

Religious Accommodation in the Land of Racial Democracy: Mormon Priesthood and Black Brazilians

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standing before the Mormon congregation, the young man exhibited the excitement and appreciation for life most fourteen-year-old teenagers have. One could sense the willingness, even yearning, to confront the challenges which would be placed before him. He was ready to be made a deacon. The young Brazilian branch president standing beside him reviewed for the congregation the importance of the Aaronic priesthood and the impact such a responsibility should have on the life of a young man. He briefly described what he considered to be the exceptional courage and behavior of this boy. He had joined the Church without parental support and maintained activity despite unusual pressure and adversity. The branch president explained that during the worthiness interview held earlier, the young man had expressed depth and knowledge of the spiritual aspects of life, exceptional for someone just fourteen years old. There was no question in the mind of the branch president and most of the Brazilian congregation of his worthiness to receive the Mormon priesthood. The request for congregational approval by the raising of the right hand was to be little more than a mere formality.

Events did not go as planned. When the obligatory request for negative votes was made, four in the congregation, all American missionaries, indicated opposition. The branch president, surprised and unsure of how to proceed, had the young man sit down and indicated that the problem would be cleared up after the meeting. The congregation was stunned, most having never seen a negative vote cast in church. The boy was confused and not quite sure what was happening.

In a conference held after the sacrament meeting, the elders explained the problem. During visits with the boy's family they had noticed that two younger brothers exhibited some negroid physical features. Even though the young

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man was fair-skinned with brown wavy hair, it was not uncommon for African ancestry to show itself in one member of a family and not in another. If their suspicions were correct, he would be ineligible to hold the Mormon priesthood because of African ancestry. The branch president had never visited the family and had never seen the younger brothers. He decided that his Brazilian counselor and one American elder should visit with the family and very tactfully determine the lineage of the boy before any further action could be taken.

A week later the elders returned. They had spent one evening with the boy's parents talking about genealogy and viewing family photos and felt that they could see in the family pictures evidence of black ancestors. Thus, according to the policy of the Church, the priesthood could not be given to any of the children in the family. The young boy was informed of the decision, explained the reasons for the priesthood denial, and counseled to continue his activity in the Church.¹

This incident, though somewhat unusual, is an example of the difficult problems the Church's policy of priesthood denial to members of African descent created for leaders living in areas with a significant black population. In these parts of the world, the priesthood issue was much more than an occasional embarrassment or a matter for theological debate. It was a very personal issue which had to be confronted often. Many members struggled with this policy which openly discriminated against family members, friends, and occasionally themselves. It was also a source of conflict between local members and missionaries and many times resulted in limited growth and development for the Church.

The Church was very careful to avoid introducing Mormonism into areas of the world with large black populations. However, the Mormons did go to Brazil, South Africa, the American South, and Hawaii. Local officials had difficulty, first in accepting these restrictions, which were sometimes contrary to local beliefs and practices, and then in administering them. An examination of the local response to the Church's policy provides an important picture of the evolution of practices, procedures, and policies developed to help local leaders work with a very difficult and potentially divisive issue.

BRAZIL'S RACIAL MAKE-UP

Brazil provides an excellent example of the effect of the Church's racial policy on local organizations, not because its experience was necessarily unique, but because of the magnitude of the potential problems. Not only did Brazil have a large black population but the Brazilian tradition of intermarriage between blacks, whites, and Indians created a large racially mixed population.

¹ The branch president within a year determined that the missionaries had made an error and the boy was ordained to the Aaronic priesthood. He has continued to remain very active and has since served in several positions in the Church. The circumstances surrounding this event were taken from oral interviews with the boy (now in his thirties) and the branch president, as well as the Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission (hereafter Manuscript History), Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter, LDS Church Archives.

This situation forced the Church to confront regularly not only the issue of priesthood denial but that of racial identification.

