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*Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* by Stephen R. Haynes

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David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003

Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002

Reviewed by Stirling Adams

Two recent books explore how the Genesis account of Noah cursing his grandson Canaan came to be used as a primary justification for enslaving black Africans. In doing so, the books add to the understanding of how this and other biblical stories were previously viewed within Mormonism as support for race-based classifications. Genesis tells of Ham finding his father Noah drunk and uncovered in his tent. Ham informs his brothers Shem and Japheth. They, walking backward so as not to see their father's nakedness, cover Noah with a garment. After Noah awakes from his drunkenness, he curses—not Ham, and not himself—but Ham's son Canaan by pronouncing: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (see Genesis 9:20–27). There is no reference to dark skin, to any skin color, or to Africa, and Noah does not say the curse applies to Canaan's descendants. Yet this story, as it was amplified and changed in extrabiblical interpretations, became the ideological cornerstone used to justify the slavery of black Africans thousands of years afterwards.

David Goldenberg is a Jewish studies scholar and has been editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, President of Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, and Associate Director of the Annenberg Research Institute for Judaic and Near Eastern Studies. In *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Goldenberg seeks to answer how and when the Genesis story became a "curse of Ham" condemning black Africans to slavery.

Of the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cultures that viewed the Hebrew Bible as scripture, Goldenberg writes that "biblical exegetical traditions moved freely among the geographically and culturally contiguous civilizations of the Near East. It is precisely the fluidity of the various

interpretations and legends that provides a unique opportunity for cross-cultural investigation" (5). His book is the result of thirteen years of steady research and presents what is often highly technical scholarship and linguistic analysis in a readable, cogent manner. His index of hundreds of primary ancient sources include Targum texts,<sup>1</sup> apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works, Greek and Latin authors, Hellenistic-Jewish, rabbinic, early Christian, Islamic, ancient Near East, Qumran, and Samaritan writings; this list does not even include ancient works that he cites infrequently or does not discuss at length (413).<sup>2</sup> He also cites 1,478 writers in his "Index of Modern Scholars."<sup>3</sup> As these indices imply, Goldenberg's research has been thorough. Though I find his analyses and typically carefully drawn conclusions compelling, I am unable to competently evaluate his multilingual, cross-cultural scholarship, and so look forward to following scholarly responses to *The Curse of Ham*.

The book is focused around answering four questions: How did biblical-era Jews view black Africans? What was the attitude of biblical and early post-biblical-era Jews towards dark skin color in general? When did slavery of blacks first become prominent? And, once trade in black slavery became established, was the Bible reinterpreted to reflect the new historical situation?

These questions, and Goldenberg's voluminous research, might sound dry in the abstract, but in answering them his text often reads like a fast-paced whodunnit mystery novel. For example, many biblical commentators, including some Mormons, believed Ham's name meant "hot," "dark," or "black."<sup>4</sup> The meaning was assumed to support the conclusion that Ham had black skin. Did the name have that meaning? See chapter 10, "Was Ham Black?" for a thorough answer of "no," and for how and almost exactly when and where the mistranslation first occurred. Goldenberg reviews the etymology of "Ham" in the languages involved (including Arabic, Aramaic, Coptic, Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, Old South Arabian, Semitic, Syriac, and Ugaritic), and concludes that the word used in Genesis did not mean "black," "dark," or "heat," and that as of now the word is of unknown origin. He believes mistaken interpretations may have developed in large part because in reducing spoken Hebrew to written form two different phonemes were represented with one graphical symbol, thus leading to confusion between words that in oral Hebrew were distinguished (141-56).<sup>5</sup>

The book of Numbers reports that Moses married an Ethiopian woman. The text makes it clear that the Lord does not disapprove, but the question arises, would the marriage have resulted in stigma for Moses, his wife, or any of their children? (Num. 12: 1-8). And in the biblical era,

was there generally a proscription against miscegenation? In chapter 4, "Postbiblical Israel: Black Africans," Goldenberg reviews commentary on Moses' wife, again using biblical, Targum, Hellenistic-Jewish, and early rabbinic texts. He concludes there is no evidence that biblical and post-biblical Judaism saw "anything denigrating in African origin or in miscegenation" (56; see also 26–40, 52–59, 163).<sup>6</sup> Goldenberg also discusses alternative interpretations of this story, one of which suggests that here "Kushite" should have been used to describe the woman instead of "Ethiopian," and that the verse refers to Moses' wife Zipporah who may or may not have had black skin (28–29, 52–59). His analysis of the broader question of whether there was a cultural reproach with regards to black Africans yields a similar conclusion: he finds no evidence of such a stigma and concludes, "Apparently Kushite ancestry did not matter one way or the other" (75).<sup>7</sup> This conclusion may remind Mormon readers of Hugh Nibley's similar findings in *Abraham in Egypt*.<sup>8</sup>

