

There were similar concerns about some of the material I had on Brigham Young. While it was clear that they wanted me to infer from this that there was an error in my understanding, they had nothing concrete to support this view, so the conversation moved on to other subjects.]

It is hard to summarize the whole [interview]. [One exchange was triggered by Elder Anderson presenting me with a copy of the 1969 First Presidency statement, as though it were the answer to my questions. In response I pointed out] the errors in the last [i.e., 1969] First Presidency statement, and the one before [1949], and it was obvious to all that I was more familiar with the specifics of the history than they, so [they] left that approach as irrelevant. They fully accepted the sincere basis of my interest, and my objectivity, [but] totally rejected any history of the doctrine as relevant to its authenticity.

While acknowledging that the discussion [of the origins of Church teachings on blacks] had been opened by Joseph Fielding Smith, and ultimately by Brigham Young, they did not think [Smith's] obvious scholastic inadequacies justified further discussion—though [they acknowledged] the problem this posed for people interested in the subject who see Stewart's *Mormonism and the Negro*, as well as Smith's *Way to Perfection* in multiple editions sold as [virtually official] explanations of the Church position. [I asked how it was that, if the Church thought the whole subject inappropriate for published discussion, no effort was made to dissuade those from *within* the Mormon establishment from publishing on it—to which there was no answer.⁴⁵]

It seems, to my genuine surprise, that they are convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that the policy is divinely instituted, and intimated strongly that this had been made manifest to President Lee. [While Packer strongly implied this conclusion, he used a double negative to make this point, which I thought odd.⁴⁶ I asked if he considered it possible that continuation of the policy of priesthood denial was the Lord's will, even without it having originally been a revealed or inspired practice. He hesitated, unexpectedly, but eventually said that for him this was not a possibility. I also asked—more than once, what he thought about the

development at some length in my paper, demonstrating that Joseph F. Smith's earlier accounts were the most accurate. Part of the sensitivity probably derived from the use by later Church leaders—including then-President Harold B. Lee—of the 1908 account to dismiss the “problem” of Elijah Abel.

⁴⁵I referred to the contemporary publications by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, John L. Lund of the Church's Seminary and Institute Program, and William E. Berrett, vice-president of Brigham Young University—all widely quoted on the subject.

⁴⁶His remarks were to the effect that “I would not say that [the Prophet] has not received,” followed by an anecdote on a tangentially related experience in which President Lee said that “the veil was very thin.”

inspiration of the intertwined teachings linking blacks to Cain, Ham, Canaan, etc. He always dismissed this—again, often with a wave of the hand, as though these links were without merit but without actually saying this explicitly. But then, toward the very end of our discussions he followed up some point by saying that there just was something about “that lineage”—referring to the traditional biblical genealogy—which would bar interracial temple marriages with blacks even after they received the priesthood.]

I expressed hope that [the modern confirmation to President Lee] would be made known to the membership of the Church, [but this suggestion] was more or less sidetracked with references to looking for a sign. [And I said that] at the least I thought that the historians could be asked about First Presidency statements that purported to give historical facts, which gave the impression that conclusions were being drawn from history that might (and did) prove inaccurate [to which there was no response].

Packer's other points dealt more with me—whether I would become a rallying point for the disaffected fringe, what I would do when the whole thing “blew up again” in response to my article (I told him I didn't expect anything to happen simply based on my article), whether I was going to pursue it further, etc.

Anyhow, it was a very friendly exchange—Anderson characterizing me as “a much younger man than I expected” [at the time I was thirty], and Packer as “a unique bird.” It was a profitable meeting for me; they seemed very genuine in their concern, and to be thoroughly dedicated to the Church. . . . On the other hand, we have a long way to go before values which academically oriented individuals consider important are given any priority in their minds. [Packer, in fact, spent some time recounting the course he saw as typical of others who delved into doctrinal history, especially on this subject—an escalating progression leading to loss of faith, marital infidelity, and divorce. It was implicit in his comments that one of the reasons I was deemed “unique” was that somehow I had done all this research and writing while remaining—in the eyes of the Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Singapore Mission presidents—a strong Church and family person.]

While I would have [preferred that] the discussion led elsewhere, I was satisfied with our interchange, and that my position appeared easily tolerated, even though it was rejected, and . . . one they would rather not see. [Packer] initially minimized the research [as nothing really new]; [but] by the end he commented that it was obviously the most extensive study yet done on the subject. [He said he now planned to send my lengthy *Compilation* over to the Historical Department, to be logged into the general Church archives, i.e., this was the end of the discussion. At no point did he make any suggestion of First Presidency interest.]

During this stop I also had time to visit the new History Division, and