For three centuries (1538–1850), African slaves were imported to work the country's plantations and mines. The small number of white women among the early Portuguese settlers created a quasi-European population with a high percentage of mulattos and mestizos, thus blurring the racial lines between white and black. Although an equally important European and Asian immigration of 47 million between 1884 and 1957 significantly altered the racial picture, over 30 percent of the population is some combination of black, white, and Indian, with interracial marriage continuing within most classes in Brazilian society.²

Because Brazil's colonial sugar and mining industries absorbed most of the African slaves, blacks are concentrated in the northeast and parts of the state of Minas Gerais. Brazil's southeastern coffee plantations developed later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, drawing both blacks and a large European immigrant population. The cooler weather of the Brazilian south attracted European small farmers, and a lack of any significant labor-intensive industry resulted in a small black population in the lower three states. These differences were to significantly influence the Church's decisions as to where missionaries would be sent.³

MORMON BEGINNINGS

In 1928, when missionaries were sent to Brazil, they were instructed to avoid the priesthood question by working only with German-speaking people in Brazil's southern immigration colonies. However, as part of the nationalistic fervor of President Getúlio Vargas's *Estado Novo* (New State), the Brazilian government in 1938 outlawed the use of non-Portuguese languages in any

² The latest Brazilian census to include racial categories (1950) showed 26 percent of the population as racially mixed. The figure should be much higher since the Brazilian perception of color classifies as white many who are actually mixed. T. Lynn Smith, *Brazil: People and Institutions* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), pp. 68–73, 126. For a study in miscegenation in Brazil, see Michael Bergmann, *Nasce um Povo* (Petrópolis, Brazil: Vózes, 1978), and Thales de Azevedo, *Cultura e situação racial no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1968).

³ The 1950 census shows the differences in Brazil's racial make-up. In the northeastern state of Pernambuco, 49 percent were listed as white, 9.3 percent black, and 40.9 percent mixed, while Santa Catarina in the south had 94.6 percent white, 3.7 percent black, and 1.5 percent mixed. Smith, *Brazil*, p. 70. J. Reuben Clark, visiting Brazil on his way to the Seventh Pan-American Conference in Montevideo in 1933, reportedly said, "We've been wondering about starting a mission down here for a long time, but we know there's so much mixed blood we rather hesitate to open it up because there's going to be a problem about the priesthood." Daniel Shupe, Oral History, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 22 Feb. 1973. James H. Moyle Oral History Program, p. 32, LDS Church Archives. Clark was able to give President Rulon S. Howells, Brazil's first mission president, little substantive advice on how to deal with the problem. "You know, I'm quite concerned over the problem you will have with the Negro in Brazil because they are so dominant. The boat stopped at a couple of places [Rio de Janeiro and Santos] . . . All I could see there was Black people." Rulon S. Howells, Oral History, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 18 Jan. 1973, p. 19, LDS Church Archives. Clark was also very interested in a possible blood test which would provide medical grounds to positively identify persons of African ancestry. See D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1983), pp. 231–32.

public gathering.⁴ Church leaders realized that they must begin teaching Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. By 1940, the mission language had been changed from German to Portuguese.

During these early years, lineage was relatively unimportant, since the priesthood was seldom given to Brazilians. Mormonism was very much a North American church, and missionaries provided branch and district leadership almost exclusively.

Two incidents in 1949 alerted the mission president, Rulon S. Howells, to the potential priesthood problems which the Church could have in racially mixed Brazil. The first incident was the planned ordination of a physically white active member in Rio de Janeiro who, just prior to receiving the priesthood, determined that he had slave ancestry. The second was a racial conflict between the missionaries and black members in the interior of São Paulo.