The Genesis 4 account of Cain killing Abel reports that Cain was cursed so that "when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength," and "the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." Though this account makes no reference to skin color, why did many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americans believe Cain was cursed with black skin, and when did that belief originate? In chapter 13, "The Curse of Cain," Goldenberg reports that the evidence suggests an Armenian author of an apocryphal "Adam-book" from between the fifth and eleventh centuries made the initial mistake: he mistranslated the Genesis 4:5 statement that Cain's "countenance fell" as meaning Cain's face and skin turned dark. This interpretation was repeated infrequently until it gained momentum in seventeenth-century Europe and eighteenth-century America. Goldenberg comments briefly that both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young shared an assumption that Cain was cursed with dark skin and was the ancestor of black Africans (178). Without reading the early Mormon record closely, Goldenberg would not be aware that though many of Joseph Smith's followers adopted Protestant folklore that tied black Africans to Cain, there is little to show that the radical, reformation-minded Joseph Smith held the same view.<sup>9</sup>

Most importantly (especially to a book entitled *The Curse of Ham*), when and how did the story of Noah's curse become associated with black slavery? While the Genesis text explicitly states it was Ham's son Canaan that was cursed by Noah, many commentators, including Mormons, applied the curse to Ham, and through him to all of Ham's children.<sup>10</sup> How, why, and when did readers redirect the curse at Ham? See chapter 11, "Ham Sinned and Canaan was Cursed!" for the history of that

interpretative leap. In that chapter and in chapter 12, "The Curse of Ham," Goldenberg reports that he found no link between skin color and slavery in Jewish sources from antiquity and late antiquity or in early Christian sources. Instead, a commentary thread referring to Canaan as having black skin first appeared among Muslims in the second century before Christ. An explicit link between blacks, slavery, and the curse is made later, in the seventh century after Christ, also in Arabia. This link occurred precisely "when the Black became strongly identified with the slave class in the Near East, after the Islamic conquest of Africa" (170). Goldenberg summarizes this time period:

In sum, in regard to Noah's curse, four factors were at play during the first six or seven centuries of the Common Era: explanation—an attempt to make sense of the Bible; error—a mistaken recollection of the biblical text [that Ham was cursed]; environment—a social structure in which the Black had become identified as slave; and etymology—a mistaken assumption that Ham meant "black, dark." The combination of these factors was lethal: Ham, the [assumed] father of the black African, was cursed with eternal slavery. The Curse of Ham was born. (167)

The curse was born but still had not gained currency among Christians. It first appeared in the Christian West in the *fifteenth* century as Europe discovered Africa and started to trade slaves. Then, "as the Black slave trade moved to England and then America, the Curse of Ham moved with it" (175). This book's focus is not on modern sources, but another work by historian Benjamin Braude corroborates the conclusion that among Christians the curse of Ham was not commonly applied to blacks until after the sixteenth century (Braude demonstrates that, up to that point, Christians more commonly used the curse to express animus towards Jews), and not prominently applied until the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

In his introduction, Goldenberg reports that in the context of racialized readings of the Bible both biblical and extrabiblical sources have been misinterpreted "ultimately due to an assumption that the way things are now is the way things were in the past," failing to realize that "our perceptions of the Black have been conditioned by the intervening history of centuries of Black slavery and its manifold ramifications" (7). *The Curse of Ham* represents an important step towards increasing the ability of those who view the Bible as scripture to avoid continuing this error.

