

April 10, 1951

Letter from First Presidency this date, from ASB papers. President Smith had died 6 days prior, after the letter which prompted this reply. The letter was to "Mr. Herbert A. Ford, c/o Norton Steel Company, Port Erie, Ontario, Canada":

"Dear Brother Ford:

Your letter of February 25, addressed to President Smith, has been received and read with deep and genuine sympathy. The hearts of the Brethren bleed with sorrow over the lot of yourself and millions of others who find themselves in the same situation, but for which neither the Brethren nor the Church is in any way responsible.

I am directed by the Brethren to reply to you in the terms in which reply has been made to many others who find themselves in the same condition, and who presented their cases to the Brethren with anguish equal to your own.

Your statement is noted in which you say, 'I hope for the day when things might change, maybe not in my day, that all the people who may have confronted you in your lifetime on the same trouble will be free.'

I am happy to tell you that from the very beginning the Brethren have said that ultimately the restraint under which you now rest will be removed, and that, as President Woodruff expressed it, 'The day will come when all that race will be redeemed and possess all the blessings which we now have.' This is your hope, and the assurance of salvation given by the prophets of the Lord.

We assume that you are familiar with the position of the Church. I take the liberty of quoting to you a statement which sets forth the position of the Church concerning your race:

'The position of the Church regarding the negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality, and that while the details of this principle have not been made known (sic), the principle itself indicates that the coming to this earth and taking on mortality is a privilege that is given to those who maintained their first estate; and that the worth of the privilege is so great that spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be as to the kind of bodies they are to secure; and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood, is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth. Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the priesthood by the negroes.'

The brethren wish me to express the hope that you will not lose heart nor let your courage fail, but live righteously. Somewhere at the end of the road there awaits you, if you do live righteously in accordance with the revealed truths of the Gospel, the same blessings enjoyed by others of the human race.

The Brethren would like you to have in mind that the place you hold in the scheme of things is not the result of any action on the part of the Brethren, either those living or those who have lived in the past. Furthermore, there is nothing the Brethren can do about removing the restraints until the Lord speaks again. Your place was determined by the Lord himself, and the only underlying principle of which we are aware is that which the Lord himself announced. The point I should like to leave with you is briefly that the Lord assigned you your place for reasons which He himself had, and a part of which, at least, he has given to us.

Praying the Lord to bless you, I am

Faithfully yours,  
JOSEPH ANDERSON

Secretary to the First Presidency"

C:A:d

(note - the quotation included is an **excerpt** from the First Presidency statement of August 17, 1949)