Piracicaba, a small city in the state of São Paulo, was one of the first areas where Portuguese-speaking missionaries were sent. It had experienced only limited success but had remained open after the missionaries were sent home during World War II, thanks to members in the nearby city of Campinas. The branch not only stayed open but added thirteen converts, many of whom were of African descent. The returning Americans were welcomed by a branch in which many of the active participants had the "lineage of Cain."⁵ The missionaries thus inherited a difficult situation epitomized by an incident in 1949. As a result of teaching English classes, the missionaries were able to interest some professors at a local college in attending church. After the services, the professors informed the elders that though they were impressed with the message of Mormonism, they were not interested in joining a church of poor blacks.

When Howells received this report, he decided that the relatively slow growth rate in Piracicaba was due to the presence of the blacks. "None of the other churches had a meeting where black and white had mingled completely so they weren't used to it." On 23 October 1949, in a meeting with the elders, he announced that the only way the Church would grow would be to separate the two groups, with a white branch using the chapel and the blacks meeting in a home of one of the members. They could be brought back together when the white branch was stronger and the idea of integrated meetings was more acceptable.⁶

⁴ The law was passed on 19 April 1938. The government had a legitimate concern because of Nazi activity in the German colonies. See Emilio Willems, *A Aculturação dos Alemães no Brasil*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Companhia Editorial Nacional, 1980) or Karl Loewenstein, *Brazil Under Vargas* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1942), pp. 156-90. For a summary of Church history in Brazil during the early period see John DeLon Peterson, "History of the Mormon Missionary Movement in South America to 1940" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1961) and Joel Alva Flake, "The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in South America: 1945-1960" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975).

⁵ The two most common terms for blacks used in Brazil missions were "the blood of Cain" or "the lineage of Cain." These terms here identify those not eligible for the Mormon priesthood and do not indicate genealogical linkage between Cain and the blacks of Brazil.

⁶ Howells, Oral History, pp. 60-61, and Manuscript History of the Brazilian Mission, 23 Oct. 1949, 29 Nov. 1949, and 31 Dec. 1949, hereafter Manuscript History. For informa-

The black members refused to acknowledge that they were the stumbling block for Church growth. They explained to Howells that separate meetings would harm all involved and that by meeting together the whites would soon learn to accept racial differences. Howells insisted, interpreting the arguments of the black members as an attempt "to force the white people to meet with them" and feeling that their actions exhibited little regard for the gospel. Howells refused to give in and meetings were scheduled in the home of one faithful member, but continued resistance upset Howells to the point that he withdrew the missionaries and stopped visiting the black members. "To make a new start among the white population, the elders go to the city from a neighboring city to hold cottage meetings with white members and friends." The elders were to return after most of the black members had lost interest and a new branch could be started.⁷

To avoid problems in the future, Howells instituted a mission-wide genealogical program designed to discover and document the racial background of all Brazilian members. Ancestral lineage information was also required of potential converts, and missionaries were not allowed to perform any baptisms without President Howells's approval. The primary goal of the mission was racial purity for all new converts. By the end of 1953, Howells was able to report to Salt Lake City that, "during the past year, only two baptisms have been performed where family members are partial descendants of Cain."⁸

The more time-consuming aspects of Howell's racial program were later modified and missionaries were allowed to make baptism and priesthood decisions. However, the essence of Howells's approach continued through 1978. Identifying the racial background of all investigators was an important missionary responsibility. When approaching a contact, the missionaries were to scrutinize the color of the skin, eyes, and hair, the shape of the nose and face, color lines on the hands and feet, and the texture of the hair. If the person did not have negroid physical features, the missionaries would try to interest him or her in the Church. Sometime during the first few visits, the missionaries would discreetly probe the family's racial history using genealogical interest as a pretext. The inquiry generally involved questions of ancestral origin and often included looking at family photos. Occasionally, if necessary, the missionary would visit relatives to check the physical appearance of other family members. After all or most of the gospel discussions, the missionaries would present a special lineage lesson which included a direct question concerning the lineage of the family. If at any point during the teaching process the missionaries had questions or found evidence indicating probable black lineage, they discouraged the person from continuing his or her investigation. Only if the contact

tion concerning the Piracicaba Branch at this time see Harry Maxwell, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, 23 July 1982, Provo, Utah, copy in possession of the author.