### Review of *Noah's Curse*

A second book picks up with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America—where Goldenberg's *Curse of Ham* ends and where Mormons were first introduced to the idea of the curse. Stephen R. Haynes holds the

A. B. Curry Religious Studies Chair at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. His book, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*, is a history of interpretation of the curse in the American South. His focus is on the several decades prior to the Civil War through 1901, picking up again in the 1950s during a resurgent national debate over segregation. As such, readers will find the book illuminating to the Mormon experience, as the Mormon community was influenced by some of the same historical events and interpretative trends as Southern Christians.

After providing a brief history of interpretation of the curse from early Judaism and Christianity through the twentieth century (chapter 2), Haynes gives a detailed analysis of how the curse was used in the South (chapters 4 and 5). Then he devotes chapters 7 and 8, "Noah's Sons in New Orleans" and "Palmer's Biblical Imagination" to how the prominent Presbyterian leader Benjamin Palmer used the curse in his voluminous sermons and writings from 1855 to 1901.

Haynes describes Palmer, a New Orleans pastor, as the emotional and intellectual leader of Southern American Presbyterianism and one of the South's most popular and influential clergymen (relevant to his research for this book, Haynes served as Parish Associate for a Memphis Presbyterian church). Palmer's sermons and writings were prominently published and widely read, and he founded the *Southern Presbyterian Review* and *Southern Presbyterian* periodicals. After the war, Palmer was elected to chair or moderate church committees charged with establishing church policies. "In this way," Haynes writes, "Palmer was able to make the church a mouthpiece for his own reading of scripture" (138). In his prominent status as a church leader, orator, and writer, and in his organizational leadership as well as in his longevity in these activities, perhaps the man that played a role within Mormonism most similar to Palmer was Joseph Fielding Smith.<sup>12</sup>

One of Haynes's themes is that the American racialized interpretation of the Genesis 9 curse significantly influenced how Southerners interpreted the Genesis 10 "Table of Nations" (a list of Noah's descendants) and the Genesis 11 account of the Tower of Babel. He argues that in a manner unique to Christian Americans, each chapter of Genesis 9 through 11 became a story first useful in justifying slavery, then in supporting racial segregation.

Palmer was a prominent case in point. He viewed the Genesis 9 story of the curse as Noah's "camera" of the future. Palmer preached that "the outspreading landscape of all history is embraced within the camera of Noah's brief prophecy; showing how from the beginning God not only distributed them [the races of man] upon the face of the earth, but

impressed upon each branch the type of character fitting it for its mission" (133). What Palmer and other Americans saw through the lens of the "camera" was a guide for assigning each race a place and position. With that guide in mind, readers would turn to the following chapters of Genesis and consequently find a racial meaning in them also (125-46).

In various of his writings exploring ancient traditions, Nibley recounted mythic lore set in Ham's or Abraham's era that gave a prominent role to Nimrod.<sup>13</sup> But Mormons, who have heard relatively little of Nimrod in our own preachings, may be surprised at the assertion that Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord" mentioned in Genesis 10:9, was after Noah himself "the most imperial figure, literally and figuratively, in the ancient and medieval imaging of the Bible" (49).<sup>14</sup> Haynes shows that Nimrod played a large role in Southern racial teachings. Despite the positive description of Nimrod in Genesis, he was portrayed as a black African who, much like Cain, introduced disorder and rebellion, thus providing another justification for enslaving or segregating black Africans. In chapter 3, "Unauthorized Biography: The Legend of Nimrod and His Tower," Haynes summarizes the embellishing given the story of Nimrod (scant details are provided in Genesis), beginning with the early rabbinic and Christian eras. Some early stories portrayed Nimrod as the builder of the Tower of Babel, a detail that came to be consistently adopted by the Middle Ages. By the middle of the nineteenth century in America, the story had been fleshed out with substantial extrabiblical (and often contradictory) details, including: Nimrod founded and ruled the major cities of Mesopotamia (but was a black African), he was an accomplished and great leader of men (but could not speak coherently), he built the Tower of Babel to ascend to heaven (and built it over the mouth of hell), he introduced fire worship, set himself up as a god, had magical clothing, established a satanic religion, and introduced tyranny (41-61).

