



# Black, White, and Red: Race and the Making of the Mormon People, 1830-1880

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*Black, White, and Red:*  
*Race and the Making of the Mormon People, 1830-1880*

A dissertation presented

by

Max Perry Mueller

to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Black, White, and Red: Race and the Making of the Mormon People, 1830-1880

Abstract

This dissertation uses the histories and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) as case studies to consider how nineteenth-century Americans turned to religion to solve the early American republic's "race problem." I begin by approaching Mormonism's foundational text, the Book of Mormon, as the earliest Latter-day Saints did: as a radical new lens to view the racialized populations—Americans of European, African and Native American descent ("white," "black," "red")—that dominated the antebellum American cultural landscape in which the church was founded in 1830. Early Mormons believed themselves called to end all schisms, including racial ones, within the Body of Christ as well as the political body of the American republic. However, early Mormon leaders were not racial egalitarians. Their vision consisted not of racial pluralism, but of the redemptive "whitening" of all peoples. Whiteness—both as a signifier and even phenotype—became an aspirational racial identity that non-whites could achieve through conversion to Mormonism. As the church failed to become the prophesied panacea for American racial and religious divisions, its theology evolved to view race as fixed. Black and Mormon became mutually exclusive identities. And though based on Book of Mormon theology, the Mormons held out hope for mass Indian redemption, it was forestalled as the church focused on shaping white converts into respectable Mormons.

However, this history is not simply one of declension. Instead, the church's evolving view on race arose out of the persistent dialectal tension between the two central, and seemingly paradoxical, elements of the Mormon people's identity: a missionary people divinely called to teach the gospel to everyone everywhere, and a racially particularistic people who believe that God has, at times, favored certain racial groups over others. As Mormon identity became more racially particularistic, white

Mormons began to marginalize non-whites in the “Mormon archive”— which I conceptualize as the written and oral texts that compose the Mormon people’s collective memory. However, a handful of black and Native Americans wrote themselves into this archive, claiming their place among the prophets and pioneers that mark membership in Mormon history. They understood that literacy signified authority, and thus with their own narratives, they wrote against what they believed was the marginalization of their historical subjectivity.

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## Citation Abbreviations

*BofM* Joseph Smith Jr., *The Book of Mormon* [first edition]. Palmyra, NY: E. B. Grandin, 1830.

Note: When citing the first edition of the Book of Mormon, I provide the page number of that edition, followed by the related 1981 edition's book, chapter, and verse (e.g. *BofM*, 22 [1 Nephi 15:17]).

BYSC L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

BYP Brigham Young Papers, CR 1234 1. Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

CHL Church History Library. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

*D&C* *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.

Note: When citing earlier editions of *D&C*, I indicate the year of publication and section of that edition, followed by the related 1981 *D&C* Section and verse (e.g. *D&C* (1835) Section XVIII [*D&C* 57: 1-4]).

*DHC* *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. ed. B H. Roberts. Vols. I-VII. Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902-1932.

*E&MS* *Evening & Morning Star*. Independence, Missouri, June 1832-July 1833; Kirtland, Ohio, December 1833-September 1834.

*EPB* *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. ed. H. Michael Marquardt. Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007.

FHL Family History Library. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

GCM General Church Minutes, CR 100 318. Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

*JD* *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, His Two Counsellors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*. Vols. I-XXVI. Liverpool and London: various publishers, 1854-1886.



- JSH* (Vol.1) *Histories, 1832-1844.* eds. Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Wittaker, Richard L. Jensen, and Mark Ashurst-McGee. Vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard L. Bushman. Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2012.
- JSP* Joseph Smith Paper Project. Church History Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
- LPB* *Later Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.* ed. H. Michael Marquardt. Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2012.
- M&A* *Latter-day Saints' Messenger & Advocate.* Manchester, England, May 1840-March 1842; Liverpool, April 1842-March 3, 1932; London, March 10, 1932-December 1970.
- MS* *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star.* Manchester, England, May 1840-March 1842; Liverpool, April 1842-March 3, 1932; London, March 10, 1932-December 1970.
- RT* (Vol. 1) *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books.* eds. Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper. Vol. 1 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard L. Bushman. Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2011.
- RT* (Vol. 2) *Revelations and Translations Volume 2: Published Revelations.* eds. Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper. Vol. 2 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard L. Bushman. Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2011.
- T&S* *Times & Seasons.* Commerce/Nauvoo, Illinois, November 1839-February 1846.
- UUSC* Special Collections. J. Willard Marriot Library, University of Utah. Salt Lake City, Utah.

## Acknowledgments

On our honeymoon in 2009, I dragged my wife Anna to “This Is The Place Heritage Park,” located in Emigration Canyon overlooking Salt Lake City. The park, a sprawling “living history” complex and replication of a nineteenth-century Mormon pioneer village, marks the site where on July 24, 1847, Brigham Young purportedly rose from his sickbed in the back of Wilford Woodruff’s wagon to get his first look at the Great Basin. “This is the place,” Woodruff recalled the prophet declaring, where the Saints would end their Exodus and begin to build their Zion.

I begin these acknowledgements where I will end them—thanking my wife, and in this case begging her forgiveness for turning our honeymoon into a research trip. But our afternoon at This Is the Place was fruitful, at least for my own scholarship. In the bookshop, I came across Kate B. Carter’s *Story of the Negro Pioneer* (1965), which contains a collection of first and secondhand stories about the handful of black Saints as well as the stories of the more abundant black slaves of white Saints who settled in Utah in the 1840s and 1850s.

In the bookshop, I flipped through the compilation and eventually came across Jane E. Manning James’s autobiography. Entranced, I read James’s telling—or at least, as I discuss in this dissertation, her telling as recorded by her white scribe—of her conversion to Mormonism in the 1840s, her trek from her home in Connecticut to gather with the Saints in Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo, Illinois, and her experiences as a Mormon pioneer and matriarch of Utah’s first and most prominent black Mormon family. In that bookshop, I decided that this story of a black Mormon woman who joined a church in her youth that welcomed her with, relatively speaking, open arms and that by the time she died was much more ambivalent about her place among the Saints, was the story that I wanted to study for my dissertation.

Fortunately, when I began to dig deeper into this history, I found that there was more to James’s story than simply the origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ anti-black

theology and practice. There is much more to the history of race and Mormonism than declension from racially inclusive roots to the racially particularism with which the church was, and to a certain degree, still is associated. But I have the next 300 pages to tell that story, so I'll stick to the task at hand here and acknowledge the people and institutions that have helped me tell it!

First, let me begin by expressing my great appreciation for my two dissertation advisors. I have been fortunate to have David Hempton as a teacher, mentor, and advisor since I began my master's degree work at Harvard Divinity School. Without Dean Hempton's support, I would never have earned a PhD from Harvard; in fact, without his support I would never have been admitted to the PhD program. As I now transition from student to mentor, I hope to be the kind of generous but critical, in both senses of the word, reader and commenter of my own students' scholarship, as well as the kind of consummate cheerleader of my students as he has been for me.

Speaking of the dedication to reading and commenting on advisee's work, in the case of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich one example suffices. The evening of July 4, 2014, I sent Prof. Ulrich a complete, (then) 350-page draft of this dissertation. On the evening of July 8, Prof. Ulrich returned the draft to me, with wonderfully insightful and important comments. One of the most celebrated and respected historians working today spent a summer weekend reading a dissertation draft!

Marla Frederick has offered great feedback on early and late chapters of this dissertation. Her own scholarship and approach to teaching continues to serve as an aspirational model for my own. Even before David Holland arrived at Harvard, he offered me the kind of invaluable mentoring—scholarly, professional and otherwise—for which he earned the appreciation of scores of his UNLV students and what will sure to be a generation of Harvard students to come. I began my first scholarly work on race and Mormonism in Marie Griffith's "Lived Religion" class during her time at Harvard. I'm so grateful for her support and mentorship as well as for the opportunity to help her and Tiffany Stanley launch the John C. Danforth Center's online journal, *Religion & Politics*.

This dissertation is the scholarly progeny of a long parti- and matrilineage of the North American Religion Colloquium (NARC), which David Hall, to whom I also owe much for helping me secure a place in the PhD program, ran with his famous grace and wisdom for much of my time at Harvard. My deepest gratitude to my peers, especially Brett Grainger, Kip Richardson, Elizabeth Jemison, and Eva Payne, and mentors, Ann Braude, Leigh Schmidt, Marie Griffith, and John Stauffer, in this storied community.

As is the case with the Saints I study here, the import of lineages is very real. A beloved and respected NARC alumnus Michael McNally was my undergraduate advisor at Carleton College. At Carleton, I realized that I wanted to do what Michael does for the rest of my life. So I did what he did and went to HDS, then on to Harvard's Committee on the Study of Religion. Based on his generous invitation, I was even able to return to Carleton and teach—camping out in Michael's office where we had discussed my senior thesis on Mormons a decade before. My deepest gratitude to the Carleton College religion department for caring for the intellectual and personal wellbeing of its students. Special thanks to Louis Newman and Roger Jackson. Lorie Pearson, Asuka Sango, Shana Sippy, and Lauren Osborne made me feel like a lifelong colleague during my short time teaching at Carleton. My thanks to my colleagues at Mount Holyoke College, especially Michael Penn and Jane Crosthwaite, for their support, and for the chance to teach their wonderful students!

This study is fundamentally about the historical archive as a site where history is not just preserved but made. As such, I owe much to the staff of archivists and librarians at the LDS Church History Library and Archives (CHL) who made me feel at home among the miles of stories of the Saints recorded on paper, microfilm, and hard drives. In particular, thanks to Bill Slaughter, Michael Landon, Brittany Chapman, and Ardis Smith for fielding questions large and small, and helping me to locate small bits of the archive that play a large role in this study. Many thanks to my fellow CHL patrons; Ardis Parshall first told me of the “Walker Letter;” Connell O'Donovan and Amanda

Hendrix-Komoto were great friends and intellectual companions during many hours in the archives. Amanda and I are both proud members of juvenileinstructor.org crew. Thanks to Matt Bowman, Chris Jones, Jonathan Stapley, and Ben Park, each of who have helped this “Gentile” navigate the intellectual and cultural world of the Saints, as well as the rest of that amazing community of scholars who are already making their mark in Mormon Studies and beyond.

Many fellowships supported my research and writing. These include the John L. Loeb Fellowship, two Warren Center fellowships, and a Harvard GSAS summer pre-dissertation fellowship. The University of Utah’s Tanner Humanities Center Mormon Studies Fellowship allowed me to spend a full year in Salt Lake City; thanks to the Center’s director Bob Goldberg as well as Colleen McDannell for making me feel home at the University of Utah during my year there.

Of course, thanks to my family for a lifetime of support. Thanks to my mom and pop, my stepparents, my aunts, and my grandparents for telling me to do what I love best and supporting me personally and often financially so I could do just that. I recognize that aspiring to become a professional thinker is a luxury created by the hard work of my family. I hope that I have done work that honors their sacrifices.

Lastly (as I did firstly), let me thank my wife, Anna. In 2006, Anna accepted my proposal of marriage and came with me to Boston so I could begin my graduate work at Harvard. She graciously let me spend summers in Utah as well as the school year of 2011-2012, during which she became a vagabond while we rented out our apartment in Somerville to save money. She does not always understand my obsession with American religious history. Nevertheless, she’s patiently listened while I share my enthusiasm with her and with unsuspecting guests at our many dinner parties, nudging me ever so gently when I go on too long! Now eight years after we started our lives together, I type these words with our beautiful newborn, Sophie Aya Mueller, asleep on my chest.

This dissertation is dedicated to Anna and Sophie.

## **INTRODUCTION: Joseph's Visions**

Joseph Smith Jr. was eighteen years old in late summer 1823, when the Angel Moroni first appeared to him in the bedroom that he shared with five of his brothers in the Smith family's log home in western New York State. Moroni, the historian-prophet and last member of a white-skinned race of pre-Columbian Native Americans resurrected as an angel, hovered above the floorboards, Smith recalled years later in his "History of Joseph Smith." Dressed in gleaming white robes, Moroni emitted such bright light that the dark room appeared to be filled with noonday sun.<sup>1</sup>

In 1830, at the age of twenty-five, Joseph Smith established a religious movement that by the time of his assassination in 1844 had become an international community with tens of thousands of members, a number that by the end of the twentieth century would surpass ten million. But on the evening before Moroni first came to him, Joseph felt completely alone. His mind was unsettled. And he turned to prayer to calm his conscience.

As he explained in the "History," throughout his teenage years, Joseph had made a study of his own life. And he found that his life was divided against itself, split between seeking spiritual and earthly fulfillment. He strove to do good; to help provide for his family—a set of downwardly-mobile Yankee New Englanders turned perpetual debtors—by working their rented farmland alongside his father and brothers. Desperate for income, for a time Joseph Jr. even joined his father and namesake in "money-digging." The two Josephs used divining rods and seer stones in an attempt to locate Spanish treasure, believing that centuries before, conquistadors had buried gold and silver treasure in caches throughout the North American countryside.

Joseph explained that he also strove to follow the dictates of the Lord. But he was prone to the "weaknesses of youth," and the gratification of "appetites," which he knew were offensive to

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<sup>1</sup> Here I draw from the source of the first published versions of the "History of Joseph Smith," which first appeared in *T&S* beginning in 1842. "History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841," *JSH* (Vol. 1), 220-222. During his lifetime, Smith wrote or dictated several different versions of his history. See "Series Introduction" in *JSH* (Vol. 1), xiii- xxxiv.

God.<sup>2</sup> As Joseph saw it, a major part of the problem was that the world was also divided, especially over the question of religion. Many competing “sects”—the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, who all proliferated in his corner of Upstate New York—made noisy claims to a singular Christian truth, each viewing the other sects as in exile from the true gospel of Christ. When, as a young teenager, Joseph found himself in a state of “darkness and confusion” over the question of which church could best help him to see and seek out the right way to live, he called directly upon the Lord for wisdom. And the Lord, along with his Son, directly appeared to Joseph. During this visionary experience, Christ told Joseph that the extant sects “were all wrong,” and Christ forbade Joseph from joining any church.<sup>3</sup> A purer way of living as well as a purer gospel truth would soon be restored. This restoration would not only help Joseph make his own divided life whole. It would also serve as a new vision of the restoration of Christ’s church as well as a unification of the Lord’s covenantal people.

Joseph followed the Heavenly Father and Son’s admonition not to join a church. Yet, as he explained in his “History,” Joseph had to wait several more years in darkness before he received the lens—in the form of a new scripture—that would illuminate this restorative vision. Thus in 1823, in supplication, he once again called out to the Lord. And the Lord sent Moroni to the soon-to-be prophet. Though it took the angel four years to disabuse Joseph of the notion that the treasure’s true worth was not in the quantity of the precious metals but instead in the quality of the precious words engraved on them, on the night of September 22, 1827, atop a hill near the Smith family’s farmstead in Palmyra, New York, Moroni entrusted Joseph with a set of ancient golden plates. In fits and starts, Joseph then translated the plates’ “Egyptian” characters into English, revealing a radical new

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<sup>2</sup> These references to Joseph’s weaknesses were redacted from published versions of his “History,” but are most likely references to his money-digging days. “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 220-221. On Joseph Smith’s “money-digging,” see Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 48–81.

<sup>3</sup> “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 208-215. For the evolution of the “First Vision,” see Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 30–56.

way of seeing the past and future, and a particularly American-centric one at that. This new gospel contained the history of a once great pre-Columbian Christian civilization in the New World as well as a mandate to restore a pure Christian church in modern-day America.<sup>4</sup>

And yet, Smith also found in this radically new gospel, which he would publish in March 1830 as the Book of Mormon, echoes of very old and familiar gospel—the story of a family torn apart by sin. The Bible holds that the descendants of history’s first family splintered from its original unity into different branches, forming the different races of humanity. Through the course of time, these branches were scattered to the four corners of the earth, spoke different languages, and worshipped different gods. They warred against and enslaved each other.

The Book of Mormon contained a New World version of this old-as-Adam-story. Out of fratricidal jealousy, a family of Israelites exiled in America split into distinct factions: Moroni’s long-extinct, white-skinned “Nephites” and their more savage kin, the “Lamanites,” the remnant of which became America’s Indians. But what separated the new gospel from the old was the lesson that these fault lines—religious, political, linguistic, and racial—were not real, or necessarily permanent. That is, they were not of God’s design, but the result of human failing.

### **Arapene’s Visions**

Twenty-five years later, in the Mormon settlement in Sanpete Valley—some one hundred miles south of Salt Lake City, the capital city of the Mormons’ Zion in the intermountain West, which the Saints established in 1847 after they fled the United States following the assassination of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in Illinois—an Indian chief named Arapene sought out Mormon leaders.<sup>5</sup> He wanted to recount to them his own set of visions. Arapene, who had been

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<sup>4</sup> “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 222-240.

<sup>5</sup> In this project, I consider “Mormon,” “Latter-day Saint” and “Saint” as synonyms. I use the term “Mormon” as parts of proper names (e.g. “Book of Mormon”) and as an adjective (“Mormon pioneer.”) And while the “Mormon Church” has long been the most common nickname for the church, I avoid employing it here because early and contemporary church leaders believe it to be inaccurate appellation. They assert that the head of the church is not “Mormon” but



baptized a Mormon elder a few years before, asked his white brethren to write down his visions so that they could be sent north to Joseph Smith's successor Brigham Young in Salt Lake.

Like Joseph's visions of the Heavenly Father and Son, Arapene's visions were didactic. Arapene explained that two separate personages appeared to him, each carrying messages of admonition for both white and "red" Mormons alike. First, Arapene explained that "Walker" (Walkara), the recently deceased leader of the once powerful Utes whom the Saints had systematically displaced from Utah's most fertile lands, had appeared to him. Walkara, who like his brother Arapene had been baptized a Mormon elder, but who in the 1850s also waged war against his would-be brethren in an attempt to protect his tribe's hunting and fishing grounds as well as their lucrative trade in Indian slaves, told Arapene that, as Walkara's heir, Arapene was now charged with "cultivat[ing] good peace" between the Mormons and the Utes. Arapene pledged to do his part. He would "put a ball and chain" on any Indian who continued to steal Mormon cattle or horses.<sup>6</sup>

Arapene explained that the Lord had also appeared to him, and told him to admonish the whites to do their part to secure peace. Based on Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon, in the early 1830s, the earliest Latter-day Saints believed that their principal responsibility was to bring the new gospel to the Indians, the "Lamanite" remnant of a lost branch of Israel in America. Together with these Lamanites, the white converts would build up a New Jerusalem in America—a millennial city where the elect from around the world would gather.<sup>7</sup> And while they

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"Jesus Christ." Following the church's official style guide, as well as recent published academic manuscripts on Mormonism, I use the church's official name, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" as the first reference in each chapter, and refer to it as "the church" thereafter. See "Style Guide—The Name of the Church," Newsroom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/style-guide>. For my academic model, see Reid Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-Day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4 n. 3.

<sup>6</sup> "Visions of Arapine on the night of the forth of February 1855," Box 74, Fold 49, B.Y.P. Sondra Jones has explained that most early Mormon writers as well as most scholars of early Mormon-Indian relations have wrongly identified Arapene and other Ute chiefs as Walkara's brother, failing to understand the Ute kinship system in which brothers, half-brothers, and cousins would have all been considered "brothers" in Ute culture. Sondra Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 147–148 n. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *BojM*, 36; 528 [1 Nephi 15:17; Mormon 5:20,14].

awaited Christ's final return, inside this city's sacred temples, where Mormons believe heaven and earth literally intersect, white and red Saints would perform covenantal rituals that would seal them together into eternal families.<sup>8</sup>

Yet after a series of failed missions to the Lamanites, along with their great success at converting white Americans and Europeans, by the mid-1850s, the Saints' hope for immediate mass Indian conversion was waning. The Saints thus focused on making white converts, gathering to Utah from the abandoned Mormon settlements in Illinois as well as from the British Isles and Scandinavia, into respectable Mormon pioneers—farming and ranching, reading and writing Latter-day Saints.

Arapene explained, “in the lords talk and not mine,” that his white brethren had been wrong to abandon their red brethren in favor of the whites. The Lord told the Ute chief that it was the Europeans, and not the Lamanites, who were out of place Utah, as “danes do not understand the mormon nor Indian talk and ways.” The Lord also spoke through Arapene to chastise the Mormons for taking the Indians' lands. “The timber, and the water and horses all was the lords and did not belong to the indians nor the Mormons.” When white Mormons and Indians finally recognize that they were to share these lands and unite so that “all people was good and at peace”—which was the hope, after all, of the earliest Mormons—then the Lord “would live on the earth and not go back.” However, if the white Saints “throwed away the lords words,” and continued to abuse the Indians and steal their lands, Arapene prophesied that the white Mormons would be cut off, and the Lord would no longer “go to their meetings.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Skinner, Andrew C., “Inextricable Link between Temple, Covenant, and Chosenness,” in *Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism*, eds. Raphael Jospe, Truman G. Madsen, and Seth Ward (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 74–75.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Jane's Visions

A half a century later, in Salt Lake City, an elderly African-American convert and Mormon pioneer named Jane Manning James told her own Mormon history. In church and community meetings, in private correspondence with church presidents, and in her own autobiography, James explained that like Joseph Smith, in her youth she too searched for a spiritual home and found the extant offerings wanting—until, that is, she met Mormon missionaries. In the fall of 1843, after she joined the church, James and eight family members trekked from their home in Connecticut to join the gathering of Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois.

James explained how, like Joseph and Arapene, she too had experienced visions. But her visions were not of resurrected angels, recently deceased Indian chiefs or members of the Godhead. She had a vision of Joseph Smith himself; even before she saw him in the flesh, she knew he was the prophet, she told Salt Lake City audiences. And in turn, Jane explained that this prophet, who housed the young black woman in his own home in Nauvoo and gave her a job as a servant, viewed her as the embodiment of faith. Joseph and his wife Emma Hale Smith even offered to adopt her into his own family, a family that, Joseph taught, would endure in this world and in the next.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1830s, Joseph Smith stated explicitly that he composed his “History” to respond to critics who had labeled him a charlatan and a blasphemer for claiming that God was still speaking, and speaking to him in particular.<sup>11</sup> Likewise in the mid-1850s, Arapene wanted his visions preserved in the early record of Mormon history to show that the Indians were more than godless heathens, deaf to the Lord and his commandments. The Lord spoke to Indian prophets as well as white ones.

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<sup>10</sup> Jane E. Manning James and Elizabeth J. D. Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James,” circa 1902, MS 4425, CHL; Susanna Young Gates [editor and compiler], “‘Aunt’ Jane James” in “Joseph Smith, the Prophet,” *Young Woman’s Journal*, December, 1905.

<sup>11</sup> “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 204. Many early reports regarding the publication of the Book of Mormon are similar to that of the *Rochester Gem*, which in September 1829 labeled it “evidence of fraud, blasphemy, and credulity.” For an analysis of such reports, see Mathew Roper, “Early Publications on the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 18, no. 2 (2009): 38–47.

Though she did so less overtly, in turn-of-the-century Utah, Jane Manning James also challenged how others viewed her, including Joseph Smith Jr.'s nephew and namesake, Church President Joseph F. Smith who asserted that because James was born into a cursed race she was not eligible to participate in the temple ceremonies that the Saints believed were necessary to reach the highest levels of heaven. Joseph F. Smith did recognize her as a member of Joseph Smith's eternal household, but he labeled her the family's eternal servant, not the prophet's adopted daughter. Although James accepted as fact the notion that as a black woman she carried the sin of her biblical forefathers on her skin, she pointed to other parts of Mormon scripture that contain visions for a restored human family open to all who lived in accordance with the restored gospel.

Like Smith, James made a study of her own life. And she found that this life was a thoroughly Mormon one. She was a baptized member of the church. She had received the gift of the Holy Ghost. She was an intrepid pioneer to Utah, and a matriarch of a large Mormon family. But she wanted more, and believed that she deserved more. In particular, she wanted to be sealed for eternity to her beloved prophet Joseph Smith in the newly dedicated Temple in Salt Lake City, a place where living Saints could not only be sealed to each other, but also to dead relatives and prominent church leaders. By telling her own story, James hoped that current church prophets would accept her as did their predecessor: not as *a black woman*, but as *a Mormon woman* who, through dedication to the church and its leaders, had demonstrated that she had earned the privilege of receiving the full blessings of the restored gospel.

### **Race: Disappearing and Reappearing in Mormon History**

The central historical questions of this project are: what led Joseph Smith Jr. to attempt to create a Mormon people made up of "black," "white" and "red" Saints; and what led his prophetic successors to draw more racially circumscribed boundaries around Mormon identity?

To answer these questions, this project studies the first fifty years of Mormon history, a period that roughly coincides with the presidencies of the first two Mormon prophets, Joseph Smith Jr. and Brigham Young (1830-1877). However this project is not simply about early Mormonism. Nor is this project simply about how the church's views of people of African and Native American descent changed over this period.<sup>12</sup> Instead, this study is about how nineteenth-century Americans

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<sup>12</sup> To be sure, studying the evolution of church leaders' views of people of African and Native American descent has been critically important, both as a historical and political enterprise. Beginning in the 1970s, a handful of Mormon historians began examining the origins of the ban on black people from full church membership. Providing a counter-narrative to official LDS statements that the ban had always been the policy of the church starting "from the days of its organization," scholars like Lester Bush and Newell Bringhurst discovered what I call a "black Mormon past." These scholars demonstrated that, before the advent of the ban in the late 1840s, Mormon missionaries converted several African Americans, including Jane Manning James, and ordained at least one black man to the Mormon priesthood. These efforts to prove that the ban was in fact historical, and not an eternal "commandment from the Lord," helped many Mormons to come to terms with what they understood as the incongruity between their church's missionary mandate to bring the Mormon-specific Christian gospel to "all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people," and the church's long-held anti-black theologies and policies. In addition, though its success was limited, this scholarship also served to counter critics of the church who claimed that Mormonism has always been a racist movement. See "Church First Presidency Statement on the Question of Blacks within the Church," August 17, 1949, reprinted in Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 230–231. For the seminal works on the "black Mormon past," see Lester E. Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 11–68; Newell G. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 22–36; Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*; Henry Wolfinger, "A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community," in *Social Accommodation in Utah*, ed. Clark Knowlton (Salt Lake City, Utah: American West Center, University of Utah, 1975), 126–72. For the most complete historical and sociological study of race and Mormonism, see Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003). I describe this important scholarship of rediscovering the "black Mormon past" and its influence on changing the official church policy on black membership, in my article, "History Lessons: Race in the LDS Church," to be published in the special edition of the *Journal of Mormon History* (Winter 2015), honoring the fiftieth anniversary of the Mormon History Association. For decades, scholars have also studied the changing Mormon attitude to Native Americans, especially related to the high hopes for large-scale Indian conversion and the on-the-ground failures to produce such conversions among Native American populations. See, among scores of others, Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); W. Paul Reeve, *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*; Todd M. Compton, *A Frontier Life: Jacob Hamblin, Explorer and Indian Missionary* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013); Ronald W. Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period," *Journal of Mormon History* 19 (1993): 1–33; Ronald W. Walker, "Toward a Reconstruction of Mormon and Indian Relations, 1847–1877," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 4 (1989): 23–42; special issue of *Dialogue* dedicated to Mormon-Indian relations, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (1985); Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Columbus to Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986); Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Howard A. Christy, "Open Hand and Mailed Fist: Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah, 1847–52," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (Summer 1978): 216–35; Lawrence George Coates, "A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830–1900" (PhD diss., Ball State University, 1969); Juanita Brooks, "Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 1–2 (1944): 1–22; J. Cecil Alter, "The Mormons and the Indians," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12 (1944): 49–67.

turned to religion to solve the most divisive “problem” of the early American republic: the “race problem.”

Antebellum Americans seeking to justify divisions between whites and blacks often pointed to their Bibles. Proslavery advocates declared that, according to the Book of Genesis, people of African descent were divinely cursed to be the “servants of servants.” At the same time, many slaves and free African Americans invoked the story of Exodus, seeing themselves as America’s oppressed, but chosen people—akin to the enslaved Israelites awaiting liberation out of the American Egypt. Nineteenth-century Americans thus turned to scripture to create and contest race as a theological category of human division. These Americans located the origins of such theologies in the ancient past while also asserting that this past had direct implications for the racial politics of the early American republic.

Scholars of race in America have often claimed that such interpretations on both sides of the “race problem” are historically contingent. Americans wrote race into scripture in response to historical experience, when scripture actually has little to say on the subject.<sup>13</sup> And yet, I argue that the history of race and religion in America is incomplete if interpretations of scripture are understood as mostly reactions to, rather than shapers of, history. History makes theology. But theology makes history, too.

This project inverts the usual focus on how Americans’ views on race influenced scriptural interpretation. Instead, I pose the question: What would a history of race and religion in America look like if we were to examine how scriptures have created theological lenses through which Americans have viewed various racial and ethnic populations of Americans?<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 65–87; Eddie S. Glaude, *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3–18.

<sup>14</sup> Mark A. Noll, “Why Theology Now?,” *Modern Intellectual History* 10, no. 02 (2013): 449–61.

I argue that, during Joseph Smith Jr.'s lifetime, based on their reading of their faith's foundational text, the Book of Mormon, many leading Latter-day Saints challenged the dominant political, religious, and increasingly scientific views that deemed European, African, and Native American races—the three dominant racial categories of the American political and cultural landscape in which the church was founded—as unequal and immutable. The Book of Mormon taught its earliest believers that race was not real, that is, race was not a permanent part of God's vision for humanity. Race entered into history as the result of sin. Thus solving the race problem involved removing the racial distinctions that marked off certain members of the human family from others.<sup>15</sup>

To be sure, the early Mormons read race on *and onto* the bodies of “black” and “red” Americans; Africans and Indians' dark skins told the history of their ancestors' sins. And early Mormons wrote about what they saw. Like other white Americans, they deployed words like “savage” and “slave,” “wicked” and “cursed” to discursively mark off African and Native Americans from more civilized white, Euro-Americans in their ever-expanding archive of public as well as personal writings. Yet in the beginning of the Mormon dispensation, the racial politics of leading Latter-day Saints like Joseph Smith Jr. emerged out of the Book of Mormon. They read and then wrote about race on the page in hopes of erasing it from skin. The earliest Mormons described the race problem as a holistic problem with a holistic solution: based on the Book of Mormon's racial

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, the Mormons were not alone in this ambition. Centuries before Joseph Smith founded his restored church, Protestant and Catholic missionaries had worked to convert African and other indigenous people in the hopes of folding them into civilized, white Christian civilizations. Yet the early Saints' insistence that conversion would lead not only to symbolic but literal change in skin color is unique. For a few of the many important studies of Protestant and Catholic missions to African and Native peoples, see Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Joel Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, eds., *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

hermeneutic, for early Mormons, “whiteness”—both as a signifier and even a phenotype—was a universal and aspirational racial identity that non-whites could achieve through conversion to Mormonism. They hoped to fold red and, in a more limited manner, black Americans into a white—as in *raceless*—Mormon people.

However, what I describe as the Book of Mormon’s “white universalism” proved too ambitious to be tolerated in antebellum America. This was especially true for a new religious movement already viewed as a blasphemous affront to the core doctrines of Christianity, especially the idea of a closed canon. In response to anti-Mormon violence, which often included accusations that the Saints were disrupting the stratified racial hierarchies of the American republic by “meddling” with Indians and blacks, the Mormons quickly adapted. They became mainstream and eventually extreme in their views on race, in particular in their views on the inherent supremacy of the white race. Likewise, how they read their own scriptures changed; they began reading more into the racially exclusionary parts of their canon and reading less into the inclusive passages to which Jane Manning James and Arapene referred in their petitions to be taken seriously as members of the Mormon covenantal people. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the whiteness that had been made universal in the early church became the exclusive purview of whites.

Despite my description here of the history of race and Mormonism as a downward trend away from racially inclusive originalism to racial particularism, this is not a history of declension. Instead, it is a history of race as a category that unites as well as divides. I argue that the church’s evolving views on race arise out of the dialectal tension between the two central and seemingly paradoxical elements of the Mormon people’s identity: a missionary people divinely called to teach the restored gospel to everyone everywhere, and a racially particularistic people who believe that God has, at times, favored certain racial groups over others. Recognizing the important role that this dialectical tension—which arose directly out of the pages of the Book of Mormon—has played in the



formulation of the church's theologies and policies opens up this particular discussion of race in Mormonism, as well as, I would argue, the discussion of race in American religious history writ large, to a more interesting and more important set of queries than the reductionistic question of whether Mormonism is fundamentally racially inclusive or exclusive.

These questions and arguments occupy the center of this project's historical analysis. Yet I also raise and begin to answer another set of related, historiographical questions. Here I ask: in nineteenth-century America how did racial identities—forged at the intersection of religion, politics, gender, class as well as an emerging field of scientific racialism—affect who gets to write history? By this I mean, first: who gets to decide whose voices get included in the Mormon people's archive—which I conceptualize as written texts, namely public, official church records and printed material including newspapers and sermons, sacred revelations, and translations, most notably the Book of Mormon, private materials including diaries, memoirs, and family correspondence, as well as oral histories and folklore, which together compose the Mormon people's collective memory? Second, who has the ability and the authority to literally put pen to paper? That is, who has access to the type of literacy and literary resources to create narratives of the Mormon people, narratives that explain who the Mormon people are as well as who they are not? Third, for those excluded from these historical narratives, how do they write against their exclusion, and thus write themselves into the written archive, even while often adhering to the assumption that the enterprise of historical narration itself signifies whiteness? Finally, how does the writing of race in the paper body of an archive affect how race is written onto bodies made up of flesh and bone? How does the act of ascribing racial characteristics—white as civilized, black as cursed, and red as savage—affect the relationships among these different *literarily* racialized peoples?

## How to Read the Book of Mormon

Answering these questions involves the careful study of how Mormons read and wrote about race. And I argue that such a study is incomplete without a careful examination of the text that marked the beginning of the Mormon dispensation and introduced its earliest readers to a new way of seeing the world and the people who inhabit it: the Book of Mormon.

Many historians have written about the Book of Mormon. Few have read it. Or perhaps more fairly, few historians have analyzed its content.<sup>16</sup> This has been the case for two main reasons. First, instead of investigating the text itself, historians have often focused on Joseph Smith's fantastic claims about how the Book of Mormon came to be—that the Book of Mormon is the fruit of an angelically-led archeological expedition, which, in 1820s Upstate New York, uncovered a cache of gold plates; that on these plates was inscribed a new American Christian gospel and a history of a great pre-Columbian Christian civilization; and that Smith translated this gospel and history from Egyptian into nineteenth-century American English.<sup>17</sup> Since the plates are not extant—Moroni supposedly took them back to heaven after the translation process was complete—and since there is no archeological evidence that matches the civilization that the Book of Mormon describes, many historians find the Book of Mormon origin claims suspect, if not “scandalous.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Terry Givens has written, “The Book of Mormon is perhaps the most religiously influential, hotly contested, and, in the secular press at least, intellectually underinvestigated book in America.” Terry Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6. For biographies of Joseph Smith and histories of early Mormonism that assert that the Book of Mormon is best understood as a product of Smith's personal experiences, his imagination, and the cultural environment from which it emerged, see Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004); Fawn McKay Brodie, *No Man Knows My History; the Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Knopf, 1971); John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998). For a noted exception, see Richard Bushman's reading of the Book of Mormon, Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 84-108. In *By the Hand of Mormon*, Terry Givens combines his reading of the Book of Mormon with a “search for a rational belief” in the book's historical authenticity and textual legitimacy as a pre-Columbian Amerindian history. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 117-154.

<sup>17</sup> “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 222, 240. Terry Givens has written, “Referring to a book actually ‘deposited’ in the earth, and consisting of a physical, tangible medium... shifts the debate—at least partly—from the realm of interiority and subjectivity toward that of empiricism and objectivity.” Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> “John-Charles Duffy has written, “The plates are thus a potential ‘scandal’ in the sense of the Greek *skandalon*: a stumbling block to conversation about Mormonism across religious divide and hence to the mainstreaming of Mormon

Second, there is the form of the text itself. For the uninitiated—those historians and literary critics who have not grown up Mormon—the Book of Mormon is difficult to comprehend, let alone appreciate. Famously, this was Mark Twain’s experience. “All men have heard of the Mormon Bible,” Twain wrote after picking up his own copy when he visited Salt Lake in the early twentieth century. “[B]ut few except the ‘elect’ have seen it, or, at least, taken the trouble to read it... It is chloroform in print. If Joseph Smith composed this book, the act was a miracle—keeping awake while he did it was, at any rate.”<sup>19</sup>

Such anti-Book of Mormon animus dies hard. A generation after Thomas O’Dea wrote in *The Mormons* (1957), that “the Book of Mormon has not been universally considered by its critics as one of those books that must be read to have an opinion of it,” Harold Bloom carried on the then century-old tradition of Book of Mormon illiteracy: in lieu of a close reading of the text, which, he wrote, the book “scarcely sustains,” Bloom concluded that summaries of the Book of Mormon would suffice.<sup>20</sup> Even today while the field of Mormon studies gains acceptance in the academy, the Book of Mormon itself is rarely studied.

For the scholarship of American religion, there is cost associated with this persistent and deliberate Book of Mormon illiteracy. The publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 helped spawn a global religious movement with today more than 15 million members spread across six

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studies.” John-Charles Duffy, “Just How ‘Scandalous’ Is the Golden Plates Story? Academic Discourses on the Origin of the Book of Mormon,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 142–165. As Grant Hardy has written, “the task of historians is to reconstruct the past by triangulating from multiple primary sources, and these do not exist for the Book of Mormon.” Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvii. For descriptions of the plates during and after the translation process, see “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 236. Also, see Lucy Smith, *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir*, ed. Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 457.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1913), 110.

<sup>20</sup> Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of The Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 86; Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 26; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 84–85.

continents.<sup>21</sup> The church has put its faith and money into the Book of Mormon as a powerful tool of religious persuasion. With some 150 million copies, translated in more than 100 languages, printed, sold and given away, the Book of Mormon is third only to the Bible and the Qur'an as the world's most reproduced religious text.<sup>22</sup> And because they do not simply believe it to be the word of God, but actually read it as such, for the Latter-day Saints, the histories and prophesies contained within Book of Mormon creates an “interpretive community,” to borrow from Stanley Fish, a communal mode of reading human experience through this communal lens.<sup>23</sup> For scholars hoping to gain entrée into this unique Mormon mode of reading history—both of the past and future—summaries of the book do not, in fact, suffice.<sup>24</sup>

Book of Mormon illiteracy directly affects the major intervention of this project: the proper contextualization of early Mormon understandings of racial identities as they relate to religious and political identities in the early American republic. As such, Book of Mormon literacy is a prerequisite for understanding how early Mormons' views on race both reflected and departed from the

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<sup>21</sup> The church's most effective mission has sometimes been the Book of Mormon itself. From the church's earliest days, some Mormons have claimed that they converted to Mormonism after a chance encounter with a copy of the Book of Mormon, even absent initial contact with flesh and blood missionaries. This was how Mormon apostle and martyr Parley P. Pratt memorialized his own conversion experience. Parley Parker Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 38–43. More recently in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Saints in Ghana and Nigeria converted to Mormonism after reading LDS tracts and Books of Mormon, some even decades before the ban on full black membership was lifted. See James B. Allen, “Would-Be Saints: West Africa Before the 1978 Priesthood Revelation,” *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 207–47.