⁷ "Annual Statistical and Financial Report of the Brazilian Mission, 1950," p. 1, Library, Church Office Building, São Paulo, Brazil.

⁸ *Ibid.*, "1953," p. 2. For a description of Howells's genealogical program see Campinas Branch, Brazilian Mission, Mission Circulars, 1949-53, LDS Church Archives.

continued to attend meetings and accepted the Church's position on blacks would a baptism be performed.⁹

The vigilance of most missionaries and the active discouragement resulted in very few persons with known black ancestry ever joining the Church. Those who did generally accepted their second-class status. Consequently, the obviously black member was not an administrative problem for Church leaders, but difficulties arose when Brazilians without negroid physical features joined the Church and later uncovered a genealogical link to Africa.

American missionaries, as long as they were in charge of branches and districts, applied strict criteria of genealogical purity to determine eligibility for priesthood ordination. Membership records were marked. Men unable to prove their racial origin were generally not given the priesthood. However, in the late fifties and early sixties, as Brazilians began to replace Americans as branch and district leaders, a subtle but important change took place in the criteria used for determining racial worthiness. This change can best be understood by examining fundamental differences in perception of race between North Americans and Brazilians.

AMERICAN AND BRAZILIAN RACIAL PERCEPTIONS

Because of Brazil's large black and mulatto population, Brazilians generally believe that racial amalgamation made their country the "land of racial democracy." A generation of twentieth-century Brazilian scholars trumpeted that Brazil had made a major contribution to world peace by providing an example of a mixed and diverse society in which racial harmony existed without prejudice or discrimination.¹⁰

Sociologists who began to study Brazilian racial attitudes and practices in the late 1950s reported that Brazil in fact had racial prejudice, though it was manifested in different forms. According to Marvin Harris from Columbia University, race in the United States was determined according to "hypodescent," or ancestry. The presence of a black in a person's genealogical line was the most determinant in racial categories. Since this system did not have any middle classifications, the offspring of interracial marriages were socially and legally identified as blacks and subjected to the same restrictions as was the person of unmixed African heritage.¹¹

⁹ I have identified numerous sets of instructions, guides, and lesson plans used to instruct missionaries on the racial question. The most extensive was a twelve-page booklet (8¼ × 14") probably written in 1970, containing genealogical sheets, extensive instructions, theological explanations, and a Portuguese language lineage lesson. "Lineage Program," Brazilian Mission Ephemera, LDS Church Archives. See also *Handbook: Brazil North Central Mission* (São Paulo: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brazil Central Mission, n.d.), pp. 38-42, copy in possession of the author.

¹⁰ The most influential writer on Brazil's racial past is Gilberto Freyre, whose ideas have influenced Brazilian and international writers for over fifty years. His most important work is *The Masters and the Slaves* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

¹¹ Marvin Harris, *Pattern of Race in the Americas* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1964), pp. 54-64. In 1982, a white woman, descended from African slaves, sued Louisiana to have her legal classification changed from black to white. Louisiana law re-

Anthropologists discovered that in Brazil the determining factor in racial classification was not genealogy but physical appearance. This system had several racial classifications between black and white in which different combinations of physical features determined the group. The child of an interracial marriage frequently would not be in the same racial classification as his or her parents and siblings.¹² A person with lighter skin or non-nappy hair texture could easily move up the social scale in Brazil's less restrictive racial system. Monetary success or educational achievement also facilitated the movement of darker Brazilians into lighter classifications, regardless of color or physical features. Thus, many mulattos were classified by their peers as white because of economic or educational achievement. Many scholars have suggested that poverty and not race is the most important variable in understanding Brazil's social structure.¹³

MEMBER/MISSIONARY CONFLICT

The Church's system of determining the lineage of Cain was so similar to the North American concept of racial identification that missionaries and members were often at odds when the decision of racial classification was made. Missionaries felt that branch leaders many times did not understand or wish to comply with the Church's methods used to determine the lineage of Cain. Members in return felt that the missionaries were overly sensitive to race and that their decisions were often based on false or questionable evidence.