A second theme is that the history of the interpretation of Genesis 9 through 11 in the pre- and post-war South adumbrates American and Southern core values. Haynes spends considerable time comparing the uses to which Southern Christians put these scriptures before the Civil War (pro-slavery, anti-federalism, criticizing abolitionists as anarchists and anti-Christ) to the decades after the war (pro-segregation, anti-federalism, anti-internationalism, anti-ecumenism, pro-traditional values). In chapter 6, "Grandson of Disorder," after summarizing how the legend of an African Nimrod was used in the South, he concludes, "This is illuminating evidence of the process by which Bible readers have seized upon Ham's mysterious grandson to interpret their experiences and project their fears. In the portrait of Nimrod that emerges in American

readings of Genesis between the antebellum period and the end of the twentieth century, his character and career are transparent expressions of American cultural concerns" (121).

Haynes finds that Palmer used Noah's curse in the same way, first to justify the enslavement of blacks; then to discover divine sanction for the law of separation as it applied to political secession, civic segregation, and ecclesiastical separation; and finally as a warrant for the "practical extinction" of Native Americans. Palmer's use of these biblical narratives over a period of 50 years elucidates both their role in American racial discourse and their remarkable flexibility in the hands of someone in search of a transcendent warrant for racial hierarchy. (145)

Haynes reports that while the stories of Noah's curse, Nimrod, and the Tower of Babel were heavily used in the South before and around the time of the Civil War, their use in political discourse for racial purposes was largely discontinued during the first half of the twentieth century. Then, he explains, "racial readings of Genesis 9–11 reemerged with a vengeance during the segregation debates of the 1950s and 1960s" (116). In particular, the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954,<sup>15</sup> and the debates leading up to the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, spawned vigorous defenses of segregation based in the scriptures (see 85–86, 103–4, 114–21, 165–66).

Haynes gives numerous examples of conservative Christians arguing during this time period that the lesson of Genesis 9 is that segregation follows "God's established order" (116–21). In doing so, he provides perspective for one of the most prominent—and surprising—cases of segregationist preaching within Mormonism. In 1958, Bruce R. McConkie published his encyclopedia-style book *Mormon Doctrine*. Although McConkie introduced the subject of segregation by stating that caste systems "are contrary to gospel principles of equality and fair treatment," especially when these systems "impose restrictions, slavery, and denial of natural rights," he went on to preach that, in a broad sense, caste systems and racial segregation originated in the gospel (particularly in regard to marriage), and that blacks are spiritually and physically inferior to the original race of Adam and Eve.<sup>16</sup> In the context described by Haynes, these and similar teachings of McConkie can be seen largely as a somewhat typical reaction by racially conservative American Christians to the growing phenomenon of racial integration.

Haynes believes honor and order were core Southern cultural values that played a significant role in how the text of Noah's curse was interpreted. In chapters 4 and 5, "Original Dishonor" and "Original Disorder," he argues that, unlike other readers, most Southerners did not see the



story as recounting some sort of sexual indiscretion: Ham had either dishonored his father, created disorder, or both. Where dishonor was the charge, he shows that many Southern readers understood the transgression as "a violation of familial loyalty that marked Ham and his African descendents as utterly devoid of honor and thus fit for slavery" (67). Haynes explains the concern for order that animated the worldview of white Southerners as resulting in part from a "dread of slave insurrection that periodically seized the Old South" (96).

As one example of this influence on the interpretative tradition, he writes that Southern Christians consistently retold the story of the curse as centered on vengeance for Ham's laughing at his father's nakedness (the biblical text contains no reference to laughter). Though other cultures included laughter or mockery by Ham in their telling of the curse, only in the South (with a fear of black rebellion) was the laughter considered behavior sufficiently wrong to justify a perpetual curse of slavery (94-97).

In the final part of the book, Haynes turns from the historical to the present. In chapters 10 and 11, "Challenging the Curse: Readings and Counterreadings" and "Redeeming the Curse: Ham as Victim," he argues that because it is used to transmit antiblack sentiment in twenty-first century America, the story of Noah's curse still requires a cure. He offers his own attempt, starting with advice to read the story in "the context of the biblical canon and its message of redemption" (203). He reviews other events recounted in Genesis (the Fall, Abel's murder, general human wickedness) accompanied by "specific expressions of divine displeasure" and notes that in the story of Noah's curse, "for the first time in biblical history, God remains curiously silent in the midst of human 'sin'" (204). As such, Haynes suggests readers should not, as has been typical, assume Noah's statement was divinely sanctioned.