<sup>22</sup> “Book of Mormon Reaches 150 Million Copies,” *Church News*, accessed February 19, 2013, <https://www.lds.org/church/news/book-of-mormon-reaches-150-million-copies?lang=eng&query=Book+of+Mormon+reaches+150>.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). For Latter-day Saints, the often spoken phrase, “I believe that the Book of Mormon is true,” is part of the litany of truth claims that forms the unofficial Latter-day Saint confession of faith. The eighth LDS “Article of Faith” reads, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”

<sup>24</sup> This is also Susan Harding's conclusion about late twentieth-century Christian fundamentalists for whom “Bible prophecy... [is] the lens through which twenty or thirty million Bible-reading Christians in America read current history and the daily news... Christians for whom Bible prophecy is true do not inhabit the same historical landscape as nonbelievers.” Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 232.

predominant antebellum conception of race as biblically and biologically predetermined and immutable to change.

Still, there remains the question of how to begin such a reading, how to become, in other words, Book of Mormon literate. Most often readers of the Book of Mormon start from one of two “sectarian” perspectives. As Grant Hardy has explained, to many non-Mormons who venture to read it, the idea of reading the Book of Mormon as actual “history... is so preposterous that it is hard to imagine how otherwise educated and rational people can take it seriously.” On the other hand, for Mormons who have grown up reading it as history and as the word of God, “the complexity and beauty of the book—in addition to what they see as profound religious truths—would seem to make it impossible for thoughtful, open minded people to doubt.”<sup>25</sup>

Mormon scholars Grant Hardy and Terryl Givens have charted another path into a critical reading of the Book of Mormon—one that I largely follow here—that looks closely at the text itself. Hardy has proposed “bracketing, at least temporarily, questions of historicity in favor of a detailed examination of what the Book of Mormon is and how it operates.” In this sense, I agree with Hardy that, if “we [scholars of Mormonism, both Mormon and non-Mormon] shift our attention from Joseph Smith and back to the Book of Mormon itself, a common discourse becomes possible.”<sup>26</sup> However, even while circumventing the “temporarily” bracketed questions of historicity, I do not think we can, nor should we remove the Book of Mormon from its early nineteenth-century origins. Nor should we exclude an examination of how the Book of Mormon operated—or at least how the

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<sup>25</sup> Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi. Though he has argued elsewhere (notably in *Indian Origins of the Book of Mormon* (1986)) that questions of Book of Mormon’s historicity cannot be escaped, Dan Vogel has made a similar proposal as Hardy. Rhetorical analysis of the text can provide “a common ground on which Mormon and non-Mormon scholars can discuss the Book of Mormon in its nineteenth-century context without necessarily making conclusions about its historicity.” Dan Vogel, “Anti-Universalist Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon,” in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 21.

early church leaders hoped it would operate—in the lives and on the imaginations of its earliest readers.<sup>27</sup>

By approaching it *as text* and *as historical phenomenon*, the Book of Mormon can be read from the perspective of its early believers, who understood it to be not only a cultural artifact of miraculous and controversial origin, and not only the material proof—the tangible “icon”—that signaled the restoration of Christ’s church and Joseph Smith’s prophetic authority.<sup>28</sup> Through such a reading, the Book of Mormon also becomes a complex, multilayered work of literature, in particular a work that is distinctly and literally American. And it also becomes the “keystone,” to borrow consciously from Joseph Smith, that binds together a complicated web of scriptural intertextuality, with connections to the archive of the sacred past (e.g. the Hebrew and Christian Bibles), as well as to the archive of the sacred future (e.g. church records, newspapers, memoirs, and other Mormon translations and revelations).<sup>29</sup>

As such, in this project I argue that the Book of Mormon created a new hermeneutical lens—what I call a “hermeneutic of restoration.” Through this lens, early Latter-day Saints read and wrote about the racialized peoples they encountered. For the early Saints, the Book of Mormon’s hermeneutic of restoration helped to create, as David Hall puts it in his study of the seventeenth-century Anglo-American Puritan worldview, “a mode of literacy [that] was keyed to a pervasive

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<sup>27</sup> This work does not entail an act of historical imagination on my part (at least not one out of whole cloth). Intertextual readings of early Mormon publications, especially early Mormon newspapers that often printed excerpts of the Book of Mormon, provide great insights into how early church leaders hoped the church’s membership would read the faith’s foundational text, especially in relation to other developing revelations and translations.

<sup>28</sup> I understand this hermeneutic of the Book of Mormon in terms of how Jean-Luc Marion describes an “icon” as a saturated phenomenon. Ann Taves’ recent work on the Book of Mormon (in particular the materiality of the golden plates) moves in a similar direction. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 197–233. Ann Taves, “Joseph Smith and the Discovery of the Golden Plates, The Role of Skilled Perception in the Making of Special Things,” to be published in the forthcoming volume, *Revelatory Events: Otherworldly Experiences and New Visionary Movements* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press)

<sup>29</sup> Allan Goff, “How Should We Then Read? Reading Mormon Scripture After the Fall,” *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 137–78.

cultural myth.”<sup>30</sup> Through this hermeneutic of restoration, the early Saints also read and wrote themselves into the unfolding latter-day drama, the Mormons’ own particular “pervasive cultural myth.” Through the Book of Mormon’s hermeneutic of restoration, and its intertextual relationship with the Bible and other sacred scriptures that would become part of the Mormon canon and the Mormon historical archive, the early Saints read history as teleology. The past and present pointed to a millennial future, which took on a specifically defined, but ever evolving shape.

### **How to Read and Write about Race**

Before I map out the arguments that I make in the chapters of this project, a few more theoretical and methodological orientations—in particular about reading and writing about race—are worth detailing. The first is how I propose to contextualize the early Mormons’ particular reading of race. When the Book of Mormon was published in 1830, race was the single most important organizing cultural and political category of the American republic. As Edmund Morgan has argued, the freedoms and liberties that white Americans declared were their birthright in 1776 were in fact contingent on the perpetuation and growth of black chattel slavery. The binary between black and white became so totalizing that it consumed all other racial distinctions; when white became synonymous with citizen, black became synonymous with slave, “even if black,” Morgan argues, “was actually brown or red.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 18. In terms of my understanding of a “hermeneutic,” I draw from the work of Paul Ricoeur, by way of Kevin Vanhoozer, on narrativity and history. “To ‘follow’ a story or history is to see how each event and action displays a particular directedness, an orientation governed by the conclusion. Each individual event is understood in light of its place in the temporal-teleological whole. The pieces of a historical puzzle are thus elements of a story.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 94.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 386. Rebecca Anne Goetz moves the creation of race as the ultimate category of distinction in American culture even further back in the nation’s history by examining how seventeenth-century Virginians excluded Africans and Indians from Christian rituals and communities, based on the idea that these racial populations suffered from “hereditary heathenism.” Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

To be sure, long before the American Revolution, in the Atlantic World race, and in particular the origins of the different races, had long been the subject of theological and historical study. As described in Genesis, Noah's sons, Japheth, Shem, and Ham, were all but universally accepted as the progenitors of the world's postdiluvian racial and ethnic peoples of Europe, Asia, and Africa respectively.<sup>32</sup> However, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the ongoing enterprise of European imperial expansion into Africa, and the capture and exportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas, created a theological and political crisis over the question of whether it was biblical for one part of the human family to force their supposed kin into bondage. In the United States, in response to an abolitionist movement that picked up steam in the 1830s, many apologists of slavery, including for a time Joseph Smith himself (see Chapter Four) read race into the Hebraic and Christian scriptures so that the practice and preservation of African slavery became not only biblical, but even ethical. After all, defenders of slavery could not only point to Noah's curse of perpetual servitude onto the supposed African descendants of Ham (Genesis 9:20-27), but also to Paul's proclamations that (black) servants must be obedient to their (white) masters (Ephesians 6: 6-9), to find evidence that slavery was sanctioned by the Old Testament's God and the New Testament's church of Christ.

Biblical hermeneutics were not the only intellectual resources for conceptualizing racial difference as an immutable part of the human experience. As Colin Kidd has argued, nineteenth century "racial science," which read ideas of biological taxonomy and hierarchies onto the black, red, and brown bodies that the white man enslaved, displaced, or colonized, "seemed to provide a compelling explanation of the world and the white man's place in it."<sup>33</sup> In 1830, the same year that

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<sup>32</sup> For a thorough examination of the evolution of the racialized reading of Noah's three sons see, Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 5–6. Also 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: 1492–1789*, ed. Gary Taylor and Philip D. Beidler (New York: Palgrave Academic Publishing, 2002), 79–82.

<sup>33</sup> "Monogenesis, Slavery and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Faith," in Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, 121, 12–167.



the Book of Mormon was published, the founder of the University of Louisville's School of Medicine, Dr. Charles Caldwell, released a polygenesis treatise in which he argued that the Bible only contained the origin story of the Caucasian race, descending from Adam and Eve. Caldwell thus claimed that the roots of the racial difference were found not in the biblical archive, but in the biological one—for example, locating the “Caucasian’s” superior intellect to that of the “African” through a comparison of the relative volumes of the two races’ crania. Yet in terms of the immutability of the races, Caldwell’s end point was the same as the pro-slavery Biblicists. “No instance can be adduced, in which a Caucasian has been changed into a Mongolian, a Malay, or an Indian,” Caldwell wrote, “any more than into an African. The reverse is equally true. There is no case either recorded, or now in existence, in which an African has been converted into a race midway between him and the Caucasian.”<sup>34</sup>

Slavery created the political and moral problem of race that antebellum Americans turned to scriptures and increasingly to science to solve. And yet race became more than a race problem. As Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has famously put it, in the nineteenth century, race became “a ‘global sign,’ a ‘metalanguage,’” which subsumed all other identities—religious, class, political, gender—into a binary of black and white.<sup>35</sup> I argue that, during the first half century of their church’s history, the Latter-day Saints both constructed and contested the notion of black and white as such totalizing categories.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (New York: E. Bliss, 1830), 81, 116. Caldwell was specifically responding to James Cowles Prichard’s proto-evolutionist assertions that all men originated from a “primitive stock” of African “Negroes.” See George W. Stocking Jr., “From Chronology to Ethnology: Prichard and British Anthropology, 1800-1850” in James Cowles Prichard, *Researches Into the Physical History of Man*, ed. George W. Jr. Stocking (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), ix–cx; Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, Race and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54–83.

<sup>35</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 1992): 254–255. Henry Louis Gates has written that race is the “trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents to specific beliefs systems,” which has been constructed to maintain hierarchies of power and subordination. Henry Louis Gates, “Editor’s Introduction: Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference It Makes,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 1985): 1–20.

Michel Foucault provides a helpful theoretical framework for describing how the Saints did so. In *The Order of Things* (1970), a philosophical-archeological exploration of the classical human impulse to “name and order,” Foucault writes about the relationship between “nomenclature” and “taxonomy.” Foucault observes that the epistemological naming of the self (or selves) occurs when the self encounters the other. This encounter also creates classifications of selves into orders of family, genus, and species.<sup>36</sup> I argue that the early Latter-day Saints did not conceptualize humanity’s diversity in terms of the classic Linnaeus taxonomy upon which the likes of Charles Caldwell relied to delineate the tropes of racial hierarchies—the anatomical structure of the African’s brain, for example, demonstrates that he occupies “a station between” apes and Caucasians.<sup>37</sup> Instead the Saints thought about all branches of the human family as sharing paternity in the first man, Adam. From this common Adamic ancestor, and then after the flood, from humanity’s second progenitor Noah spun out a complicated web of patrilineages. The Book of Mormon—the plates of which were the result of Joseph Smith’s own archeological and revelatory diggings on the Hill Cumorah—promises that during the restoration, Noah’s descendants through Shem and Shem’s descendants through Abraham, Isaac Jacob, and Joseph, along with Japheth’s “Gentile” progeny, shall gather together in the New World and “build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.”<sup>38</sup> The descendants of Ham, it is important to note, are completely absent from the Book of Mormon’s millennial vision.

Foucault’s archeology is metaphorical. Joseph’s archeology is historical and/or mythical. Yet Foucault’s archeological discoveries help us to understand Joseph’s; his findings yielded a new way of seeing, or more aptly, reading the American continent (and beyond) and the people who inhabit it. Perhaps the principle discovery is that Joseph Smith believed himself mandated to mend what

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<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 207–208.

<sup>37</sup> Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race*, 81.

<sup>38</sup> 3 Nephi 21:23.

Phillip Barlow has recently called a “fractured reality.”<sup>39</sup> I argue that racial divisions within the human family were part of this fractured reality. To be sure, like the standard nineteenth-century reading of Noah’s curse on Ham’s descendants, the Book of Mormon teaches that racial divisions arise from divine curses. Yet these curses were not of God’s will, but the result of men’s sinful acts, in particular sins against the human family. What’s more, the Book of Mormon also teaches that racial categories are not the same as “taxonomy,” fixed and immutable biological stations or biblical divisions. “Race” can be overcome and eradicated as a marker of hierarchical difference.

Nevertheless like Foucault’s ruminations on taxonomy, I argue that one of the early Saints’ main theological tasks was to “name and order” the various divisions of the human family. They did so according to specific lineages, which, I will show, were theological categories related to, but not the same as, antebellum categories of race. To be able to restore them to the knowledge of their true selves, and to the true knowledge of a universal Adamic (and Noahide) kinship, the divisions of human lineages had to be named (e.g. the sons and daughters of Shem, Japheth, and Ham) and ordered according to the hierarchy of these lineages, with descendants of Shem at the top and those of Ham at the bottom. Once named and ordered, these lineages could be marketed to according to their spiritual and intellectual characteristics and needs, determined both by the lineage into which they were born, and by the civilization in which they were reared. But until the reunion of these unequal lineages occurs, whiteness and blackness remain powerful signifiers, marking off the Christian from the heathen, the civilized from the savage, the citizen from the slave, and the literate from the illiterate.

### **How to Read the Race of the Archive**

Let me briefly pause to reflect on this last distinction between white and dark-skinned people—namely literacy—because I believe it is the most consequential distinction in this study,

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<sup>39</sup> Philip L. Barlow, “To Mend a Fractured Reality: Joseph Smith’s Project,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 28–50.

which examines how the archive is a space where both history *and* race are written, and rewritten. Paul Ricoeur serves as an influence here. Ricoeur asserts that history is a compilation of documents—a physical archive of human experiences written down on paper, as well as stored in the less tangible archive of memories not (yet) recorded. It is the historian’s mandate to return to this archive, again and again, and rediscover documents that have been excluded from previous iterations of historical narration. The act of returning to the primary sources of history is repetitive. But according to Ricoeur, this repetition holds “creative power” to expose “the past again to the future.” Thus historiography—creating new narratives of the “same” history—is self-correcting. “Repetition thus opens potentialities that went unnoticed, were aborted, or were repressed in the past.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, newly-written histories do not—or at least should not—lead to the fragmentation of a people’s history or result simply in a new chapter tacked onto the end of old narratives. Instead, newly discovered or long ignored parts of the archive require the reformulation of the entire narrative.<sup>41</sup>

Ricoeur writes that “the moment of the archive” is a moment of liminality. It is the moment when the “testimony [which] is by origin oral... is listened to, heard,” and then written down. The act of creating a record gives the testimony epistemological authority that the oral does not enjoy. It is the “documentary proof” of history, and the evidentiary requirement for the revision of historiography.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2006), 380; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. 3 (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1990), 76. Ricoeur’s onetime assistant, Jacques Derrida was also concerned with the archive, in particular what he describes as “archive fever” created by the digital age. For Derrida this fever “is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.” Whereas the return to the archive for Ricoeur is constructive, for Derrida it is patricidal, in that it destroys the father’s claim to the present. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 95.

<sup>41</sup> Ann Braude, “Women’s History Is American Religious History,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 166, 176–178.

Ricoeur, however, fails to recognize the racial (as well as gender, and class) implications of the archive. To access the archive, one must pass a literacy test.<sup>43</sup> This means that making and remaking of history—the historiographic exercise in which Ricoeur invests so much hope—is segregated, empowering literate whites to write race and racial hierarchies into history. Jill Lepore explores this distinction in her study of the historical narration of the King Philip’s War. As the Nephites did in relation to the Lamanites, seventeenth-century Puritans enjoyed a “‘literall advantage’” over the Indians. “Like all literate Europeans in the New World... [Puritan historians] had a veritable monopoly on making meaning, or at least on translating and *recording* the meaning of what they saw and did, and even of what they supposed the Indians to have seen, done, and said.” Lepore observes that in seventeenth-century New England, Indians were “speaking Apes”—an ahistorical people without the ability to write—whom Anglo-Americans encountered, tried to convert, and also tried to kill; in the early nineteenth century, America’s “speaking Apes,” at least according to Caldwell’s taxonomy, were black Africans. In both cases, one can observe, as Lepore puts it, “the circularity of the ‘literall advantage’: ‘speaking Apes’ cannot respond in writing to the writers who label them inhuman.”<sup>44</sup> The construction of race—the race of a white, writerly-self and the race of a non-white, non-writerly other—is an act of writing in general, and an act of writing history in particular.<sup>45</sup>

Of course, non-whites write too. They are not simply objects of history. They are subjects who make history. They are also historians who recognize that history does not become history until

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<sup>43</sup> Postcolonial theorists, most notably Edward Said and Stuart Hall, have been more attune to the racial and political implications of the archive. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 41–42; Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *The Formations of Modernity: Understanding Modern Societies an Introduction Book 1*, ed. Bram Gieben and Stuart Hall (Cambridge, U.K: Polity, 1993), 275–332.

<sup>44</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 1999), xviii. Henry Louis Gates Jr. has also written at length about the importance of literacy in the construction of racial difference and hierarchy in American history. See “The Trope of the Talking Book,” in Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 127–169.

<sup>45</sup> For race and the “writerly-self” see Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (New York: Random House, 2007), xii.

it is written down. They put pen to paper, to archive and narrate their own histories. And often, they do so to challenge the manner in which they have been written about in (or written out of) history. And yet, in the history of early Mormonism, the existence of the non-white, writer is a rarity. The writerly James Manning James (Chapter Five), and the writerly Chief Walkara (Chapter Seven) cannot escape the racialization of their own writings. Even when black and Indian Americans produce writing, white writers are almost always called on to authenticate these writings. This authentication process often leads to editing—solicited or not—of the non-white writer’s written words, which in turn can alter and diminish the subjectivity of the non-white writer’s writerly-self.

### **Chapter Outlines: Reading and Writing Race in Mormon History**

Using the evolution of Mormon racial theologies and practices as a point of entry, understanding how nineteenth-century Americans read and wrote about race—the hermeneutics and historiography of the American “race problem”—is the central focus of this study. In Part I, I investigate the hermeneutical lens itself. In Chapter One, I analyze the Book of Mormon’s relevance to three of this project’s most important and interconnected subjects: race, literacy, and the writing of history. First, in terms of race, I elaborate on what I call the Book of Mormon’s “white universalism.” To be sure, the Mormon restoration was a religious one. But by definition, what Joseph Smith called the “restoration of all things” before Christ’s return included the restoration of the human family, which in Joseph’s time (as it is today) was separated into religious, political, and racial factions.<sup>46</sup> Yet, unlike the predominant nineteenth-century view that race is fixed by the strictures of biblical and even biological inheritance, I argue that the Book of Mormon teaches that Christ’s atoning sacrifice provides the “infinite” potential for “all mankind”—even those men and women who carry the curses of their forefathers on their skin—to be redeemed and restored to the

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<sup>46</sup> Revelation, August, 1830 [*DC* 27:6, 9], *RT* (Vol. 2), 490.

white, universal human family.<sup>47</sup> For those willing to accept Jesus as “the Christ,” and accept the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the one true church, God is willing to remove curses, including the curses’ outward manifestation, turning dark skin white.

What’s more, whiteness also signifies the second major subject related to race in the Book of Mormon: literacy. The Book of Mormon teaches that the act of reading written records left by a people’s forefathers, as well as the act of adding to this people’s archive, is the way God’s chosen people remember their heavenly father’s commandments and covenants. It is how they remain just and righteous “from generation to generation.”<sup>48</sup> To read, to write—in other words, to be historical—is to be fully human. The fact that only members of the white, Nephite population of pre-Columbian American history directly add to the archive of what would become the Book of Mormon further substantiates the power of literacy to define whiteness as the universalized category of humanity.<sup>49</sup>

The connection between whiteness and literacy leads to the third racialized subject in the Book of Mormon that I explore in the first chapter, and throughout this project: the power to control what gets written and thus, what gets remembered in this ancient American Christianity. The Book of Mormon is a work of historical and prophetic narration undertaken exclusively by the white, Nephite prophets and historians who enjoy what I call a “narrator’s prerogative.” By this I mean that as historians, Nephi, Mormon, and his son Moroni draw from an archive of written records to create an abridged, synthesized, and intertextual narrative that moves towards a predetermined conclusion.<sup>50</sup> These divinely appointed historians consciously include some historical actors and historical events, and leave out others. In other words, they narrate with a purpose: to

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<sup>47</sup> *BofM*, 104 [2 Nephi 25:16]. See also “To Man,” *E&MS*, June, 1832.

<sup>48</sup> *BofM*, 104; 123; 518 [2 Nephi 25:22; Jacob 1:3; 4 Nephi 1:48].

<sup>49</sup> Jacques Derrida and Peggy Kamuf, “Racism’s Last Word,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (October 1985): 292.

<sup>50</sup> J. Christiaan Beker, “Echoes and Intertextuality: On the Role of Scripture in Paul’s Theology,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 64–69; Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, viii.

create a devotional history intended to guide future readers to accept the gospel contained within the Book of Mormon, to restore God's true church, and to build up a new Jerusalem where the Mormon people were to gather and await Christ's return.

The Book of Mormon is thus the first installment of the Mormon archive. I argue that it shapes not only how early Latter-day Saints viewed the racialized people they encountered, but it also shaped how they wrote about them as objects of missionary work, of colonization, of displacement, of exclusion, and of violence.

In Chapter Two, through a close reading of the prophecies of the Book of Mormon prophet, "Samuel, the Lamanite," I argue that the Book of Mormon itself contains a warning of the pitfalls of ignoring dark-skinned voices in the narration of ancient and latter-day Mormon history. As a Lamanite, Samuel does not or cannot record his own testimony. Thus his prophecies were only recorded when Christ himself intervened to instruct the white Nephite historians to do so. As such, the case of Samuel, the Lamanite, paradoxically highlights the special vantage point that racial marginalization affords critics of American culture, both from the Book of Mormon's mythical, ancient past as well as more recent history. In this sense, Samuel's case has a specific payoff for the analysis of race and Mormonism. It draws our attention to the need to include histories of the marginalized in Mormon record keeping, as these histories often provide correction, even revision, to the dominant (white) historical narrative.

In Part Two, I focus on Mormon history during the lifetime of Joseph Smith (1805-1844). In Chapter Three, I examine the Mormons' first formal marketing efforts, a mission to the "Lamanites" living twenty-five miles west of where the Saints attempted to build their New Jerusalem in Jackson County, Missouri. Since most Native Americans could not read English, the Saints believed that, at least initially, the missionaries would have to bring their new gospel directly to the Indians, and through translators explain its content. While it produced not one single Indian convert, how the



missionaries wrote about this first mission reveals much about the early Mormon hermeneutic of restoration, especially as it pertains to this project's aim to study the archive of Mormon history as a site where the boundaries of Mormon racial identity are constructed and contested.

Next, I examine early Mormon efforts to market the Book of Mormon to the "Gentiles," whose status as civilized whites meant that they were, practically speaking, better prepared to receive the gospel. They could read and write, and in English too, the language the Saints believed was the divinely chosen lingua franca for the restoration. The Saints marketed the Book of Mormon to the Gentiles using more efficient and civilized means than they did with the first Lamanite mission: the written word printed in their own newspapers and on their own printing presses.

Finally, I introduce the complicated place that African Americans occupied in the early Mormon hermeneutic of restoration. The Book of Mormon does not include the supposed descendants of Ham in its vision for a New Jerusalem in America. Nevertheless, motivated by the same ideals of the restoration of the original, white human family found in the Book of Mormon, the Saints engaged in a limited marketing campaign to, as they called them in the Saints' first newspaper, the *Evening & Morning Star*, America's "Free People of Color."

Chapter Four describes the inward reorientation—the formation of a what I call "contracted covenant"—in which the Mormons engaged after they were expelled from Jackson County and, following the Mormons' 1838 ultimate expulsion from Missouri. To articulate what I mean by a contracted covenant, let me explain how I understand the difference between a covenantal "community" and covenantal "family." The early Saints who accepted the Book of Mormon's authenticity as a (purer) gospel of Jesus Christ created two kinds of overlapping Mormon communities.<sup>51</sup> First, acceptance of the normative claims of the Book of Mormon created an interpretive community based on a "hermeneutic of restoration." And second, acceptance of the

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<sup>51</sup> W.W. Phelps, "The Evening and Morning Star [publication announcement]," February 23, 1832, reprinted in *Ec&MS*, June 1832.

Book of Mormon—and Mormonism—created a physical, geographical community that, in the first years of Mormon history, was to be centered at the “City of Zion” near Independence, Missouri.”<sup>52</sup> Here the Mormon converts—Lamanite, Gentile, and perhaps even free people of color—would gather and build New Jerusalem. Religious redemption would lead to racial unification. Even those cursed with dark skin could participate in what I call the “covenantal contract,” which is available to all who proved themselves worthy to be members of a providentially chosen Mormon people.

Yet the Saints turned inward after the trials of the first three years of the church’s existence, when accusations that they were meddling with both Indians and blacks helped to justify their forced removal from Jackson County. As they did so, they discovered that until they could secure a permanent place to build their covenantal community, the most important building blocks of Zion would not be edifices—save for one, the temple—but interrelated bodies in which ran the literal blood of the ancient Israelite patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim.

In Chapter Five, I examine the period during which the Saints built “the City of Joseph” in Nauvoo, Illinois, and in a limited manner reestablished their racial universalism. Both contemporaneous and retrospective archival records from this period, most importantly, but not exclusively Jane Manning James’s own autobiography, portray Joseph Smith Jr. as a prophet who welcomed blacks into his community, his own home, and perhaps even into his own family.

Yet Joseph Smith and other Smith family members were far from colorblind. In fact, the Smiths’ willingness to accept black Mormons like James, along with Mormonism’s first African-American priesthood holder Elijah Abel, was predicated on these black Saints’ ability to overcome the legacy of spiritual inferiority of the cursed lineages into which they were born. Joseph and other Smith family members believed that blacks could change. They too could accept and live by a

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<sup>52</sup> Revelation July 20, 1831 [*D&C* 57:2], *RT* (Vol. 1), 159.

covenantal contract. If they remained faithful to the gospel, then the curse of blackness would be removed, signifying that they were equal to their white brethren—if not white themselves.

In Part III, I focus on the building up of Zion's infrastructure in Utah during Brigham Young's tenure as church president and prophet. This infrastructure was comprised of Zion's built environment as well as its people, which were also, I argue, under construction. The principle sites of this people building included the flesh and bone bodies of Utah's Native populations, Utah's small African American community, as well as the European converts gathering to Utah. In Chapter Six, I argue that Mormons set out to build a Lamanite people by employing the tools of civilization, including farms, clothes, grains, and schoolhouses. They sought to free the Indians from their savage natures, allowing them to access their own God-given agency and fulfill their predetermined destiny to settle the land and covenant with their white brethren. In particular, for those Indians who were physically constrained—especially the women and children enslaved by Indian slavers like Walkara, Arapene, and other Ute chiefs—the Saints would buy them in order to free them. As the white Mormons' pupils, servants, adopted children, and plural wives, these freed slaves would learn to choose the right, and become their Lamanite selves.

In Chapter Seven, I argue that people building in Zion was literary as well as literal. Essential to the construction of the Lamanite was also the construction of the Indian, a character of violence and depravity against which the civilized Lamanite could be drawn. As the Mormon archive grew full of elegiac celebrations of the poor Indian slave—almost always an Indian slave girl—whom the Saints claimed to have purchased into freedom and self-knowledge, Mormons also wrote about the refusal of the Indian—almost always a male Indian slaver—to accept his lessons, an act of defiance that was not deemed a demonstration of human agency, but instead of savagery. Through their performances of violence against Mormons and, against the Mormons' Lamanites, these Indians proved that they were in fact Indians. And they were made to be so on paper. What's more, on

paper, especially in their laws legalizing African slavery, and in speeches explicating black exclusion from full church membership, leading Mormons also drew the “African.” This accursed lineage was set apart for eternity, or at least until the end of time, from the more favored branches of the human family.

I conclude this project with a survey of the history of Mormonism and race after Brigham Young’s death in 1878 and up to the present day. For more than a century, the church worked to fortify the racial boundaries around the Mormon identity that Brigham Young erected during his tenure as president and prophet. And yet, pressures from inside as well as outside the church continually contested these boundaries. I also meditate on how and why the church has recently renewed its universalism, and done so in relation to a re-reading of the Book of Mormon. Yet this contemporary Mormon universalism is a new universalism. It is caste explicitly in a different shade than the white universalism proposed, and in some ways practiced, by the church that Joseph Smith founded in 1830.

## CHAPTER ONE: The Book of Mormon: A “(White) Universal Gospel”

### The New and Ancient American Gospel

For Joseph Smith Jr. and his earliest followers, the Book of Mormon was more than just a book. It was Indian treasure of ancient golden plates unearthed from a hill called Cumorah located just south of an Upstate New York canal town. It was the last material remnant of a once great pre-Columbian American civilization. It was a history of the origins of the nation’s native inhabitants. It was a record of Christ’s first mission to America as well as a prophetic account of Christ’s return.<sup>1</sup>

And yet for those who accepted the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s claims about where the plates came from and how he translated their ancient Egyptian characters into nineteenth-century English script, perhaps what mattered most was what the Book of Mormon directs its readers to do. The Book of Mormon addresses itself implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, to America’s modern-day masters.<sup>2</sup> It commands the “Gentiles” of America—understood initially as white, Anglo-Americans—to repent and restore Christ’s “true church,” the covenants of which had been lost when the Gentiles’ “sectarian” churches fell away from the original gospel’s message.<sup>3</sup> It commands the Gentiles to bring forth the Book of Mormon to the Indians, who are in fact a remnant of a lost tribe of Israel, now in a depraved state and oblivious to their true Abrahamic lineage. It commands the Gentiles to “gather” these Indians together into one civilized people and to covenant with them so that the Gentiles too can be numbered among Abraham’s seed.<sup>4</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 48–52.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Hardy has written that the Book of Mormon is “didactic.” The Book of Mormon’s narrators’ “message is clear—repent and turn to God or suffer the consequences.” Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 8. For direct addresses to the Gentiles see *BofM*, 528, 522 [Mormon 5:22; Mormon 3:17].

<sup>3</sup> *BofM*, 29, 78 [1 Nephi 13:15; 2 Nephi 9:2]; Joseph Smith, “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol.1), 328.

<sup>4</sup> *BofM*, 66-67; 487-488 [1 Nephi 22:6-12; 3 Nephi 16:13-16]. See Daniel Peterson’s discussion of the early Mormon concept of covenant. Daniel Peterson, “Covenant in the Book of Mormon,” in *Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism*, ed. Raphael Jospe, Truman G. Madsen, and Seth Ward (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 33.

commands the Gentiles to join with their new brethren and build a “New Jerusalem” in America, the capital city of Christ’s coming thousand-year reign.<sup>5</sup>

To be sure, the Book of Mormon was not the only nineteenth-century project that aimed to reconceive America’s past as something approaching sacred. A half a century removed from the founding of the republic, Americans were, as Jan Shipps has written, “busily engaged in the manufacture of instant heritage, substituting inspiration for antiquity with regard to the Constitution and producing a veritable hagiography of popular biography,” intended to make secular saints out of the nation’s founding fathers.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, the Book of Mormon’s American focus is not surprising. The Book of Mormon presents itself as a distinctly American scripture. Its prophetic description of the American Revolution as the fulfillment of divine will and the American continent as the “choice land above all other lands” can be read as overtly nationalistic.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the Book of Mormon’s claims that America is the “promised land” become much more ancient and much more audacious than those of America’s incipient civil religion. To the antebellum United States, and soon to many other nations around the world, when the Book of Mormon went on sale in E. B. Grandin’s print shop in Palmyra, New York, on March 6, 1830, the text introduced a radical new reading of America’s past. The new gospel not only included America as a historical site of early Christianity. It moved the center of Christian history away from the Old World and onto the New.<sup>8</sup> Just as important, the Book of Mormon introduced a new reading of the role that America, and the people who inhabit it, would play in the coming millennium.

This chapter analyzes both the past and the future that the Book of Mormon describes. Such a close reading of the Book of Mormon is central to this dissertation’s goal of studying the evolution

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<sup>5</sup> *BofM*, 499-501; 549 [3 Nephi 21:4, 6, 23; Ether 6:12].

<sup>6</sup> Jan Shipps, “The Prophet Puzzle,” in *The New Mormon History*, ed. D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 67.

<sup>7</sup> *BofM*, 29; 9 [1 Nephi 13: 10-19; 1 Nephi 2:20]; Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 56.

<sup>8</sup> Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 89–116.

of the concept of race within early Mormonism. Analyzing this peculiar text, which presents itself as both of ancient origin as well as destined to “come forth” into an America of the early nineteenth century, shows that Mormonism’s foundational scripture both reflects and sometimes departs from the antebellum intellectual and theological world from which it emerges. And because it became the central scripture of the Mormon dispensation, the Book of Mormon creates the theological framework—the hermeneutical lens—for how Mormons understood race in early Mormon history.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the Book of Mormon’s main historical narrative. I focus primarily on how the text describes the two main populations that dominate the Book of Mormon’s pre-Columbian history: the God-fearing, civilized and white-skinned Nephites, and their unbelieving, “filthy,” cursed and dark-skinned cousins, the Lamanites.<sup>9</sup> These two, often belligerent communities descend from one family of Israelites—Lehi, his wife Sariah and their children, who, the Book of Mormon claims, fled to America centuries before Christ’s birth to avoid religious persecution in Jerusalem. I also highlight how the Book of Mormon describes the role that its first modern-day Gentile recipients were to play in restoring the “fulness [*sic*] of the gospel” in the latter-days. In doing so, I describe the text’s relevance to three of this dissertation’s most important and interconnected subjects: race, literacy, and the racialization of the writing of history.

I also introduce what I call the Book of Mormon’s “white universalism.” The text’s missionary mandate—to take the Book of Mormon to “all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (2 Nephi 30: 8)—provides for the opportunity for those born outside the Abrahamic covenant to participate in the “restoration” in the latter-days. Even those whose ancestors’ curses marked them off from the rest of the human family can be restored to the original, white family. And yet, in my discussion of the Book of Mormon’s inchoate conceptualization of the all-but eternal racial

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<sup>9</sup> Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 119, 155, 111.

“lineages” into which humans are born, I also begin to highlight the limits of early Mormonism’s universal whiteness as an identity and as tool for reconciliation of the fractured human family.

### **An American Gospel**

In 384 A.D., Mormon is old, tired, and heartbroken. In the final days of his life, the last of the Nephite military generals finds himself in the land of Cumorah, preparing for a battle with his bloodthirsty enemies, and distant cousins, the Lamanites.<sup>10</sup> The seventy-four year old Mormon spent most of his adult life fighting the Lamanite armies.<sup>11</sup> For more than half a century, continuous warfare with the Lamanites, along with increased “wickedness and unbelief” among the Nephites, reduced this once great people—rulers of civilizations that rivaled the great cities of the Mediterranean antiquity—to refugees, fleeing from Lamanite hordes bent on their total inhalation.<sup>12</sup>

Vastly out numbered, Mormon knows that the Nephites would make their last stand at Cumorah. And yet before this decisive battle, instead of simply sharpening his sword, Mormon sits down to write a history of the Nephite people, as well as a history of the Lamanites.<sup>13</sup> Mormon had specific reasons for writing this millennium-long saga, which he etches on golden plates and then buries atop the Hill Cumorah. Near the end of this history, which more than 1,500 years later would be unearthed, translated from the Egyptian in which he composes it, and then mass produced as a book that would bear his name, Mormon includes a message for his future readers.<sup>14</sup> He writes so that the Gentiles who first receive this American gospel would bring it to the Lamanites. He writes so that in his stories and prophecies, this Lamanite people would rediscover the knowledge of who

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<sup>10</sup> *BofM*, 529 [Mormon 6:1-6].

<sup>11</sup> *BofM*, 519-532; 585 [Mormon 1:5-8:3; Moroni 9:24].

<sup>12</sup> *BofM*, 519; 520 [Mormon 1:14; Mormon 2:3].

<sup>13</sup> *BofM*, 519-529 [Mormon 1:5-6:1-6].

<sup>14</sup> Nephi implies that Egyptian became the language of record for the lost tribes of Israel during the Israelite captivity in Egypt. Much later in the Book of Mormon, Moroni writes that the histories would have been written in Hebrew “if our plates were sufficiently large,” but Egyptian was a more compact script. *BofM*, 5; 15; 538 [1 Nephi 1:2; 1 Nephi 5:14-17; Mormon 9:33].



they are and what they once believed. He writes so that they return to the covenant of their forefathers, to repent and be baptized in Christ's name. Though this history is a mostly a tragic one, Mormon explains that it is written with the intention of bringing "happiness" to its future readers: to show both the cost of forgetting the Lord as well as the promise of eternal life that comes with remembering him.<sup>15</sup>

To compose his history, Mormon had a lot of material with which to work. For hundreds of years—stretching all the way back to the Nephites' progenitor, the Jerusalem-born Nephi—Mormon's ancestors collected and added to a vast archive of epistles, sermons, sacred and secular histories, prophecies, poems, and apocalypses. These records were engraved on what was collectively called "plates of Nephi." And because they represented the Nephites' greatest treasure—this people's collective memory—with each passing generation, a divinely appointed Nephite was chosen to safeguard the plates and continue to add to them so that generations to follow could remember God's providential hand in their unfolding history.<sup>16</sup> The first Nephi was also the first keeper of the plates that bear his name. Centuries later, before his own death Mormon entrusts the plates to his son Moroni, the last Nephite to survive the genocide of his people. Yet it is Mormon who takes on the task of sifting through this large archive of material and creating a carefully edited narrative with the goal of convincing future readers that, for the sake of their salvation, they must "believe in Jesus Christ" and believe in this particularly American gospel.<sup>17</sup>

Mormon first begins by borrowing directly from the history left by the first Nephi.<sup>18</sup> The favored son of Lehi and Sariah, members of the Israelite tribe of Manasseh, Nephi recounts his

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<sup>15</sup> *BofM*, 530-531 [Mormon 7:1-10].