The incidence of racial conflict in the United States also meant that American missionaries were race-conscious, their opinions supported by their perceptions of the Church's theological and political policies about the place of the black in the Church and in society as a whole.¹⁴ Many missionaries doubtless had personal experiences with blacks that broadened their views, but very little in their official experience softened their racial attitudes. They heard frequent reminders from mission presidents and traveling General Authorities to avoid baptizing Brazilians with the lineage of Cain.¹⁵ At regular missionary

quired the black designation regardless of physical appearance because the woman had more than one thirty-second negro blood. K. Demaret, "Raised White, a Louisiana Belle Challenges Race Record That Calls Her Colored," *People Weekly*, 6 Dec. 1982, pp. 155-56.

¹² Charles Wagley, "On the Concept of Social Race in the Americas," in Dwight B. Hoath and Richard N. Adams, eds., *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America* (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 540-41.

¹³ See Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 205-65, and Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbia University, 1969).

¹⁴ Brazilian missionaries who served as companions to Americans and some members were embarrassed by the occasional obvious racism of missionaries. Alfredo Lima Vaz tells of an elder who not only refused to talk to blacks but would cross the street to avoid getting close. Vaz felt that the issue of race was the cause of greatest conflict between Brazilians and missionaries. Oral History, interviewed by F. LaMond Tullis, 4 May 1976, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil, copy in possession of F. LaMond Tullis.

¹⁵ The most significant missionary conferences which dealt with the question of priesthood denial occurred during the visit of Joseph Fielding Smith in 1961. See Manuscript History, 25 Oct. 1961. For an example of a more recent conference held with Elder Bruce R.

conferences, the doctrinal reasons for the stand and instructions on how to recognize and teach blacks were discussed. Books and handouts were distributed as additional reinforcements.

However, the Church's practice of limiting information to the Brazilian member about the Mormon position on the black further strengthened the differences in perception between the two groups. There was a conscious effort by mission leaders to avoid talking about the priesthood question with members. In the early 1950s, an occasional presentation was made in church, especially to young members, cautioning against interracial marriage. However, as the racial question became an issue, both within and outside the Church, the flow of written or verbal information on the reasons for priesthood restrictions lessened. For example, the Portuguese translation of Joseph Fielding Smith's *The Way to Perfection* in 1964 left out the two-chapter discussion on the lineage of Cain, while other language translations published at the same time included it.¹⁶ Brazilian members had to rely almost entirely on missionaries for explanations of the Church's position, a situation which left Brazilian members somewhat confused about the reasons for the Church's policy on the lineage of Cain. With such limited background and knowledge, local Brazilian leaders felt little motivation to change and continued to hold their personal racial perceptions. And that was the loophole.

The official policy which branch, ward, and stake leaders were instructed to follow was simple. Descendants of Cain, usually those who traced their lineage to Africa, were not allowed to hold the priesthood.¹⁷ The Church did not, however, explain how to determine African heritage. Brazilians were genuinely puzzled when they needed to make a decision about (1) a man with some African features who did not have genealogical proof of either pure-European or partial-African lineage or (2) a man with ambiguous or no negroid physical features whose genealogy included African ancestry.