Then, he offers a reinterpretation using Catholic anthropologist and literary critic René Girard's theory of mimetic rivalry and a scapegoat effect.<sup>17</sup> Haynes assumes a central competition among Noah's oldest sons Shem and Japheth. He finds a canonical link between Ham and Jesus, both of whom he views as innocent victims chosen within a cultural practice of sacrificing a scapegoat upon which communal blame can be projected. Haynes explains that "the object of the brothers' desire—their father's blessing—is shared in exchange for their complicity in scapegoating a third party" (211). Although the sacrificial Ham is not killed, "he becomes a perpetual human sacrifice, surviving as a target for whatever postdiluvian corruption must be accounted for. Abandoned to dishonor but never consumed, Ham is available for literary lynching whenever needed" (212). Haynes reads the story of Noah and his sons as a type of "the willing

victimhood of God's Christ" (217), with Ham as an innocent victim and the curse as teaching "we are all victims, all victimizers, . . . all in need of rescue and redemption, all loved and favored by God, all revealed in our depravity by God's truth. Seen in this light, the designation 'Noah's curse' not only displaces the stigma of guilt from Ham the innocent victim but also implies that the curse and responsibility for redeeming it belong to all" (218).

As a side note relevant to Mormons, I have suggested to Haynes that he misunderstands the Mormon impact on American racial readings of the Bible. He writes in passing that "the suggestion that Cain's mark was blackness was advanced in eighteenth-century Europe and was popularized a century later in America by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism" (15). However, while some of Smith's followers did understand Cain's mark to be the genesis of the dark skin of black Africans, the evidence does not establish that Smith himself held that view (see note 9). Also, this teaching was already common among American Christians by Smith's time (see Goldenberg, 178–79), and Joseph Smith was hardly in a place to influence popular opinion on such theological matters. As Naomi Felicia Woodbury wrote of the early Mormons, "The church was in its infancy: weak, disliked, and ridiculed. It was in no position to affect American thought."<sup>18</sup>

Together, Goldenberg's and Haynes's books reinforce the importance of reading and interpreting scripture with careful attention to the text itself and due consideration given to possible translation complexities or errors and to interpretative glosses that may have been introduced over time. Both books can be useful in assisting modern readers in identifying and avoiding the distorting impact cultural mistreatment of black Africans appears to have had on how biblical stories were understood and utilized in recent centuries. Readers with a continuing interest in the topic of racialized readings of Genesis will want to keep an eye out for Benjamin Braude's forthcoming book, *Sex, Slavery, and Racism: The Secret History of Noah and His Sons* (to be published by Alfred J. Knopf). Until that is released, portions of Braude's work on the topic are accessible in previous journal publications or conference presentations.<sup>19</sup>

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1. The Targum were early Aramaic Jewish translations or paraphrases of the Old Testament from the first and other early centuries AD. Goldenberg, *Curse of Ham*, 391.

2. For example, Goldenberg cites Maimonides and David ben Abraham Maimuni five times each, but neither author is on the list of ancient sources, as they were not primary sources.

3. If Goldenberg can take the time to research 1,478 authors, I can at least count them. Readers familiar with scholarship on Mormons and race matters are likely to recognize at least a few of the modern scholars listed, particularly Newell Bringhurst and Naomi Felicia Woodbury.

4. For Mormon instances of this belief, see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 343; "Through Ham (a name meaning black)"; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 2:176: "It is likely that Ham's name was changed because he had a black wife, for *ham* is an adjective in Egyptian for black"; LDS Bible Dictionary in *Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), sv. Ham—"Ham. *Hot*, Son of Noah" (all italics in originals).

5. Hugh Nibley suggested the biblical name "Ham" may be linked to the Egyptian deity Min through mistaken readings of "Min" as "Khem" or "Khm." Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, ed. Gary P. Gillum, vol. 14 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 557-78, esp. 562, 566-67.

6. See chapters 1, "Biblical Israel: The Land of Kush," and 2, "Biblical Israel: The People of Kush," and appendixes I "When is a Kushite not a Kushite? Cases of Mistaken Identity," and II "Kush/Ethiopia and India," for a discussion of biblical use of the terms "Kush/Cush," "Cushite," and "Ethiopia."