<sup>16</sup> *BofM*, 518-519; 529; 326-327 [Mormon 1:2-4; Mormon 6:6; Alma 37:1-20].

<sup>17</sup> *BofM*, 530-531 [Mormon 7:5].

<sup>18</sup> There are three main Nephite narrators in the Book of Mormon. Nephi, the son of Lehi, and the founder of the Nephite people in the New World, is the narrator of the first two books of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi. Mormon, the last Nephite military general, is charged with abridging, editing and narrating a millennium worth of Nephite history, from the Words of Mormon through Mormon 7. Mormon here is working from existing sources, and

family's exodus from Israel. Around 600 B.C. they journeyed by boat across the sea to the New World. Nephi never explicitly calls his family's new home "America." Instead echoing the first generations of Anglo-American settlers' dialectic sentiment about the continent, he calls it both a "wilderness" and the "promised Land."<sup>19</sup> Also like the Puritans, this exodus is done under duress, but guided by providence. God prompts the faithful Lehi to take his wife and children out of Israel to avoid the persecution of faithless Jews and before the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup>

However, within the first generation of their arrival in the New World, after Lehi's death, his family splits into two rival factions. Lehi's elder sons Laman and Lemuel become jealous that God chose their younger brother Nephi to lead this new Israelite-American people. Together, Laman and Lemuel conspire to kill Nephi.<sup>21</sup> But God foils the plot. He warns Nephi to flee "into the wilderness" with his family and the families of his brothers who remain loyal to him. In a land they call "Nephi," Nephi and his brothers establish the "people of Nephi." There they become successful farmers; as Nephi explains, "we began to till the earth" and "plant seeds," which these Israelites in diaspora "had brought from the land of Jerusalem." They also raise "flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind." And they erect cities and construct temples, the first built to resemble Solomon's Temple.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, according to Nephi, for their pride and for their failure to recognize God's appointed spokesmen on earth, God curses Laman and his progeny. Like their supposed

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in some instances he directly quotes from these sources (e.g. The Book of Mormon's second Alma is the author of most of Mosiah through Alma 44). For our purposes, it is important to note that Mormon quotes directly from Nephi, one of Christ's New World disciples, who is the chief record keeper of Christ's time in America, though Mormon does insert commentary in some of 3 Nephi (e.g. 3 Nephi 5, Nephi 28:13-30:2). After his father's death, Moroni takes over the record keeping, completing Mormon (Mormon 8) and adds his own narration of the demise of the last of the Nephites. He also abridges the history of the Jaredites (Ether), another Israelite people who arrived in America before Lehi and his family. This people too created a great civilization, and who all but destroyed themselves by the time of the development of the Nephite civilization (Esther 15:2). My thanks to Grant Hardy who has helped me sift through this unfamiliar material.

<sup>19</sup> Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 156–206; Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>20</sup> *BofM*, 7-8, 43 [1 Nephi 1:18-2:13; 1Nephi 17:7-14].

<sup>21</sup> *BofM*, 71 [2 Nephi 5:1-5].

<sup>22</sup> *BofM*, 71-72 [2 Nephi 5:5-18].

“Indian” descendants, the Lamanites become “an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety.” While the Nephites are “white, and exceeding fair and delightsome,” the Lord’s curse causes “a skin of blackness to come upon” the Lamanites. Unlike the Nephites, who establish societies of laws and covenants that they keep with each other and with the Lord, the Lamanites become apostates and nomads, who hunt in the “wilderness for beasts of prey.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus establishes the cultural divisions—often, though not exclusively, manifested as racial divisions—that dominate the Book of Mormon narrative. For most of the next six centuries, Mormon describes a cyclical pattern similar to that of the Nephites’ Hebraic ancestors. While striving to uphold the Abrahamic covenant and live by Mosaic law, the Nephites’ increasing prosperity and power leads to periods of class divisions, spiritual degeneracy, followed by cycles of repentance and the rebuilding of godly kingdoms.

As for the Lamanites, in Mormon’s narrative, they are most often portrayed as a wicked, idolatrous people who constantly war against their more faithful kin. And yet, foreshadowing the Saints’ own missions to the Native Americans, a handful of Nephites become missionaries to the Lamanites. Through their efforts many Lamanites join the church that the Nephite prophets establish in the New World.<sup>24</sup>

Because it is a “gospel of Christ,” the central event of the Book of Mormon is Christ’s mission to America. During his absence from his ossuary in Jerusalem, Jesus reassures his disciples of his resurrection. Yet in the New World (around 34 A.D.) at the moment of Jesus’ death, great storms, fires, floods, and earthquakes lay to waste many of the great Nephite cities, including their capital, Zarahemla, which had recently become a den of iniquity and inequality. Because of their great wealth, the Nephites had begun to worship gold more than God. Their collective sin was

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<sup>23</sup> *BoM*, 73 [2 Nephi 5:21, 24].

<sup>24</sup> From within this community of converted Lamanites, arises a great prophet, Samuel, the Lamanite, whose important mission I detail in Chapter Two.

economic. Class divisions had created schisms of jealousy, with Nephites coveting their neighbors' possessions. As such, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the disastrous events that accompany Jesus' death are the Nephites' divine punishment.<sup>25</sup>

During his brief, three-day sojourn in America among "the more righteous part of the people" who survive these calamities, Christ is very busy.<sup>26</sup> He teaches the Nephites his gospel message—of repentance of sin, of obedience to the Heavenly Father's will, and of faith in his atoning sacrifice. He preaches the Sermon on the Mount. He speaks the Beatitudes. He teaches the Lord's Prayer. He calls his twelve New World disciples, ordains them, and teaches them how to ordain other priests and teachers.<sup>27</sup> And these twelve disciples establish a new church in Christ's name.<sup>28</sup> Christ also teaches that his death has opened up the covenant, once reserved only for the faithful seed of Abraham, to all who would believe in him.<sup>29</sup>

Christ also proclaims that the gospel he leaves behind in the Americas is a more complete gospel than that which is contained in the Bible. To be sure, faithful apostles of Christ originally wrote the "fulness of the gospel" into the Old World's Bible. Yet for centuries, the Bible passed from one inept or unfaithful translator to the next. Along the way, it was stripped of its "most plain and precious parts." Christ explains that he has come to deliver to the Nephites that which is essential for salvation, but would be lost in the Old World Bible.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Christ instructs his

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<sup>25</sup> *BofM*, 472 [3 Nephi 9:1-2]. See 3 Nephi 8-9 for descriptions of all the cities that were destroyed upon Christ's death.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Dilworth Rust has written, "the preservation at Christ's coming of the 'more righteous part of the people' (3 Nephi 10:12) and the calamitous destruction of many cities confirms the oft-repeated Book of Mormon motto: those who keep the Lord's commandments shall prosper in the land of promise, but those who will not shall be swept off (cf. 2 Nephi 1:9; 4:4, Alma 9:13; 50:20; and Ether 2:10)." Richard Dilworth Rust, "Recurrence in the Book of Mormon Narratives," *Journal of Book of Mormon and other Restoration Scriptures*, 3 no. 1 (1994): 51.

<sup>27</sup> *BofM*, 574-574 [Moroni 3:1-4].

<sup>28</sup> For Christ's teachings to the Nephites, see: *BofM*, 476-510 [3 Nephi 11:1-3 Nephi 28:12].

<sup>29</sup> *BofM*, 485 [3 Nephi 15:8, 17].

<sup>30</sup> Christ reveals this prophecy to the first Nephi centuries before his actual mission in America. *BofM*, 30-31 [1 Nephi 13: 34; 23-35].

Nephite disciples to make an archive of Christ's New World mission. "Write these things which ye have seen and heard," he commands them.<sup>31</sup>

Christ explains that it is this American gospel that allows the Nephites to "know the things that ye must do in my church" in order to be blessed and "lifted up at the last day." The same holds true for those who bring forth the Book of Mormon in the latter-days. The gospel shall be "hid up" in its original form, only "to come forth unto the Gentiles." In the last days, many Gentiles will reject the Book of Mormon, declaring, "we have got a Bible, and there cannot be anymore."<sup>32</sup> Yet those who accept this more complete gospel will have the complete knowledge of how to administer Christ's true church, including how to properly perform baptisms, bless sacraments, and ordain priests, issues of contention among the "sectarian" churches of early nineteenth-century America who based their faith on their sectarian reading of the incomplete Bible of Antiquity.<sup>33</sup> The Book of Mormon does not claim the gospel that Jesus delivered to the first Christians in Palestine was less complete than the gospel he proclaimed to America's House of Israel. But the Book of Mormon claims it is *a better record* of this gospel, a claim that makes the New World, not the Old, the more reliable repository of the true Christian past and future.

In the latter-days, it is this American gospel that will lead to the salvation of all those willing to believe in the message of Christ's universal offer of salvation. Together, the histories and prophecies recorded in the Book of Mormon serve to bring "truth... to all kindreds, tongues, and people." This truth is plain and precious: "that the Lamb of God is the son of the Eternal Father;

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<sup>31</sup> *BofM* 509 [3 Nephi 27:23-26].

<sup>32</sup> *BofM*, 115 [2 Nephi 29:3, 5].

<sup>33</sup> *BofM*, 508-509, 31 [3 Nephi 27:21-23; 13-27; 1 Nephi 13:35-37].

and that all men must come unto Him, or they cannot be saved... for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.”<sup>34</sup>

While Jesus ministers directly to the Nephites, his message of universal salvation also leads to the conversion of the Lamanites. For two hundred years after Christ’s ascension into heaven, the Lamanites and Nephites live together in a society of Christ. In the new cities they build, racial and cultural differences disappear.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the final chapter of this saga does not end with peace and piety. “In the two hundred and thirty first year,” Mormon writes, “a great division among the people [occurs],” in which Lehi’s progeny return to their respective original roles. At least before their ultimate destruction in the fifth century A.D., many Nephites remain “true believers in Christ,” while the cursed Lamanites “wilfully rebel against the gospel of Christ; and they did teach their children that they should not believe, even as their fathers, from the beginning.”<sup>36</sup>

In a reversal of the fate of their supposed Indian descendants at the hands of the Anglo-Americans a millennium later, the Lamanites engage in a campaign of total Nephite genocide.<sup>37</sup> During this reign of terror, the Lamanites reveal what is perhaps their inborn hatred for civilized

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<sup>34</sup> *BofM*, 31 [1 Nephi 13: 40-41]. To be sure, the concept of universal salvation, or at least the potential for it, existed long before the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith’s father and grandfather were both Universalists for a time. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 17, 23. Here, a distinction must be made between “Universalism” and potential universal salvation. Both early Mormonism and Universalism were formed in response to sectarianism. Unlike the Universalist Hosea Ballou (*Treatise on Atonement* (1805)), who held that since “all the religion in our world, founded on the partial principles of man’s inventions... is from carnal man,” the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 14:10) makes clear that “there are two churches only, the one true church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and is the whore of all the earth.” See Hosea Ballou, *A Treatise on Atonement* (Hallowell, ME: C. Spaulding, 1828), 56. While Ballou asserts that God’s love is perfect and infinite, and therefore atonement does not depend on the agency of sinful man, the Book of Mormon asserts that all of humanity is free to choose redemption, but must believe, be baptized in the name of Christ, and live righteous lives. See 2 Nephi 28:23; Mosiah 16:1-15; 2 Nephi 4:17, 21, 31-32; Timothy Smith, “The Book of Mormon in Biblical Culture,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7, no. 1 (1980): 7. However, Ballou and other Universalists did not advocate a bacchanal life, as the Book of Mormon mockingly puts it, “Eat, drink, and be merry... God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last shall be saved in the Kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 28: 7-8), and as many of the Universalists’ critics suggested. Obedience was sign of salvation. But instead of damnation for all those who failed to choose “the Kingdom of the father,” unification with “God [who] shall be all in all” is inevitable. Ballou, *A Treatise on Atonement*, 240. Not all scholars of early Mormonism read the Book of Mormon as a universalist text. See Vogel, “Anti-Universalist Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon.”

<sup>35</sup> *BofM*, 515 [4 Nephi 1-17, esp. 17].

<sup>36</sup> *BofM*, 517 [4 Nephi 1:35-38].

<sup>37</sup> *BofM*, 526; 532 [Mormon 4:21; Mormon 8:2-3].

Christianity. They not only slaughter the Nephite warriors, but also sacrifice them “unto idols.” The Lamanites make special targets of the Nephites who refuse to “deny the Christ.”<sup>38</sup> As such, the Lamanites show that they intend not only to lay waste to the bodies of the Nephites, but also to eradicate the hallmarks of Nephite civilization, destroying the New World Christian church, and burning down Nephite towns and cities.<sup>39</sup> Mormon even worries that the very plates that he has been charged with protecting at the cost of his life “[might] fall into the hands of the Lamanites (for the Lamanites would destroy them).” To protect them, Mormon first makes an abridgement of the Nephite archive, and then hides these plates “up in the hill Cumorah.”<sup>40</sup>

After the Lamanites “hunt down” Mormon and a handful of Nephite survivors, it falls to the last surviving Nephite, Mormon’s son Moroni, to narrate the end of “the sad tale of the destruction of my people.” Yet after lamenting his own lot—“I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not”—he writes that his purpose in recording this history is not to curse the Lamanites.<sup>41</sup> Instead, Moroni remains hopeful that “my brethren, the Lamanites in some future day” will read these sacred records. And when they do, he hopes that they will accept the invitation contained within them of Christ’s offer of salvation.<sup>42</sup>

### **Restoration and Whiteness**

That Moroni’s exhortation is addressed to the Lamanites is important. The Nephites do not keep this sacred record for their own posterity. They have none. After Moroni’s death in 421 A.D., the Nephite people become extinct. And yet the fact that Moroni names his future Lamanite readers

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<sup>38</sup> *BofM*, 574 [Moroni 1:2].

<sup>39</sup> *BofM*, 527 [Mormon 5:5]. Jill Lepore writes that during the King Philip’s War, the English colonists not only feared for their bodily safety, but also “to many colonists... all that they had made them English and all that had made the land their own—their clothes, houses, barns, churches, cattle, and crops—were being threatened... English possessions were, in a sense, what was at stake in the war, for these—the clothes they wore, the houses they lived in, and the things they owned—were a good part of what differentiated the English from the Indians.” Lepore, *The Name of War*, 79.

<sup>40</sup> *BofM*, 529 [Mormon 6:6].

<sup>41</sup> *BofM*, 531-532 [Mormon 8:2-5].

<sup>42</sup> *BofM*, 530-532 [Mormon 7:1-Moroni 1:4].

“my brethren” suggests that, while the differences between Lamanite and Nephite prove to be very consequential for the history of pre-Columbian American Christianity, these differences are, in the long term, superficial. They are literally and figuratively only skin deep. Moroni and Mormon, along with the other Nephite record keepers, write the Book of Mormon so that in the last days before Christ’s return, their brethren, the Lamanites can read it, repent, and be restored to God. Returning to the faith of their fathers will also restore them to the original, white human family. The curses that once marked them off as inferior will be removed. Religious conversion leads to the conversion of skin color; a change of heart leads to a change from black to white.

Still the question remains, how does this restoration come about? The Book of Mormon teaches that the Lamanites do not restore themselves. In fact, Mormon foresees that, in the interlude between the end of the Book of Mormon history and the text’s modern-day restoration, the surviving “seed” of the Lamanites “scatter” throughout the “Promised Land.” They divide further into tribes who war with one another. They become the American Indians: “a dark, a filthy, a loathsome people, beyond the description of... even that which hath been among the Lamanites.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, their hearts and perhaps their skins become even darker than before.

For the first few centuries after their own exodus to the New World, the Gentiles add to the suffering and depravity of the Indians. Both Nephi and Mormon foresee this. They prophesy that the Gentiles scatter the Indians further afield from what the Nephite historians call “the land of [the Lamanites’] inheritance.”<sup>44</sup> The Book of Mormon was first published in 1830, the same year the U.S. government enacted President Jackson’s Indian Removal Act. And yet the Gentiles—or at least those Gentiles willing to believe—play a central role in the restoration of the Lamanites to the faith of their forefathers. To be sure, the Book of Mormon reflects the standard antebellum view that the

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<sup>43</sup> *BofM*, 528 [Mormon 5:15].

<sup>44</sup> *BofM*, 36; 528 [1 Nephi 15:17; Mormon 5:20, 14].



Indians were dark-skinned, belligerent savages—the working policy of the American government in 1820s and 1830s. Yet the Book of Mormon also teaches that the believing Gentiles, who are the first to read the Book of Mormon, understand its great worth and, based on its mandates, restore Christ’s true church in America, should look beyond the Indians’ current state. In his prophecies, Nephi foretells of a time when the Gentiles who accept the Book of Mormon will also accept the Lord’s commandment not to see the Indians simply as a hindrance to the providential westward expansion of the United States’ territory.<sup>45</sup> Instead, Nephi foresees a time when believing Gentiles will see the Indians as the remnant of a lost tribe of Israel, and thus rightful heirs to the oldest of covenants, and even the rightful heirs to the American promised land.<sup>46</sup>

During the last days before Christ’s return, these believing Gentiles will restore the Indians to the knowledge of their true Israelite identity. They will “gather” and unite the various tribes into one people. The Gentiles will “nurse” them and carry them as “children... in their arms... [and] upon their shoulders.” Nephi’s prophecies suggest that, through the paternal care that Gentiles provide them, the Indians will eventually rise to the “standard” of their fellow Gentile believers.<sup>47</sup> They will become civilized Christians. And they will join with their white Gentile brethren to become one “covenanted people.” At that time, not only will “the scales of darkness... begin to fall from their eyes.” Nephi also foresees that “many generations shall not pass away among them” before the Lamanites too become “a white and a delightsome people.”<sup>48</sup> According to Nephi, when Christ’s returns, he will find his church restored, and its membership roles filled with a people

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<sup>45</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 192–204.

<sup>46</sup> These Gentiles will be well suited for this restoration. As Nephi suggests, like his Israelite family escaping persecution of the wicked “Jews” of Jerusalem for the sanctuary of the promised land, these Gentiles will be descendants of a devout people who also fled Old World “captivity” to find religious freedom in the New World. *BofM*, 7; 29; 32 [1 Nephi 1: 18-20; 1 Nephi 13: 17-20; 40-42].

<sup>47</sup> *BofM*, 74; 57 [2Nephi 29:14; 1 Nephi 22:6].

<sup>48</sup> *BofM*, 177 [2 Nephi 30:5-6].

unified under one Christian covenant. The racial assimilation will be so complete that perhaps even Christ will not be able to differentiate Gentile from Lamanite.

As such, the Book of Mormon's past matches its prophesied future. The lessons of religious and racial reconciliation in America's pre-Columbian Christian history correspond with the white universalism that Nephi prophesizes for the millennium to come. Racial divisions are not permanent, or need not be. The racial and cultural differences between Gentiles and Indians, as they were between Nephites and Lamanites, are "temporal," as Nephi explains. God and God's creation are "spiritual" and eternal. Moroni exhorts his future Lamanite and Gentile readers to read the Book of Mormon, and take from it the knowledge that eternal life is not out of reach for those willing to believe in Christ. At least until judgment day, Christ's offer of redemption is open to all men and women, even those cursed because of the betrayal of their forefathers.<sup>49</sup>

### **Race, Lineage, and the Legacy of the 'Second Fall'**

The New and Old World gospels agree that all men and women are heirs to Adam and Eve's fall, resulting from the first family's sin against God.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, paralleling centuries' old beliefs that dark-skinned Africans descend from the Bible's Cain and Ham whose curses resulted from "a second fall" brought about by sins against family members, the Book of Mormon describe sins against the family that also result in a curse, whose physical manifestation is dark skin.

In its assertion of monogenesis human origins and in its assumption that dark skin results from twice fallen ancestors, the Book of Mormon was standard fare in antebellum America. In this sense, the Book of Mormon bears the markings of its nineteenth century "translator," including the linguistic and cultural assumptions about the hierarchies of the races. Smith and many of his early followers accepted the notion that "white" descendants of Noah's sons Japheth and Shem were

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<sup>49</sup> *BofM*, 57 [1 Nephi 22: 6; Moroni 10: 19]. Revelation, September 1830, [*De&C* 29:31-34], RT (Vol. 1), 47-49.

<sup>50</sup> *BofM*, 669 [2 Nephi 2:19-22; Mormon 9:12]; Genesis 3:6-7; Romans 5:12.

culturally, intellectually, and spiritually superior to the “black” sons of Ham.<sup>51</sup> The Book of Mormon’s own hermeneutic of race reflects this equivalency of “whiteness” with humanity, or at least humanity at it is fully realized.

The first Nephi writes that the Lamanites’ curses of “blackness” result from their “iniquity.” The first such iniquitous act is Laman’s Cain-like attempt to kill Nephi, which stems from Laman’s jealous rejection of God’s choice to name Nephi as the prophetic and political successor to his father.<sup>52</sup> In response, God causes “a skin of blackness to come upon [the Lamanites].” Echoing nineteenth-century social and legal taboos against miscegenation, the Lord hopes that such a demarcation will prevent confusion—and mating—between the righteous and wicked. Black skin is intended to make the Lamanites less “enticing” to Nephi’s “white and delightsome” descendants. The Lord goes so far as to warn his favored Nephites that any progeny produced “of him that mixeth with their [the Lamanites] seed... shall be cursed even with the same cursing.”<sup>53</sup> Just as Cain’s sin against Abel separated him the Bible’s first (white) family, the Lamanites’ sin marks them as unfit to be full members of the Book of Mormon’s first (white) family.

This curse divides Lehi’s family into distinct racial and cultural lineages. However, the Book of Mormon presents its own set of assumptions about the origin and destiny of “race” as a category of human division, assumptions that help define the Mormons’ hermeneutic of restoration. The Book of Mormon diverges from other nineteenth-century biblical and biological beliefs by teaching that race is not destiny. When Christ comes to America, his church establishes peace and prosperity for all. The universal gospel creates a unified, just, and equitable American Christian society. There

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<sup>51</sup> See “Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch,” *E&M*, August 1832, which reprints Smith’s 1830 translation of what would become known as the Book of Moses. Moses contains an elaborated version of humanity’s first murder, the punishment of which is a curse against Cain, marking him off from the rest of Adam’s progeny. Compare Genesis 7 to Moses 5 and Moses 7.

<sup>52</sup> *BofM*, 71-73 [2 Nephi 5:3, 19]. Angela Y. Kim, “Cain and Abel in the Light of Envy: A Study in the History of the Interpretation of Envy in Genesis 4.1-16,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 12, no. 1 (2001): 65.

<sup>53</sup> *BofM*, 73 [2 Nephi 5:21-23]. See also Alma 3:6-8.

are no “rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.” What’s more, eventually there are even no “Lamanites, nor any manner of Ites,” as Lamanites and Nephites unify to create a raceless (white), Christian people. Race is a false, or at least, an impermanent distinction, the result of human temporal failing, not God’s eternal design.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, the Book of Mormon is not fully committed to its own faith in the potential of religious and racial restoration of all of Adam’s progeny. The return of the Lamanites’ wickedness at the end of the Book of Mormon saga points to another critically important, perhaps even a defining feature of the Mormon hermeneutic of race. The sins against the family that Cain, Ham, and Laman commit create “lineages,” which the early Saints would come to understand as having distinct origins as well as distinct destinies. And while the Book of Mormon teaches that these curses can be removed, the fact that the (formerly) Lamanite Christians could not abide Christ’s gospel message through the generations suggests that the legacy of the curse placed upon the first generation of Lehi’s rebellious children—which created the Lamanite and Nephite lineages—was not fully eradicated. Some two hundred years after Christ’s departure, the Lamanites return to their original depravity. Just as they “were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning” of the Book of Mormon’s history, Mormon writes that at the end of this saga, these reconstituted Lamanites again “were taught to hate the children of God.”<sup>55</sup>

Incipient in the Book of Mormon, this idea of all-but eternal lineages developed gradually during the first decades of Mormon history, and did so in response to historical contingencies, including a combination of failed Lamanite missions, great success among certain supposedly

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<sup>54</sup> *BofM*, 515 [4 Nephi 1:17]. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 51. In the eighteenth century, Le Compte de Buffon, along with Johan Blumenbach, proposed a similar, though secular, theory for the origins of the races. While de Buffon and Blumenbach were monogenesisists, they believed that the races (other than the “white” race) devolved due to “degeneration” away from a pure, Caucasian origin. Degeneration could be reversed if the proper environmental conditions, including climate, food, mode of living, and elimination of diseases, were established. Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (Walnut Creek, CA: Rowman Altamira, 2001), 85.

<sup>55</sup> *BofM*, 517 [4 Nephi 1:35-39].

Gentile populations, especially, as I argue in Chapter Four, in the British Isles, as well as ever-increasing persecution from other populations of Gentiles, which often included accusations that the Saints were challenging America's racial hierarchies by marketing their faith to Native Americans and some blacks.<sup>56</sup> For the most part, however, the Book of Mormon presents an expansive view of the possibility for the redemption of all mankind, and the restoration of the cursed to full covenant with the original, white family. The Book of Mormon understands whiteness to be the original and universal racial category.<sup>57</sup> Adam was white. Noah was white. Lehi was white. Their sons—Cain, Ham, and Laman—sin against the family, the punishment for which was a curse of blackness on their progeny. Yet the Book of Mormon provides a vision for the religious and racial restoration of this fractured human family. When dark-skinned people accept Christ's offer of salvation, their curse is removed. Within the Book of Mormon's hermeneutic of restoration "whiteness" becomes an aspirational identity that even those cursed with blackness can achieve.

### **Whiteness and Literacy**

Whiteness signifies humanity in a state of accord with both the commandments of God and the cultural norms of man. As such whiteness is the racial category that is, ironically, empty of race. And yet whiteness—just as much as blackness—is pregnant with meaning. In the Book of Mormon, blackness (as does "Lamanite," and as did "Indian" in the early American republic) signifies cursed, idolatrous, nomads who hunt beasts of prey, steal cattle and crops from more civilized peoples, and

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<sup>56</sup> Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 21–24. In Chapter Four, I further detail the evolution of the Mormon concept of "lineages" and its relation to race. In Chapter Three, I further discuss the early Mormons' marketing efforts to racially diverse populations of Americans.

<sup>57</sup> As Warren Montag has written, "One of the moments in the invention of the white race was its universalization in a movement that replaced the distinction between black and white 'races'... with the distinction between the human and the animal. To be white is to be human, and to be human is to be white. In this way, the concept of whiteness is deprived of its purely racial character at the moment of its universalization, no longer conceivable as a particularistic survival haunting the discourse of universality but, rather, as the very form of human universality itself." Warren Montag, "The Universalization of Whiteness," Mike Hill ed., *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 282, 285.

wage war against them. Whiteness signifies pious farmers and ranchers who progress to create cities and temples, and erect walls to keep the dark-skinned marauders out.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps most consequently, whiteness also signifies literacy: the ability to read and remember the history of a people's forefathers as well as to write new histories, thus adding to an ever-growing communal archive. Literacy is also fundamental to the restoration. At least according to the Book of Mormon's Nephite narrators, the Lamanites cannot or do not keep a record of their own. Thus they forget America's ancient Christian past and they display their antipathy towards this past by destroying all traces of this ancient American Christian civilization.

All traces but one. Buried atop the Hill Cumorah, the Plates of Nephi survive as a forgotten testament to the rise and fall of the various branches of Lehi's offspring. Because of the Nephites' ability to leave a written record of their history and prophecies, this testament did not stay forgotten. Instead Joseph Smith, with the aide of the Angel Moroni, unearthed the plates, translated, and published them as the Book of Mormon. Though they are long dead, because white-skinned Nephites were literate, the voices of Nephites can be heard in the latter-days. Because they were literate, white-skinned Gentile believers read these voices in a text that they believed restored the plain and precious essentials to the Christian gospel.<sup>59</sup> The Book of Mormon thus becomes the "fulness" of this gospel; it contains the knowledge capable of ending belligerent religious and racial divisions within the human family and restoring this family to its original God-fearing, raceless, white form. Literacy thus unlocks the door to this restored Christian gospel. And what follows naturally from acceptance of it is whiteness.

In the Book of Mormon, this lesson about literacy begins well before Lehi's family splits into Nephites and Lamanites in America. Before departing for the Promised Land, Lehi sends his sons

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<sup>58</sup> *BofM*, 174 [Mosiah 9:8-15].

<sup>59</sup> *BofM*, 502 [3 Nephi 23:4].

Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi to Jerusalem. Their errand is to obtain from Laban, a wealthy citizen of Jerusalem, “a record of the Jews” as well as a genealogy of Lehi’s forefathers, written proof that Lehi is a literal seed of Abraham, which Lehi will bring with him during his exodus to the New World so that future generations will not forget that they are heirs to the Abrahamic covenant.

Laman and Lemuel are unwilling to risk their lives to obtain these precious “plates of brass.” Nephi however kills Laban and does so with Laban’s own sword. While Nephi is initially uncomfortable committing such violence, in his divine counsel to Nephi, the Lord proves to be utilitarian. He reveals to Nephi that killing Laban is a “righteous” act. “It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief,” explains the Lord. Without the written record of “the law of Moses” as well as a written record of Lehi’s family tree, the Israelites in the wilderness of America would surely forget the knowledge of their true Abrahamic lineages. They would become like the progeny of Laman and Lemuel, illiterate and faithless. The fruit of the Bible’s first murder is the creation of the first race; the curse upon Cain marks off Cain and his progeny from the rest of the human family. The fruit of the Book of Mormon’s first murder is the first installment of the Nephite archive.<sup>60</sup> In the name of literacy, murder becomes righteous.

The Book of Mormon’s first *attempted* murder further emphasizes the importance of literacy to remember the promises made between earthy forefathers and the father in heaven. When the Lord warns Nephi to flee into the wilderness to avoid Laman and Lemuel’s plot to kill him, Nephi takes only the essentials with him. He takes his family. He takes tents for shelter. And he takes his father Lehi’s treasured plates of brass. Because they safeguard these records, the Nephites are able uphold the religion and Law of Moses. And they also are able to preserve a written genealogical

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<sup>60</sup> *BoM*, 11-13, 15 [1 Nephi 4:1-19; 1 Nephi 5: 11-14]. These records included: the five books of Moses; the history of the Israelites to the reign of Zedekiah, the last of the kings of Judah before the Babylonian conquest; the prophecies of the Israelite prophets through Jeremiah; and the genealogy of Lehi’s own family stretching back Joseph, the son of Jacob, and the great-grandson of Abraham.

record that connects them directly back to Abraham, a lineage that plays a pivotal role in the development of the early Mormon self-perception.<sup>61</sup>

In a sense, even Christ's New World mission is a literacy promotion campaign. When Christ gives the Nephites the essentials of the gospel he also commands them to "write the things which I have told you."<sup>62</sup> He wants to make sure that this gospel is remembered, so in the latter-days it can be restored to the world in an accurate form. In fact, Christ describes himself as imprinted with the universally available covenantal bargain between God and humanity. He is the word made flesh. "I bear record," Christ explains, "that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me." As the bearer of the record, Christ's mission is to guarantee that he *as text* (logos) is preserved in the new world gospel for the sake of "future generations."<sup>63</sup>

Jesus explains that the Lord will give to his people "a sign" to mark the beginning of the latter-days. But this sign—the Book of Mormon itself—will come first to the American Gentiles because they are literate and the Indians are not. The Gentiles will read it, repent, and be baptized into Christ's true church, which they will restore in America. Then they will return the book to the Indians. And together, Indian and Gentile—the former who will reclaim their place in the covenant and the latter whose faith will allow them to be "numbered among" the restored covenant people—will build New Jerusalem in America and from inside this righteous city, await Christ's return.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Narrator's Prerogative**

At the end of the Book of Mormon, Mormon and Moroni's description of the Lamanites' increasingly "loathsome" state—manifested in their increased blackness—puts the Nephites' own whiteness into greater relief. The last two of the book's narrators present themselves as literate,

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<sup>61</sup> *BofM*, 71-72 [2 Nephi 5:5-12]. In Chapter Four, I detail the importance of the Saints' own Abrahamic lineage.

<sup>62</sup> *BofM*, 502 [3 Nephi 23:4].

<sup>63</sup> *BofM*, 478 [3 Nephi 26:1].

<sup>64</sup> *BofM*, 499 [3 Nephi 21:1; 5-6; 22-25]



forgiving, forwarding thinking Christians who, despite the fact that the Lamanites seek to kill them, write for the sake of the descendants of their illiterate, depraved Lamanite “brethren.”<sup>65</sup>

From Moroni’s perspective, it is the Nephites’ responsibility to write for the Lamanites. Part of Laman’s initial rebellion against Nephi is to refuse to “hearken unto...[the] words” of God’s appointed prophet. The cost of this perfidy is that not only are Laman and his progeny separated from the rest of Lehi’s family. They are also “cut off from the presence of the Lord.” This means that for the most part, the Lamanites are made deaf to God’s commandments. They must rely on the Nephites to record the precious knowledge that passes between heaven and earth. This also means that the Lamanites are made functionally dumb. Lamanites are unable to speak, or at least unable to speak so that what they say is remembered. The Lamanites’ illiteracy means that they cannot directly add their own voices and stories to the records that would become the Book of Mormon. The result is that the Nephite record keepers have the sole responsibility as well as total control over what gets recorded, and as such, how the Book of Mormon story gets told.<sup>66</sup>

Mormon, Moroni, and Nephi do not hide the fact that they enjoy what I call a “narrator’s prerogative.”<sup>67</sup> They state directly that the Book of Mormon is an “abridgement” of all that they have seen, and all that they and their fathers, and their fathers’ fathers have written. Likewise, the

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<sup>65</sup> *BofM*, 528; 574 [Mormon 5:15; Moroni 1:1-4].

<sup>66</sup> Richard Bushman has written, “History is one of the spoils of war. In great conflicts, the victors almost always write the history... The reverse is true of the Book of Mormon. The Lamanites vanquished the Nephites and survived; yet by virtue of a record that went into the earth with them, the Nephites’ version of the history is the one we now read. We think of the Nephites as the superior nation because they write the history, even though in the end the Lamanites won on the battlefield.” Richard Bushman, “The Lamanite View of Book of Mormon History,” in Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-Day Saint Essays*, 79.

<sup>67</sup> The concept of a “narrator’s prerogative” is frequently used in literary studies, but not as much in religious studies. For example Deborah G. Plant has written, “The narrator’s prerogative to withhold information is also a device to conceal anything that might upset the equilibrium she has created. It is also, perhaps, a flaunted indication of her power as narrator and as the controlling force in her world.” Deborah G. Plant, *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 27–28. Drawing from Bakhtin and Pascal, Gerald Prince describes “monologic narrative” as “[a] narrative characterized by a unifying voice or consciousness superior to other voices or consciousness in that narrative... In monologic as opposed to dialogic narrative, the narrator’s views, judgments, and knowledge constitute the ultimate authority with respect to the world presented.” Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 54. See also Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 281 n. 29.

book's translator attempts to disabuse Book of Mormon's readers of the notion that it aims to be comprehensive. Instead it is "an abridgment of the Record of the people of Nephi; and also of the Lamanites," writes Joseph Smith Jr. on the book's title page.<sup>68</sup> According to the book's narrators, the fact that the Book of Mormon is not comprehensive—that it includes almost exclusively the voices and stories of white-skinned, male Nephites—is not due to some racial or gendered antipathy. Nor is it in the service of brevity. The "abridgement" Smith published in 1830 was almost 600-pages long. Instead, God's divinely-appointed historians narrate with a purpose: to create a faith-promoting history intended to guide future readers toward the acceptance of the sacred words of God, made manifest in the personage of Christ and made definitive in the Book of Mormon.

How these narrators choose to write this history reveals the message they intend their readers to take away. For example, Mormon does not lay complete blame for the annihilation of the Nephites at the feet of the Lamanites. After all, it is in the Lamanites' nature, passed down from their patrilineal progenitor, to reject God and to hate their more righteous kin. Instead, after two hundred years of peace and equality, the Nephites too revert back to their old ways. Their increased wealth leads them to divide themselves "into classes... and began to deny the true church of Christ."<sup>69</sup> Like the floods, earthquakes, and storms that destroyed the wicked Nephites and their cities before Christ's first mission in the New World, the Lamanites' humanity degenerates to the point that God can deploy them as tools of nature to punish the increasingly wicked Nephites.

More still, Mormon writes that the Nephites' degeneration continues, to the point where the distinctions between "Nephite" and "Lamanite" collapse. "Many of our brethren have deserted over unto the Lamanites," writes Mormon, "and many more will also desert over unto them."<sup>70</sup> Save for Mormon's closest kin—the direct descendants of the original Nephi and the keepers of the Nephite

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<sup>68</sup> *BofM*, title page; 7; 151; 527; 574 [title page, 1 Nephi 1:17; Words of Mormon 1:3; Mormon 5:9; Moroni 1:1].

<sup>69</sup> *BofM*, 516 [4 Nephi 1:26].

<sup>70</sup> *BofM*, 585 [Moroni 9:24].

recorders—at the end of the Book of Mormon narrative, the boundary lines between the Lamanites and many Nephites blur to the point of non-recognition.<sup>71</sup> The Book of Mormon teaches that because race is mutable both racial progress *and* declension is possible; if those normally considered “white” reject the gospel and the gospel’s messengers, as some of Joseph Smith’s most important early followers would do, then they too can be cursed and even lose their claim to whiteness.<sup>72</sup>

The Nephites’ disloyalty to their own kin and to God’s commandments leads to their degeneracy into Lamaniteness. The shock of this declension is so profound that it renders Mormon speechless, and unable to record what he has seen: “yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written.”<sup>73</sup> Here Mormon excludes certain parts of what he has witnessed before these events become recorded in order to spare future readers the “great sorrow... of the wickedness of [the Lamanites and the Nephites].”<sup>74</sup> Mormon does not wish to create a complete representation of a millennium’s worth of history. His prerogative is to forget much of the past in service of the future.