Questions on how to deal with the first group were eliminated in 1967 when the burden of proof shifted from the individual to the Church. Even

McConkie, see Manuscript History of the Brazil São Paulo South Mission, 22 Sept. 1975, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁶ Chs. 15 and 16, Joseph Fielding Smith, *O Caminho da Perfeição* (São Paulo: Centro Editorial Brasileira, 1964). In the Spanish, German, and Japanese translations, these two chapters were included. When a revised Portuguese translation was published in 1978, the translators were again instructed to omit the two chapters. Flavia Erbolata, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, 8 Sept. 1982, Provo, Utah. When the Pearl of Great Price was translated into Portuguese in 1957, President Asael T. Sorenson felt that the members needed a lengthy theological discussion on the Church's racial policy. Missionaries wrote twelve lessons, complete with scriptural and prophetic statements which would then be given in priesthood meeting over a three-month period. The lessons were translated and sent to Salt Lake City for final approval before being printed. The response from Church headquarters was that the lessons were not to be given and that Church leaders were to "just give the people a statement from the First Presidency saying that those with the Blood cannot receive the priesthood as yet, the reasons we don't know." Historical Record of All Meetings Held in the Mission Office, Melchizedek Priesthood Committee, 6 Nov. 1958, and 7 Oct. 1959, Library, Church Office Building, São Paulo, Brazil.

¹⁷ For an excellent study of the evolution of Church policy, see Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *DIALOGUE* 8 (Spring 1973): 11-68.

though the previous "clean genealogy" policy had not been strictly adhered to, it was sometimes used to justify withholding the priesthood in questionable cases. After 1967, leaders were instructed that if potential priesthood holders did not have "obvious evidence of lineage in themselves or their families and do not know whether or not it is present, they are not required to prove it before being taught or receiving the priesthood." The question of race was thus eliminated from most priesthood ordination decisions.¹⁸

The second group, those with genealogical links to Africa, posed a significant dilemma for the leadership. The Mormon Church in Brazil has always struggled to find enough active male priesthood holders to staff local and regional organizations. It was frustrating to have an active member who was considered white by Brazilian racial perceptions but ineligible by Church standards. Two strategies emerged to overcome this problem and to allow ordination.

The first was for someone in priesthood authority to declare racial purity. This generally occurred at the bishop or stake-president level, but at times went all the way to the First Presidency. The most widely known case was that of the president of the Ipiranga, São Paulo Branch. In 1964, while doing his genealogy, he discovered a probable African ancestor in one of his grandmother's lines. Upon informing the mission president, he was released from all priesthood duties and allowed to work in the Church only in positions not requiring the priesthood. After several years of faithful activity, he was asked to provide information concerning his genealogical research as well as Church activity, which was then forwarded to Salt Lake City. The First Presidency, after examining the documentation, concluded that he did not have the lineage of Cain and should be allowed to use his priesthood. In this and other cases,

¹⁸ "Instructions," *O Animador*, Dec. 1967, p. 6. There is some confusion about when this change actually occurred. In 1954, as a result of President McKay's visit to South Africa, the Church's official policy was liberalized and the requirement that men prove racial purity was done away with. See Armand C. Mauss, "The Fading of the Pharaohs' Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban Against Blacks in the Mormon Church," *DIALOGUE* 14 (Fall 1981): 12, and Farrell Ray Monson, "History of the South African Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1853-1970" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960), pp. 42-46. As far as the First Presidency was concerned, this new policy applied to Brazil as well as South Africa. See Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark*, p. 233. However, Brazilian Mission President Asael T. Sorenson was apparently never told of the changes so there was no adjustment in preordination procedures. In fact, the requirement for genealogical checks of potential priesthood holders were strengthened. Some administrative aspects of the policy were liberalized during the subsequent term of William Grant Bangerter (1958-63) but these changes were due more to increased Brazilian participation in branch presidencies than to any perceived policy change from Salt Lake City. A genealogical check of potential priesthood holders was in effect in some form into the mid-1960s when Spencer W. Kimball during a 1965 tour of the Brazilian South Mission was informed by President C. Elmo Turner that several worthy men were not being given the priesthood because they could not prove racial purity. Upon returning home he sent President Turner a copy of the minutes of the 1954 First Presidency Meeting approving the Church-wide change of policy. He then made an official announcement of the policy to a South American Mission Presidents' Seminar in 1967. As a result of that announcement some Brazilians who had not been given the priesthood were ordained. Spencer W. Kimball to C. Elmo Turner, 23 Nov. 1965, Brazilian South Mission President's Correspondence, LDS Church Archives.