7. Goldenberg explains in chapter 4 and in the conclusion that this finding does not mean he found an absence of positive or negative symbolic references to skin colors.

8. In the subchapter entitled "No Prejudice," Nibley discussed whether there existed in the Abrahamic era a prejudice against skin color. He concluded there did not: "In the drawings and texts, which are numerous, the proportion of black to white seems to follow no pattern but that of a society in which the races mingle freely and equally." He agreed with Heinrich Brugsch that in records of the "four races" of the period and geography (Egyptian, Asiatic, Black, European-Berger), there was not "the slightest indication of race distinction." From reviewing numerous royal portraits and royal mummies, "from the earliest dynasties right down to the end," Nibley determined that if black skin "did not prevent one from becoming pharaoh, neither was it a requirement. There was simply no prejudice in the matter." He concludes the subchapter with the statement that in the Abrahamic era it is "clear that there is no exclusive equation between Ham and Pharaoh, or between Ham and the Egyptians, or between the Egyptians and the blacks, or between any of the above and any particular curse." Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 585-87.

9. See, for example, Lester Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," *Dialogue* 8 (Spring 1973): 16 (evidence that Joseph Smith believed Negroes descended from Cain is "not very convincing" and "Certainly there is presently no case at all for the idea that he 'taught' this genealogy"). Joseph Smith's writings do show that he had at least temporarily accepted some elements of American racial folklore. Perhaps in part because of this, Goldenberg errs, as did many Mormons after Smith's time, in interpreting Smith's teachings and revelations through a lens shaped by the wrong assumption that the Church's race-based practices were

initiated either by Smith or during his lifetime, with a corollary assumption that Smith therefore subscribed to all the racial folklore soon cited by Mormons to explain those practices.

Abraham 1:25–28 was revealed to Joseph Smith, which was later used by many Mormons to support race-based practices. But though this text reports that Pharoah was ineligible to hold the priesthood, that condition was not tied to race or skin color. And Pharoah is described as righteous, wise, just, and blessed by Noah with the “blessings of the earth” and “blessings of wisdom.” Similarly, in Moses 8:27, also revealed to Joseph Smith, Ham is described as righteous enough to “walk with God.” These verses contrast sharply with nineteenth-century lore portraying all of Cain, Ham, and their presumably Negro descendants as physically and intellectually inferior, thus suggesting that these verses are based on something other than a simple Mormon recasting of Protestant racial teachings. See Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 426–28 (rejecting Abraham 1 as basing priesthood restriction on race or skin color); 583–87 (questioning the tie between blacks, Ham, and Pharoah and offering various interpretations from ancient texts of the Genesis 4 “mark of Cain”—none of which were based on skin color).

10. See, for example, LDS Bible Dictionary, sv. Ham, 698: “Ham. *Hot*. Son of Noah . . . ; cursed (Gen. 9: 18–22).” Also, the 1958 and 1966 editions of McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* included the following in the “Ham” entry: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren’ (Gen. 9:25), said Noah of Ham’s descendants.” *Mormon Doctrine*, 1958 ed., 314; 1966 ed., 343. In 1979 that sentence was removed from the entry.

11. See Benjamin Braude, “Michelangelo and the Curse of Ham: From a Typology of Jew-Hatred to a Genealogy of Racism,” in *Writing Race across the Atlantic World: 1492–1763*, ed. Gary Taylor and Phil Beidler (New York: Palgrave Academic Publishing, 2002), available at [www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/research/rapl/events/braude\\_abstract.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/research/rapl/events/braude_abstract.html), last visited March 25, 2005. For further discussion of the timing of the curse as applied to black Africans and the conclusion that in Euro-American Christianity “it was not until the eighteenth century, the height of the slave trade, that the curse of Ham came to gain broad acceptance,” see Benjamin Braude, “Ham and Noah: Sexuality, Servitudinism, and Ethnicity,” Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University, Collective Degradation: Slavery and the Construction of Race, November 7–8, 2003, Yale University (available at [www.yale.edu/glc/events/race/Braude.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/glc/events/race/Braude.pdf), last visited March 25, 2005).