Mormon believes that, in the end, all this forgetting will be palliative. This abridged and redacted history will be unearthed when the “Gentiles” rule America, and will be translated, typeset and printed as a book. These Gentiles will bring this book to the Lamanites. In learning about its content, perhaps even learning to read it themselves, the Lamanites’ Indian descendants will rediscover who they really are, reconcile with the Lord, and build up a New Jerusalem with believing Gentiles on the land of their inheritance. But according to Mormon, such a future can only occur if much of the past is forgotten, especially the savage crimes that the Lamanites themselves

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<sup>71</sup> *BofM*, 531-532 [Mormon 8:13-14].

<sup>72</sup> In Chapter Five, I discuss how the early Saints frequently racialized their enemies, describing them as less than white because of apostasy or because of their disrespect for American law and their maltreatment of the Saints.

<sup>73</sup> *BofM*, 585 [Moroni 9: 15, 18-19].

<sup>74</sup> *BofM*, 526 [Mormon 5: 9].

committed.<sup>75</sup> The import of the Book of Mormon is not that it is a complete, unbiased record. Instead the narrators intend that the Book of Mormon serve as a “usable past” to aide the earliest leaders of the Mormon dispensation in accomplishing their restorationist project.<sup>76</sup>

Even on what would become the Book of Mormon’s title page—which Joseph Smith later described as the “last leaf” of Mormon’s abridged narrative of the entire Nephite archive—Mormon explains that he composed this text with a particular prerogative and a particular audience in mind.<sup>77</sup> The Book of Mormon, “an account written by the hand of Mormon,” is an epistolic narrative, “written *to* the Lamanites,” the modern-day Indians. For though they have forgotten it, these people “are a remnant of the house of Israel.” They are carriers, therefore, of a sacred lineage, stretching back to Abraham. The Book of Mormon’s purpose thus is to help the Lamanites restore themselves to the covenants of their Israelite forefathers. And if the Book of Mormon pattern holds true, these redeemed Lamanites will unify with the white-skinned Gentiles and be “one, the children of Christ.” Like the converted Lamanites reconciling with the Nephites after Christ’s first visit to the New World, in the days before Christ’s return, all “manner of Ites” will disappear as whiteness becomes universal among the Saints.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Anthony W. Marx has written that the creation of a “‘family memory’ of unity . . . rests upon purposeful amnesia of those deadly quarrels that tore apart the [familial or political] unit at its formation.” Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 29–30. Returning to Ricoeur, in theory, “amnesia” about this horrible Lamanite past allows for “amnesty” in the future. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 456.

<sup>76</sup> German historian and theologian Peter Meinhold wrote extensively about the ways in which the Book of Mormon created for its first believers a “usable past” about America and the people who inhabit it. Peter Meinhold, “Die Anfänge Des Amerikanischen Geschichtsbewusstseins,” *Saeculum* 5 (1954): 65–86. See also Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 51–53.

<sup>77</sup> History, 1838-1856, vol. A-1, (ID # 7268), JSPP, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=40&highlight=last%20leaf#!/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834&p=40>

<sup>78</sup> *BofM*, title page, 515 [title page; 4 Nephi 1:17].

## Silent Voices Speak Volumes

The book, which together Mormon, Moroni, Nephi, and Joseph Smith create, is filled with lessons. In this American gospel, there are explicit lessons about forgetting and remembering the Lord's commandments. There are explicit lessons about how to restore Christ's true church, and how to create a community of Saints who will gather together as one people to await the second coming of Christ. There are also more implicit lessons about race as a mutable category of human division; a schism in the human family created by sin, but surmountable through faith in a gospel made universally available by Christ's atoning sacrifice. Hearing about the "plain and precious things" in this restored gospel—or better reading them for oneself—is the first step towards remembering who has always belonged to the covenant and who is now welcome to join it. Submersion in the baptismal waters is the next step toward washing away cursed, dark skin that stains the human family's white original form.

Still there are other even more implicit lessons, which have implications for how early Mormons came to read and write about race. The segregation of the Book of Mormon's historical record as the domain of white, literate members of Lehi's family presents itself as the natural result of dark-skinned Lamanite illiteracy. And it seems just as natural that the white-skinned narrators value the racialized voices and stories of some over others. After all, if the guardians of the Plates of Nephi are also God's chosen prophets and historians, then their prerogative on the history of pre-Columbian American Christianity naturally carries the imprimatur of divine authority.

Yet even if they are divinely called, prophets of God are still human, as Joseph Smith Jr. himself frequently asserted, pointing to his own, imperfect life, "a rough stone rolling," as a prime example.<sup>79</sup> That Lamanite voices are all but silenced in the Book of Mormon raises critical questions

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<sup>79</sup> *DHC*, May, 1843 V: 401.

about the Nephite historians' reliability as narrators.<sup>80</sup> Comprehensiveness, even accuracy is not their main motivation. Promoting faith is. But undergirding this motivation is the unexamined assumption that white, male storytellers tell the best stories. This assumption moves backwards and forwards in Mormon history and the writing of Mormon history—backwards through the Book of Mormon itself and forwards through the recording of Mormon history that begins with the publication of the Book of Mormon, the “sign” of the advent of the Mormon dispensation.<sup>81</sup>

The dearth of diversity of racial perspectives in the Book of Mormon, not to mention the perspectives of women who are even more absent than the Lamanites, means that the Book of Mormon as a hermeneutical lens of the restoration has distinct blind spots.<sup>82</sup> Yet as I demonstrate in this dissertation, pointing out these blind spots is not the same as deconstructing the entire Mormon historical project. To the contrary, when the voices of non-white and female Mormons are included in the Mormon narrative, more often than not they further substantiate the theological and cultural foundations of Mormonism, including the connections between whiteness, literacy, and the innate authority of white, Mormon men.

This observation, of course, presents another set of historical problems that require examination and critique. Ironically, the start of such a project can take its cues from the Book of Mormon itself. As I examine in the next chapter, the Book of Mormon highlights the dangers that the exclusion of marginalized voices and histories from the Mormon archive presents to the accurate recording of sacred history, even the recording of the gospel of Christ itself.

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<sup>80</sup> *BofM*, 515; 73 [1 Nephi 4:1-19; 2 Nephi 5:1-4]; Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 39–44.

<sup>81</sup> *BofM*, 499 [3 Nephi 21:1].

<sup>82</sup> Lehi's wife Sariah is one of only three named female characters in the Book of Mormon. Even when Nephi mentions his mother (*BofM*, 14-15 [1 Nephi 5:1-9]), Sariah is presented as both a complaining wife as well as a witness to her husband's prophethood. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 18–22, 288 n. 3. The voices of African Americans are completely absent from the Book of Mormon. As I argue in Chapter Three, the reason for this is that in the millennium that Book of Mormon's hermeneutic of restoration creates, there is literally no place for people of African descent, as they are understood to be neither Gentiles nor Israelites. *BofM*, 83-84 [2 Nephi 10:1-19].

## **CHAPTER TWO: “Samuel, the Lamanite” and the Race of the Archive**

### **The Lamanite and the Indian**

More often than not, the Lamanite is a foil. For the Book of Mormon’s narrators, he is a dark-skinned set piece against which the civilized, white-skinned Nephite can be drawn. The Lamanites are a lazy, “idle people, full of mischief and subtlety.” Instead of building cities, cultivating crops, and erecting temples like their more righteous cousins the Nephites, the Lamanites are savages who feed on and even drink the blood of the “beasts of prey” that they hunt in the wilds of America. They are naked, “save it were skin, which girded about their loins.” Their own skin is “dark,” a mark they carry as a reminder of their forefathers’ “transgression and rebellion against their [Nephite] brethren.” Most importantly, even after Christ’s intervention and their assimilation with the Nephites, the Lamanites prove to be unrepentant enemies of civilization and Christianity. They attack and destroy Nephite cities, and sacrifice Nephite women and children unto idols. They even try to destroy the Nephite records, the archive from which the Book of Mormon would be written. For the Lamanites things get much worse before they are prophesied to get better in the latter-days before Christ’s return. After they complete their genocide of the Nephites, the Lamanites become Indians, a darker, more “filthy” and “loathsome people,” writes Mormon, the Book of Mormon’s titular historian, than “even that which hath been among the Lamanites.”<sup>1</sup>

When it was first published in 1830, the Book of Mormon’s downwardly trending Indian was certainly nothing new to early American history or literature. As they marked the United States’ ascent, from a backwater set of disorganized colonies ruled by tyrannical absentee monarchs to the

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<sup>1</sup> *BofM*, 73; 146; 526-529; 228; 528 [2 Nephi 5:24; Jarom 1:6; Mormon 5:5; 4:21; 6:6; Alma 3: 5-6; Mormon 5:15].

world's first modern republic with ambitions for empire, Anglo-American writers did so against a backdrop of further deterioration of America's indigenous peoples.<sup>2</sup>

The English colonists' original promise was that they would bring uplift to the Indian in the form of fencerows, schoolhouses, and congregations. The Puritans' John Eliot believed that the Indian who lived in English villages, wore English clothes, and read the King James Bible, would also confess his sins, and submit himself to the waters of baptism. The "heathen" would all but disappear, and the "praying Indian," perhaps even a red Englishman would emerge.<sup>3</sup> But many Anglo-Americans wrote that Indian violence against their settlements was irrefutable proof that the Indian was an unrepentant enemy of religion and humanity's progress.<sup>4</sup> For example, historians of the King Philip's War often highlighted the Indians' disdain for symbols of English Christianity. In his account of the King Phillip's War, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians* (1677), William Hubbard describes a scene in which colonial soldiers came upon burned out English houses where they also found "a Bible newly torn, and the Leaves scattered about by the Enemy in Hatred."<sup>5</sup> Such accounts of Indian assaults against representations of English society parallel the Book of Mormon's descriptions of the Lamanites' near total success at razing all remnants of the Nephite civilization from the American continent. Mormon buries the Plates of Nephi on Cumorah to spare them the fate that would befall the Puritans' Bible.

When the English colonists became Americans in the late eighteenth-century, many believed that their hard won liberty was still under threat. But the main front of the war had shifted to the

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<sup>2</sup> Lepore, *The Name of War*, 199–226; Peter Rhoads Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 261–302.

<sup>3</sup> Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1974): 28; William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 128–129.

<sup>4</sup> Lepore, *The Name of War*, ix–xxiv, 71–124. Bernard Sheehan has argued that the 1622 Powhatan massacre of Jamestown and other English settlements held the same lesson about innate Indian savagery. Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians* (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1677), 71; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 105.



west where the former Indian allies of the English continued to attack American frontier settlements.<sup>6</sup> Two years before the Book of Mormon was published, James Fenimore Cooper declared that the “noble savage,” whom he so famously championed in his *Leatherstocking Tales*, was all but extinct. “As a rule, the red man disappears,” Cooper wrote in *Notions of the Americans* (1828), “before the superior moral and physical influence of the white.” The Indians were either forced westward, “deeper into the forest... [or] they become victims to the abuses of civilization, without ever attaining any of its moral elevation.” Those few Indians who remained in Cooper’s (and Joseph Smith’s) Upstate New York, were “all alike, a stunted, dirty and degraded race.”<sup>7</sup>

However, in his *Address to the Whites*, first delivered in Philadelphia’s First Presbyterian Church in 1826, the Cherokee activist Elias Boudinot challenged the racial category of the “Indian” as a misrepresentation of certain tribes’ success at raising themselves to the level of white Americans. “To those who are unacquainted with the manners, habits, and improvements of the Aborigines of this country, the term Indian is pregnant with ideas the most repelling and degrading,” and as such should not be applied to such “nations” like his own. After all, Boudinot argued that his Cherokee Nation, a people of letters, Christianity, and laws, had become more white, that is more civilized, than “Indian.”<sup>8</sup>

Yet the Book of Mormon’s “Lamanite” is not quite Boudinot’s “Cherokee,” nor is he simply Cooper’s “Indian.” Instead, the Lamanite identity is a paradox. The Lamanite both affirms and transcends the commonplace antebellum descriptions of Native Americans as an unredeemable race

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<sup>6</sup> In September 1783, bells pealed in the new nation’s capital of Philadelphia to commemorate the signing of the Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War. Yet word from “Fort Pitt” of Indian “plundering” in western Pennsylvania moved that state’s official printer, Presbyterian deacon, and editor of the *Freeman’s Journal*, Francis Bailey to caution his fellow countrymen not to celebrate too early. The “disposition of the savages,” Bailey wrote, meant that America’s freedom would not be secured until it was taken from the Indians by a “heavy [military] campaign” into the their territories. *Freeman’s Journal*, April 23, 1783, quoted in Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 261–263.

<sup>7</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1848), 278, 281; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 40.

<sup>8</sup> Elias Boudinot, *An Address to the Whites* (Philadelphia: Printed by W. F. Geddes, 1826).

of red men, destined to either be isolated from the white man's civilization, or exterminated. The Lamanites are depraved apostates. Yet they are also the "remnant" of a great, Israelite people. The Lamanites are illiterate and ahistorical, "confounded" as to their own identity because they "harden[ed] their hearts" against the word of the Lord. Yet they are also heirs to an uncorrupted record of a long-lost gospel of Christ, and heirs to the covenant of history's "last day."<sup>9</sup>

Even within the Book of Mormon's historical narrative, the "Lamanite" racial identity is far from immutable. In the decades before Christ's arrival in the New World, the Lamanites' "harden[ed] hearts" soften toward the gospel and the "more part" of the Lamanites becomes "a righteous people." In fact Lamanite virtue grows to the point that the spiritual hierarchy signified by the Book of Mormon's standard racialized categories is reversed. The Lamanites' "righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness, and their steadfastness in the faith," writes Mormon. At the same time the Nephites "become hardened, and impenitent, and grossly wicked, insomuch that they did reject the word of God."<sup>10</sup>

### **Samuel, the Lamanite**

And yet as the spiritual hierarchy gets inverted, do the Book of Mormon's typical racialized signifiers also change? In other words, do Lamanites become white and Nephites become black? To begin to answer this question about the link between whiteness and righteousness as well as blackness and wickedness, in this chapter I study the case of "Samuel, the Lamanite," a member of the righteous community of Lamanites that emerges in the decades before Christ's arrival in the New World. Paradoxically, in the Book of Mormon it is not a Nephite, but "Samuel, a Lamanite" who prophesizes most accurately about the coming of Christ, the meaning of his earthly mission, of

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<sup>9</sup> *BoM* 56-59 [1 Nephi 22:5-31].

<sup>10</sup> *BoM*, 421; 422 [Helaman 5:49-52, 6:1-6].

his death, and of his resurrection.<sup>11</sup> It is also Samuel who most forcefully describes the source of the fault lines within the human family. These divisions, created by jealousy, greed, and pride, most often manifest themselves as distinct racialized categories. Yet these categorizes do not always remain moored to their original equivalencies of Nephite to righteousness and Lamanite to wickedness.

In this chapter, by focusing on Samuel, the Lamanite, I further emphasize an argument that I began in the previous chapter: a careful reading of the Book of Mormon is essential to understand how the Mormon hermeneutic of race and the writing about race evolved in early Mormon history. This will become especially true in later chapters of this study, which explore the early Saints' goal of fulfilling their duty to restore "all things," including the reunification of the human family, to this family's raceless, (white) universal form.

In this chapter, I first show that a significant correction of the sacred Nephite record—indirectly made by Christ himself—suggests that the authors as well as the translator of the Book of Mormon are aware of the tendency of white-skinned record keepers and historians to exclude marginalized voices from the historical archive. Second, I discuss how Samuel, the Lamanite, whose own racial identity is itself ambiguous, becomes a case study for the mutability of racial categories within the Book of Mormon, and for how this mutability relates to "white universalism," which I assert is one of the core features of the Book of Mormon's hermeneutic of restoration.

Next, I contextualize the fact that Samuel, the Lamanite does not record his own prophecies. As a Lamanite, even a prophetic one, he is functionally illiterate. By this I mean that even if he can actually read and write, he cannot directly add to the Nephite archive. Instead the prophecies that Samuel voices move from the "oral field to that of writing," as Paul Ricoeur describes the "birth" of

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<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Jared Hickman bringing my attention to this important episode in the Book of Mormon history. See Jared Hickman, "The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse," *American Literature* 86, no. 3 (2014): 429-461. Also see "Eugene England Replies," *Sunstone* 15, no. 1 (1991): 9.

an archived, literate memory, when his testimony is “received” and recorded “by another.”<sup>12</sup> From his memory of Samuel’s testimony, one white-skinned Nephite creates the archived document, which another white-skinned Nephite historian weaves into the Book of Mormon narrative. More still, the fact that Samuel does not write down his own testimonies raises more questions. What gets lost in this translation from oral to written? What gets remembered, and what falls into oblivion due to forgetfulness and due to the narrator’s prerogative?

### **Christ, the Historical Revisionist**

During his three-day visit to America (around 34 A.D.), the resurrected Christ examines the Nephites’ sacred texts. And he finds them wanting. A significant lacuna exists in what was destined to become the Book of Mormon.

Christ tells Nephi, one of Christ’s New World disciples, (and a direct descendant of Nephi, the progenitor of the Nephite people), to “[b]ring forth the record which ye have kept.”<sup>13</sup> Jesus Christ gives one look at the record and demands, where are the prophecies of “my servant, Samuel, the Lamanite”? More than any Nephite sage, Christ declares, it was Samuel who prophesied most correctly about Jesus’ birth, his death, and the resurrection of Christ. In particular, Christ states that it was “my servant Samuel, the Lamanite” who testified to the Nephites that not only is Christ’s atoning sacrifice available to all people *everywhere*, but also to all people in every *time*. In other words, the faithful born before Jesus’ earthly mission would not be left behind during history’s final act simply due to their ill-timed birth. On the last of the latter-days, their “graves shall be opened,” and they too shall rise to the heavens with their fellows Saints.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 146–147.

<sup>13</sup> *BofM*, 503, [3 Nephi 23:7]. For clarity, I will refer to “Nephi” whom Christ appointed as one of his New World disciples as “Nephi, the Disciple.”

<sup>14</sup> *BofM*, 503 [3 Nephi 23:6-13]. See Samuel’s prophecy, *BofM*, 447 [Helaman 14:25].

On behalf of Samuel, Christ rebukes Nephi, the Disciple for not having “written this thing” into the people’s sacred archive. Nephi responds to Christ’s upbraiding and acknowledges: “Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.” Christ, it seems, is not just the word made flesh, and once again made word and archived on the Plates of Nephite. His omniscience means he is the archive of history and its eschatological completion.

Nephi, the Disciple, follows Christ’s commandment to give proper place to Samuel’s prophetic voice. Samuel’s text—oral prophecies from a Lamanite now recorded in written form by a Nephite—is then placed in the Book of Mormon’s proper chronological order, around 6 B.C. shortly before Jesus’ birth. Once they are added to the Nephite archive, Samuel’s prophecies move instantaneously from oblivion to the level of “scriptures” to be read and studied for eternity.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, by ceding the authorial control of the Book of Mormon history to Samuel, Nephi, the Disciple and Mormon, the narrator also cedes control of one of the Book of Mormon’s most pivotal events: the prophecies foreseeing Christ’s mission in America, and the prophecies foreseeing the Book of Mormon’s apocalyptic conclusion. This lacuna filled—this holy book made whole—becomes the center of the Book of Mormon, at least, I argue, the center in terms of the Book of Mormon’s hermeneutic of race. Samuel, a cursed descendant of Laman, becomes, as Jared Hickman has recently argued, “the most eloquent expositor” of the Amerindian millennialism.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Book of Mormon here is unclear as to whether or not Nephi, the Disciple is the actual scribe of Samuel’s prophecies. However, the textual reference that “it was written according as he [Christ] commanded” suggests that Christ himself might have played a part in the accurate recording of Samuel’s prophecies. It is possible that Nephi, the Disciple serves more of a scribe to Christ’s own dictation of Samuel’s testimonies, testimonies that were forgotten but never should have been. *BoM*, 503 [3 Nephi 23:10-14].

<sup>16</sup> Hickman, “The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse.” The lessons included in Samuel’s prophecies are so important for the book’s future readers that in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, they are given their own headnote: “THE PROPHECY OF SAMUEL, THE LAMANITE,” it reads in all capital letters, “TO THE NEPHITES.” The only other instance in which the Book of Mormon addresses itself so specifically to particular, racially-defined audiences is on the title page, which states that the text is an “abridgement of the Record of the People of Nephi; and also of the Lamanites, [that is] written to the *Lamanites* [my emphasis], which are a remnant of the House of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile.” Credit thus for highlighting Samuel’s prophetic testimony in type-face must go in part to Joseph Smith who, despite Samuel’s status as a Lamanite, joins Christ in wanting future readers of the Book of Mormon to pay attention to what Samuel declared about the past and the future. The Book of Mormon’s headnote

## “Because I am a Lamanite”

Samuel’s prophecies, now rightfully placed in the Book of Mormon’s chronology, allow for a radical new reading of the normal Book of Mormon’s racial hierarchy. Christ’s intervention here invites readers to perform an intra-textual hermeneutic, to page back in the Book of Mormon to Samuel’s prophecies, and move back in the chronological order of the Book of Mormon narration: from Christ’s visit to the New World in 34 A.D. (3 Nephi) to Samuel’s prophecies now inserted in the Nephite archive at around 6 B.C. (Helaman 13-16). “Re-presenting” Samuel’s prophecies in their proper historical order is of great “creative power,” as Ricoeur might suggest, “opening up the past again to the future,” and creating a new hermeneutic of the entire Book of Mormon racial schema.<sup>17</sup>

Six years before Jesus’ birth, Samuel, the Lamanite climbs atop the walls of Zarahemla, the capital city of the Nephites. Once the seat of a great and faithful Nephite people, Zarahemla is now more filled with “wickedness and abominations” than with God’s law. Samuel takes this high perch because the citizens of Zarahemla “would not suffer that he should enter the city.”<sup>18</sup> Samuel is turned away because Zarahemla is a segregated city. Yet, as Samuel’s prophecies indicate, perhaps Zarahemla is segregated based on degrees of righteousness as much as it is on shades of skin color. After all, the Lamanites have their own country, where “the more part of them,” Mormon explains, “do observe to keep [the Lord’s] commandments and his statutes and his judgments according to the law of Moses.” While Zarahemla does contain some “righteous [Nephites],” Samuel prophesizes that the wicked will soon cast them out.<sup>19</sup>

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directed *to the Nephites* allows Samuel to address the community that initially excluded him from the Book of Mormon history—and he does so with the backing of Christ. *BofM*, 441.

<sup>17</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 380.

<sup>18</sup> *BofM*, 441 [Helaman 13:4]. Readers today, like many of the early Saints for whom the King James Bible was the major source of literary and sacred archetypes, would likely find that Samuel’s prophetic pronouncements parallel those of Amos (ca. 750 BC) at the walls of Samaria, the capital city of the Israelite northern kingdom, decadent and idolatrous of wealth. See Amos 6:1-9. Jorg Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 108–120.

<sup>19</sup> *BofM*, 450; 448; 442, [Helaman 16:7; 15:5; Helaman 12-14].

Samuel's ascent atop the walls of Zarahemla signifies the inversion of the Book of Mormon's normal racial hierarchies. Six centuries before his mission to Zarahemla, the fallout from Samuel's ancestor Laman's conspiracy to kill his brother Nephi establishes two distinct racialized lineages. Though both lineages descend from a common forefather, the Nephites become the white-skinned keepers of the Abrahamic covenant while the Lamanites become cursed, dark-skinned apostates. But in the half century before Christ comes to the New World, conversion among many Lamanites makes them "righteous," while the Nephites become wicked because they rejected "the word of god."<sup>20</sup> The signifying link between whiteness and righteousness created by the first Nephi's faithfulness, especially in stark contrast to the first Laman's wickedness, proves to be far from fixed.

From atop Zarahemla's walls, Samuel declares to the Nephites below that he has been sent on the Lord's errand and brings to them the Lord's words "which he doth put into my heart."<sup>21</sup> Through Samuel, the Lord warns the Nephites that, after they expel the few faithful Nephites remaining in Zarahemla, their city will become "ripe for destruction." At the moment of Jesus' crucifixion in the Old World, the New World's iniquitous cities will be leveled in a great conflagration of fire.<sup>22</sup> God's wrath will come, Samuel explains, because the Nephites have made idols out of their riches. With the Lord absent from their city, "envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquities" take root in Zarahemla. And Samuel exclaims, the Lord curses the Nephites. Out of pride and greed, Laman sinned against God and his brethren. This "second fall" resulted in a curse manifested in dark skin. Likewise, out of pride and greed, the wicked Nephites turn against God and against their brethren—perpetrating acts of

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<sup>20</sup> *BofM*, 72; 421; 422 [2 Nephi 5; Helaman 5:49-52, 6:1-6].

<sup>21</sup> *BofM*, 441 [Helaman 13:5].

<sup>22</sup> *BofM*, 442; 472 [Helaman, 13:7,14; 3 Nephi 9:3, 11-13].

violence and economic inequality—for which they too are cursed, though the Book of Mormon does not specify a change in skin color.<sup>23</sup>

The Nephites of Zarahemla do not take kindly to a Lamanite calling them a “wicked... and perverse generation.” Samuel recognizes the irony of God’s messenger coming in what is typically understood as an accursed form: “And now, because *I am a Lamanite* [my emphasis], and have spoken unto you the words which the Lord hath commanded me, and because it was hard against you, ye are angry with me and do seek to destroy me, and have cast me out from among you.”<sup>24</sup>

Some forty years before Christ’s own brief visit to the New World, the wicked Nephites fail to heed Samuel’s warnings and hear the good news of the coming gospel. Instead they hurl stones and shoot arrows at Samuel, though he remains unscathed on top of the city’s wall.<sup>25</sup> The Nephites’ own ethnocentrism, perhaps even racial antipathy, means that they reject the messenger—“a Lamanite”—and the message that salvation will come through belief in Christ.

Samuel fears that for most of the Nephites of Zarahemla, the day when they realize that they have forgotten “the Lord our God” and rejected the words of the Lord’s prophet will come too late. Yet to those Nephites who are able to see beyond the fact that he is a Lamanite, Samuel not only foretells of the first Easter and the first Christmas. Prophesizing the yet to be written message of the Gospel of John, Samuel preaches the covenantal contract required for salvation: “whoever shall believe in the Son of God, the same shall have everlasting life.”<sup>26</sup>

Even though he forcefully articulates the failings of (most of) the Nephites to heed his words, even locating the source of their deafness to him (and later their forgetfulness of his message) in their animosity towards his racial identity, Samuel has an expansive, even universal view

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<sup>23</sup> *BofM*, 443 [Helaman 13:21-23].

<sup>24</sup> *BofM*, 444; 445 [Helaman 13:29; 14:10].

<sup>25</sup> *BofM*, 450 [Helaman, 16:1-3].

<sup>26</sup> *BofM*, 445 [Helaman 14:8]. See John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”



of the potential reach of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Samuel simplifies what he calls “all mankind[’s]” ultimate relationship with God to the most elemental of bargains: repentance of sin and acceptance of Christ’s salvific gift allows humanity to overcome permanent “spiritual death,” to be resurrected, and restored to the presence of the Lord.<sup>27</sup> This is the core message of Samuel’s prophetic teaching, and the message that Christ insisted be written into the Nephite archive. Christ’s resurrection means that “all mankind”—even those who were born and died before Jesus’ earthly life—can overcome the tyrannical chronology of history and time. When Christ rises from his grave, Samuel prophesies, “many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead, and many saints shall appear.”<sup>28</sup> “All mankind” also means that all children of Adam—even those suffering from curses that mark them off from their more righteous kin—can to be restored to Heavenly Father’s embrace.<sup>29</sup>

### **Can a Lamanite Prophet Be “White?”**

The Nephites might have been God’s chosen people in the past. But God’s favor has, at least in Samuel’s lifetime, passed to the Lamanites. This change in status raises the question of the racial identity of the two branches of Lehi’s family. To put it plainly, does this inversion of the normal spiritual hierarchy lead to a change in skin color? Do the faithful Lamanites become “white and delightsome”? Likewise, do the cursed Nephites have “a skin of blackness [come] upon them”?

In the prelude to Samuel’s prophecies, the Book of Mormon makes it clear that in the generations before Jesus’ birth, Samuel and most of his Lamanite kin strictly keep “the commandments of God,” while most—though not all—Nephites live “in great wickedness.” These

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<sup>27</sup> *BoM*, 445-446 [Helaman 14:14-18].

<sup>28</sup> *BoM*, 447 [Helaman 14: 25]. Christ’s affirms Samuel’s prophecies in *BoM*, 503 [3 Nephi 23:6-13].

<sup>29</sup> In an 1830 revelation (*DeC* 29), Joseph Smith also pointed to the grave as the location of the final millenarian sorting of humanity. When Christ makes his final return to earth, the yet-to-be-resurrected Saints will be awakened from their graves by the quaking earth, “and they shall come forth,” their bones “to be clothed upon” with new flesh. For the righteous “not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost.” Yet for the wicked, even those living shall be cursed with putrefaction of their bodies. “I the Lord God will send forth flies upon the face of the earth, which shall take hold of the inhabitants thereof, and shall eat their flesh, and shall cause maggots to come in upon them. . . . And their flesh shall fall from off their bones.” Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 36–37.

righteous Lamanites are the fruits of a handful of Nephite missionaries, in particular the direct descendants of the first Nephi and the caretakers of the Nephite archive. These Nephites help establish a “church of God” among the receptive Lamanites.<sup>30</sup> The missionaries follow the lesson of their progenitor, Nephi. Echoing Paul’s famous message to the Galatians, the first Nephi declares, “[H]e inviteth them all to come unto him, and partake of his goodness, and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female.” Even “the heathen,” Nephi proclaims, is not forgotten. “[A]ll are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”<sup>31</sup> Within the church of God, doctrinal unity—“one faith and one baptism”—cuts across all divisions, knitting “hearts... together in unity and in love.”<sup>32</sup>

The Book of Mormon consistently teaches that the church of God, and later, the church of Jesus Christ, is universal. But when a Lamanite knits his heart together with righteous Nephites, does he still remain—racially as well as spiritually—a “Lamanite?” The Book of Mormon does not indicate the color of Samuel’s skin when he scales the walls of Zarahemla. But in the interlude between Samuel’s prophecies and Christ’s arrival to the New World (between 6 B.C. and 34 A.D.), Mormon writes that the Lamanites like Samuel, who “had united” with the few righteous Nephites, have their “curse... taken from them.” Their children become white and are even “called Nephites.”<sup>33</sup>

In other words, a change of heart from wicked to righteous, the Book of Mormon teaches, leads to the whitening of skin. Through conversion, the Lamanite can overcome his own “Lamaniteness,” to the point that within a few generations the cursed Lamanite completely disappears into the white, universal Nephite identity. The Book of Mormon also suggests that a

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<sup>30</sup> *BofM*, 448, 449; 44; 422 [Helaman, 15:4-6, 17; Helaman 13:1; Helaman 6: 1-5].

<sup>31</sup> *BofM* 109 [2 Nephi 26:33]. See Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

<sup>32</sup> *BofM*, 193 [Mosiah 18:17, 21].

<sup>33</sup> *BofM*, 456 [3 Nephi 2:14-16].

change in the other direction can happen; spiritual degradation can lead to racial degradation. As I mentioned in the last chapter, Mormon writes that the annihilation of the Nephites at the end of the Book of Mormon's historical saga does not simply occur through extermination. While most Nephites are "murdered, plundered, and hunted and driven forth, and slain" by the once again wicked Lamanites, others "mixed with the Lamanites until they are no more called the Nephites, becoming wicked, and wild, and ferocious, yea, even becoming Lamanites."<sup>34</sup>

Membership, it seems, within the Book of Mormon's two racial divisions is mutable. The Lamanite and Nephite identities are outward, racialized expressions of individuals' interior religious persuasions. Samuel is still a "Lamanite" when he preaches from atop the walls of Zarahemla, but perhaps only because his dark skin color has not caught up to his pure heart. Likewise, Samuel's wicked and prideful Nephite audience might still be light-skinned. But if the Lord had not leveled their cities and smote them at the moment of Jesus' death—as Samuel prophesied that the Lord would—their skin might have turned black as a marker of their accursedness.<sup>35</sup>

Samuel's case is an important one to keep in mind as this study further explores how the Book of Mormon's hermeneutic of restoration was deployed in the first years of the Mormon dispensation. Samuel, the Lamanite is rarely mentioned in the early Mormon archive.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, I argue that Samuel embodies the early principles of Joseph Smith's church and its hermeneutic of restoration. In the Book of Mormon's most idealized vision, it is not for the white "Gentiles" to lead the restoration and building up of New Jerusalem. Instead this responsibility and authority falls to yet-to-be named "Lamanite" leaders, who like Samuel, transcend their own ontological oblivion and racial limitations to rediscover who they are—lost and then found descendants of God's covenantal people, latter-day Lamanite-Israelite prophets and priests of the New Jerusalem.

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<sup>34</sup> *BofM* 117 [2 Nephi 30: 6]; *BofM*, 413 [Helaman 3:16].

<sup>35</sup> *BofM*, 472 [3 Nephi 9]

<sup>36</sup> For a rare example, see the patriarchal blessing of Dana Jacobs, June 13, 1837, *EPB*, 165.

The intertextuality between Samuel's prophecies and Christ's New World mission allows us to see that it is Christ himself who most forcefully articulates the Lamanites' future role in the restoration. Christ addresses his final "commandment" of his American sojourn directly to the descendants of the Lamanites, or the "remnant of Jacob" as Christ himself calls them. Christ declares that in the latter-days, the American Indians shall "be gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them."<sup>37</sup> Like the white-skinned Nephite missionaries who brought Christianity to the Lamanites in the years before Christ's birth, white-skinned "Gentiles" will serve God's purposes: to restore God's word made literate in Book of Mormon, to restore God's church, and to restore God's chosen people to the faith of their earthly fathers as well as to their heavenly one. For their participation in this heaven-sent errand the Gentiles too will be welcomed into the restored covenant.<sup>38</sup>

This dissertation asks how the text's promise (and assumption) of the connection between whiteness and righteousness played out, as the earliest "Gentile" adopters of the Book of Mormon brought their sacred scripture to the Lamanites, and later to "all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people" If, as prophesied, cursed, dark-skinned descendants of the Lamanites accepted the Book of Mormon and recognized their true, ancient Israelite selves on its pages, would their increased righteousness lead to the whitening of their skin? And what of other cursed peoples, including people of African descent? Did they have a place in the newly restored church and newly mended white, universal human family? And finally, would "white" Saints accept their formerly cursed, dark-skinned brethren as full partners in the creation of New Jerusalem?

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<sup>37</sup> *BofM*, 496-497 [3 Nephi 20:13].

<sup>38</sup> *BofM*, 497 [3 Nephi 20:27].

## How Spoken Words Become Written Scripture

Christ's commandment that Samuel's prophecies "should be written" into the records suggests that the Book of Mormon's narrators are aware of the need to include the voices of marginalized historical subjects in the Nephite archive. Or perhaps more accurately, Christ makes these ancient historians and their modern-day translator aware of this need. Yet, Samuel's case also raises another important question about the archive as a place of racialized authority. What else have these Nephite archivists and historians forgotten or failed to include on the Plates of Nephi?

A careful reading of the Book of Mormon suggests that there is no easy answer to this question. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the narrators of the Book of Mormon repeatedly remind their readers that the history they recount, and perhaps the racialized hermeneutic through which they recount this history, is of human origin. It is thus susceptible to human limitations, biases and even failings. The first Nephi does not claim to be an omniscient narrator. For example, we do not read Laman's side of the story about what led to the split between him and his brother, a split that created the Nephite and Lamanite lineages. Nephi states clearly that the history he leaves behind is meant to be faith promoting. He hopes that his words "speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth [his readers] to believe in [Christ]," and "to do good."<sup>39</sup>

The same is true for the other two Book of Mormon narrators. Before his own demise, Mormon writes what is essentially an explanation of his methodological approach to history, choosing what he believes are the most salient events, and leaving out the rest. Mormon also writes with his "own hands," and based in large measure on the events he has seen with his "own eyes." His perspective is limited. And understandably, for a man who has witnessed the brutal slaughter of hundreds of thousands of his Nephite people at the hands of Lamanites, this perspective is

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<sup>39</sup> *BofM*, 122 [2 Nephi 33:1, 4].

particularly colored.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Mormon completes his narrative after he too has been gravely wounded. His physical and mental state raises questions about his reliability as the narrator of the Nephite and Lamanite histories.<sup>41</sup>

However, it is unfruitful, and perhaps unfair, to hold the Book of Mormon narrators to standards of inclusive and balanced history writing to which they do not claim to adhere. Nevertheless, highlighting how and why the Book of Mormon falls short as a complete record of ancient America, as the case of Samuel, the Lamanite does, can be productive for scholars of Mormonism. The contested place Samuel occupies in the Book of Mormon provides lessons about how dark-skinned and other historically marginalized subjects are written (or not written) about in the narration of early Mormon history.

For example, beyond accusations of ethnocentrism on the part of the Nephites, one reason why Samuel's prophecies did not make it initially into the Book of Mormon canon is that they are oral in nature. In 6 B.C., Samuel did not send a letter to the Nephites of Zarahemla admonishing them for their wickedness. Instead, Samuel "*spake* [my emphasis] upon the walls of the city...[and] many... *heard* [my emphasis] the words of Samuel."<sup>42</sup> This division between the oral and written archive is a fundamental division between "white" and "dark-skinned" history keeping. Because whites, be they Nephites, Puritans, or Mormon pioneers, control the means of the production of history—the written word, the printing press—whites control what gets recorded in the archive, and thus remembered as history. Oral histories, if they survive at all, are deemed folk tales, family lore, and given a second-class status as viable sources for the writing of history.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *BofM*, 529 [Mormon 6:9].

<sup>41</sup> *BofM*, 529; 463 [Mormon 6:10; 3 Nephi 5:9-11, 9-22]. It was the Mormon-raised literacy theorist Wayne C. Booth who first articulated the concept of the "unreliable narrator." Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric Of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 158–159.

<sup>42</sup> *BofM*, 450 [Helaman 16:1].

<sup>43</sup> Alistair Thomson, "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," in *Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77–95, esp. 79-80.