priesthood authority nullified genealogical research and allowed for men with apparent African heritage to be declared racially eligible.¹⁹

The second and more frequently used method relied on patriarchal blessings for determining lineage. Since blacks were not allowed to hold the priesthood, the reasoning went, they could not be part of the house of Israel. Thus, the patriarch was instructed that if the person were a descendant of Cain, he should not pronounce a tribal designation. More significantly he was told not to declare whether the person had the lineage of Cain. Consequently, if the recipient was declared to be from one of the tribes of Israel, then Brazilian local leaders believed that he could not be a descendant of Cain. It was a very simple method to dispose of the difficult administrative problem of determining lineage in questionable cases.²⁰

For example, a young teenager from the interior of São Paulo with fair skin and black wavy hair was baptized, given the priesthood, and, at the age of nineteen, called on a mission. While on his mission, his mother wrote that he had no right to hold the priesthood since his father, whom he had never known or even seen a picture of, was a mulatto. Against the advice of his mission president, he returned home, extremely confused and troubled. The branch president was able to convince him that since he had been designated a member of one of the tribes of Israel in his patriarchal blessing, he could not have the lineage of Cain, regardless of what his mother said. The boy began to use his priesthood again, eventually receiving another mission call which he ac-

¹⁹ Eduardo Alfieri Soares Contieiri, Oral History, São Paulo, Brazil, interviewed by F. LaMond Tullis, copy in possession of Tullis. See also Wayne Beck, Oral History, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 1974, LDS Church Archives, p. 64. For example of President Kimball resolving a similar situation in Mexico, see Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), p. 231. For an example of a branch president making a similar decision, see Manuscript History, Brasilia District, 19 Sept. 1965 and 23 Sept. 1965. These decisions were most often made at the branch or ward level. The most difficult cases were sent to the First Presidency until the spring of 1978 when all responsibility for determining lineage was formally transferred to stake and mission leaders. See Mauss, "Pharaohs' Curse," p. 26. The administrative clearing of certain men for the priesthood often caused problems with members who found it difficult to understand why one received the priesthood while others with similar racial backgrounds were denied. One member whose friend had been denied, observed, "Since I know Negroes who've received the priesthood in the Church, that upsets me . . . because some people have received the priesthood and its all right for them, and they still continue in the quorums and they still had the priesthood . . . my friend just because he was so far away and didn't talk to the President of the Church or write to him just left the Church." Helio Lopes de Costa, Oral History, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 1973, p. 26, LDS Church Archives.

²⁰ Jose Lombardi, Oral History, interviewed by Frederick G. Williams, São Paulo, Brazil, 1975, original in possession of Williams. I have talked with several Brazilian members and four patriarchs who have generally confirmed these procedures. There were problems, however, when the patriarch did feel inspired to designate a tribe for someone with obvious negroid features. The person would often return to his bishop expecting to be given the priesthood. Apostle L. Tom Perry, after his visit to Brazil in 1976, commented, "I have found a problem in interviewing the two patriarchs. One has been giving lineage from the line of Israel to the Negroes." Quarterly Stake Conference Report by General Authorities of the Santo André Stake Conference, 15-16 May 1976, "Construction of the São Paulo Temple Correspondence," Library, Church Office Building, São Paulo, Brazil, copy in possession of the author.

cepted and completed. In this and other cases the patriarchal blessing was the final authority.²¹

These evolving methods of dealing with the black question meant that the denial of the priesthood to members of African descent ceased to be a significant administrative problem for the Church in Brazil. Leaders were able to work within the restrictive Church policy to deal with almost any administrative situation that came up. These procedures worked well because they simultaneously acknowledged the Church's requirements for priesthood ordination and Brazilian perceptions of racial identification. The Church in Brazil had confronted a difficult situation and had developed a way to live with the problems.²²

