I don't suppose you can see with your eyes. It has a weight of its own, and represents the responsibility and duty that accompany this office which I hold - the holy stewardship for the children of God both within and outside of our faith. The trust inherent to that stewardship is no small part of its weight.

This prophetic mantle of this dispensation of the fullness of times began on the shoulder of the founder of our faith, the Prophet Joseph Smith. I imagine Joseph's shoulders strained at times to bear the weight of the mantle until they were relieved of that calling on the ground outside of Carthage Jail. Still, the mantle passed on.

To each of the brethren who have born it since then, those men who have passed through the office I now hold, its weight and shape have persisted - adapted to the needs of the people and the inspired direction of our creator. Each of us bear the same duty and responsibility in accepting this office, and in so doing we also may be called upon to act on the principle of that mantle in completing or responding to matters started by our institutional and ecclesiastical forbears who also bore it before us. It is in that capacity that I address you now, this day.

Today, as Prophet, Seer and Revelator, and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, I offer a full unqualified apology for the error of racism which was taught from this office and in the tabernacle and over the pulpits of our churches the world over. I am joined by my counselors in the First Presidency and the full Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in making this apology and we collectively bear witness and testimony of the devastating effects of racism which were perpetuated by leaders of the church in the past.

Institutionally in the past, we taught false and hurtful ideas about curses, skin color, and spiritual worthiness, and we were wrong. We taught false notions of white supremacy in civil and religious life, heinous ideas of pure white blood, and erroneously condemned interracial marriage, and we were wrong. We took it upon ourselves to interpret scripture to justify these false ideas and closed our hearts and minds to the truth of God's love even when it could be found in God's written word, ancient and revealed, and we were wrong. We hardened our hearts to the plain and simple truth of Universal Brotherhood and equality of all before God, and we were wrong.

We withheld from our brothers and sisters the joys of Temple service, the security of an eternal family, the peace of hope for full exaltation, complete fellowship among the saints and the duty and blessing of the Priesthood, and we were wrong. We operated in the political sphere and used our influence to fight against civil rights when we should have been on the front lines in defense of those rights, and we were wrong. We reprovved good men and women whose hearts were enlightened and whose voices were raised to God for equality, and we were wrong.

We have previously acknowledged that the false and racist explanations for the Priesthood and Temple restriction were wrong and disavowed them. Today, I am declaring that the ban itself was wrong. It was not of God but of fallible men, born of ignorance, pride and sin.

We stand humbly before our God and the world this day to prostrate our souls and beg forgiveness. With the mantle of authority also comes accountability. Though we did not originate these teachings and policies, we cannot deny accountability for

their harm. Many of us were living and secure in our places of Priesthood privilege during those days and did not speak out against their falsehood when it was our duty, and each of us now feels the weight of institutional responsibility for those affronts to God's precious children.

Our souls are harrowed up by the memory of this sin. To every man, woman, and child and to every family scarred by this hurtful sin, we humbly ask for forgiveness. We plead forgiveness of God and forgiveness from all of you in this room and throughout the world.

Throughout the scriptures, the Lord has called for his people to humble themselves and correct the error of their ways - the leaders most of all. Members may be faithful in following the teachings and instructions of their leaders, but if their leaders are in error, how much greater is their need for repentance because of their influence?

Just as individual repentance is commanded by the Lord, so too is institutional repentance, and we, the prophets and apostles must take the lead. We began our own institutional repentance in 1978 when the restriction on Priesthood and temple blessings was removed. I learned as a surgeon how a wound which is not fully healed may fester, and I have come to see the principle true for our church. For us, this wound of racism has taken the form of lingering false ideas which have remained in the hearts of both leaders and members resulting in cultural divisions which fester below the surface.

Today, I am cleansing the wound and completing that doctrinal restitution by acknowledging that there are false racist ideas which have been enshrined in our canonized scripture. This is not as surprising as you might imagine - in the very title page the Prophet Moroni himself states that the Book of Mormon may contain errors which are "the mistakes of men" and this is true of any scripture.

With that in mind, I am announcing the formation of a Scriptural Review Committee on Race. This committee is composed of representatives from The Quorum of the Twelve, The Relief Society, The Seventy and key members of BYU and CES faculty in sociology and race relations and will be presided over by the President of the Genesis Group. The committee will take the next 6 months to review our current body of modern revealed canonized scripture and identify those faults of men around racism which have been left uncorrected. They will consult with experts in sociology, race relations, and theology from both inside and outside of the church and present their recommendations at the October General Conference this fall. Those recommendations may take the form of additional footnotes, updated headers, additional explanatory text or even full removal of offending passages.

We will all have time to prayerfully consider their findings and recommendations before the April 2019 General conference where they will be presented to the body of the church for a sustaining vote according to the law of Common Consent as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants. Following the April 2019 conference the Correlation department of the church will complete the requisite systematic revision of all manuals, videos and publications.

True repentance requires a deep introspection and thorough understanding of the degree of the offense. Though it may sometimes be painful, it carries a hope for a

brighter future free from the mistakes of the past. Though we have been chastened of the Lord, we are hopeful for "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

It is my prayer that we all examine our hearts and root out those aspects of ourselves which may have been shaped by the racism of our past. As leaders and as members we must constantly guard against these biases. The strongest ally we have in this endeavor is Christ. He set the example of unconditional love and charity. If we measure our hearts against that standard and always strive to meet it, changing where we must even though it may be difficult - then we can stay on the path of discipleship and grow in faith and love for all of God's children.

On behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, its current and past leaders and members, I offer this humble apology and plead for forgiveness in the merciful name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

CONCLUSION

Following President Nelson's remarks, First Presidency counsellors President Dallin H. Oaks and President Henry B. Eyring joined NAACP leaders in making a joint statement affirming the statement of apology and repentance offered by the Prophet and calling for a season of introspection and reconciliation in the coming months as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints undertakes a solemn process of institutional repentance.

Members throughout the world are encouraged to view the upcoming First Presidency-sponsored event on June 1, 2018, celebrating the 1978 revelation on the priesthood on its 40th anniversary. BeOne.lds.org has been created to provide more information about the event, which will feature a message from the First Presidency, stories of faith of Church members and music from Gladys Knight, the Saints Unified Voices, Alex Boyé, the Bonner family, the Unity Gospel Choir International and members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

[Transcript of President Nelson's Apology](#)

[Essay: Race and the Priesthood](#)

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