The Book of Mormon itself repeatedly highlights the importance of literacy as a key line of demarcation between civilized and savage, Christian and unbeliever. Lehi's son, Nephi writes that the Lord promised him, "these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed," and thus *not the seed* of his brother Laman, "from generation to generation." Nephi proclaims that what is contained in these written words is the salvific logos: the name "Jesus Christ... there is no other name under heaven... whereby man can be saved." This lesson must not be subject to the failings of oral storytelling. Christ's name must be preserved on ancient tablets so that one day it can be translated and printed on nineteenth-century paper. And for that reason, Nephi writes, "we labor diligently *to write* [my emphasis], to persuade our children, and also our brethren [the Lamanites], to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God."<sup>44</sup>

King Benjamin (ca. 130 B.C.), the second of the great Nephite kings of Zarahemla, teaches his own sons "the language of his fathers" so that they would be able to discern the recorded prophecies of their ancestors. Benjamin also teaches them about "the records which were engraven on the Plates of Brass," brought to the New World by their progenitor, Lehi under divine instruction to do so. According to Benjamin, literacy is both a sign and a tool that differentiates between the faithful and the faithless. Benjamin points out that this ability to read and to write, passed down from Lehi's generation "to this present time," is the fundamental division between the Nephites and the Lamanites. Benjamin explains to his sons:

[W]ere it not for these things—which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been *like unto our brethren the Lamanites* [my emphasis], who know nothing concerning these things, or do not believe them when they are taught them.<sup>45</sup>

Were it not for the ability to read the histories of their fathers, and to write their own, the Nephites would have become no better than the Lamanites. Tellingly, it is the Nephites like

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<sup>44</sup> *BofM*, 105 [2 Nephi 25:20-23].

<sup>45</sup> *BofM*, 154 [Mosiah 1:1-5].

Benjamin—the direct descendants of the first Nephi who are charged with safeguarding the Nephite archive down to Mormon and Moroni—whose racial identities remain stable. Their proximity to this sacred family record, which they read and add to, inculcates them against the failings of pride, greed and forgetfulness that lead to the downfall of both the Lamanites and most Nephites.<sup>46</sup>

Literacy here is next to godliness. Literacy is also power. Those who control the written word get to narrate the winners and losers of war, to portray who is savage and idolatrous, and who is civilized and Christian. We can and will ask these same questions about what—or who—gets excluded from the narration of Mormon history in the latter-days. What racialized prerogatives do the all-white official record keepers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as the Mormon people, whose journal keeping and family history writing become performances of Mormon identity, bring to the recording of early Mormon history?

### **Samuel, the Prophet on the Wall**

Back to Samuel on the wall of Zarahemla. How can Samuel see so much more clearly the future of Jesus' birth, his death and Christ's resurrection, as well as the apocalypse of the wicked and the redemption of the righteous than any of his white-skinned contemporaries, even better than the Nephite record keepers and historians who narrate the Book of Mormon? Perhaps the first way to answer this question is by way of comparison with other marginalized, antebellum prophets and critics of American religious and political culture. While early Mormons believed that the Book of Mormon was an authentic, historical account of ancient Indian origins, its 1830 publication means the prophecies of Samuel, the Lamanite enter the antebellum world in the same period as, for example the 1836 autobiography of the itinerant black Methodist preacher, Jarena Lee. To substantiate her own authority to preach, and to challenge the prohibition against female ministers, Lee wrote that God directly called her to "Preach the Gospel," assuring her that she need not rely

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<sup>46</sup> *BofM*, 478, 532 [3 Nephi 1:2; Mormon 8:13].



on her own abilities. Instead, God told her, “I will put words in your mouth, and will turn your enemies to become your friends.”<sup>47</sup> Likewise, from the beginning of his testimonies, Samuel makes clear that he does not preach to the Nephites of Zarahemla using his own words, but the words of the Lord. Lee and Samuel’s self-ascribed humble (racial and gendered) positions, make them particularly receptive vessels for the Lord’s words. Their accursedness, their status as outcasts, makes them uniquely qualified to speak for God, or more aptly to have God speak through them.

Yet a second way to understand Samuel’s prophetic acumen is to assert that God chooses Samuel as prophet because of the particular point of view on American history that Samuel’s own racialized marginalization affords him.<sup>48</sup> Though again one must proceed with caution when making comparisons between the ancient, (and mythical) Samuel and other antebellum Native American authors, Samuel, the Lamanite is far from the only Native American who leverages his marginalized position to criticize America’s treatment of its indigenous peoples. In his 1833 essay, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man,” the Pequot Methodist minister, William Apress transforms the “Native” Americans’ status as “the most mean, abject, miserable race of beings in the world,” into a lens of self-reflection in which he can see clearly the causes of Indian degradation, and implores his white readers to turn this mirror upon themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Apress belongs to the literary lineage of Native American Christian converts who penned excoriating critiques of some of the very missionaries who brought them out of “heathenism” and into Christianity. This includes Samson Occom, the Mohegan Presbyterian preacher and erstwhile

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 138–139. Amy Hollywood has noted that the Mechthild of Magdeburg employed a similar strategy in her own writing. Amy M. Hollywood, *The Soul As Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

<sup>48</sup> Jared Hickman has argued that like W. E. B. Du Bois, Samuel’s particular point of view provides him with the “gift” of “second-sight.” The irony of this second sight is that such vision yields the Lamanite and the Negro “no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.” Hickman, “The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse.”

<sup>49</sup> William Apress, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man,” in *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians, of the Pequot Tribe* (Boston: James B. Dow, 1837), 51.

co-founder of what would become Dartmouth College. Occom famously wrote in a 1768 letter to his former teacher Eleazer Wheelock that when it comes to purposeful deceit, “pretended Christians are seven times worse than the Savage Indians.”<sup>50</sup> In his 1826 *Address to White People*, Elias Boudinot argues that that Cherokees had demonstrated that they have achieved the standards of civilization long required by Anglo-Americans to covenant, politically at least, with white citizens. And yet the American republic had demonstrated its hypocrisy by insisting that Cherokees are still “Indians” and thus, like all other Indians must be removed from the land of their inheritance.<sup>51</sup> Apess agreed with Occom and Boudinot.<sup>52</sup> When they take the “red” or “black” skin “as a pretext to keep [the Natives and black slaves] from our unalienable and lawful rights,” White Christians in America prove themselves to be hypocrites who failed to recognize Native and African Americans as inherently like themselves—members of the universal family of the children of God.<sup>53</sup>

Samuel, the Lamanite shouts from the walls of Zarahemla to the Nephites below that they reject him “because [my emphasis] I am a Lamanite.” On the pages of his *Short Narrative*, Samson Occom describes observing a white farmer beat an indentured Indian boy—likely an allusion to the ill-treatment he experienced at the hands of white ministers, including Wheelock—“because [my emphasis] I am a poor Indian.” Yet both Samuel and Occom suggest that their Lamaniteness and

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<sup>50</sup> Samson Occom, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan*, ed. Joanna Brooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 89. Also in 1768, Occom wrote *A Short Narrative of My Life*, in which he accused white missionaries of racism after they failed to uphold their promise to recognize Indian converts as equal brothers in Christ—including paying Indian ministers like Occom at the same rate as white missionaries. Eileen Razzari Elrod, *Piety and Dissent: Race, Gender, and Biblical Rhetoric in Early American Autobiography* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 33–34.

<sup>51</sup> Boudinot, *An Address to the Whites*.

<sup>52</sup> Occom, Apess, and Boudinot among others created a Native American sub-genre of conversion acculturation narratives. Joanna Brooks has argued that “English-language literate Christian converts like Occom should not be viewed primarily as intercessors with the white world but as proponents of new and powerful definitions of Indianness.” Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55. William Apess and Barry O’Connell, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), xlii; Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man,” 55.

their Indianness are divinely-ordained identities.<sup>54</sup> What's more, their "native" marginalization, even dislocation, ironically frees these Native Americans to become fierce critics of their fellow white Christians. Occom "can't help" the fact that he is a "poor Indian... God has made me so." But as this poor Indian, he can see better and more clearly articulate the abuses of a society that claims Christian identity but fails to uphold Christ's most basic commandment.<sup>55</sup> Apess challenges his white readers along the same lines: to interrogate their own position relative to the Natives whom they treat with such disdain and inequality: "Because of your white skin" would "[you] like to be disenfranchised from all your rights?"<sup>56</sup>

Yet Occom, Apess, along with Samuel, the Lamanite assert that white men are not fully capable of such self-reflection. Their vantage point from the inside of American culture limits their vision. As Apess puts it, they cannot see that the "principles" of racial hierarchies, which white Americans consider divinely mandated or biologically predetermined, are in fact "black" and "unholy."<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, from atop the walls of segregated Zarahemla, Samuel can look to both heaven and to earth. He can see God's will and look over an American city at odds with it. He can see all this "because [he is] a Lamanite" *and* because he is "a prophet" who "testifieth of... [the] sins and iniquities" of the ancient white American ruling race, the Nephites.<sup>58</sup> He can also see Jesus coming on history's horizon, and following him, the Nephite apocalypse.

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<sup>54</sup> In his most well known work, *A Son of the Forest* first published in 1829, Apess goes even farther. He challenges the notion that "whiteness" is the original race of man. "It is my opinion that our [Native] nation retains the original complexion of our common father Adam." And for that reason like Boudinot, Apess rejects the name "Indian" as a "slur upon an oppressed and scattered nation." "The proper term which ought to be applied to our nation to distinguish it from the rest of the human family is that of *Natives*—and I humbly conceive that the natives of this country are the only people under heaven who have a just title to that name." According to Apess, white, Anglo-Americans are in fact the interlopers on the American continent. William Apess, *A Son of the Forest: The Experience of William Apes, a Native of the Forest* (New York: The Author, 1829), 73, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Occom, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan*, 58; Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Apess, "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man," 55.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *BojM* 445; 447 [Helaman 13:26-27; 14:10]. Jared Hickman directs our attention here to Satya Mohanty's claim of the "epistemic privilege of the oppressed." Because society has failed the oppressed, and thus rendered her outside its power

Nevertheless, while the Book of Mormon appears forward thinking—the oppressed have a privileged place, even a privileged sight—it also adheres to own decidedly ancient, and perhaps arcane, ideas of the process of the restoration of the human family. To regain their past and future glory, the Lamanites must shed “their scales of darkness from their eyes.”<sup>59</sup> Samuel, who somehow overcomes these visual limitations innate to his race, is thus an exception to the rule. Or perhaps he is a racially ambiguous figure, transitioning from one racial identity to another. The Book of Mormon professes that “all are alike unto God” including “black and white, bond and free, male and female” and that no soul, even covered in skin the color of “flint” is lost.<sup>60</sup> Yet universal redemption involves a return to the purity and unity of Adam’s and Lehi’s white family. If faithfulness to the gospel is the standard of righteousness, this righteousness manifests itself in skin that in “many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people.”<sup>61</sup>

### **The Race of the Archive**

Samuel, the Lamanite serves as a case study for the racial politics within the Book of Mormon. In particular, Samuel highlights the instability of how Mormonism’s foundational text understands who is righteous and who is wicked, and how this instability maps onto white-skinned and dark-skinned bodies. Because of this instability—because non-white peoples can be righteous and prophetic—Samuel’s case highlights the import of locating the voices of non-whites in the Mormon archive, voices that, we will see, can serve to correct and even revise the dominant historical narrative. And yet, because of the tension between the oral and written testimony, Samuel’s case also helps contextualize why non-whites are often excluded from the historical records

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structure, she gains “social objectivity” onto the workings of society. Satya Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 198–253.

<sup>59</sup> *BofM*, 177 [2 Nephi 30:5-6].

<sup>60</sup> *BofM* 109; 73 [2 Nephi 26:33; 2 Nephi 5:21].

<sup>61</sup> *BofM*, 177 [2 Nephi 30:5-6].

of the Book of Mormon and from historical records of nineteenth-century America. We will see that when Native Americans and African Americans make it into the archive, they rarely add directly to the archive themselves. To borrow from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's seminal work, while a subject like Samuel can "talk back" or even "write back" to criticize the hegemonic culture that marginalizes him and excludes his prophecies of ultimate, even salvific import, in Mormon history he can rarely write his own, unmediated way into the archive, a domain which remains racialized, though coded in a (white) universal form.<sup>62</sup>

William Apess understood the power of the written word as a tool of racial oppression wielded against the marginalized.

The Indian character... has been greatly misrepresented. Justice has not, and I may add, justice cannot be fully done to them by the historian. My people have had no press to record their sufferings, or to make known their grievances; on this account many a tale of blood and wo has never been known to the public. And during the wars between the natives and the whites, the latter could, through the medium of the newspaper press, circulate extensively every exaggerated account of the 'indian cruelty,' while the poor natives had no means of gaining the public ear.<sup>63</sup>

Apess' case was itself unique—an exception to the rule that early American historical narrative remained the domain of white Americans who had the prerogative to shape the "Indian character" to fit their cultural and political expectations and ambitions. Rarely did the "Natives," and for that matter African Americans, have the means to tell their side of the story, to air their own grievances, to "gain the public ear."

What was generally true for the marginalized in antebellum culture is particular true in early Mormon history and history writing. Samuel, the Lamanite's case serves as a cautionary reminder that when they do appear—from the Delaware in Kansas in 1831, to Chief Walkara in Utah's Sanpete Valley in the 1850s, to Jane Manning James in Salt Lake City in 1893—"red" and "black" subjects rarely add their own voices directly to the written archive, and as such their voices are

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<sup>62</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–316.

<sup>63</sup> Apess, *Son of the Forest* (1829), reprinted in Apess and O'Connell, *On Our Own Ground*, 60.

mediated by their white scribes. Non-white subjects can and do “talk back,” and do so against their own objectification or exclusion from the Mormon community. Yet they often remain “captured” in the texts produced by white transcribers or historians and “captured” in the cultural conventions about nineteenth-century conceptions of the intersection of race, religion, and literacy.<sup>64</sup> What’s more, because in early Mormon history literacy signifies whiteness and worthiness, when a Mormon historical subject becomes a writerly-self she also becomes—figuratively, and the Saints believed perhaps even literally—a white self.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 1–4, 15–60.

<sup>65</sup> A Church of England missionary in nineteenth-century Alaska, William Duncan records the voices of Indian converts who report that as the “Indians ‘become white’... they could ‘talk on paper’ and ‘hear paper talk’ and who wore white folks clothes, and lived in houses with windows, and forsook the Shaman, and at no more dog-flesh, and no longer killed one another.” Quoted in Julia McNair Wright, *Among the Alaskans* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1883), 203–204.

### CHAPTER THREE: Marketing the Book of Mormon to Noah's Three Sons



Figure 3:1. E.B. Grandin's Printing Shop, Palmyra New York.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Book of Mormon in the Antebellum Marketplace

March 1830. Broadsheets hung from the rafters and the sweet, metallic smell of drying ink filled the air of E. B. Grandin's cramped, third-floor printing office located on Main Street of Palmyra, New York, a bustling Erie Canal town of some 5,000 residents. As he set type for the March 26<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Wayne Sentinel*, the twenty-four year old newspaperman and publisher was racked with anxiety and doubt.

In the previous week's edition, Grandin printed the bloodless announcement, "*we are requested* [my emphasis] to announce that the 'Book of Mormon' will be ready for sale in the course of next week."<sup>2</sup> The newspaperman's rhetorical passivity might hint at Grandin's state of mind. On the eve of the Book of Mormon's debut, perhaps Grandin wanted to distance himself from Joseph Smith's "Gold Bible." Against his better judgment, Grandin had agreed to print the book in the same office where he produced *The Wayne Sentinel*. The year before, when Joseph Smith first approached

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<sup>1</sup> Source: John Foxe, Creative Commons, accessed August 17, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.\\_B.\\_Grandin#mediaviewer/File:GrandinPrintingShop.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._B._Grandin#mediaviewer/File:GrandinPrintingShop.jpg).

<sup>2</sup> *The Wayne Sentinel*, March 19, 1830.

Grandin about publishing his translation of what he claimed was both a long-lost record of an ancient American people as well as new Christian gospel, Grandin initially refused, believing “the whole affair... a wicked imposture.” Grandin and Smith eventually agreed to terms, but only after Smith convinced Grandin that the book would be published, either in his shop or elsewhere. And only after Martin Harris, a local farmer who had helped transcribe portions of the book, mortgaged his farm to raise 3,000 dollars as collateral to pay for the audacious printing run of 5,000 copies.<sup>3</sup>

By March 1830, almost everyone in and around Palmyra had heard about the Book of Mormon. But its notoriety did not assure sales. Many Palmyrans believed the book was fraudulent and blasphemous, and some threatened a boycott. It was one thing for Smith to claim that he had discovered a history of the Israelite origins of America’s native peoples. It was another thing to claim that the risen Christ had visited this American House of Israel in 34 A.D. and established a Christian church among them. And it was downright outrageous to prophesy that the Indians—tens of thousands of who would soon march west into government-mandated exile—would unite with believing “Gentiles” to build New Jerusalem in America where they would find safe harbor during the global calamities before Christ’s imminent second coming. The rest of “the world... would come to an end in two or three years,” another Palmyra newspaper mockingly summarized the Book of Mormon’s millennialism. “The state of New York would (probably) be sunk.”<sup>4</sup>

Setting type for the March 26<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Wayne Sentinel*, in which he announced that the Book of Mormon was available for purchase in the bookstore located in the first floor of his building, Grandin could steal a glance outside his print shop window to Palmyra’s Main Street below, where carriages full of local produce, dry goods—including books and newspapers—came

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<sup>3</sup> The Book of Mormon was not only the most controversial printing job Grandin ever undertook. It was probably the largest in the history of Wayne County, New York. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 80; Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1867), 51–52.

<sup>4</sup> “Book of Mormon,” *The Reflector*, February 14, 1831.



and went to the canal that passed just a few hundred feet to the north.<sup>5</sup> As he did so, Grandin might have wondered if he had made a terrible mistake. Would anyone show up at his store to buy the book when he unlocked the front door on the 26<sup>th</sup>?

In terms of a business venture, Grandin's fears were realized. At least initially, the Book of Mormon did not sell well. Martin Harris soon lost his farm; he reportedly complained to Joseph that, despite his efforts to sell copies of the book door-to-door throughout western New York, "no Body wants [to buy] them."<sup>6</sup> And Grandin soon closed his shop. Nevertheless, the publication of the Book of Mormon, and the founding of a new church less than two weeks later on April 6, 1830, immediately elevated Joseph Smith to the stature of a latter-day prophet in the eyes of his early followers, and a dangerous blasphemer in the eyes of his enemies. As such, while the number of Mormons and anti-Mormons multiplied, so did interest in the Book of Mormon, or more precisely its message of a restored Christian church, a restored priesthood for all (male) believers, and a restored prophet on earth to whom God continued to speak. By the time mob a killed him in Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844, the church Joseph Smith established fourteen years earlier had grown into an international religious community—and an expanding market for the Book of Mormon—as well as a national controversy, a "Mormon problem" debated at the highest levels of American political culture.

And yet how did Joseph Smith and his earliest converts market both their own new religious movement and what Joseph Smith called the "keystone" of this movement: the Book of Mormon? And who would become the consumers of the new Mormon scriptures and converts to the new Mormon religion?

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<sup>5</sup> "Book of Mormon," *The Wayne Sentinel*, March 26, 1830; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 46.

<sup>6</sup> Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 60.

I argue that between the church's founding in the spring of 1830 in New York State and the Mormons' expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri in the fall of 1833, the earliest Mormons engaged in marketing campaigns to bring the "blessings" of this new gospel to "all the families of earth." In other words, Joseph Smith and his first followers imagined a universal market for their new faith and their faith's foundational text. In an era when Americans were increasingly divided along political, religious, economic, and racial lines, the Book of Mormon provided the early Saints with what Joseph Smith called "a restoration of all things," which, when fulfilled, would bring an end to all schisms within the human family—at least for all those willing to believe.<sup>7</sup> The Book of Mormon, along with Joseph Smith's other early translations and revelations, thus not only served as a lens through which the Mormons envisioned the reconstitution of the Body of Christ—currently divided by sectarian battles over the proper place of baptismal waters, the sacrament table, the clergy in the church, as well as the proper place for Native and African Americans in the American republic. This hermeneutic of restoration also served as a lens through which the Saints envisioned the restoration of the human family to the form the Saints believed was its original, white form.

However, during the first three years of the church's existence, the Mormons marketed their universal gospel in specific ways to the specific branches of the human family that were currently divided into distinct races. In 1831, Joseph Smith and other leading members of the church met in western Missouri to make plans for the building of their Zion in America. During this time, early Mormon newspaperman and key figure in the early Saints' missionary outreach, W. W. Phelps described the races that the Saints hoped would populate New Jerusalem as the American-based progeny of Noah, human history's (second) first family: the "Lamanites... descendants of Shem,"

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<sup>7</sup> *D&C* 27:6.

“Negroes... descendants of Ham,” and Gentiles, descendants of “Japheth.”<sup>8</sup> The Christian world had for centuries accepted these three sons of Noah as the respective postdiluvian progenitors of the “Gentile” peoples of Europe, the Semitic peoples of Asia (including the Holy Lands), and Ham’s progeny in Africa.

Japheth, Shem, and Ham’s shared parentage did not mean that the descendants of Noah were equal, at least not in their current state. To be sure, migration brought all three branches of Noah’s family tree from the Old World to the New. Japheth’s Gentile progeny came as religious refugees, missionaries, and colonizers. Ham’s sons and daughters came as slaves. And according to the Book of Mormon, Shem’s Israelite descendants fled the Babylonian conquest to settle in America six centuries before Christ’s birth, eventually becoming the people whom the Book of Mormon names “Lamanites,” and whom most Americans named Indians. To borrow from Foucault, this is how the Saints “named and ordered” the current state of the three branches of Noah’s descendants whom they encountered. The early Latter-day Saints marketed the message of a restored gospel according to each of these lineages’ spiritual and intellectual characteristics as well as the racial politics of Jacksonian America.<sup>9</sup> To put another way, while the Saints understood humanity was in essence one family, to make the restoration appealing and efficacious to this family’s current (racialized) lineages—the “Lamanite,” the “Gentile,” the “Negro”—required targeted marketing.

### **New Jerusalem “Among the Lamanites”**

Founded on April 6, 1830 at a small farmstead in Fayette, New York, some thirty miles southeast of Palmyra where the Book of Mormon had gone on sale ten days before, the “Church of

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<sup>8</sup> June 19-July 1831, History, 1838-1856, vol. A-1, (ID # 7268), JSPP, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=135>.

<sup>9</sup> *BoM*, 59 [1 Nephi 22:28].

Christ” began as a family affair.<sup>10</sup> With perhaps as many as sixty members, the church was mostly comprised of Smith’s immediate and extended family, along with local boosters like Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery, Smith’s chief Book of Mormon scribe and the early church’s second leading official. Smith’s 1830 revelation promising that the Book of Mormon missionaries would find that “the field is white[,] already to harvest” came to fruition in the quick growth of the church among white, “Gentile” populations.<sup>11</sup> While the Book of Mormon did not become the bestseller Smith, Harris, and Cowdery hoped it would, the book played a key role in the conversions of many early Saints who became key figures in the restoration. During the church’s first year in existence, copies of the Book of Mormon that were sold or given away passed from hand to hand among networks of families and neighbors, including to Smith’s successor to the church’s leadership, Brigham Young, to missionary and theologian, Parley P. Pratt, and to Joseph’s future plural wife, the poetess Eliza R. Snow. By the end of 1830, the size of Joseph’s church had grown to an estimated 280 members.<sup>12</sup> According to Joseph Smith, it was this success that drew the ire of his persecutors. As Smith later explained, anti-Mormon mobs, lawmen, and jealous sectarian “priests” conspired against him because he and his followers had set “the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon.” After he was briefly imprisoned on charges of being a “disorderly person,” Smith and his wife Emma fled to her family’s home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Soon after, anti-Mormon mobs chased the rest of the young religious community out of New York.<sup>13</sup>

Yet before the early Saints left the birthplace of Mormonism, following on prophecy contained in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith revealed the future role of the Native Americans

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<sup>10</sup> The church changed its name several times over the course of the 1830s, finally settling on its current name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, based on an 1838 revelation. See *DC&C* 115:4.

<sup>11</sup> Revelation, October 1830, [*DC&C* 33:3], *RT* (Vol. 1), 59.

<sup>12</sup> Rodney Stark, “Mormon Networks of Faith,” in *The Rise of Mormonism*, ed. Reid Larkin Neilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 57–82, esp. 57–59.

<sup>13</sup> “History Drafts, 1838 ca.—1841,” *JSH* (Vol. 1), 396; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 116–118.

in the restored church. For the Saints, America's indigenous peoples were much more than "Indians"—often seen as both a burden to the white, American republic and a hindrance to the nation's westward expansion.<sup>14</sup> In the Book of Mormon, the Indians are the literal descendants of Abraham. Because their conversion was so vital to the unfolding of the prophesied events of the latter-days, in a September 1830 revelation Smith commanded Oliver Cowdery to "Go unto the Lamanites and preach [the] gospel unto them." If the Lamanites accepted these "teachings" contained in the newly rediscovered American gospel, the Lord told Cowdery through Smith, then "thou shalt cause my church to be established among them."<sup>15</sup>

Smith and Cowdery expected that these gospel "teachings" would naturally appeal to the Indians because the Book of Mormon was, after all, the Indians' own long-lost family history. It was "a record of the people of Nephi and also of the Lamanites," as Smith wrote on the book's title page. And in the Book of Mormon-prescribed order of Zion, it was this "broken off" branch of Israel who would be the principal members of a restored covenant of the latter-days. The Book of Mormon prophesied that not only would the "Gentiles" return the Indian/Lamanites' history to them, the Gentiles would also help elevate them from their current depraved state, restore them to the faith of their forefathers and shape them into citizens of New Jerusalem. For this work, the Gentiles would also be invited to join the covenant that the Lord had established with the Lamanites' most ancient forefather, Abraham.<sup>16</sup>

This hermeneutic of restoration stood in contrast with President Andrew Jackson's vision for America's future, in which the Indian played no part. "What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages," the President declared in his annual

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<sup>14</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 134–136; Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 135–168.

<sup>15</sup> Revelation to Oliver [Cowdery], September 1830 [*De&C* 28:8], *RT* (Vol. 1), 53.

<sup>16</sup> *BofM* 33, 85 [1 Nephi 15:17, 13-14; 2 Nephi 10:18].

address to Congress in December 1830, “to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion?”<sup>17</sup> Mormon millennialism built Zion around the Lamanite. Emerging manifest destiny pushed the Indian out of the American republic. The Lamanite would be a Mormon; the Indian could not be an American.<sup>18</sup>

In mid-October 1830, two months before Jackson delivered his speech celebrating the “happy consummation” of Indian removal, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer Jr., and Ziba Peterson left Upstate New York and headed west. The four were particularly well suited to participate in the first formal mission in Mormon history. As Smith’s chief Book of Mormon scribe Cowdery knew the Book of Mormon better than anyone, perhaps even better than Smith himself. In the last pages of Book of Mormon’s first edition, Cowdery and Whitmer were listed as eyewitnesses to the golden plates from which Smith supposedly translated the new scripture.<sup>19</sup> Cowdery baptized Ziba Peterson in April 18, 1830, twelve days after the Church of Christ was officially established. And Pratt’s chance encounter with a copy of the Book of Mormon in the late summer of 1830 led to his almost immediate conversion.<sup>20</sup>

Westward was both the prophesied and logical trajectory of the church. Before Cowdery departed for the mission, Joseph Smith revealed to him that the Saints’ millennial city “shall be [built] among the Lamanites.”<sup>21</sup> And following the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830,

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<sup>17</sup> President Andrew Jackson’s Message to Congress “On Indian Removal,” December 6, 1830, Records of the United States Senate, 1789-1990, The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>18</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 134-136.

<sup>19</sup> *BofM*, 589, 590 (unnumbered) [“The Testimony of the Three Witnesses,” “And Also the Testimony of the Eight Witnesses”].

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Bowman, “The Conversion of Parley Pratt: Investigating the Patterns of Mormon Piety,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 178–87.

<sup>21</sup> Here I am purposefully using the original preposition “among” instead of the edited “by the borders of.” This editing of the original record most likely occurred between 1833 and 1835. This change is very important, as it is a response to the failure of the first mission to the Lamanites as well as the Missouri “old settler” concerns over Mormon “meddling” with the Indians. Revelation, September 1830 [*DC* 28:9], *RT* (Vol. 1), 53. Ronald Walker has also suggested that a set of July 1831 revelations were altered “to conceal their Indian content and the implicit Mormon interest in the area west of Missouri.” Ronald W. Walker, “Seeking the ‘Remnant’: The Native American During The Joseph Smith Period,” *Journal of Mormon History* 19 (1993): 10.

hundreds of thousands of Native Americans were forced west to Indian Country. If New Jerusalem were to be built “among the Lamanites,” then this city would be built on the Lamanites’ new lands on the westward side of the new, ragged edge of the United States.

Between October 1830 and February 1831, the four twenty-something-year-old missionaries trekked over a thousand miles, searching for potential Lamanite converts and potential locations for the Saints’ New Jerusalem. Along the way, they preached to both Indian and white audiences in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Ohio’s Western Reserve, a region already alive with the great religious awakening that had begun in the early decades of the 1800s in western New York, proved to be particularly fruitful.<sup>22</sup> Parley P. Pratt brought word of the new prophet and copies of the new gospel to his former minister, Sidney Rigdon, the leader of a Campbellite church in Kirtland, Ohio. Within weeks of the missionaries’ arrival almost the entire membership of Rigdon’s church was converted. Rigdon became one of the church’s highest-ranking officials and eventually Brigham Young’s chief rival to the succession of church leadership after Joseph Smith’s death in 1844.

The addition of these Ohioans doubled, if not tripled, the Church of Christ’s membership. These conversions also injected vital enthusiasm for the Saints’ restorationist vision and established a geographic base that would sustain the church during much of its tumultuous first decade.<sup>23</sup> And, as Cowdery suggested in his November 1830 letter sent to the Saints still in New York, the Ohio converts might prove to be a lucrative market for the Book of Mormon. “There is considerable call here for books.” Cowdery instructed his brethren to send “five hundred immediately.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen J. Stein, “‘Taking Up the Full Cross’: The Shaker Challenge to the Western ‘Christians,’” *Disciplina* 65, no. 3 (2005): 93–110; Charles H. Lippy, “The Great Awakening,” *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 2, no. 1 (1974): 44–52.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Lyman Staker, Hearken, *O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations* (Sandy, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2010), 49–65; *Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling*, 144–160.

<sup>24</sup> Oliver Cowdery to “beloved brethren,” November 12, 1830, (ID# 1613), JSPP, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-from-oliver-cowdery-12-november-1830?p=3#/paperSummary/letter-from-oliver-cowdery-12-november-1830&p=3>.

## Missionaries among the Delaware in Diaspora

While these unintended “Gentile” converts would prove to be a boon to both the Mormon movement and Book of Mormon sales, Cowdery and the other missionaries were anxious to bring the gospel to the Lamanites.<sup>25</sup> The missionaries thus left the embryonic Kirtland community and headed west to seek out their divinely mandated target audience: the American remnant of Israel. In early February 1831, Cowdery, Pratt, and a convert from Ohio, Frederick Williams, walked across the iced-over Kansas (Kaw) River and into a Delaware village, a two-day trek west of the last American settlement at Independence, Missouri.<sup>26</sup>

The highlight of the Mormons’ first venture west of the U.S. border was a visit with Chief William Anderson (Kikthawenund), the “sachem” of the ten Delaware nations in diaspora.<sup>27</sup> Converting Anderson would have been quite a coup for the new religious movement. The missionaries believed that, if the venerated chief could be brought to accept the Book of Mormon, then he could help introduce other Delaware to the gospel.

A little more than a year before the missionaries first met him, on September 24, 1829, the aged and illiterate Anderson put his mark (an “X”) on a treaty document with the federal

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<sup>25</sup> At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836 (*DC* 109:60), through revelation, Smith indirectly identifies early white Mormons as “Gentiles.” Yet as I show in Chapter Four, by 1835 the Saints began to change their own self-perception, moving away from identifying themselves as Gentiles and towards their own long-forgotten Israelite identity.

<sup>26</sup> The missionaries claimed to have made contact with other Indians during their trek from New York, and left two copies of the Book of Mormon with the Seneca Indians south of Buffalo. But they were most eager to meet the Lamanites gathering in Indian Country. Terryl Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 38. Out of money, while Pratt, Cowdery, and Williams visited the Delaware, Whitmer and Peterson remained in Independence to work as tailors, and probably to scout the land for possible Mormon settlements Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 56.

<sup>27</sup> It is possible that the Mormon missionaries first heard about Chief Anderson and the Delaware from James Poole (Pool), a blacksmith from Virginia hired by the federal government to provide translation and smithing services to the Delaware. It is also possible that they heard about the Delaware from another Indian leader, Anthony Shane, with whom the missionaries spent their first night in the Indian Territory. When the Mormons met him, Shane had recently relocated with a group of Shawnees to their new lands just south of the Delaware. The Mormons’ stay with Shane was brief, perhaps due to the fact that the longtime Baptist missionary to the Indians Isaac McCoy was already working to establish a mission among the Shawnees. Delilah Lykins, letters to Isaac McCoy, July 29; August 3, 1831, reprinted in George Melvyn Ella, *Isaac McCoy: Apostle of the Western Trail* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), 256–257. Warren A Jennings, “The First Mormon Mission to the Indians,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 37 (Fall 1971): 291–292.



government, which annulled the Delaware's rights to land that ran along the James Fork in Missouri. Anderson hoped to preempt any further disputes with white Missourians who had accused the starving Delaware of hog stealing. These western Missourians were migrants themselves, who had moved north from Mississippi to squat on land the Delaware had been granted in the 1818 treaty of St. Mary's. Tensions with white settlers were high enough that Anderson did not wait until the arrival of the spring thaw or the promised provisions from the federal government to make his exit. In November 1830, through late fall snows, Anderson and a large body of the Delaware trudged out of Missouri and into their newly allocated lands between the Kansas River to the south, the Missouri River to the east, and Fort Leavenworth to the north."<sup>28</sup>

This move west was the latest chapter in the Delaware's long exile from their ancestral lands. Two centuries earlier, Anderson's forefathers governed a huge expanse of the Delaware River Basin, from southern New York to northern Maryland. The Delaware had their own patrilineal origin myth quite distinct from the Indian-as-Israelite saga that the Mormons would present to them. Revered as the progenitors of all the Algonquian tribes, the Delaware were called "Lenape," the "original" or "real men." Yet when the English settlers began moving into their land in the late seventeenth century, the Delaware were reduced to nomads, divided by war, religion, and poverty. The Iroquois, whom the Delaware blamed for colluding with the English to steal their land, signaled the Delaware's reversal of status by renaming the "real men" with the epithet "women."<sup>29</sup>

During the century before the Mormons brought their own particular pan-Indian message west, the Delaware and other Indian tribes attempted to unify Native Americans to resist further Anglo-American encroachment. Almost a half-century before the Christian Second Great

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<sup>28</sup> See letters and treaties signed by Anderson, reprinted in Ruby Cranor, *Kick Tha We Nund: The Delaware Chief Anderson and His Descendants* (Anderson, IN: published by author, 1989); C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 364–369. Richard W. Cummins, letter to Gen. William Clark, April 2, 1831, microfilm reel MS-95, v. 6, pp. 166, William Clark Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

<sup>29</sup> Jennings, "The First Mormon Mission to the Indians," 292–293.

Awakening reached western Ohio, the Delaware prophet Neolin led a religious revival among the Native Americans in that region.<sup>30</sup> Beginning in 1761, Neolin began receiving revelations from the “Master of Life,” who implored the Indians to undertake their own restorationist project: to reject the trappings of European culture, including western dress, food, firearms, alcohol and Christianity, and to return to the traditions of their forefathers of hunting, fishing, and worshiping the Master of Life. Neolin even implored the Indians to refuse to shake hands with whites, and when greeting each other to extend the left hand instead of the right as was the white custom. The left hand, after all, “is nearest to the heart,” Neolin explained.<sup>31</sup>

Neolin also created his own sacred scripture, which missionary observers dubbed “the Great Book of Writing.” But this “book” was not a book that could be read like the Book of Mormon, another supposed Native American prophetic scripture. Instead it was a map of Neolin’s cosmology sketched out on deerskin, which charted a path by which faithful Indians could retake their lands as well as find salvation in the life to come. As did the Book of Mormon, the Master of Life explained to the Indians that America was, by divine right, the land of their inheritance. “The land on which you are,” the Master of Life revealed through Neolin, “I have made for you, not for others.”<sup>32</sup>

Described by a Moravian missionary as a “half-breed” son of a Delaware princess and a Swedish Indian trader and interpreter, Chief Anderson became the leader of the Delaware tribes when another pan-Indian revivalist Tenskwatawa, “The Prophet,” the brother of the military leader Tecumseh, accused then Delaware chief Tatapashke of witchcraft. The Moravian missionaries, who since the 1740s had moved westward with the Delaware, looked on with horror while Tatapashke

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<sup>30</sup> Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 23–46.

<sup>31</sup> Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 102–103.

<sup>32</sup> Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 29; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 33; Alfred A. Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 37.

and a few of the Moravians' Indian converts were burnt alive.<sup>33</sup> After the tumult created in the wake of Tecumseh and the Prophet's defeat, Anderson made peace with the Americans and began to unify much of the Delaware in diaspora.<sup>34</sup>

Though less belligerent toward the missionaries than Neolin and Tenskwatawa, Anderson also proved less accommodating than some of his predecessors, including his uncle, the Delaware chief Gelelendam (John Killbuck Jr.), who joined the Moravian missionaries' Indian Christian village at Goshen, Ohio.<sup>35</sup> Decades before Mormon missionaries would try to market their brand of Christianity to Anderson in Indian Territory, the Moravians remarked on Anderson's resistance to Christianity, referring to Anderson's village near the White River (now Anderson, Indiana) as "the heathen town, four miles away."<sup>36</sup> Conversations between Anderson and the Moravian and Baptist missionaries recorded in the missionaries' own journals, hint at why Anderson preferred to remain a "heathen." Anderson recognized that while missionaries might peddle Christianity, other white men who would surely follow close behind, would peddle the white man's whiskey, the white man's cattle and clothing, and the white man's land treaties. Anderson believed that Christianity served to make the Indians dependent on white Americans' markets and paternalistic largesse.

Even Anderson and other Delaware leaders' resistance to English-language literacy appears to be deliberate. According to the journal of Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy, in June 1818, McCoy met Anderson at his Indiana settlement and offered to teach Anderson and his community "to read and write, to raise corn, and to make our clothes." Anderson told McCoy that the chief recognized the "great benefit to our children" of a "good education." But Anderson suggested that other

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<sup>33</sup> John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder, *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Delaware and Mohican Indians* (Philadelphia: M'Carty & Davis, 1820), 409–411.

<sup>34</sup> For a history of Chief Anderson's important role in unifying the Delaware and leading them into Kansas, see Weslager, *The Delaware Indians*, 359–398.

