

lot of people didn't [expect to see me here], but they never gave me any credit for growing up."⁶⁷ Jokes about blacks in the Church betrayed some uneasiness among the rank and file, but such stories soon died out.⁶⁸ Unlike the ending of plural marriage, where some people felt that their personal salvation depended on conforming to the earlier commands, this change had no such impact. A few people did reject the revelation and left the Church, and some lapsed into inactivity out of dissatisfaction, but no new splinter group formed.⁶⁹

Within a few days of the announcement President Kimball received more than a hundred letters from members expressing elation and gratitude. He received letters of appreciation from non-members, too, including a telegram from President Carter.⁷⁰ He received about thirty negative letters, nearly all from non-Mormons,⁷¹ mostly calling him a fraud in claiming revelation⁷² or a traitor to his race.⁷³ An anti-Mormon styling himself the "Prophet Onias" asserted in a "revelation" ten days after the announcement that giving priesthood to the Negro race exposed Church leaders as "frauds and false prophets" who had acted because "they feared the persecution that they may have received."⁷⁴ An anonymous flier circulated a few weeks after the revelation arguing that because President Kimball had changed the teaching of earlier Church presidents, "either Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, or Spencer W. Kimball are liars." As late as 1982, anti-Mormon or fundamentalist newspaper advertisements were still taking the same tack: because the Church abandoned a long-established "doctrine," it was therefore false.⁷⁵

67. Brigham, "To Every Worthy Member," 15.

68. William A. Wilson and Richard C. Poulsen, "The Curse of Cain and Other Stories: Blacks in Mormon Folklore," *Sunstone* 5, no. 6 (November/December 1980): 9–13; "Now we can have the best basketball team in the country." "It was a black day for the Church." Arrington, *Journal*, June 9, 1978. "When my family heard, they celebrated by buying a watermelon." Arrington, *Journal*, June 12, 1978. A joke with less bite and more whimsy says that "when asked whether there might be a Black president of the Church, President Kimball answered 'Not in my lifetime.'"

69. Don L. Searle, "Four Who Serve," *Ensign* 22 (February 1992): 39.

70. Robert Bryson, "Church Officials Applaud LDS Action on Blacks," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 10, 1978, A1, A2; "Carter Praises LDS Church Action," *Deseret News*, June 10, 1978, A1; Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 418.

71. The few protesting Church members wrote to President Kimball vituperatively: "You senile old bastard. . . . Even the black animals are laughing at us and even planning for the 'take over' as they call it. . . . You stupid fool. . . . Our Church shall curse the day you were born."

"I request that my name be taken off the LDS Church records. You gave the N—— the priesthood. This tells that you are liars [*sic*] and The Book of Mormon is a fraud."

"I could have accepted and respected your decision if you had been honest enough to make the following statement: 'The doctrine is being changed due to changing times and pressures from the bureaucratic government.' To claim a vision and lay the church open to further ridicule I can't accept with a clear conscience. . . . my only wish is to have my name removed from the records of membership." These and letters in the next footnotes are in Kimball Papers.

72. For example, "You ostensibly had a 'revelation'—opportunistically, one fears." "I and many others really got a big laugh about your recent revelation." "Kimball, you faker." "A senile old man claims he had a revelation." See also Gibbons, *Spencer W. Kimball*, 297; Stathis, "Mormonism and the Periodical Press," 51, quoting T. S. Carpenter, in *New Times*. Mario S. DePillis, "Mormons Get Revelations Often, but Not Like This," *New York Times*, June 11, 1978, E10: "For Mormonism's antiblack policy a revelation was the only way out, and many students of Mormonism were puzzled only at the lateness of the hour."

73. For example, "The N—— and the Jews they taking over the world." "You are setting a path of destruction and chaos [chaos?] for the Mormon Church." "Christian-white societies are inundated with parasitic colored." "God 'changes not,' and he does not accept Negro race priests." "You are a traitor to your own race."

74. Book of Onias, Section 25, June 18, 1978, in a pamphlet by Prophet Lee, *Apostasy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Boise: School of the Prophets, n.d.).

75. Jerald and Sandra Tanner advertisement, "The Changing World of Mormonism," *Salt Lake Tribune*,