12. Joseph Fielding Smith was influential as Apostle (1910–72), President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles (1951–70), Church President (1970–72), Church Historian (1921–70), president or vice-president of the Church’s Utah Genealogical and Historical Society (1925–61), and author of numerous books, Church lesson manuals, and Church magazine and newspaper articles. See 2004 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Morning News, 2004), 57; Joseph F. McConkie, *True and Faithful: The Life Story of Joseph Fielding Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 38–47.

13. See, for example, Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, ed. Don E. Norton, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 127–32 (Nimrod becomes invincible with receipt of Adam’s garment stolen by Ham, Cush, Nimrod, Esau, Jacob, and Jacob’s sons); Nibley, *Abraham in*

*Egypt*, 171, 195-97 (Nimrod challenges Abraham to a duel, builds a tower, sacrifices victims by fire), 226-232 (Nimrod is conflated with Pharaoh as Abraham's rival, is Great Magician, is priest, casts Abraham into furnace, puts male children to death, locks up all expectant mothers, daughter falls in love with Abraham), 564 (shoots arrows to claim rule of world), 577 (marries mother, claims priesthood through stolen garment); Hugh Nibley, *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry, vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 6, 14-16, 63 (claims world rule, mad hunter, challenges God to duel), 93-94 (founder of first state, first walled city, first army), 115 (hunter of men, founder of king-ruled state); Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, ed. John W. Welch, Darrell L. Matthews, Stephen R. Callister, vol. 5 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 165-170 (mad hunter legend, claims priesthood through stolen garment of Adam, magical giant that established false priesthood and kingship, made all men sin, first to kill beasts for food), 265 (leads attack on God, builds tower).

14. Citing Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 131.

15. *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (striking down the "separate but equal doctrine" created in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), and mandating desegregation of public schools).

16. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (1958 ed.), 107-8: "In a broad general sense caste systems have their root and origin in the gospel itself. . . . All this is not to say that any race, creed, or caste should be denied inalienable rights. But it is to say that Deity in his infinite wisdom, to carry out his inscrutable purposes, has a caste system of his own, a system of segregation of races and peoples"; 554: "Racial degeneration, resulting in differences in appearance and spiritual aptitude, has arisen since the fall. We know the circumstances under which the posterity of Cain (and later of Ham) were cursed with what we call negroid racial characteristics. . . . If we had a full and true history of all races and nations, we would know the origins of all their distinctive characteristics. In the absence of such detailed information, however, we know only the general principle that all these changes from the physical and spiritual perfections of our common parents have been brought about by apostasy from the gospel truths."

In 1979, following a revelation to President Spencer W. Kimball and the Quorum of the Twelve (of which McConkie was a member) restoring priesthood and temple privileges to all worthy members independent of race, McConkie made a few changes to the race-based teachings of *Mormon Doctrine*. The teachings quoted in this note were retained in the updated version. *Mormon Doctrine*, 1966 ed. (1979 and later printings), 114, 616.

17. One summary by Girard of the theory is: "According to the mimetic theory, no existence is free from imitation; and the alternative to imitating Christ or Christ-like models is the imitation of our neighbors whose rivalrous impulses are usually as easily aroused as our own. As soon as we pattern our desires on our neighbors' desires, we all desire the same objects and we become entangled in mimetic rivalries. Comically as well as tragically, human beings keep turning each other into obstacles to the fulfillment of the very passions they keep transmitting mimetically to one another. This is why peaceful relations among neighbors

[and older brothers in the Old Testament] are rare." See *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Telford, Penn: Pandora Press, 2000), 310–11.

Girard describes the scapegoat effect as "that strange process through which two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoaters. They feel relieved of their tensions and they coalesce into a more harmonious group. They now have a single purpose, which is to prevent the scapegoat from harming them, by expelling and destroying him." René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996), 12.

18: Naomi Felicia Woodbury, "A Legacy of Intolerance: Nineteenth Century Pro-Slavery Propaganda and the Mormon Church Today" (master's thesis, UCLA, 1966), 6–7.

19: See notes 11 and 14 above for some of Braude's writings on this topic. See also Benjamin Braude, "Cham et Noé. Race, esclavage et exégèse entre Islam, Judaïsme, et Christianisme," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 57 (January-February 2002): 93–125; unedited English original available at [www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/research/rapl/word/braude01.doc](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/research/rapl/word/braude01.doc) last visited March 25, 2005.