<sup>35</sup> Weslager, *The Delaware Indians*, 342–344, 346; Olmstead, *Blackcoats Among the Delaware*, 76–77.

<sup>36</sup> Harry Emilius Stocker, *History of the Moravian Mission among the Indians on the White River in Indiana* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1917), 77.

leading Delaware were skeptical about the missionaries' true intentions. He suggested that perhaps white Americans wished to separate young Indians from their families, and place them in white homes and schools, which would make the tribes more vulnerable. "My chiefs say perhaps the white people desire to educate [the Indians] more, so that they can kill them."<sup>37</sup>

Where Tenskwatawa and the Moravians had, for the most part, failed to unify Native Americans, the confident and naïve Mormon missionaries expected that their pan-Indian message would succeed among Anderson's Delaware. At least in the beginning, the Mormon and Moravian understandings of the Native Americans' place in their respective religious communities could not have been more different. The Mormons believed they and their Native converts would create an integrated, covenantal community, with the Natives eventually assuming the prophetic leadership of New Jerusalem. However, the Moravians kept their Indian converts at arm's length. They created separate villages for them away from the missionaries' own settlements. And they required that Indian converts adhere to strict moral and behavioral codes, including prohibitions against "native practices" like dancing, sacrifices, and "heathen festivals."<sup>38</sup> Even when the converts followed the Moravians' paternalistic rules, the missionaries were cautious in accepting them as full brothers in Christ. For example, they only agreed to baptize Anderson's uncle Gelelemend thirteen years after he first expressed interest in Christianity, and only after the chief renounced his leadership of the Delaware.<sup>39</sup>

Although decades later the Mormons' own relations with Native Americans would come to resemble those of the Moravians, the Saints were more inclusive than the Moravians, at least

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<sup>37</sup> John Peter Kluge and Abraham Luckenbach, *The Moravian Indian Mission on White River: Diaries and Letters, May 5, 1799, to November 12, 1806.*, ed. Gipson, Lawrence Henry (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1938), 608, 431, 452–453, 623; Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes; Their Settlement within the Indian Territory, and Their Future Prospects* (New York: H. and S. Raynor, 1840), 58–59, 52. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians*, 342.

<sup>38</sup> Olmstead, *Blackcoats Among the Delaware*, 124–126.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 76–77, 222, 224; Earl P. Olmstead, *David Zeisberger: A Life Among the Indians* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 246.

according to the earliest expressions of their hermeneutic of restoration. With Christ scheduled to return at any moment, the Saints' theology also required more immediate application. They could not wait decades for Indians to prove their fidelity to the gospel. The goal was to teach the "Indian" how to become a "Lamanite," and then a Mormon, and to do so with great haste.

### **A Restored Gospel for Chief Anderson**

On April 18, 1831, a few days after the missionaries ended their visit with Anderson, returned to Missouri, and began preparing for the arrival of the prophet and other leading Saints, Oliver Cowdery posted a letter to Joseph Smith in which the church's Second Elder gave an upbeat assessment about the missionaries' success. Even after the Mormons' departure from Indian Territory, "the Delaware Nation of the Lamanites" remained very interested in the Book of Mormon. Cowdery was particularly glad to inform his Mormon brethren back east that Chief Anderson had pledged his faith in the new gospel, even if the illiterate chief and many of his nation had to rely on the missionaries' interpretation to understand the words written on the Book of Mormon's pages.<sup>40</sup> Cowdery wrote that part of the Lamanites' interest in the book was that in it, they heard a name they recognized. "Every [Lamanite] Nation have now the name of Nephly," and this name had been "handed down to this very generation." Though the Delaware might have forgotten the (Pre-Colombian American) Christian gospel itself, an important vestige remained: the name of the faithful son of Lehi whose descendants protected and added to the archive that would become the Book of Mormon. Perhaps the name "Nephly" would serve as the welding link between these Indians' past and their Mormon future.

Despite his optimism, Cowdery's letter also highlighted potential barriers to the mission's success, including hints at the struggle to communicate the Book of Mormon's message to non-

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<sup>40</sup> Oliver Cowdery to "beloved brethren," April 8, 1831, (ID# 3878), JSPP, accessed July 10, 2013, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-from-oliver-cowdery-8-april-1831?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=1&s=undefined&sm=none>.

English speaking Indians. After all, Cowdery's information about Delaware continued interest in the Book of Mormon is hearsay. Anderson did not write a letter to Cowdery about his budding faith in the Book of Mormon. Instead, this information came from the interpreter James Poole. Between Saint and Indian, the "fulness of the gospel" had to be mediated and translated.

Another barrier was one that Adam Smith's then half-century old theorizing on the religious marketplace directly addressed—government regulation. Cowdery wrote that Richard W. Cummins, the Delaware and Shawnee's Indian agent, had prevented the Mormons from exercising what Cowdery called their "liberty" to visit "our brethren the Lamanites." The inexperienced missionaries failed to secure the proper governmental approval to travel into Indian lands. The Mormons' more seasoned rivals did not make these mistakes. For example, the Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy had acquired licenses to trade with and preach to the Delaware in the newly formed Indian Territory.<sup>41</sup>

But it is likely that the Mormons also suspected market manipulation; that American Indian agents colluded with more established religious groups to proselytize to the Indians. And the Mormons were not without cause for concern. In a letter dated February 15, 1831, Indian agent Cummins explained to Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark, that not only did the Mormons lack the proper paper work to preach in Indian Territory, but they also "act very strange" and belonged to a suspect "sect." What's more, the Mormon missionaries told Cummins that government bureaucrats would not deter them from fulfilling their mandate to bring "a New Revelation" to the Indians. If they did not receive permission to "go among the Indians," Cummins

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<sup>41</sup> Isaac McCoy, Field Notes of Delaware Lands, September 6, 1830, MS-94, William Clark Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS; General William Clark, letter to Secretary of War Lewis Cass, September 14, 1830, MS-94, William Clark Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS. Like the Mormons and many other missionaries, McCoy hoped that Indian removal would lead to the creation of a pan-tribal Indian homeland—what he called an "Indian Canaan." Yet McCoy did not share the Mormons' view that white Americans should participate in the creation of the Indians' own country. He believed that only when they separated from white settlements and became independent of white patronage, whiskey, and exploitive land prospectors could the Indians build their own farms, civic institutions, and Christian churches. George A. Schultz, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 67–70.

wrote that the missionaries planned to “go to the Rocky Mountains.”<sup>42</sup> Cummins, who would later be a signatory of the July 1833 “manifesto,” which accused the Mormons of meddling with both Indians and blacks and demanded that they leave Jackson County, Missouri, not only wanted to uphold the letter of the law. It is possible that Cummins also wanted to remove competition to other missions in the area, perhaps including McCoy’s Baptist and Methodist missions, which other Indian agents in the area supported.<sup>43</sup>

The lesson that the Saints took away from the failed first mission to the Lamanites—and their great success among the Ohio converts—was that Saints would find that the “white fields” ready to harvest were among white American Gentiles who, for the time, were more prepared to accept the gospel than unlettered Indians. Yet the Mormons did not attribute to the Indians some permanent intellectual and spiritual inability to accept civilization and Christianity, as did many other Protestant missionaries who proselytized in Indian Country in the 1830s. The Saints insisted that Indians only needed to be taught the right gospel message—and taught how to read this message for themselves—to be restored to the religion of the ancient forefathers.<sup>44</sup>

### **Parley P. Pratt among the Delaware**

Despite the failure of the 1831 mission to the Delaware, the Saints’ Book of Mormon-inspired hermeneutic of restoration required them to hold out hope for mass Lamanite conversion.<sup>45</sup> There is no better example of the longevity of the Mormons’ expectation for Lamanite redemption than Parley P. Pratt’s retrospective account of the Mormon missionaries’ encounter with the

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<sup>42</sup> Cummins’ letter contains the first record of the Mormons’ interest in exploring and proselytizing the Indians of the intermountain west. It also pits the Mormons’ agenda for the Indians, and not for the last time, in conflict with that of the federal government. Richard W. Cummins, letter to General William Clark, February 15, 1831, reprinted in Leland H. Gentry, “Light on the ‘Mission to the Lamanites,’” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 2 (1996-1997): 234.

<sup>43</sup> Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 46.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Congregationalists in Oklahoma reported to their own superiors in Boston that the Osage Indians’ heathenism did not allow them “to accomplish ... a knowledge of the art of reading,” an essential skill for full understanding and study of the gospel. William Montgomery, letter to the Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, August 27, 1832, cited in Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 62–63.

<sup>45</sup> Walker, “Seeking the ‘Remnant’: The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period.”

Delaware as recorded in his autobiography, which he wrote in the 1850s, and was first published in the 1870s. In writing about his memories of this first mission to the Lamanites, Pratt details how he understands the (white) Mormons' own understanding of themselves and their relationship with the Indian peoples whom they hoped to redeem and with whom they hoped to create a New Jerusalem on the American frontier.<sup>46</sup>

In his autobiography, Pratt recalls how in February 1831 when the missionaries met with Chief Anderson and a group of his councilors, the lead missionary Oliver Cowdery explained to the Delaware chief that their recent difficulties were in fact the fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecy. It was the “Great Spirit” who used the “pale faces” to displace the “red men” westward from their ancestral lands and bring them to Indian Country. Cowdery suggested that, though certainly traumatic, this forced exile should really be thought of as an exodus, a divine act that would serve “to restore [the Indians] to the knowledge of the will of the Great Spirit and to His favor” and to bring them into the lands that the Lord had designated as the site of their new millennial city.<sup>47</sup> The pale faces and the red men were witnessing prophecy become history. And this fulfillment of the gospel “will do the red man good as well as the pale face.”<sup>48</sup>

According to Pratt's recollection, this exile-as-exodus was just one Book of Mormon prophecy that was being realized, Cowdery explained to Anderson. The other was the restoration of the Indians' own history to them, which was contained in the Book of Mormon itself. Cowdery described the rise of great pre-Columbian Amerindian civilizations, whose citizens built great cities

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<sup>46</sup> In their recent biography of Pratt (2011), Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow mostly avoid Pratt's autobiography as a source for the Saints first mission to the Lamanites. Yet I read the autobiography as a valuable window into how Pratt imagines a romanticized encounter between Mormons and the Delaware. The autobiography also reflects the audacious expectations of the early Saints' desire to fulfill Book of Mormon prophecy, a desire that was still present when Pratt was writing in the 1850s, a period when the Lamanite missions to the Indians in the Utah territory were at their peak. Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 46–48; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 153–156.

<sup>47</sup> Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 58. See 1 Nephi 2:4; 1 Nephi 4:36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* See among others 2 Nephi 10:10; 3 Nephi 20:27; 1 Nephi 22:9; 2 Nephi 10:18.



and cultivated the land. They also worshiped the Great Spirit who revealed his gospel to wise men and prophets, and recorded this history on golden plates handed down from fathers to sons. Cowdery also told of the ultimate destruction of this civilization. Apostasy led to wickedness and the loss of knowledge of how to read and write led to the oblivion of the Indians' true Israelite parentage. Yet this sacred history was preserved so that a "pale face" prophet—Joseph Smith—could unearth it centuries later and translate it "into the language of the pale face." The preservation of this history was a result of divine intervention: God had instructed the last two ancient American prophets and historians, Mormon and Moroni, "to hide the Book in the earth, that it might be preserved in safety, and be found and made known to in the latter days to the pale faces who should possess the land."<sup>49</sup>

Yet Cowdery explained that Joseph translated this book not for the pale face, but for the red men. This is why he sent his missionaries "to bring some copies of it to them" and tell them of the good news; that "the Book" could "restore them" to the ways and knowledge of their forefathers. Cowdery framed this potential restoration in the conditional tense:

If the red man would then receive this Book and learn the things written in it, and do according thereunto, they should cease to fight and kill one another; should become one people; cultivate the earth in peace, in common with the pale faces, who were willing to believe and obey the same Book, and be good men and live in peace...*then* [my emphasis] should the red men become great and have plenty to eat and good clothes to wear.<sup>50</sup>

This particular formation of "if ... then" is the reoccurring discursive mechanism by which the early Saints explained and offered the universal salvation that Christ's atonement created. Pratt here presents what I call a "covenantal contract."<sup>51</sup> If Indians followed the gospel that the "pale

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 58–59.

<sup>51</sup> By this I mean covenants *as contracts*, as in the legalistic term referring to a written or spoken agreement between two or more parties—in this case between a people and God, and among a community of people. In Chapter Four, I show how these covenantal contracts also *contracted* as the Mormon people become more and more (racially) circumscribed during the early decades of the church's existence. For precedents of Mormon covenantal theology, see Rex Eugene Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 14–49; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 398–431.

face” restored to them in the form of the Book of Mormon, *then* the red men would not only enjoy material blessings, but spiritual ones, too. However, before the red men could become “great,” they had to end their nomadic wanderings, and become landed farmers and ranchers. They had to “obey” the same book as the pale faces and, based on this shared worldview, covenant with them. This covenanted people would also be a literate people, as literacy was essential for “learning the things written in [the Book of Mormon],” and also essential for recording God’s providential hand in the unfolding history of this last dispensation.

Though Pratt does not leave a record that Cowdery taught the Delaware this lesson, the “Book” also teaches that *if* the red men does all this, *then* not only could they become one with the pale faces. They too could become “pale face” themselves. Cowdery’s mission to the Delaware parallels that of the Book of Mormon Nephite missionaries who brought the gospel to the Lamanites in the years before Christ’s birth. Those Lamanites who “united with the Nephites” had their curse removed and “their skin became white like unto the Nephites.”<sup>52</sup> Just as these Lamanites disappeared “and were called Nephites,” the missionaries foresaw the disappearance of the “red men.” For example, in 1861 early Mormon newspaperman W.W. Phelps wrote a letter to then Church President Brigham Young claiming that in July 1831, Joseph disclosed a confidential revelation to Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, and other missionaries to the Indians. Through Smith, the Lord told the Saints that it was his “will, that in time, ye shall take unto you wives of the Lamanites,” with the goal of breeding out the Lamanites’ curse, so “that their posterity may become white, delightful, and just.”<sup>53</sup>

Phelps’ report of a thirty-year-old revelation does have an apocryphal ring to it, echoing Utah-era views of Mormon-Indian relations when church leaders actively encouraged Mormon

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<sup>52</sup> See 3 Nephi 2:14-16.

<sup>53</sup> W.W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, reprinted in B. Carmon Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy: Its Origin, Practice, and Demise* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 37.

missionaries to take Indian women as their plural wives as means to acculturate the Indians into Mormon culture and create matrimonial allegiances with Indian tribes. Yet the revelation is not entirely out of place in the early 1830s. Though many missionaries like the Moravians discouraged intermarriage between white missionaries and their Indian initiates, the practice was a longstanding tradition for other missionizing Europeans, especially among the French who, like the Mormons, saw marriage as a means of creating kinship between colonizing Europeans and indigenous Americans.<sup>54</sup>

What's more, the decade preceding the founding of the Mormon movement was marked by a national debate over the efficacy and morality of Indian-white marriages. A Supreme Court ruling, best-selling novels by the likes of Lydia Maria Child and James Fennimore Cooper, and a "scandalous" marriage between the Cherokee writer Elias Boudinot and his white wife, Harriet Gold, made marriages between Native Americans and whites the talk of the nation.<sup>55</sup> And while it supposedly came more than a decade before Smith received formal revelations requiring elite male Saints to practice what they would call celestial marriage, the 1831 revelation echoes other anecdotes about Smith's early interest and theological ruminations about polygamy.<sup>56</sup> Whatever or whenever its origins, the revelation reflects an early Mormon desire to create familial bonds between leading male Mormons and those they believed to be literal daughters of Israel, a vital step towards the

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<sup>54</sup> Hermann Wellenreuther and Carola Wessel eds., *Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger: 1772-1781* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 48 n. 162. Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Cole, "Indian Questions: Native American Writing in Response to Removal" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 2007), 62–120; Theresa Strouth Gaul, ed., *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 65; Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 3; Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 195.

restoration of Christ's church among the Lamanites and the restoration of the original, white universal family.<sup>57</sup>

According to Pratt's recollection, Cowdery's sermon convinced Chief Anderson that the Mormons' intentions were benevolent. "We are truly thankful to our white friends who have come so far," the chief said through translation, "and [having] been at such pains to tell us good news, and especially this new news concerning the Book of our forefathers." Pointing to his heart, Pratt recalls the chief declaring, "It makes us glad in here."<sup>58</sup> The Delaware chief promised that when the winter's deep snow receded, his tribe would build a meetinghouse, and also erect fences, homes, and farms. For the chief and his people, these structures would serve as buttresses against the harsh climate of their new and unfamiliar home. But these proposed infrastructure also had symbolic significance; they would mark the nomadic Delaware's transition to landed and civilized lives.

As did Cowdery in his April 1831 letter to Joseph Smith, in his autobiography Pratt recalls that the time the missionaries spent in eastern Kansas was one of great excitement among the Delaware.<sup>59</sup> It seemed that the retail marketing—bringing word of the restored gospel directly to Delaware—had worked. Within several days of teaching, "nearly the whole tribe began to feel a spirit of enquiry and excitement," writes Pratt.<sup>60</sup> "Several among them could read the language of the pale faces," perhaps the fruits of previous Baptist and Moravian missions, "and to them we gave copies of the Book of Mormon." Those who could translate written English into oral Delaware

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<sup>57</sup> Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period," 10; Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 119. Also, see Mormon apostate Ezra Booth's IX letter to anti-Mormon Eber D. Howe. "[I]t has been made known by revelation, that it will be pleasing to the Lord, should they [Mormon missionaries] form matrimonial alliances with the natives, and by this means the Elders, who comply with the thing so pleasing to the Lord, and for the Lord has promise to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the [federal Indian agent]." Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: By the Author, 1834), 220.

<sup>58</sup> Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 60.

<sup>59</sup> Pratt (or Pratt's editors) refers to the Indian Territory just west of the Missouri state border as "Kansas," even though Kansas would not become a state until January 29, 1861, almost exactly thirty years after the missionaries encounter with the Delaware. This anachronism emphasizes the retrospective nature of Pratt's account. *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

“began to rejoice exceedingly, and took great pains to tell the news to others, in their own language.” But for the majority of Delaware who could not read, the book remained an icon, an illegible totem whose stories to which only those who had the power of literacy had access.<sup>61</sup>

In 1831 as soon as the Mormons left, what seemed to be a quick sprouting of seeds of faith among the Delaware quickly died out. Like Cowdery before him, Pratt did not blame the Native Americans for some inherent inability to understand and accept the gospel. Instead he faulted jealous “Indian agents and sectarian missionaries” who worked to prevent the Indian excitement around “The Book” from progressing to the point where the church could be established among the Lamanites.<sup>62</sup> But perhaps Cowdery and Pratt were wrong for faulting their missionary competitors and supposed conspiring federal agents.

If Chief Anderson’s actions in the spring and summer of 1831 are any indication, perhaps Anderson himself was in fact responsible for not allowing Mormonism to take root. Instead of the great excitement about which the missionaries boasted, Anderson’s efforts reflected what John C. McCoy, who helped settle and develop nearby Kansas City, later called the Delaware’s indifference to the Mormon message, or at least the prioritization of a different set of needs.<sup>63</sup>

Instead of erecting farms and a Mormon meetinghouse, Anderson worked to move the rest of the Delaware over the Missouri River and ensure provisions for their settlement in Indian Country.<sup>64</sup> In late summer of 1831, Anderson dictated a letter to Andrew Jackson’s Secretary of War Lewis Cass, the man most responsible for implementing the president’s Indian Removal Act. He petitioned Cass to supply “a pension of \$100 annually to each of his four sons.” Beyond this small cash infusion, it seems that the chief wanted little to do with white Americans. The descendant of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. See the “Trope of the Talking Book” in Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*, 127.

<sup>62</sup> Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 60–61.

<sup>63</sup> Jennings, “The First Mormon Mission to the Indians,” 295.

<sup>64</sup> William Myers to Col. Pierre Menard, August 8, 1831, microfilm reel MS-95, v. 6, pp. 280, William Clark Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

the Lenape had his own ideas about protecting his people's lineages into the future. The year before, on September 22, 1830, in another dictated message, Anderson told Cass: "I hope that if the Government fulfill all its promises that before many years the balance of my nation who are now scattered... will all come here on this land." Like the Saints, Anderson too envisioned the creation of a pan-Indian nation gathered near the border of Indian Country and the United States. But Anderson did not foresee a place for white Americans—Mormon or non-Mormon—in this new nation. In another letter to Cass, Anderson offered to "shake hands with" the Secretary of War. Yet perhaps this handshake would occur with Anderson on the Indians' side of the border between Indian Territory and the United States, and Cass on the other side. Anderson continued, "I pray the Great Spirit to preserve you *where you are* [my emphasis] for the good of the Red Skins."<sup>65</sup>

### **A Mission Postponed**

The importance of this first Mormon mission to the Lamanites cannot be overstated. It changed the course of Mormon history, and arguably American history as well. But it did so in a way that the early Saints did not envision.<sup>66</sup>

Early Mormons (and historians of early Mormonism) naturally focused on the unexpected missionary success among the Campbellites in Ohio.<sup>67</sup> But there are also lessons to be learned from the missionary failure among the Lamanites in Indian Country. The first lesson is about how early Mormons conceptualized, and attempted to realize, their Book of Mormon mandate to restore the

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<sup>65</sup> See letters and treaties signed by Anderson, reprinted in Cranor, *Kick Tha We Nund: The Delaware Chief Anderson and His Descendants*, 14–15. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians*, 374–375.

<sup>66</sup> Ronald Walker puts it best when he writes, "The history of that tiny missionary band is now a saga. En route to their destination, the missionaries preached in the Western Reserve and reaped a bounteous harvest of converts in and about Kirtland, Ohio—not of red but of white people who dramatically changed the flow of LDS history." Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American during the Joseph Smith Period," 7.

<sup>67</sup> G. St. John Stott misinterprets the early Saints' reorientation towards the missionary gains in Ohio as a total abandonment of the Book of Mormon mandate for a Lamanite-Gentile eschatological unification. G. St. John Stott, "New Jerusalem Abandoned: The Failure to Carry Mormonism to the Delaware," *Journal of American Studies* 21, no. 1 (1987): 80–81. Craig S. Campbell is more accurate when he writes that the failure of the first mission to the Lamanites meant that "the importance of the Native American in the gathering process became a latent element of church policy." Craig S. Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence*, Missouri (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 32–33.

Native Americans to the faith of their supposed Israelite forefathers, and thus to revitalize the American-based progeny of Noah's son Shem that had been lost to oblivion. The optimism of Pratt's 1850s-era description of the first Lamanite mission highlights the fact that the Saints' millennial vision to covenant with the Lamanites did not go away during the intervening decades between 1831 and the Mormons' arrival in Utah's Great Basin.<sup>68</sup>

The conversion of the Kirtland community also helped to shape how Saints came to understand proper restorationist hermeneutics and behavior. John Whitmer, the first official Church Historian recorded with more than a little dismay that some of the Kirtland Saints began acting out Book of Mormon historical dramas and imitating stereotypical Indian behavior. Some pantomimed an "Indian in the act of scalping," while others "would slide or scoot on the floor, with the rapidity of a serpent, which they termed sailing in the boats to the Lamanites, preaching the gospel." Another observer reported witnessing some converts engaged in glossolalia, which they believed allowed them to speak Indian languages and thus "fancy themselves addressing a congregation of their red brethren."<sup>69</sup> After his arrival in Kirtland in the late winter of 1831, Smith used this outburst of religious fervor to help differentiate between true religious experience and dangerous enthusiasm. In May 1831, Smith revealed that white converts were not expected to act more like Indians. Instead in the restored church, the Indians were expected to act more like white Saints. Imitations of the Indians, Smith revealed, were "abominations in the Church which professes... [Christ's] name."<sup>70</sup>

A third lesson gleaned from this first mission is less about history and more about history writing. Pratt and Cowdery captured on paper the words of the illiterate Indian chief whom they

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<sup>68</sup> Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period."

<sup>69</sup> John Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer*, ed. Bruce N. Westergren (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 57; Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 184–185; Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 85–86.

<sup>70</sup> Revelation, May 9, 1831 [*D&C* 50: 1-46, esp. 4], *RT* (Vol. 1), 137.

tried to convert.<sup>71</sup> While Anderson authorized white Indian agents to compose letters and interpret treaties on his behalf, Pratt functioned as Anderson's unauthorized amanuensis, recreating the interaction between the Mormons and the Indians long after the encounter.<sup>72</sup> The missionaries thus could accomplish on paper what they could not in the flesh: to mold the Delaware into their conception of Lamanites whose conversion was thwarted not by a lack of Indian interest, but by unbelieving Gentiles' anti-Mormon persecution.

The missionaries thus had the power to “name” and “order” the “Lamanite” Anderson based on their own hierarchical hermeneutic of restoration. Anderson's own words only became a written archive in order to reflect this vision. Here the archive becomes a racialized space. Though Anderson is a historical subject with his own historical prerogatives, because he does not write down his version of the history, in the Mormon archive he is reduced to an object lesson for Mormon faith-promoting history of the continued potential to restore Indians to their Lamanite selves.

### **The Publishing House of New Jerusalem**

Naming and ordering affected the medium that early Saints used to market the Book of Mormon to different (racialized) populations in antebellum America. For example, Joseph Smith knew that reaching the Lamanites, who were both geographically and culturally on the margins of American society, required direct visits from missionaries. And because they shared neither a spoken nor a written language with their audience—because the Indians were functionally illiterate, at least in English—these missionaries had to recount the Book of Mormon history and prophecy orally and through translators.

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<sup>71</sup> This is particularly true for Pratt who served as scribe for both sides of the encounter between the Mormons and their non-white interlocutors. This is also true for the Moravian missions to the Delaware. John Heckewelder's narrative contains lengthy dialogues between missionaries and Indians as well as speeches from Delaware chiefs, sometimes decades removed from when he was composing his history in the 1810s Heckewelder, *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians*, see for example 223–225, 328–329.

<sup>72</sup> Dan Moos, *Outside America: Race, Ethnicity, And the Role of the American West in National Belonging* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 184.



Naming and ordering also affected the message brought to the Delaware. Though the early missionaries imagined the Lamanites would soon occupy places of esteem in God's millennial city, the missionaries told them that they were not yet elevated to such vaunted positions. Even these heirs to the Israelite covenant had to contract into Christ's restored covenant of the latter-days. Their contract involved unifying with other "red men," as well as with the "pale face." It also meant that the Indians become land-cultivating, law-abiding citizens of the yet-to-be established New Jerusalem. Perhaps most importantly, as Pratt tells it, the Indians had to become literate so they could learn to "obey the ... Book [of Mormon]."

When it came to marketing to American "Gentiles," the early Mormon missionaries sought audiences with religious communities who they believed would find the Saints' message of a covenantal, restored Christian church appealing.<sup>73</sup> And while fewer than expected actually bought it, early missionaries sold or gave away copies of the Book of Mormon that subsequently circulated through family, religious, and even economic networks in New York, as well as in communities in Ohio, Vermont, and Massachusetts.<sup>74</sup> After reading the Book of Mormon, many early Mormon leaders, including future church president Brigham Young, apostle Heber C. Kimball, Mormon newspaperman W.W. Phelps, and Relief Society presidents Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. Huntington Young claimed to have been convinced of the book's historical and prophetic assertions.<sup>75</sup> The Book of Mormon became the early church's most effective "literary missionary."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 44–45, 53–57. John L. Brooke has argued that early Mormon converts were particularly "prepared" to accept the Mormon message of "restoration and hermetic divinization." Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 62–65.

<sup>74</sup> Connell O'Donovan's important work on the Boston Mormons—where the Book of Mormon circulated through trade guilds, most notably furniture makers—highlights a need for a thorough social history of how the text circulated through networks in other communities. *Augusta Cobb Young: The Lioness of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming). Val D. Rust, *Radical Origins: Early Mormon Converts and Their Colonial Ancestors* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

<sup>75</sup> During his lackluster first mission, Samuel Smith passed through Mendon, New York, in April 1830, where he convinced Brigham Young's brother Phineas to purchase a copy of the Book of Mormon, a copy which Heber C. Kimball's biographer called "perhaps the single most important copy of the Book of Mormon ever sold" because it led to the conversions of members of the Young and Kimball families, and several other prominent early Mormons. "History of Brigham Young," *MS*, June 6, 1863, 360–361; John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge,

Still, as Joseph Smith and other church leaders realized, door-to-door marketing was not the most efficient way to spread the restored gospel. Nor was it always the safest, as Smith learned from his run-ins with anti-Mormon mobs. So the Mormons did what many new religious movements in the early American republic did. They founded their own publishing house. On their own press, the early Saints could both create a medium and shape a message specifically targeted to the Gentiles.

In late July 1831, Joseph Smith and some sixty converts from Coleville, New York, arrived in Jackson County, Missouri. On July 20, the small community gathered in the unsettled land just west of Independence where Smith revealed that his followers were to purchase “every tract [of land]” between the Indians located across the Missouri River in Indian Country, and the “gentile” Americans living to the east in Independence. The Lord proclaimed through Smith that this land, “between Jew”—meaning “Lamanite”—“& gentile,” was the land “appointed & consecrated for the gathering of the Saints ... the place for the city of Zion.” Smith next indicated where a temple, in which the Saints would perform yet-to-be revealed sacred ordinances binding families together for eternity, was to be built. And he appointed Sidney Gilbert to establish a store to provision the Saints.<sup>77</sup>

Smith also called on W.W. Phelps to run the Saints’ newly established printing office, and Oliver Cowdery was appointed his assistant.<sup>78</sup> Phelps was already a seasoned newspaperman who before his conversion to Mormonism had established the anti-Mason *Ontario Phoenix*, among other

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MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 24–28. For other Book of Mormon conversion stories, see W.W. Phelps, in *M&A*, September, 1835; Eliza R. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” Maureen Beecher, ed., *Personal Writings Of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 11. Also see the compilation of conversion narratives in Susan E. Black, ed., *Stories from the Early Saints: Converted by the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994).

<sup>76</sup> Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 235.

<sup>77</sup> Though it was redacted from the published version, in John Whitmer’s original inscription of the revelation, Smith also empowered Sidney Gilbert to “obtain a license... that he may send goods also unto the lamanites & thus the gospel may be preached unto them.” Clearly Cowdery, Pratt, and the other missionaries to the Lamanites had informed Smith that if the Saints hoped return to Indian Country, preach, provide and gather the Lamanites to New Jerusalem, then they would first need government sanction. Revelation, July 20, 1831 [*D&C* 57], RT (Vol. 1), 160-161; *D&C* (1835) Section XVIII [*D&C* 57], RT (Vol. 2), 466-467; Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident*, 86–87, vii.

<sup>78</sup> Revelation, July 20, 1831 [*D&C* 57: 1-13], RT (Vol. 1), 161.

short-lived newspapers. The Mormons' first newspaper, *The Evening & Morning Star* (*E&MS*), printed on the Mormons' own printing press in Independence, was intended to be a marketing tool for the promotion of the Mormons' sacred texts as well as a literary vehicle to reach those Gentiles willing to join the Mormons and help establish Zion in Jackson County, Missouri.

The Mormons' desire to become record keepers and publishers of their own scriptures was a natural one for an evangelizing, antebellum religious movement. The Saints joined a robust market of religious printers, which developed exponentially during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Methodists, Baptists, Universalists, and Millerites all had their own presses on which they printed hundreds of denominationally-specific newspapers and pamphlets.<sup>79</sup> Like the Saints, religious missionaries from these communities also became "colporteurs," peddling both their religion and their religion's devotional literature.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, lackluster Book of Mormon sales meant that the Saints hoped to find another means of distributing the new gospel.

Unfortunately, the *E&MS*'s subscriber lists are no longer extant, perhaps destroyed along with Mormons' printing office during the anti-Mormon attacks in Independence in July 1833. However, some surviving records from the early 1830s suggest that Smith considered these lists of an estimated few hundred names an invaluable resource for distributing church news and scripture.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> William Miller's Adventists were far and away were the most prolific, producing an estimated 4 million pieces of literature in the 1830s and 1840s, including the community's elaborate chart illustrating Miller's biblically-based calculations that the world would end in 1843. Jon Butler and Ronald Number's edited volume on Millerism includes a full-size reproduction of the chart, entitled "A Chronicle Chart of the Visions of Daniel & John," Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pouch in the back binding.

<sup>80</sup> Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 125–127.

<sup>81</sup> Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps et al., August 10, 1833, (ID # 177), JSPP accessed June 14, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-jackson-county-missouri-10-august-1833?p=1>; Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge, December 5, 1833, (ID# 191), JSPP, accessed June 14, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-edward-partridge-5-december-1833?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=5&s=undefined&sm=none>. One surviving letter dated April 1832 from Sidney Gilbert's father Eli, then living in Connecticut, indicates that the elder Gilbert considered gathering with the Saints in Independence. He also mentions his plans to obtain subscribers in Connecticut for the newly established *E&MS*. Eli and William Gilbert to Sydney Gilbert, April 23, 1832 [Huntington, CT to Independence, MO], MS 19650, CHL. A Samuel Bent wrote a letter to Phelps, which was reprinted in the April 1833 edition of the *E&MS*, requesting that a subscription of the paper be sent to Pontiac in the Michigan Territory. Bent wrote that he was "a professor of the

After all, in the earliest years of the church, it is likely that more people—both the Saints and their enemies—read sections of the Book of Mormon in the pages of the *E&MS* than in the hardback first edition of the book. And certainly the *E&MS* was the most widely distributed source of Smith’s revelations. Because of the newspaper, converts did not need to be within earshot of Smith to hear divine messages about the development of Zion.

The medium of the newspaper also shaped the early Saints’ message to their hoped-for Gentile converts. The *E&MS* printed specific excerpts from the Book of Mormon, which functioned as reading guides for how early church leaders hoped both the faithful and potential converts might consume the new gospel. In particular, Phelps aimed to shape how the paper’s consumers would read the Book of Mormon in relation to the prophet’s revelations.<sup>82</sup> For example, in the *E&MS*’s first edition in June 1832, Phelps published “The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ,” which were established at the church’s organizational meeting at Fayette on April 6, 1830. Through the pages of the *E&MS*, readers could participate in that auspicious day’s events when, through revelation, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were named the church’s first and second elders. Readers could learn that Smith had been given “the means” to translate the Book of Mormon, which contained the historical record of the “fallen” Lamanites and the future restoration of the “Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles; & also to the Jews [the Lamanites.]”<sup>83</sup> Readers could learn the proper means of conferring the priesthood, and the duties and powers of this office, including how to conduct baptisms and administer the sacrament.

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christian religion for twenty seven years, and stood among the sects,” until a Mormon missionary helped him “see the error of which the different sects embrace.” Like the Gilbert family, he too declared his intentions to gather “in Zion before long.” *E&MS*, April, 1832.

<sup>82</sup> In the July 1832 edition of the *E&MS*, Phelps provided explicit instructions on how the paper’s readership should read and study the “sacred Scriptures” in a “threefold capacity. 1. As matters of divine revelation. 2. As a rule of life. 3. As containing that covenant of grace which relations to man’s eternal happiness.” “The Excellence of Scripture,” *E&MS*, July, 1832.

<sup>83</sup> Revelation, April 6, 1830 [*D&C*, 20], *RT* (Vol. 1), 77.

Smith's revelations, reprinted in the *E&MS*, about the proper manner in which to understand and conduct these rituals often matched word-for-word passages from Book of Mormon.<sup>84</sup> These intertextual connections between the Book of Mormon and Smith's early revelations signify that the early Church of Christ leaders saw themselves as belonging not to the theological lineages of Augustine, Wesley, and Calvin. After all, the Book of Mormon implied that such theologians and prophets of "sectarian" churches had corrupted the early Christian faith.<sup>85</sup> Instead, the early Saints believed that their writings joined an uncorrupted scriptural patrilineage stretching back to the Book of Mormon's American prophet-historians, as well as to the Bible's own original prophets, historians, and archivists. In other words, these early Mormon leaders believed they picked up where their textual forefathers—Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni, Moses, Mark, and Paul—left off.

The *E&MS*'s message to its Gentile readers was that when they joined the Church of Christ they could rest assured that they were covenanting into Christ's one, true church. Because "sectarians" like the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists based their theologies and ritual practice solely on their interpretation of the Bible—and a faulty Bible at that—the Saints' competitors could not make such assurances.

### **A Relational Covenant**

Phelps' editorial decisions about which revelations and Book of Mormon passages he chose to print in the *E&MS* also demonstrate that the early Saints thought of this covenant as relational. The reunification of the human family in the latter-days required the American descendants of Noah's sons Shem and Japheth to cooperate in building New Jerusalem. As the patrilineal heirs to

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<sup>84</sup> See side-by-side comparison of the June 1832 *E&MS* publication of the April 6 revelations in *RT* (Vol. 2), 202-210. Compare the April 6, 1830 regarding the ordination of priests (*D&C* 20:68), baptism (*D&C* 20:73-74), administering the sacrament (*D&C* 20:77) with *BofM*, 238, 478, 575 [Alma 6:1; 3 Nephi 11: 23-26; Moroni 4:1] respectively. Revelation, April 6, 1830 [*D&C*, 20], *RT* (Vol. 1), 77-87. See also *BofM*, 30, 31 [1Nephi 13: 28-32]; *E&MS*, June, 1832.

<sup>85</sup> *BofM*, 30 [1 Nephi 13:36]; *E&MS*, June, 1832.

the Abrahamic covenant, the Lamanites would be the primary peoples in the New Jerusalem. Yet the restored gospel would come to the Gentiles first, in large measure because they were already literate.<sup>86</sup> As Cowdery and Pratt did for the Delaware, the reading-and-writing Gentiles would bring the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites. And with it, they would bring the message that literacy is key to the restoration of the white, original family.