SÃO PAULO TEMPLE

This accommodation is important to understand in analyzing the effect of the 1975 announcement that the São Paulo Temple would be constructed. Some observers not familiar with Brazil began to suggest that the Church would face a crisis in Brazil when the temple opened. Would not the mixing of races in Brazil make it impossible to exclude members of African descent?²³ They did not understand that the question had already been resolved at the time of ordination to the Aaronic priesthood. Church leaders in Brazil were not overly concerned with possible administrative difficulties resulting from having a temple in Brazil. The extensive correspondence between São Paulo Church headquarters and Salt Lake City between 1975 and the dedication of the temple in 1978 includes only one reference to any administrative aspect of the black question and it had to do with whether a black could enter the temple to perform baptisms for the dead. (The answer was no.)

If the construction of the São Paulo Temple had any effect on the Church's decision to lift the priesthood restriction, it was the result of compassion rather than administrative concern. President Kimball, during more than fifteen years of contacts and visits to Brazil, reportedly had several difficult and emotional experiences with blacks and was visibly touched by their continued faith. After the announcement of the temple, General Authority Area Supervisors reported how black members gave financial donations, assisted in the construction, and participated in planning the temple dedication. Many in Brazil and Salt Lake City were moved by such wholehearted participation

²¹ Horácio Saito, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, Araçatuba, São Paulo, Brazil, 18 April 1982, copy in possession of the author.

²² Notice this remark by William Grant Bangerter of the Quorum of the Seventy who spent several years in Brazil as a missionary, mission president, Regional Representative, and a General Authority Area Supervisor: "I'd learned that it's impossible to tell by observation, or even by trying to establish facts, who had or had not lineage. The ultimate recourse would be to consider the case carefully and then, if there was no assurance that they had the Black lineage, to present it to the Lord with a request that he would inspire or prompt the conferral of the priesthood. We knew unless He inspired us we inevitably make mistakes. I came to feel that He was permitting people to have the priesthood who may have had traces of this lineage, even though we were trying to be as faithful to the instructions as we possibly could." Oral History, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 1981, p. 13, LDS Church Archives.

²³ Jan Shipps, "The Mormons: Looking Forward and Outward," *Christian Century*, 16-23 Aug. 1978, pp. 761-66; and Mauss, "Pharaohs' Curse," p. 25.

towards the construction of a building which they would not be allowed to enter.²⁴ Concern over how to allow blacks into the temple — not the impossibility of keeping them out — was the most likely contribution of the São Paulo Temple toward the 1978 lifting of the priesthood ban.

The history of the Mormon Church's denial of the priesthood to persons of black African descent is an example of change and adjustment to different social and cultural situations within an authoritarian religious structure. The result for the Church was the use of two different approaches and methodologies to implement the same policy. The American missionary generally used a genealogical approach for determining race, thus limiting the percentage of converts joining the Church with African ancestry. When Brazilians were given responsibility over priesthood decisions, the methodology for determining racial worthiness of members changed. First, because of a shift in the burden of proof responsibility, leaders were in most cases simply able to avoid the issue. Secondly, the decisions of priesthood authorities, especially those of patriarchs, were used to invalidate rational genealogical research. The uncomfortable but functioning accommodation to the two different perceptions of race allowed for both Brazilians and Americans to accept and work within a difficult situation.

²⁴ In 1977, Apostle James E. Faust indicated that black members helped "to make blocks for the temple just like anybody else, they have made their monetary contributions for the construction of the temple, and they've made their sacrifices just the same as everybody else. And I've advised President Kimball and Brother McConkie of the faithfulness of these people." Oral History, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 30 Dec. 1977, p. 26, LDS Church Archives. See also Bangerter, Oral History, and Helvécio Martins, Oral History, interviewed by Mark Grover, 18 April 1982, Rio de Janeiro, copy in possession of the author.