



The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History

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The year 1978 marked a watershed year in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it lifted a 126-year ban on ordaining black males for the priesthood. This departure from past practice focused new attention on Brigham Young's decision to abandon Joseph Smith's more inclusive original teachings. The Mormon Church and Blacks presents thirty official or authoritative Church statements on the status of African Americans in the Mormon Church. Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst comment on the individual documents, analyzing how they reflected uniquely Mormon characteristics and contextualizing each within the larger scope of the history of race and religion in the United States. Their analyses consider how lifting the ban shifted the status of African Americans within Mormonism, including the fact that African Americans, once denied access to certain temple rituals considered essential for Mormon salvation, could finally be considered full-fledged Latter-day Saints in both this world and the next. Throughout, Harris and Bringhurst offer an informed view of behind-the-scenes Church politicking before and after the ban. The result is an essential resource for experts and laymen alike on a much-misunderstood aspect of Mormon history and belief.

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