Gentiles and Indians can be redeemed, but only in relation to one another. As Christ explains in the Book of Mormon—a passage Phelps quotes in the December 1832 edition of the *E&MS*—the “house of Israel” and the “Gentiles” would be brought together because of the Book of Mormon, which Christ declares “shall be a sign unto [the Lamanites],” signaling that the Heavenly Father had again begun the work of fulfilling the promises of the ancient Abrahamic covenant. Oliver Cowdery and the other missionaries to the Lamanites brought this sign and message of a renewed covenantal contract to the Delaware in early 1831. To the Gentiles, in the Book of Mormon, Christ also offers a covenantal contract, once again made universal in the latter-days: “*if* [my emphasis] they will not harden their hearts, that they repent and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know the true points of doctrine,” which the Book of Mormon restores, “[*then*] they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel.”<sup>87</sup>

Covenanted together, believing Gentiles and restored Lamanites would build New Jerusalem. As printed in the June 1832 edition of the *E&MS*, Joseph’s revelations regarding this sacred city contain a vision of Zion as “a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints.” This one-square mile “plat of the City of Zion” included housing for the expected 20,000 residents as well as

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<sup>86</sup> *BofM*, 36 [1 Nephi 15:13-17]. As Phelps noted in the December 1832 edition of the *E&MS*, Christ’s commandment to the Nephites, who created and safeguarded the Nephite archive, was to “write these sayings [down]” so that they could be kept safe until the latter-days when they would be “manifested unto the Gentiles.” 3 Nephi 16:4. See also Mosiah 1:1-5. What David Hall describes as the “politics of writing and reading in eighteenth-century America” carried over into the nineteenth century. “Literacy connoted cultural authority; illiteracy, cultural inferiority and exclusion.” David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 153.

<sup>87</sup> *E&MS*, December, 1832; *BofM*, 499-500 [3 Nephi 21:4-9].

buildings for church, government, and commerce.<sup>88</sup> In this city, the “righteous”—both Lamanite and Gentile—would be safe from the calamities of the outside world where, in the days before Christ’s return, unbelieving Gentiles would experience an “overflowing scourge” of apocalyptic earthquakes, conflagrations, and wars.<sup>89</sup> What’s more, this millennial community would not be ghettoized. Absent from Smith’s plans for New Jerusalem are the types of transitional housing for Indians that were popular with the Moravians who believed the Indians had to prove they could live as Christians before they would be admitted into civilized settlements. Instead, Gentile and Lamanite would live and govern together. Religious redemption would also lead to racial unification and a white (raceless) people would emerge, ready to greet Christ upon his return.

### **Marketing to the Sons and Daughters of Cain and Ham?**

To be sure, the vast majority of the Gentiles did not accept Christ’s offer—or at least the Book of Mormon’s description of it—to join the newly restored covenant. Many were indifferent to this new covenantal contract. Others violently rejected it. According to leading Latter-day Saints, this was especially true for the jealous “sectarian priests” who were fearful that the Mormons would attract converts from their churches.<sup>90</sup> A few months after the Saints were expelled from Jackson County, in a March 1834 article in the *Evening and Morning Star*, which had temporarily set up shop in Kirtland, Ohio, Oliver Cowdery compared the “righteous” Saints’ treatment in Jackson County to “the horrors of the Inquisition.”<sup>91</sup>

Cowdery focused on the religious persecution that the Saints endured at the hands of the “mobs,” which Cowdery insisted were led by “Professors of Religion.” But according to the old

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<sup>88</sup> Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem*, 48–60. Like his expectations for Book of Mormon sales, Smith’s vision for the size of New Jerusalem was nothing short of grandiose. In 1830, only sixteen American cities had populations of 10,000 to 25,000. If Smith had succeeded in gathering the number of Saints he hoped for, New Jerusalem would have been the largest city west of the Mississippi. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 221.

<sup>89</sup> “Prophecy Given to the Church of Christ, March 7, 1831 [D&C 45],” *E&MS*, June 1832. See also *RT* (Vol. 1), 115–125

<sup>90</sup> B. H. Roberts, *The Missouri Persecutions* (Salt Lake City: G. Q. Cannon, 1900), 72–74.

<sup>91</sup> “The Outrage in Jackson County, Missouri,” *E&MS* [Kirtland, OH], March 1834.

Missouri settlers who opposed the Saints' presence in Jackson County, religion was only one factor in their increasing Mormon animus. In July 1833, Jackson County's non-Mormon leaders circulated a petition to remove the Saints from the area. The hundreds of signatories of this "manifesto," including the Mormon missionaries' old foe, Indian agent Richard Cummins, worried that these "lazy, idle and vicious" people, who openly professed "that their God hath given them this county of land," would soon monopolize the levers of power.<sup>92</sup> At least in terms of changing demographics, the old settlers' worries were not without cause. By the end of 1833, the Saints numbered some 1,200 in Jackson County, far less than the 20,000 Smith had envisioned in his city planning for Zion, but still approximately one-third of the county's population.<sup>93</sup>

In their manifesto, by referencing the Saints' belief that Jackson County was their God-given "inheritance," the old settlers made it clear that they were reading the Book of Mormon passages and Smith's revelations printed in the *E&MS*, and reading them carefully. Though they did not hold to this belief as literally as the Saints, the old settler Missourians also saw Jackson County as a second Eden. They had designs on making it a cultivated, pastoral region where slave owners could manage their farms and plantations and create localized, Jeffersonian democratic communities without interference from abolitionists or religious fanatics wishing to make citizens out of their slave property.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, along with concerns about the Mormons' religion and politics, old settler Missourians were also alarmed that the Mormons were "tampering with our slaves," as they wrote in their manifesto, "and endeavoring to sow dissensions and raise seditions among them." The old settler Missourians' best evidence for these accusations was printed in the Mormons' own newspaper, the *Evening and Morning Star*.

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<sup>92</sup> Petition reprinted in *E&MS* [Kirtland, OH], December, 1833.

<sup>93</sup> Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem*, 63.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–28.



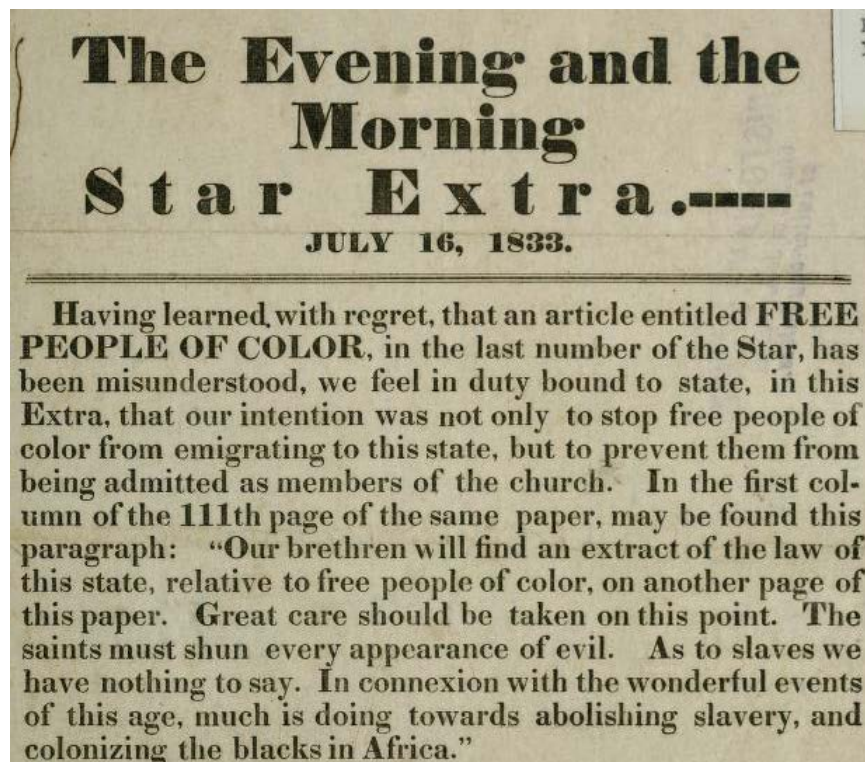


Figure 3:2. "Extra," *E&MS* (July 16, 1833).<sup>95</sup>

In a July 1833 article entitled "Free People of Color," W.W. Phelps spelled out the conditions under which "free people of color, who may think of coming to the western boundaries of Missouri" could do so. The article was mostly a verbatim reprint of the Missouri statute that permitted only those "negroes" and "mulattos" who carried documentation stating that they were citizens of "some one of the United States" to settle in Missouri.<sup>96</sup> Yet the old settlers read "Free People of Color" as an explicit invitation to "free negroes and mulattoes from other States to become mormons and remove and settle among us."<sup>97</sup> The old settler Missourians interpreted the article as an attempt to agitate both free and enslaved blacks.<sup>98</sup> In a way, the old settler Missourians imagined the dystopian underbelly of the Mormons' vision for the utopian New Jerusalem in

<sup>95</sup> Source: CHL. accessed August 17, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/eveningmorningst02unse>.

<sup>96</sup> "Free People of Color," *E&MS*, July, 1833. "An Act Concerning Negroes and Mulattoes," approved January 7, 1825, Rufus Pettibone and Henry Sheffie Geyer, *Laws of the State of Missouri: Revised and Digested by Authority of the General Assembly* (Saint Louis: Printed by E. Charles for the State, 1825), 600.

<sup>97</sup> "Manifesto," reprinted in the *E&MS* [Kirtland, OH], December, 1833.

<sup>98</sup> Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," 11–13. "The Indians," *E&MS*, October 1832.

Jackson County. The Mormons hoped to create a racially diverse and productive community, unified in their covenant to create a great city worthy of Christ's return. Old settlers, including the Mormons' old competitor among the Delaware, the Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy, envisioned a horde of religious fanatics, savage Indians, and blacks, whose zealotry would threaten the social and political order of the county.<sup>99</sup>

Recognizing that he had created a major crisis, within a week of the publication of "Free People of Color," Phelps printed an "Extra" edition of the *E&MS* (Figure 3:2), in which the paper's editor expressed "extreme regret" that the article had been "misunderstood." "Our intention was not only to stop free people of color from emigrating to this state," Phelps wrote, "but to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church." Phelps also pledged loyalty to "the laws and constitution of our country," in the hopes that their neighbors would recognize that the white Saints shared with them the same political patrilineage, stretching back to the United States' founding "sons of liberty," and "through the favorable auspices of a Jefferson and Jackson."<sup>100</sup>

Appeals to white American constitutional republicanism did not work. On July 23, 1833, church leaders relented to the old settlers' demands that the Mormons not vote in local elections, that they cease printing their newspaper, and that they leave the county within six months. Yet there would be no organized, peaceful exodus out of Jackson County. During the summer and early fall of 1833, Mormon homes and businesses, including Phelps' printing office, were attacked or destroyed. One Mormon and two Missourians were killed in a shootout.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Warren A Jennings, "Isaac McCoy and the Mormons," *Missouri Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1966): 75.

<sup>100</sup> "Extra," *E&MS*, July 15, 1833.

<sup>101</sup> "To His Excellency, Daniel Dunklin, Governor of the State of Missouri," *E&MS*, December, 1833; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 222–227. The Mormons' press was not the only one destroyed by pro-slavery Missourians. The abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy published a series of papers, the last named the *Alton Observer* until 1837, when pro-slavery mobs destroyed his press and killed him. Paul Simon, *Freedom's Champion—Elijah Lovejoy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 61–97.

Even if “Free People of Color” was not the cause of the Mormons’ expulsion from Jackson County, it was certainly the catalyst. And even if Phelps was at least somewhat correct in his assertion that his intended message was misread, the old settler Missourians’ reaction raises an important question: what were the Saints’ intentions towards blacks? What place could the least favored of biblical lineages, the sons and daughters of Cain and Ham, occupy in New Jerusalem?

To begin to answer this question, it is worth revisiting the early Mormon universalistic impulse, and to see how, if at all, this impulse translated into the Saints’ efforts to market their new religion to African Americans. Though perhaps not the main attraction, concern over the temporal and spiritual plight of non-whites was one factor that drew some prominent converts to the faith. For example in 1830, five years before she converted to Mormonism, future plural wife of Joseph Smith and famed poetess Eliza R. Snow published in local Ohio newspapers elegiac poems bemoaning the plight of the “red man” under the “white man’s” tyranny, which included accusations that Jackson’s Indian removal policy was a fraudulent land grab. Under nom de plumes such as “Tullia” and “Pocahontas,” in her poems Snow, then a member of Kirtland’s Campbellite church, also articulated sentiments similar to the Book of Mormon’s providential expectations of Indian redemption.<sup>102</sup> In his autobiography, Parley P. Pratt wrote about the Indians as a pure, uncorrupted people, albeit certainly less advanced than the Gentiles whom he described as rife with “sectarian divisions.” When reading the Book of Mormon for the first time, Pratt recalls finding, “to my great joy,” that Christ had come and preached to the “remnant of Joseph on the continent of America.” Such a discovery, Pratt writes, “greatly enlarged my heart . . . Surely, thought I, Jesus had *other sheep*, as he said to his Apostles of old; and here they were, in the wilderness of the world called

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<sup>102</sup> “Red Men of the South,” “Red Men of the West,” in Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), 40–41. See Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, “A Wary Heart Becomes ‘Fixed Unalterably’: Eliza R. Snow’s Conversion to Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 2 (2004): 98–128.

new... Truly, thought I, the angels sung with the spirit and with the understanding when they declared: *We bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE* [emphasis in original].”<sup>103</sup>

To be sure, Snow and Pratt’s universalism was colored. Converting Indians was an ambition shared by many antebellum Christian communities. Missionizing of blacks, especially by a suspect religious community and especially in a newly established slave state, was something else altogether.

As an abolitionist, W.W. Phelps was more explicit in his distaste for slavery, which he believed was a threat to the realization of a true American, Christian republic.<sup>104</sup> Still, abolitionism was not the same as religious integration. And even if we read Phelps’ “Free People of Color” article as the old settlers did—as an invitation for free blacks to “become mormons”—the scant to non-existent free black population in both Missouri and Ohio’s Western Reserve meant that the Saints most likely had, at best, limited contact with blacks. As such, Parley P. Pratt’s 1839 proclamation that, during the first decade of its existence, “[no more than] one dozen free negroes or mulattos never have belonged” to the church is probably accurate.<sup>105</sup>

Yet lack of opportunity was not the only factor. After all, Joseph Smith’s most ambitious early mission involved sending some of his most trusted followers more than a thousand miles to seek the Native American “remnant of Joseph.” Likewise, though not as directly as it did with the Lamanites, the Book of Mormon’s hermeneutic of racial restoration—that even those cursed with dark skin could be restored to the white, original human family—also played an important role in the precarious place African Americans were to occupy in the Saints’ new covenantal community.

To put it plainly, there are no people of African descent in the Book of Mormon. To be sure, the inclusion of biblical-sounding curses led many readers to apply standard antebellum biblical

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<sup>103</sup> Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, 40.

<sup>104</sup> Phelps later helped craft Joseph Smith’s 1844 presidential platform in which the Mormon prophet advocated for gradual abolition. Samuel Brown, “The Translator and the Ghostwriter: Joseph Smith and W.W. Phelps,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (2008): 26–62..

<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Newell G. Bringhurst, “Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism,” 25.

hermeneutic to the text. Though the Book of Mormon's curses resulting in divisions within that scripture's "first family" (Lehi's progeny) resemble the divisions within the Bible's first family (Adam's progeny as well as Noah's), the Book of Mormon curses do not involve the same populations. The Bible and biblical-pseudepigrapha were written in and around (Old) Jerusalem, the crossroads of the Old World, where the peoples of Europe, Asia, and Africa met. As such, its protagonists reflect this diversity.<sup>106</sup> However, diversity in Book of Mormon history is limited to the progeny of the sons of the Israelite Lehi in exile in the New World. Ham's progeny are absent from the Book of Mormon's millennialism in which Shem—in the form of the Lamanite remnant of Lehi—unites with Japheth's Euro-American Gentiles to build New Jerusalem in America.

Keeping this in mind helps us to understand the inconsistent public positions—from implicit abolitionism to staunch defenses of human bondage—that Joseph Smith and other Saints held during the church's first decade.<sup>107</sup> While Phelps wrote in "Free People of Color" that, "as to slaves we have nothing to say," Phelps believed that the *Evening & Morning Star* had something to say about slavery, or more precisely about its coming demise. In the May 1833 edition of the *E&MS*, Phelps printed reports of the American Colonization Society's efforts in Liberia. And in July, Phelps exclaimed, "in connection with the wonderful events of this age, much is doing towards abolishing slavery, and colonizing the blacks, in Africa." For Phelps, abolishing slavery and returning Africans to Africa was a sign the millennium. If the progeny of Cain and Ham were returned to their homeland—clearing the United States of the people who, at least according to the Book of Mormon

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<sup>106</sup> James M. Scott, *Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity: The Book of Jubilees* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 135–158; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000); Kyu Sam Han, *Jerusalem and the Early Jesus Movement: The Q Community's Attitude Toward the Temple* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> The Book of Mormon itself can be read as an anti-slavery text, at least against the enslavement of those who belong to the same ancient Israelite lineage. Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 102.

hermeneutic of restoration, did not belong there in the first place—then the nation would be freed from the divisive politics of slavery and the Saints would be more at liberty to build New Jerusalem.

That being said, in the early 1830s Joseph Smith thought a lot about the supposed biblical lineages of Africans. Smith was particularly interested in the origins of the curse of Cain, and their implications for Cain’s African progeny. Between August 1832 and July 1833, the *E&MS* printed large sections of Joseph’s revelations and translation of the Old Testament, in particular his revisions and additions to the Book of Genesis, which he completed as part of his mandate to restore those “plain and precious things” essential for salvation, which he believed had been stripped from the Bible by two millennia’s worth of ignorant and corrupt translators.<sup>108</sup>

The translation contains an extended visionary experience during which God revealed to Moses knowledge about the nature of God and Christ, the purpose of creation, and Moses’ future role in the Israelite covenant. It also elaborates on the biblical story of Adam and Eve and describes the lives of humanity’s first generations after Adam and Eve’s first acts of sin.<sup>109</sup> It is this last element of what would be canonized as the Book of Moses that seemed to most interest Phelps. The August 1832 edition of *E&MS* contains a description of Cain in which the eldest son of Adam and Eve does not fare well. In it, Cain is cursed for some undisclosed sin, though most readers would certainly recognize it as the murder of Abel.<sup>110</sup> It is hard not to read Cain’s sin against his brother Abel intertextually with Laman’s sin against Nephi. This is especially true since the Book of

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<sup>108</sup> While Smith claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon from the gold plates that he unearthed on Hill Cumorah and, starting in 1835, the Book of Abraham from ancient Egyptian papyri that he purchased from a traveling mummy exhibit, Smith did not claim to translate the Book of Moses from ancient sources. Instead, Smith translated it from his inspired reading of the King James Bible. However, as Richard Bushman points out, “in the method of their creation, the three translations were alike. Joseph did not translate in the sense of learning the language and consulting dictionaries. He received words by ‘revelation,’ whether or not a text lay before him.” Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 132, 127–143.

<sup>109</sup> “Historical Introduction,” Old Testament Revision 1, (ID # 7201), JSPP, accessed April 25, 2013, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/old-testament-revision-1?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=2&s=undefined&sm=none>.

<sup>110</sup> “Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch,” *E&MS*, August, 1832. The Book of Moses also contains an elaborated version of humanity’s first murder. See Moses 5 and Genesis 4.

Moses was Smith's first translation project after the Book of Mormon. Motivated by envy, both Cain and Laman act violently against their brothers. While only Cain is guilty of murder, both Cain and Laman's sins result in curses of dark skin. In the Book of Moses, God expresses willingness to look past the transgressions of the "sons of Adam," which resulted in Adam and Eve's exile from the Garden of Eden. Yet one lineage of Adam, namely "the seed of Cain," was not welcome to mix with their kin: "for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among [the other sons of Adam]."<sup>111</sup>

Smith's translations reflected standard antebellum biblical hermeneutics linking the origins of black-skinned Africans to Cain, a people named as cursed and divinely ordered as separate from and unequal to the other children of Adam. As such, in the Book of Moses, the sins of their fathers, which the seed of Cain's carried on their skin, were so egregious that a covenantal contract was not available to them. While Smith's first translation, the Book of Mormon, teaches that those named Gentiles and Lamanites would "mix" and covenant with each other and build New Jerusalem, Smith's next translation, the Book of Moses, suggests that those who belonged to the most inferior of the ancient lineages, those of Cain, "had not place" among the Saints of Zion.

Yet the purpose of publishing this specific passage of the Book of Moses in the *E&M* had more to do with marketing Smith's new translations and his authority than excluding the seed of Cain from the early church. During this period, Smith, Phelps, and the other early Saints were busy implementing the Books of Mormon and Moses prophecies to, as the August 1832 edition of the *E&M* spelled out, gather the elect "from the four quarters of the earth unto... a holy City." From inside this "New Jerusalem," the elect would "be looking forth for the time of [Christ's] coming."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *E&M*, August, 1832; Moses 7.

<sup>112</sup> *E&M*, August, 1832; Moses 7: 62; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 141.

## Black Pete

What's more, it seems that the Book of Moses' anti-Cain theology did not shape early Mormon policy towards its black membership. Written records on early African-American Saints are scarce, partly because black membership was so rare. Yet the history of one African-American convert "Black Pete," who appears only briefly in the Mormon historical record, speaks to the Mormon archive as a place where race, literacy, and prophetic authority intersect.

In the 1830s, Ohio and Missouri, the two states in which the Saints tried to build permanent settlements, counted only a small number of free blacks, due largely to the states' restrictive black codes.<sup>113</sup> A former slave, Pete became one of the first non-white converts in the Mormons' Ohio settlements.<sup>114</sup> In February 1831, an article in one Western Reserve newspaper described "Black Pete" as "a man of colour, a chief [Mormon] man, who is sometimes seized with strange vagaries and odd conceits."<sup>115</sup> A neighbor of Pete's Kirtland-based Mormon community described him as "a low cunning illiterate negro [who] used to run over the hills and say he saw holes of fire."<sup>116</sup>

Setting aside the ridicule of this "illiterate negro" among non-Mormon Ohioans, Pete's conversion occurred literally at the crossroads of early Mormon outreach to the Lamanites and Gentiles. Pete was a member of the "Morley Family," a communitarian Christian society gathered on Isaac Morley's farm outside of Kirtland. Along with many other members of this millenarian

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<sup>113</sup> By the late 1820s, Black Pete was probably one of a handful of free blacks in Geauga County, near Kirtland. According to Missouri's first state census taken in 1830, Jackson County had a total population of 2,822 people, out of which 193 were slaves and only two were free blacks. Missouri's 1825 codes were similar to those that black Mormons would face in Illinois. Not only did a "free negro or mulatto" need to provide documentation that he was "a citizen of some one of the United States" before he could settle in the state. The legislation also empowered state officers to immediately expel any black settler who failed to produce such documentation. "Missouri's Early Slave Laws: A History of Documents," Missouri Digital Heritage, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/earlyslavelaws/slavelaws.asp>.

<sup>114</sup> Though Ohio officially entered the union in 1802 as a free state, its proximity to Kentucky and the gradual abolition policies of many northern states meant that slave owners often brought their slaves to Ohio without granting them freedom. According to Mark Staker, even after moving to Ohio sometime in the first decade of the 1800s with his owners, Pete only became free some time around 1820. Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 29-31.

<sup>115</sup> "The Golden Bible or the Book of Mormon," *Ashtabula Journal*, February 5, 1831, reprinted in Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 77, 89 n. 50. Staker provides the most detailed analysis of Black Pete and his influence on early Mormonism.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.



community, Pete converted to Mormonism when the missionaries to the Lamanites visited the Kirtland area in the fall of 1830.<sup>117</sup> Already preparing for the return of Christ, the Morley community was primed to accept the four missionaries' millennial message of a restoration of the true church, of prophetic revelation, and of the priesthood of the first Christian church. Yet because they were anxious to get to the Lamanites, the missionaries left Ohio before the new Mormon community had been adequately instructed about who could claim prophetic authority.<sup>118</sup>

Before they left, the missionaries did explain to the Ohio converts that Joseph Smith had translated the Book of Mormon through a mysterious combination of translation and revelation. Mimicking Smith's own process, Black Pete was among a group of early Mormons in Ohio who also began receiving written messages from heaven. Both Mormon and non-Mormons provide recollections of the process by which Pete and his prophetic colleagues obtained their divine communiqués. One Ohio newspaper reported that the converts received letters "directly from the God of Heaven" and their "credentials [as prophets] written and signed by the hand of Jesus Christ."<sup>119</sup> Another anti-Mormon Ohioan reported that these divine letters "came on parchment... [and the recipients] had only time to copy them before they vanished from their sight." Like Joseph Smith's golden plates, God restricted who could see such "commissions," and for how long. "With such papers in their pockets," the report continued, the prophets "went through the country, preaching, and made many converts."<sup>120</sup> Decades later, Mormon Apostle George A. Smith remembered the letters Pete and others received as signs of unauthorized fanaticism. Smith recalled that, in early February 1831, "they had a meeting at the [Morley] farm, and among them was a negro known as Black Pete who became a revelator." On one occasion, "Black Pete got sight of one of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 44-58.

<sup>118</sup> See George. Q. Cannon, "Holy Spirit Necessary for the Right Performance of Temporal Duties," November 13, 1865, *JD* XI: 33-34.

<sup>119</sup> "Book of Mormon," *Painesville Telegraph*, December 7, 1830.

<sup>120</sup> Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 107.

those revelations carried by a black angel.” Trying to catch up with the angel, Pete “ran off a steep wash bank twenty-five feet high, passed through a tree top into the Chagrin River beneath. He came out with a few scratches, and his ardor somewhat cooled.”<sup>121</sup>

Despite their thinly veiled dismissal of Pete’s ecstatic behavior, these descriptions of Pete’s “letters from heaven” reveal two important points about Pete and the early 1830s Western Reserve that he traveled as a self-appointed Mormon prophet. First, while there is no extant record of the supposedly illiterate Pete’s writing in the archive, his composition of divine communications suggests at least that Pete understood that the written word trumped the oral utterance in terms of asserting prophetic authority.<sup>122</sup> It is possible that, as one Native American Mormon convert would do in Utah, Pete merely mimicked writing—scrawling lines on paper—without actually composing discernible messages.<sup>123</sup> Second, such divine commissions would have been of vital importance for Pete due to the legal restrictions on free blacks in Ohio. As was the case in many officially free states in the antebellum period, Ohio law required free blacks to travel with “free papers.” Black Pete, less than a decade removed from slavery, might have believed that traveling with a letter from heaven would give him the legal cover to avoid imprisonment or expulsion from the state.

Black Pete disappeared from the Mormon archive as quickly as he arrived. There is no evidence that he remained with the Saints after 1832. However it is possible that Black Pete’s departure from the early church was more related to claims to be a “revelator” than it did with his race. Upon his arrival in Kirtland in February 1831, Joseph Smith found a nascent Mormon community in which many claimed to have prophetic powers. Through a revelation, Smith made it clear that he alone was God’s “appointed” prophet, and thus he alone had the authority to “to

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<sup>121</sup> Georg A. Smith, “Historical Discourses,” November 15, 1864, *JD*, XI: 3-4

<sup>122</sup> It was however commonplace for slaves to hide their literacy from their masters, as reading and writing slaves were always sources of anxiety in American slave communities, leading to legal restriction on slave education in many states. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *“When I Can Read My Title Clear”: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>123</sup> In Chapter Seven, I examine the Ute leader Walkara’s attempt at writing a letter to Brigham Young.

receive revelations from [God’s] hand.” Black Pete was probably among other Ohio revelators who were tried by church leaders for apostasy and “cut off” from fellowship. In a May 1831 revelation, later printed in the *Evening & Morning Star*, Smith attempted to distinguish for his community the boundaries between true religious experience and unholy enthusiasm. The revelation proclaimed that the act of spiritual revelation was one of “reason[ed]” discourse between the “ordained” prophet and God. Running off riverbanks in attempt to capture letter-carrying angels was a sign of madness or even demonic possession.<sup>124</sup>

And yet Black Pete’s appearance in the Mormon record highlights the racialization of the archive. Black Pete understood the power of the written word, even if what he wrote was rejected as religiously inauthentic. What’s more, the naming of “Black Pete” within and outside the Mormon community—his racial identity attached to a moniker that lacks a family name, and thus lacks a clear patrilineage—fits into a Mormon pattern that begins with the Book of Mormon prophet “Samuel, the Lamanite,” and that repeats throughout the archive in the naming, for example, of Jane Manning James as “Black Jane.” Those seen as white are named without a racialized adjective, emphasizing the assumption that whiteness is a racial category that is, in fact, empty of race. And whites have the authority to bestow these racialized names on those outside this raceless, white identity.<sup>125</sup>

### **Marketing to “Free People of Color”**

Yet the case of Black Pete is only one example—and an ambiguous one at that—of how the early Mormons marketed their new faith to people of African descent. Once again, what was printed

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<sup>124</sup> See side-by-side comparison of the original revelation and the version printed in the October 1832 edition of the *E&MS*, in *RT* (Vol. 2), 237-238. Newell G. Bringhurst, “Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism,” 25; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 151–152. For a thorough analysis of religious enthusiasm, dissent, and prophetic authority within the early Ohio Mormon community, see Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 71–174.

<sup>125</sup> In her 1847 accounts book, the midwife Patty Sessions lists prominent Mormons who owed her money for services rendered, including “Ezra Benson, “Hosea Stout,” and “P.P. Pratt.” Sessions, who delivered Jane Manning James’s child Silas during the Mormon trek to Utah, lists James as “Black Jane.” Donna Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 54.; John C. Inscoe, “Carolina Slave Names: An Index to Acculturation,” *The Journal of Southern History* 49, no. 4 (1983): 527–54; Jerome S. Handler and JoAnn Jacoby, “Slave Names and Naming in Barbados, 1650-1830,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1996): 685–728.

in the *Evening and Morning Star* provides more concrete detail. In the October 1832 edition, Phelps published an extract from a February 1831 revelation in which Joseph Smith called on his faithful to prepare themselves and the world for Christ's return. The "elders" of the church should "teach the children of men" about the restoration of the gospel. "Call upon the nations to repent, both old and young, both bond and free," and invite them all to join the Saints.<sup>126</sup> This missionary exhortation echoes the Book of Mormon's most racially universalist passage. In 2 Nephi 26:33, the first Nephi states plainly that if they are faithful, the Lord does not exclude any of the (racialized) lineages to which the early Mormons marketed their message. The Lord "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake in his goodness ... black and white, bond and free, male and female." Even "the heathen" is remembered. "All are alike unto God."

Phelps might have been right to claim that the July 1833 edition of the *E&MS* was "misunderstood," and that the Mormons were not attempting to agitate free and enslaved blacks. Yet "Free People of Color" is undeniably a direct address to free people of color "who may think of coming to the western boundaries of Missouri, as members of Church." By quoting directly from the "laws of Missouri" regarding emigrating freemen, Phelps forewarns those potential black church members of the legal ramifications that they face by coming into Missouri. "*If* [my emphasis] it shall appear that such person is a free negro or mulatto ... and such a person shall not produce a certificate ... evidencing that he is a citizen of such state, [*then*] the justice shall command him forthwith to depart from this state."<sup>127</sup>

Yet this warning—composed in the conditional construction of the Mormons' own covenantal contract—is political, and not religious. In "Free People of Color," Phelps presents no theological objection to free blacks coming to Jackson County. In other words, *if* free blacks want to

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<sup>126</sup> *E&MS*, October, 1832; Revelation, February, 1831 [*D&C* 43:20-21], *RT* (Vol. 2), 248-249.

<sup>127</sup> "Free People of Color," *E&MS*, July, 1833.

covenant with the Mormons and take part in the building of New Jerusalem, *then* they must overcome the high hurdles created by the laws of man, but not the laws of God or his church.

Phelps' invitation to the sons and daughters of Cain and Ham is a narrow one; slaves were "real estate" in Jackson County, and thus not welcome in the church nor were freemen without free papers.<sup>128</sup> The law might have stood in the way of people of African lineage who sought to gather with the Saints in Missouri. But Christ's covenant, it seems, was open to all: to Lamanite, to Gentile, and even to the people the Book of Moses names the "seed of Cain," as long as they "free people of color" and have the documentation to prove it.

### **Noah's Three Sons in Indian Country**

In July 1831, Joseph Smith and an entourage of trusted followers arrived in Jackson County and marked off the land where the Saints would build their New Jerusalem. Smith pointed about him, performing a land survey guided not by compass, but by revelation. The Saints' general store would be *here*, the printing office *there*, and the temple, "not far from the court-house" in Independence.<sup>129</sup> On the first Sunday after their arrival, the *Evening & Morning Star's* editor W.W. Phelps crossed a more secular boundary, leaving "the United States" to preach "to a western audience" in Indian Country. There, Phelps found:

specimens of all the families of the earth...for there were several of the Lamanites as descendants of Shem, quite a respectable number of Negroes as descendants of Ham; and the balance was made up of citizens of the surrounding country their great progenitor, Japheth.<sup>130</sup>

In those first three years of the church, Phelps' Sabbath sermon in Indian Country was a rare opportunity to preach to the supposed descendants of Noah's three sons all at once—racial lineages

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Revelation, July 20, 1831 [*D&C* 57], *RT* (Vol. 1), 159-161.

<sup>130</sup> In the original hand-written copy of this record, the references to Noah's sons are redacted with a strike-through line. However, in later official histories of the church, the references are included. June 19-July 1831, History, 1838-1856, vol. A-1 (ID # 7268), JSPP, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=135>; *DHC* I: 190-191.

the Saints hoped to unify in a new covenant of the latter-days. For the most part, the Saints had to reach out to these three populations through tailor-made mediums and messages.

And yet this targeted marketing—this particular means—was in the service of a more expansive end. The Book of Mormon’s message challenged the standard theological and political views of the potential for reconciliation of these three main racial populations of antebellum America. When the Saints looked out onto the American landscape and the people who inhabited it, they did not simply see “white,” “black,” and “red”—fixed identities with fixed characteristics that made racial reunion impossible. Instead, the Saints saw one human family only *temporarily* separated by literal and symbolic skin color.

## CHAPTER FOUR: From Gentile to Israelite

By the summer of 1833, the initial wariness that “old settlers” of Jackson County, Missouri, felt towards the county’s new residents turned to outrage. It was clear that the Saints intended to build their New Jerusalem—populated by Indian, Gentile, and perhaps even “Negro” converts—in the Missourians’ backyard. Yet, the Saints’ audacious marketing campaign to the descendants of Noah’s three sons in America was not just upsetting news on the United States’ western frontier. In Mormonism’s birthplace of Upstate New York, on the pages of the Palmyra-based *Reflector*, which he established to discredit his neighbor turned prophet, Abner Cole noted that the “zeal in this new religion” was spreading just as “Jo” Smith had expected. In February 1831, Cole reported that Smith’s followers had grown “from 1 to 200 (whites).” These “Mormonites” were also interested in converting Indians, whom they believed “were the ten lost tribes [of Israel].” A few had “already been dipt” in baptismal waters.<sup>1</sup>

Cole’s reports came from Eber D. Howe, editor of another anti-Mormon newspaper in Ohio, the *Painesville Telegraph*. Howe had his own correspondent, the Mormon defector Ezra Booth who sent Howe dispatches regarding the troubling events in Jackson County. Booth exaggerated the Mormons’ success among the Indians in order to raise awareness of what he believed were the Saints’ worrisome intentions. Booth believed that they were preaching the Book of Mormon’s apocalyptic prophesies in order to “inflame the minds of the Indians” so that the Mormons could enlist large numbers Indian braves to help them “expel the white inhabitants [of Jackson County], or reduce them to a state of servitude.” According to Booth, “bloody” conflict was inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Book of Mormon,” *The Reflector*, February 14, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> “The enthusiastic spirit which Mormonism inspires,” Booth warned, might indeed result in the Indians “going forth among the white people,” as the Book of Mormon promised—and from which Booth directly quoted (3 Nephi 20:13)—“as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through, both treadeth down and teareth to pieces.” Ezra Booth, “Mormonism No. VI,” *Painesville, Telegraph*, November 29, 1831.

Word of the Mormons' grand ambitions even crossed the Atlantic. In a report of his tour of the United States published in London in 1835, the English abolitionist and legal scholar Edward Strutt Abdy wrote that the Mormons "maintain the natural equality of mankind, without excepting the native Indians or the African race." Abdy even asserted that the Saints envisioned upending the standard Jacksonian-era racial hierarchies as a reprisal for white Americans' abuse of racial minorities. "[The Mormons] maintain that the Indian tribes will finally recover their lands and the blacks [will] gain ascendancy over the whites."<sup>3</sup>

Abdy provided a careful reading of the Book of Mormon, which he called a "curious Koran." Perhaps because it fit with his own abolitionist views, Abdy highlighted what he alleged was the scriptural source of the Mormons' "extraordinary" belief in racial equality. "He inviteth them all to come unto him," Abdy quoted directly from 2 Nephi 26:33, "black and white—bond and free, male and female, and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God." Abdy also correctly noted that the Mormons' foundational text presented an even more radical view than mere racial equality, or even Indian and black political ascendancy. Abdy asserted that the Book of Mormon made clear that race was mutable—that faithful dark-skinned Indians and blacks might even become whiter than the dark-hearted and unjust white Americans, and as such more favored "before the throne of God." According to Abdy, this notion would mean that the Mormon movement would probably not survive in America where white supremacy was a bedrock principle of the nation's political culture. "The preachers and believers [of this doctrine] were not likely to remain unmolested in the State of Missouri."<sup>4</sup>

Just as reports of Mormon racial meddling in Missouri quickly reached anti-Mormon newspapers in Ohio and New York, so did news of violent attacks that the Mormons endured at the

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Strutt Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America: From April, 1833, to October, 1834*, vol. III (London: J. Murray, 1835), 57–58, 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 55, 58–59.



hands of the old settler Missourians. In August 1833, E. B. Grandin's *Wayne Sentinel* reported mob violence against Mormons in Independence. "The Mormonite printing press was torn down," as was the Saints' general store. And the "[Mormon] leaders [were] tarred and feathered."<sup>5</sup> Grandin decried this mob violence, describing it as an "illegal and riotous" response to the "nuisance" that the Mormons presented.<sup>6</sup> Following their expulsion from Jackson County, when boatloads of Saints crossed over the Missouri River into neighboring Clay County, even Eber Howe's *Painesville Telegraph* voiced support for the Saints' constitutional rights. "The Mormons are as much protected in their religion, their property, and persons, as any other denomination, or class of men."<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Smith also framed Mormon persecution as a failure of American citizens to abide by the laws of the American republic and the principles of the Constitution, a document that the Mormons would come to believe was inspired by God.<sup>8</sup> Yet the Saints realized that the local and state officers sworn to uphold the Constitution would prevent further anti-Mormon violence. As such, following their expulsion from Jackson County the Saints created a more circumscribed "contracted covenant," which explicitly excluded ambitions to build a racially diverse millennial city, a gathering place for all believing "nations, kindreds, tongues, and people."<sup>9</sup> Before they could hope to build the covenantal *community* of New Jerusalem, the Saints would have to start smaller. They would have to define and strengthen the covenantal *family* that, they soon discovered, already existed in their midst.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "The Mormonites 'hors de combat,'" *The Wayne Sentinel*, August 23, 1833; "Head Quarters of Mormonism Broken Up," *The Ontario Freeman*, August 21, 1833.

<sup>6</sup> *The Wayne Sentinel*, September 6, 1833.

<sup>7</sup> "The Mormons and Anti-Mormons," *Painesville Telegraph*, December 13, 1833. Despite his assertions that even the Mormons deserve constitutional protections, Howe's own anti-Mormon rhetoric created an environment in which violence against the Saints could be justified. Patrick Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 106.

<sup>8</sup> See Revelation, December 16, 17, 1833 [D&C 101], RT (Vol. 1), 353. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 226.

<sup>9</sup> Revelation, December 27, 28, 1833 [D&C 88:103], RT (Vol. 1), 305. See 1 Nephi 22:28; Mosiah 15:28; 2 30:8.

<sup>10</sup> Revelation, December 16, 17, 1833 [D&C 101:20, 71], RT (Vol. 1), 345, 351.

In this chapter, I argue that as they failed to take back their lands in Jackson County—either by securing the assistance of Missouri state officials, by negotiating a legal settlement with Jackson County settlers, or by marching into Independence with their own militia—Joseph Smith concluded that the Saints’ troubles were in fact divine signs that they were not ready to build New Jerusalem. “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principoles [*sic*] of the laws” of God’s kingdom, Smith revealed at a June 22, 1834 gathering of the Saints in their temporary home of Clay County. While they waited “a little season for the redemption of Zion”—how long of a season was not specified—Smith revealed that the Mormon people needed to learn more about the laws of God’s kingdom.<sup>11</sup> The Saints soon discovered that these laws were not limited to the municipal organization of New Jerusalem. Instead, the kingdom was organized around a network of family trees. And the Saints found that their own family trees—starting with the patrilineage extending from Joseph Smith Jr., to Joseph Smith Sr., and even back to the biblical (and Book of Mormon) patriarch, Joseph—connected them not only in *spirit*, but also in *genealogy* to the ancient Israelite patriarchs with whom God had established the original covenant.<sup>12</sup>

It is important, however, not to assume causality. The Saints’ exile from the prophesied site of Zion in Missouri, along with the failure of the first missions to the Lamanites did not cause them to abandon dreams of Indian redemption in favor of the reality of the growing number of white, ostensibly “Gentile” converts. As I detail in the chapters to come, well into the twentieth century, the Mormons continued to expend great resources towards the realization of mass conversion of Native Americans who remained in the Saints’ collective imagination a remnant of a fallen, but destined to be redeemed branch of Israel. Likewise, as I’ve detailed in previous chapters, the Mormons always envisioned Zion as a city whose citizens looked and acted more like white Gentiles

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<sup>11</sup> Revelation, June 22, 1834 [*D&C* 105: 9-13], *RT* (Vol. 1), 375.

<sup>12</sup> Revelation, December 16, 17, 1833 [*D&C* 101: 68], *RT* (Vol. 1), 351.

than the red Indians. And yet, while the Missouri trials did not cause them to reconfigure their theology, the troubles that led to their expulsion from Jackson County did provide the Saints time to clarify *nbo* was literally *nbo* in the theological schema of Zion—namely who was truly a Gentile and who was truly an Israelite.

Relatedly, during this period, instead of seeking out the lost branch of the House of Israel among America's Indians, church leaders sent one missionary overseas to bring the gospel to the "Jews"—the remnant of Judah in the Holy Land and in diaspora scattered throughout Europe. Of more immediate consequence, they also began sending missionaries to the British Isles where they found receptive audiences among a people whom the Saints increasingly believed were not, in fact, "Gentile" descendants of Japheth, but instead themselves descendants of lost tribes of Israel. For the moment, the Saints could not establish New Jerusalem "among the Lamanites." But they did find that they could establish covenantal families with Israelites whom they discovered were scattered among their own supposedly Gentile converts.

What's more, during the mid-1830s Smith revealed that priesthood authority—the office that Mormon males were required to hold both for church leadership positions in this world and for exaltation in the world to come—flowed from their connections to this ancient, Israelite genealogy. The Israelite sons of Shem were naturally born with this authority, and the Gentile sons of Japheth could gain it through adoption into the covenant. And though during this period a mixed-raced African American named Elijah Abel did join the church, became a missionary, priesthood holder, and even an adopted member of the Mormon covenant, the new translations that Smith produced in the mid-1830s revealed a more ambiguous place for the sons of Ham's priesthood eligibility, a place that would become much less ambiguous after Smith's death.

## Anti-Abolitionist Converts

Before their troubles in Jackson County, many leading Latter-day Saints expressed misgivings about the morality and feasibility of the American republic continuing to exist as half slave and half free. Many Saints brought their ambivalent or antagonistic attitudes towards slavery with them when they moved from New England and the Mid-Atlantic to Missouri. Joseph Smith's own Upstate New York was a hotbed of abolitionism.<sup>13</sup> On July 5, 1827 the former slave Austin Steward gave the Emancipation Day speech in the abolitionist stronghold of Rochester, New York, some twenty-five miles to the west of Palmyra. Though his audience was mostly comprised of white members of Rochester's various abolitionist societies, in his speech Steward directly addressed the slaves made officially free that day in New York, drawing parallels between their bondage and those of the ancient Israelites: "Like the people of God in Egypt, you have been afflicted; but like them too, you have been redeemed."<sup>14</sup> Before she and most of the Smiths joined her son's Church of Christ in April 1830, Joseph's mother Lucy Mack Smith was briefly a member of Palmyra's Western Presbyterian Church, which in the 1840s served as a stop on the Underground Railroad.<sup>15</sup>

Even when they reached Utah and began excluding blacks from full participation in the Mormon religious and political culture, leading Latter-day Saints were far from uniform in their views on the issue of slavery. In 1852, as Utah's first legislature debated an act to legalize "African" chattel slavery in the newly-formed territory, an act that with the backing of Brigham Young was eventually adopted, church apostle and member of the legislature's upper chamber Orson Pratt not only voiced vehement opposition to slavery. He even called for the enfranchisement of black men.

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<sup>13</sup> In 1881, David Whitmer, a Book of Mormon witness, onetime church apostle, and leader of his own splinter Mormon community, told a Kansas City newspaper that many early Mormons were "northern people, who were opposed to slavery." "Mormonism," *Kansas City Journal*, June 5, 1881.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Eddie S Glaude, *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 98.

<sup>15</sup> Emerson Klees, *Underground Railroad Tales: With Routes Through the Finger Lakes Region* (Rochester, NY: Cameo Press, 2000), 139.

“To bind the African because he is different from us in color,” Pratt told his colleagues and Mormon brethren in the legislature, “[is] enough to cause the angels in heaven to blush.”<sup>16</sup> Eight years later, on the eve of the outbreak of the Civil War, Brigham Young himself recalled that Joseph Smith’s famed 1832 “Civil War” revelation—in which the prophet revealed that the demise of slavery was a prerequisite for the millennium—came as a divine response to the brethren’s “serious reflections” regarding the morality of “African slavery on this continent” as well as the morality of the perpetuation of the slavery “throughout the world.”<sup>17</sup>

Yet after the first set of troubles in Jackson County in the summer of 1833, church leaders realized that their slave-owning Missouri neighbors would not abide public support for abolition. As such, the onetime abolitionist W.W. Phelps printed his “Extra” in July 1833, denying that his “Free People of Color” article published the week before in the *Evening & Morning Star* signaled the Saints’ intent to convert slaves. In doing so, Phelps elucidated the Mormons’ public anti-abolitionist stance that would endure in the church for at least the next decade.

Phelps’ effort to stamp out fears of Mormon meddling with slaves failed spectacularly. Phelps could not unprint what had already been printed. Nevertheless, in the mid-1830s the Mormons wanted their neighbors in Kirtland and in Clay County to know that they intended to abide by the (race) laws of the land.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> LaJean Purcell Carruth, “‘To bind the African because he is different from us in color enough to cause the angels in heaven to blush’: Orson Pratt’s Opposition to Slavery in the Territorial Legislature,” (annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, San Antonio, TX, June 5-9, 2014),

<sup>17</sup> Brigham Young, “Privileges of the Sabbath,” May 20, 1860, *JD* VIII: 58-59. Following the church leadership’s discussions regarding slavery, the Lord revealed through Smith that the “day of the Lord” would come only after “Slaves rise up against their Masters who shall be Martialed and disaplined [*sic*] for war.” Revelation, December 25, 1832 [*D&C* 87:4], *RT* (Vol. 1), 291.

<sup>18</sup> In a series of resolutions passed during an August 1835 church assembly in Kirtland, the Saints acknowledged that they were called “to preach the gospel to the nations of the earth.” Yet they also stated explicitly, “we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the will and wish of their masters.” *D&C* (1835), Section CIII [*D&C* 134:1, 4, 12], *RT* (Vol. 2), 562-564.

Thus, following their expulsion from Jackson County in 1833, the Saints stopped printing invitations, albeit very narrowly-tailored ones, to “Free People of Color” to join the gathering in Missouri. Instead the Mormons’ printing press was typeset to assuage their enemies that they did not wish to disrupt America’s precariously-balanced racial politics. The following year, the Kirtland-based *Messenger & Advocate (M&A)*, which replaced the *Evening & Morning Star* as the Mormons’ newspaper of record, dedicated much of its April 1836 edition to denounce the abolitionist movement in America. The prophet himself authored the lead article, which included the lengthiest public pronouncement on slavery, abolitionism, and the place of African Americans in the church that Smith would make during his lifetime.

Smith was compelled to put his feelings in print after a Presbyterian minister named James W. Alvord established an anti-slavery society in Kirtland. Non-Mormon observers noted that Alvord had some success. An abolitionist newspaper in Cincinnati reported that by April 1836, the society counted some eighty-six members on its Kirtland roster.<sup>19</sup> Smith wanted to avoid even the appearance that Mormons were supporters of abolitionism. In his *M&A* article, Smith made sure to mention that, at least among the Saints, Alvord had garnered little interest.<sup>20</sup> Smith agreed with the nation’s chief law enforcement officer, President Andrew Jackson who in the 1830s described abolitionism as a threat to the stability of the American republic.<sup>21</sup> Just five years after Nat Turner’s rebellion, in which more than fifty whites and one hundred blacks were killed, Smith faulted

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<sup>19</sup> Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Black*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> *M&A*, April, 1836. Smith also stated proudly that his followers did not abuse the abolitionist. This stood in sharp contrast with the non-Mormon anti-abolitionists in the area, who reportedly threw stones, snowballs, and rotten apples at Alvord. Kirtland’s proslavery ruffians were well-behaved compared to anti-abolitionists in Boston—the most cosmopolitan American city—who the year before, would have lynched the most famous abolitionist in America, William Lloyd Garrison, if local law enforcement had not protected him. Wendell Phillips Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879; the Story of His Life Told by His Children* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), 1–31.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 429.

abolitionists like Alvord for instigating “the slave to acts of murder” by teaching them that slavery is against God’s will.<sup>22</sup>

According to Smith, the institution of slavery was legitimate in the eyes of the law and the Lord. To justify his position, Smith did not turn to the Book of Mormon. After all, Smith’s intended audience was not his Mormon flock, but his Mormon enemies who had demonstrated that they read the Saints’ newspapers, looking for any religion or politics that they might perceive as threatening. Instead, sounding like any number of antebellum Christian defenders of human bondage, Smith cited Genesis 8:25-27—the passages that describes the curse that marks Ham’s descendants off from the rest of postdiluvian humanity. Smith declared that since “he was perfect in his generation and walked with God,” Noah was justified when he cursed Ham for sinning against him. And because of this sin—what antebellum racial theorist Jacob Flournoy described in an 1835 treatise on the origins of the “African Race” as the “second fall”—Ham’s progeny had remained the servants of the seed of his more righteous brothers, Shem and Japheth.<sup>23</sup> Human bondage was biblical, which for Smith and for most antebellum bible-believers meant that it was also legal and moral.<sup>24</sup>

### **“Our Worthy Brother”**

At the same time that he was espousing support for the institution of slavery, Joseph Smith also sent off—with a blessing and a preaching license—the racially mixed Mormon named Elijah Abel on an extended mission. If “Black Pete’s” presence in the Mormon archive is faint and obscure, Abel left an indelible mark on the history of the church’s relationship with its own black membership, one that speaks to the changing racial politics within Mormonism.

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<sup>22</sup> *M&A*, April, 1836.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. John Jacobus Flournoy, *An Essay on the Origin, Habits, &c. of the African Race: Incidental to the Propriety of Having Nothing to Do with Negroes* (s.n., 1835), 5; Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*, Religion in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> *M&A*, April, 1836.

In 1832, the twenty year-old Elijah Abel joined the Mormons after migrating to the church's Kirkland settlement from his home in Maryland. The details of Abel's pre-Mormon existence are sketchy. Some scholars suggest that he was a freed slave. Others believe he ran away. But as a Mormon, Abel's life is well documented. During his half-century as a Saint until his death in 1884, Abel was a priesthood holder, a Smith family confidante, and an indefatigable missionary. While Joseph Smith was alive, Abel even served in the lower ranks of the church hierarchy.<sup>25</sup>

On March 31, 1836 in Kirtland—days before his anti-abolitionist jeremiad appeared in the *Messenger & Advocate*—Joseph Smith signed a missionary license confirming Abel's status as “an elder” in the church, a license that Abel most likely kept on hand during his mission throughout the Mid-Atlantic States and Canada. The license praised Abel for his “good moral character, and his zeal for the cause of righteousness, and diligent desire to persuade men to forsake evil and embrace truth.” The license was intended “to serve as proof of [the Mormons'] fellowship and esteem” in him.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Black Pete's “letter from heaven” written “by the finger of the almighty,” such a letter of recommendation written by the hand of the church's prophet—or more likely in the hand of one of his many scribes—probably served as more effective de facto “free papers” for Abel. Even in the antebellum north, a man of his ambiguous racial background would have faced difficulty traveling freely.<sup>27</sup> This document signified that he did belong to somebody, namely the Mormons. At the same time that, on the pages of the Mormons' newspaper of record, Smith voiced his public support

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<sup>25</sup> Lester E. Bush, “Mormonism's Negro Doctrine, 11–68; W. Kesler Jackson, *Elijah Abel: The Life and Times of a Black Priesthood Holder* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2013); Russell Stevenson, “‘A Negro Preacher’: The Worlds of Elijah Ables,” *Journal of Mormon History* 39, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 165–254; Newell G. Bringham, “Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism,” 22–36.

<sup>26</sup> “Elders License Elijah Abel Certificate,” James D. Wardle Papers, Box 37, Folder 6, SCUU. In the June 1836 edition of *M&A*, Abel is listed along with more than a hundred other Mormon men as “Ministers of the Gospel, belonging to the church of the Latter Day Saints,” *M&A*, June, 1836.

<sup>27</sup> As Frederick Douglass explained, in the 1830s even free blacks traveling in or through slave and border states were often required to present “free papers” or risk enslavement. To make his own escape, Douglass borrowed the papers of a black sailor friend, and disguised himself as a sailor and took a train north and into freedom. Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: From 1817-1882* (London: Christian Age Office, 1882), 166–169; John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass & Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Twelve Books, 2008), 44.



for the eternal subjugation and segregation of the sons and daughters of Ham, on the paper upon which Abel's license was written, "by the authority of this Church" Smith named a mixed-race Mormon "our worthy brother in the Lord."<sup>28</sup>

### Lamanites in the Distance

In February 1834, the *Evening & Morning Star*, then relocated to Kirtland, published another "Extra." This time the author was Parley P. Pratt, the onetime missionary to the Delaware. And this

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<sup>28</sup> "Elders License Elijah Abel Certificate." Yet what the license does not mention—Abel's race—is perhaps as important as what it does. It is possible that in the missionary field Abel passed as white. In antebellum America, the "third crossing"—the progeny of a person with only one black grandparent and three full-blooded, white Europeans—was said to "clear the blood" of any trace of black blood, and thus could be accepted as white, provided, that he did not "present" any typically "African" characteristics. In fact, if Abel had been such an "octoroon," as Church President John Taylor later described him, he could have been considered legally white in many states. Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 205; Elise Lemire, *Miscegenation: Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 38; Stevenson, "'A Negro Preacher': The Worlds of Elijah Ables," 171–172. Still if Abel did pass as white, he did not follow the unwritten rules of passing, which required establishing a low-key profile so as not to draw attention to his ambiguous racial identity. In fact during his 1838 mission in Lawrence County, New York, just south of the Canadian border, "handbills were pasted up in every direction stating that the Mormon Elder had murdered a woman and five children and a great reward was offered for him," wrote Eunice Kinney in an 1891 letter to a friend in which she detailed the role Abel played in her conversion to Mormonism. Northern Upstate New York was experiencing its own religious revival along with great civil unrest as the British Crown moved to squash growing independence movements in nearby Ontario. During this time of turmoil, the region's more established religious communities, including the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists made it clear that the upstart Mormons were not welcome. At least according to Kinney's recollection, none of his persecutors raised the specter of Abel's race as a reason to be wary of him or his message. Instead, according to Kinney, the "black elder" bravely faced down those who accused him of murder. Eunice Kinney to Wingfield Watson, "My Testimony to the Latter Day Work," September 1891, MS 4226, CHL; Darren Ferry, "The Politicization of Religious Dissent: Mormonism in Upper Canada," *Mormon Historical Studies* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 61–78. A year later, reports reached Kirtland that Abel was even stirring up conflict among his fellow Mormon missionaries in Upstate New York and Canada. Abel reportedly named himself leader of the mission and even "threaten[ed] to [knock] down" another Mormon who challenged his leadership. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith were present at the council meeting when news of these incidents reached Commerce, Illinois, where the Saints were gathering after their expulsion from Missouri. The church's senior officials found nothing too remarkable in the reports, as no punitive action was taken against Abel. And Abel's race, it seemed, was not worth remarking on either, as it went unmentioned in the meeting of the church hierarchy in which the case was discussed. See June 1, 1839, Minutes of the Seventies, CHL, quoted in Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," 52 n. 33. In fact, more often than not, during the church's first two decades, Abel's race is absent altogether from the archive. Instead, Abel was the white Saints' "worthy brother," and as such endowed with appropriate powers that came with that ecclesiastical and familial bond. For example, though he initially opposed Abel, Eunice Kinney's husband eventually joined his wife in Mormonism. And based on his priesthood authority, Abel ordained Eunice's husband a priesthood holder. Eunice Kinney to Wingfield Watson, "My Testimony to the Latter Day Work." However in 1853 when he arrived in Utah, Abel was turned away from the Mormon endowment house and all but stripped of the priesthood because church leaders then insisted that his African lineage rendered him innately unworthy of full church membership. In the 1850s, Mormon leadership preceded the rest of America in adopting the "one drop rule"—that even one African ancestor, however distant in a person's genealogy meant that he was "black"—a rule which became the unofficial and later official policy in many states after Reconstruction, as well as the justification the church would use to exclude people of African descent from full church membership for more than a century.

time Pratt was charged with denying accusations that the Mormons were “colleguing [*sic*] with the Indians, and exciting them to hostilities against the whites.”<sup>29</sup>

Despite these denials, rumors of Mormon Indian meddling followed the Saints out of their would-be Zion in Jackson County. In 1836, the Saints were again forced to refute accusations that they had their hearts set on converting and colluding with the Indians. On June 29, 1836—almost three years to the day since the Jackson County citizens met to write up their anti-Mormon manifesto—Clay County’s elite met at Liberty, Missouri, to formally voice their concerns about their Mormon neighbors’ true intentions. The set of resolutions passed at Liberty was less bellicose than the Jackson County statement. In fact, the Clay County leaders made note of the abuse the Saints had faced in 1833. “[The Mormons] were expelled from their homes in Jackson county... and like Noah’s dove without even a resting place for their feet.”

Clay County had provided the Saints with the metaphorical dry land. However, the Saints had outstayed their welcome. And they had continued to demonstrate that they were “Eastern men” who opposed slavery in a slaveholding land where “the haggard visage [of abolitionism]” was not welcome. More disturbing, the Mormons continued to “keep up a constant communication with the Indian tribes of our frontier, with declaring, even from the pulpit, that the Indians are part of God’s chosen people, and are destined, to inherit this land, in common with themselves.”<sup>30</sup>

Together, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and other leading Mormons took to the pages of the August 1836 edition of the *Messenger & Advocate* to refute these accusations. Like the area’s non-Mormon residents, these leading Saints wrote that they too were well “acquainted with the barbarous cruelty of rude savages.” In fact, they pledged that if the “Indians should break

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<sup>29</sup> However, Pratt did insist that Jackson County’s “neighboring tribes of Indians” acted more civilized than the “companies of ruffians,” including “pretended preachers of the Gospel” like the Baptist and Indian trader Isaac McCoy, whom Pratt names in the paper as among those guilty of illegally forcing the Mormons out of the Jackson County. Parley P. Pratt, “Extra: The Mormons’ So Called,” *E&MS*, February, 1834.

<sup>30</sup> “Public Meeting,” June 29, Liberty, MO, reprinted in *M&A*, August, 1836.

out” into warfare against western Missouri’s white citizens, then the Mormons would “be among the first to repel any invasion, and defend the frontier from all hostilities.”<sup>31</sup>

There is no reason to question the Saints’ sincerity here. The citizens of Clay County, not unlike the citizens of Jackson County before them, provided a fair accounting of the Mormon views of the Indians, their role in the final dispensation, and the location of Zion in Missouri. Yet by 1836, the Mormon leadership recognized that, for the time being, neither they nor the Lamanites were ready to establish New Jerusalem. The Saints also realized that their public position must be one of allegiance with their non-Mormon neighbors. They learned from the Jackson County ordeal that if their proselytizing efforts towards the Indians were too ambitious—or even perceived as such—their enemies would seek to destroy them.

Thus, instead of trumpeting their millenarian vision of a racially inclusive New Jerusalem, the Saints presented themselves as fully supportive of the national policy towards Indians. In fact, in a January 1836 article in the *Messenger & Advocate*, W.W. Phelps made clear that he believed that President Jackson’s policy to move “the remnants of this race which are left within our borders” west of the Mississippi was a sound one. Incapable of being Americans, the Indians should be forced to gather in their own country. The Indians would be provided with fertile land, clothing, even “arms, ammunition, and other indispensable articles.” But it would be up to the Indians to feed themselves, either by “agricultural labor” or by hunting the “countless herds of Buffalo” who roam the Indians’ new lands “on the skirts of the great prairies.”<sup>32</sup>

Phelps did put a Mormon spin on Jackson’s policy. He hoped that this future “nationalizing” of the Indians would create a pan-Indian civilization, a chance for the Indians to recognize themselves as the Saints saw them: not as disparate tribes and clans, warring with each other and

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<sup>31</sup> Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith Jr., et al. to John Thorton, et al., *M&A*, August, 1836.

<sup>32</sup> W.W. Phelps, “The Indians,” *M&A*, January, 1836.

with the Gentiles, but a people unto themselves, a lost but now rediscovered branch of “Israel... upon this continent.” Once the “gathering by the government” is complete, then Phelps looked to the future when the Indians could be “be gathered by the gospel.” But until then, Phelps supported Jackson’s decision to leave the Indians to their own devices.<sup>33</sup>

Yet even before the Mormons were expelled from Jackson County in late 1833, changes made to Joseph Smith’s revelations regarding the Lamanites reflected more circumspect expectations for the immediate redemption of and covenant with Native Americans. Sometime between the return of the failed first mission to the Lamanites in the spring 1831 and the Mormons’ expulsion from Independence in late 1833, Smith’s revelation declaring that New Jerusalem would be built “among the Lamanites” was edited. In the original revelation, dated September 1830 and recorded in Oliver Cowdery’s hand in the original ledger of Smith’s revelations, a strike-through line runs through the preposition “among.” And a caret indicates the insertion of the prepositional phrase “on the borders by.”<sup>34</sup>

Revelation was scripture sent to the prophet from Heaven. But revelation could be amended to reflect changing realities on earth. The Saints interpreted the federal prohibitions against Mormon settlements in Indian Territory, as well as the lukewarm reception from the Indians themselves, as a sign that the Book of Mormon-prophesied covenant with the Lamanites was not in the immediate future. According to the edited revelation, New Jerusalem would be built in close proximity to the Lamanites—on their borders—with the hope that Indian converts would join the Saints in due course. But New Jerusalem’s center would lie somewhere east of Indian Country.

The Saints were quick to reevaluate the *where* of their new covenantal community. They were also quick to recalibrate the *who* of the Lamanites. In fact, as soon as the first missionaries to the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> According to the editors of the JSPP, Sydney Rigdon performed the actual editing of the revelation in “Revelation Book 1,” though it is unclear under whose direction the editing occurred. See Revelation, September 1830 [*De&C* 28:9], *RT* (Vol. 1), 53. Also, see Book of Commandments (1833), Chapter XXX, *RT* (Vol. 2), 80.

Lamanites realized that they would not be permitted to proselytize in Indian Country, they began to fix their gaze not on the Lamanites in their neighborhood, but on more distant western horizons. Writing from Kaw Township, Missouri, in his May 7, 1831 letter to the brethren back east in Kirtland, after noting that there was nothing new to report concerning the local Lamanites, Oliver Cowdery suggested that it was not the “local” Indians like the Delaware that the Saints were destined to redeem. Independence was the easternmost stop on the Santa Fe Trail. And through the news that the trail brought east, Cowdery heard of “another Tribe of Lamanites,” named the “navahoes” who were successful ranchers and manufacturers of higher quality textiles. Thus in the distance—both geographically and chronologically—Cowdery insinuated that the Saints should send missionaries further west where among more civilized tribes they might find more receptive audiences.<sup>35</sup>

## **Jews and Judah**

American politics of Indian removal as well as local Indian indifference to the Mormon message meant that at least for “a little season,” the Saints could not hope to covenant with the Lamanites. Yet, this did not mean that the prophesied unification of Israelites with Gentiles would have to go unfulfilled until some unknown future date. After all, the Lamanites were just one branch of Israel. Thus, with the Indians temporarily out of reach, the Book of Mormon mandate required the “Gentile” Saints to find other heirs to the Israelite covenant with whom they could unify.

Of course, the modern-day Jewish people, who already called themselves religious and ethnic descendants of Abraham, were perhaps the most logical option. On occasion, Joseph Smith’s prophecies conflate “Lamanite” and “Jews.”<sup>36</sup> Yet more often, the Book of Mormon and the Latter-day Saints distinguished between the descendants of the two main kingdoms of ancient Israel. First

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<sup>35</sup> Oliver Cowdery to “beloved Brethren” May 7, 1831, (ID # 72), JSPP, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-from-oliver-cowdery-7-may-1831?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=1&s=undefined&sm=none>.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see Revelation, July 20, 1831 [*D&C* 57:9], *RT* (Vol. 1), 160-161.

were the lost tribes of Israel, notably the descendants of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who fled the Holy Land and, according the biblical exegetes of the 1830s, were eventually scattered throughout the world after the Assyrians destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel in the eighth century B.C. Second were the descendants of the Kingdom of Judah (later Judea), understood to be the progenitors of the modern-day Jews.<sup>37</sup> The Book of Mormon makes clear that when Gentiles restore the Nephite archive to the "remnant of [Israel]," they would bring the Book of Mormon to those Israelites "who came out from Jerusalem," and who shared common ancestors with the "Jews," but were not Jews themselves.<sup>38</sup> The Book of Mormon's title page indicates that the scripture was written to "Lamanite," "Gentile," and "to Jew," making it clear that Mormonism's foundational text differentiated between the Old and New World branches of the House of Israel.<sup>39</sup>

To be sure, the early Mormons were certainly interested in the Jews. They shared with many other antebellum Christian communities the belief that the return of the Jews to Israel was an important precursor to the millennium.<sup>40</sup> As the Saints built New Jerusalem in America, they felt it their duty to do their part to restore the Jews to Old Jerusalem in Palestine. Early in the 1830s, Smith gave a special blessing to Orson Hyde, an original member of Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Smith prophesied that Hyde would one day go to Jerusalem, "and be a watchman unto the

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<sup>37</sup> *BofM*, 98; 92 [2 Nephi 21: 11-13; 2 Nephi 17:6, 8, 17] William Newcome and Samuel Horsley, *A Literal Translation of the Prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi: With Notes, Critical, Philological, and Explanatory* (London: Thomas Tegg & Son, 1836), 79. For an introduction to the history of the division between the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah see, Victor Harold Matthews, *A Brief History of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 55–94.

<sup>38</sup> *BofM*, 117 [2 Nephi 30: 4].

<sup>39</sup> *BofM*, Title Page.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Smith revealed on November 2, 1833 that at the "hour" of the Lord's return, those lost Israelites scattered "among the gentiles [shall] flee unto Zion" in America and those "of Juda[h] [shall] flee unto Jerusalem." Revelation, November 2, 1833 [*D&C* 133:13], *RT* (Vol. 1), 395. Throughout the 1830s and early 1840s, on the pages of their newspapers, the Saints publicly pronounced their expectation for an imminent "Restoration of the Jews." For example, reporting on the recolonization of the Jews in Palestine, in the Manchester, England-based *Millennial Star's* first edition in May 1840, Parley P. Pratt saw nothing less than the fulfillment of a prophecy of Nephi. "And the Jews also shall begin to believe in Christ, and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land. And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall commence his work among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth." Pratt here quotes the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon, (pg. 125) [2 Nephi 30: 7]. "Restoration of the Jews," *MS*, June. 1840. See also "Restoration of the Jews," *E&MS*, August 1833; Letter from Parley P. Pratt, reprinted in *Elders' Journal*, October, 1837.

house of Israel,” facilitating there “the gathering together of [the Jewish] people.”<sup>41</sup> In 1841, Hyde set off on a cross-continent, multi-city mission to bring the gospel to “Judah” and urge them to leave the “Gentile” cities, which would soon be laid to waste.<sup>42</sup>

Despite their outward expressions of philo-Semitism, the early Saints’ view of the Jews was not without its complications. Like the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Mormon also emphasizes the divide, even antagonism between the tribes of Israel and Judah.<sup>43</sup> While the Book of Mormon recognizes that the Jews were once a covenantal people, it also espouses longstanding views of deicide, blaming the Jews for Christ’s death, a communal sin that led to their exile from their own Promised Land. The Jews had rejected the universalized gospel offered by Christ. And in doing so, in the eyes of the Mormons (along with many other nineteenth-century Christians), this once covenantal people broke with the covenant of their forefathers.<sup>44</sup>

Orson Hyde brought these views with him on his mission and expressed them during his audiences with leading rabbis in London, the Netherlands, and Israel. The Jewish people had lost their “kingdom—a land flowing with milk and honey,” Hyde wrote in a letter to England’s chief Rabbi, Solomon Hirschel. Because of their fathers’ idolatry and “shedding of [Christ’s] innocent blood,” the Jews had been reduced to the state of shylocks, “buying and selling the stale refuse with which their fathers would never have defiled their hands.” God meted out the appropriate punishment for their horrible crime, namely the Babylonian conquest, the destruction of the temple, and exile “to the four quarters of the earth.” Like the seed of Cain, because of the sin against the family—in this case, sin against God’s only begotten son—these sons of Judah were separated from

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<sup>41</sup> See *T&J*, October, 1841.

<sup>42</sup> Orson Hyde, *A Voice from Jerusalem* (Liverpool: P. P. Pratt, 1842), ii-iv. Steven Epperson, *Mormons and Jews: Early Mormon Theologies of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 140, 145–146.

<sup>43</sup> 2 Nephi 10: 3-6; 2 Nephi 19: 21. See Isaiah 9: 21

<sup>44</sup> Epperson, *Mormons and Jews*, 79; William Shepard, “The Concept of a ‘Rejected Gospel’ in Mormon History. Part 1,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 130–81; William Shepard, “The Concept of a ‘Rejected Gospel’ in Mormon History. Part 2,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 142–86.

the rest of humanity and forced to live in ghettos in Europe and Eurasia. Yet Hyde's message was that the Mormon gospel gave them a new chance at redemption and restoration to their own lands. Hyde's mission was to call them to "Repent" and return to the covenant "as in the days of old."<sup>45</sup>

Like the first mission to the Native American branch of Israel carried out a decade before, during his mission Hyde received few audiences, and made no Jewish converts. And like that first mission to the Delaware, Hyde blamed interference from unfriendly Christian missionaries whom he encountered in the Holy Land as well as the unprepared hearts of a broken branch of Israel.<sup>46</sup> But according to Hyde, his visit to Palestine was a success. On October 24, 1841, Hyde climbed atop the Mount of Olives. There he offered a dedicatory prayer, imploring the Lord to facilitate the Jewish gathering to the Holy Land. He also built a simple stone shrine to memorialize the event.<sup>47</sup>

For the next half-century, the Mormons reported on events in Palestine, often citing the growing "gathering" of the Jews as fulfillment of Hyde's prayerful rededication of Palestine to Judah.<sup>48</sup> Yet in the near term, besides Hyde's mission to the Holy Land, the Saints watched the Old World Jerusalem at a physical and theological distance. For the restoration, the Mormons discovered that a more important remnant of Israel was even closer at hand.

### **Three Josephs**

With the Lamanites at least temporarily out of reach, and the Jews a less than favorable and less than enthusiastic alternative, the Saints began emphasizing the implicit Israelite lineage already in

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<sup>45</sup> *T&S*, October, 1841; Epperson, *Mormons and Jews*, 152–153. Arnold Green, "Gathering and Election: Israelite Descent and Universalism in Mormon Discourse," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (1999): 196.

<sup>46</sup> Orson Hyde, *A Voice from Jerusalem* (Liverpool: P.P. Pratt, 1842), 8–9.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 20–23.

<sup>48</sup> *DHC*, IV: 455–460.



their midst. And the new lineage the Saints hoped to follow back to the ancient Hebraic covenant ran through Joseph Smith Jr. and his first converts, his immediate family.<sup>49</sup>

On its title page, the Book of Mormon is described as having “come forth... by way of the Gentile” and translated by one particular Gentile, “Joseph Smith, Jun.” However, within the Book of Mormon’s actual text, Mormon describes finding evidence on the ancient Hebraic plates, which Lehi’s family brought with them into the American wilderness, that Joseph Smith Jr.’s complete identity is not so self-evident. Mormon cites a vision from history’s first Joseph, the son of Jacob (Israel), and great-grandson of Abraham. While a captive in Egypt, the ancient Joseph prophesied about another Joseph, “a seer” whom the Lord would “raise up” in the latter days. The ancient Joseph, with whom “great were the covenants of the Lord,” foresaw that “out of the fruit his loins” a Joseph of the last days would be born. This prophesied Joseph who would “write” down the words of the Lord, and bring them to the Lamanites and would restore them to the “covenants” of their forefathers. The ancient Joseph prophesied that not only would this seer’s “name shall be called after me;” he also will be named “after the name of his father,” Joseph Smith Sr.<sup>50</sup>

These three Josephs form an Abrahamic patrilineage that survives over three millennia. Joseph Smith’s dual identity—a Gentile and a seed of Abraham—reflects what would come to be typical of many early converts who would be named as descendants of ancient Israelite patriarchs. Smith’s “Gentile” identity was a political designation; Smith belonged to the “nations of the Gentiles” in which Nephi prophesied the true church would be established.<sup>51</sup> Even while Smith and other Saints pledged fealty to the constitutional principles of the American republic, their patrilineal

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<sup>49</sup> Rodney Stark has called the Smiths Mormonism’s “Holy Family,” akin to the family of Islam’s Muhammad, and Judaism’s Moses. These families form the hub of expanding “networks” through which the news faiths spread, most often through connections with other kin (aunts, uncles, and cousins), along with friends and neighbors. Rodney Stark, “Mormon Networks of Faith,” in *The Rise of Mormonism*, ed. Reid Larkin Neilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 46–58.

<sup>50</sup> *BofM*, 66-67 [2 Nephi 3:5-15].

<sup>51</sup> *BofM*, 28 [1 Nephi 13:4].

identity as sons of Joseph and Abraham would supersede their identity as “Gentile” citizens of the United States. And during the course of early Mormon history, the line between the Gentile nation and the Israelite, patrilineal Mormon families would become more explicit and more contentious.

Thus, according to the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith Jr., Joseph Smith Sr., and the ancient Joseph shared more than a first name. The family resemblance among son, father, and progenitor was literal. “He shall be like unto me,” declared the first Joseph. These family ties meant that Joseph Jr. was born into a sacred lineage, and born to fulfill a sacred mandate. As the first Joseph prophesied, “the Lord shall bring forth by [Joseph Smith Jr.’s] hand” the salvation of “my people.”<sup>52</sup>

The genealogical connections among these three Josephs—son, father, and ancient biblical forefather—was present in the Book of Mormon, and thus present even before the founding of the church. Yet the full import of the latter-day Joseph Smiths’ literal connection to the ancient Joseph became more fully articulated after the failure of the early Saints to attract Lamanite descendants of the House of Israel with whom the early “Gentiles” Saints expected to covenant. At that point, Smith and his early followers looked for other heirs of the Abrahamic covenant, and found them in Smith’s own family tree. Smith’s new movement was not only a spiritual restoration. Early Mormons believed that they were restoring in the latter-days a covenantal family first created in Biblical times. And though it would remain inchoate until the Utah period, the ritualized naming of descent from ancient Israelite patriarchs increasingly became part of the membership in the church as well as part of the familial, even ethnic identity that defines membership in the Mormon people.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *BofM*, 67 [2 Nephi 3:15].

<sup>53</sup> By “ethnicity,” I follow Werner Sollors’ description of the nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon of “inventing ethnicities.” “The category of ‘invention’ has been stressed in order to emphasize not so much originality and innovation as the importance of *language* in the social construction of reality.” Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1991), x. See also Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14. See also Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 145–169, 203–247.

## The Patriarch of the Latter-days

Just a month after the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County, on December 18, 1833, by revelation, the prophet of the restored church named his father “Patriarch.” This office empowered the elder Joseph to bless individual Mormon converts and, if such a connection existed, proclaim their connection to the House of Israel.<sup>54</sup> In 1834, these blessings were mostly limited to the patriarch’s immediate family and their spouses. But by 1835, Joseph Sr. began blessing many more Saints. And by the time they were driven out of Nauvoo in late 1846, Smith Sr. and his successors (and sons), Hyrum and William Smith had performed thousands of blessings.<sup>55</sup>

Modeled after the blessing that the Hebrew prophet Jacob (Israel) gave to his sons before his own death, the Mormons’ patriarchal blessings ritualized the naming of individuals and ordering them according to the hierarchy of the lineages. This naming and ordering created “a chain of belonging,” as Samuel Brown has recently argued, linking the Saints of the latter-days back to the original Israelite covenant.<sup>56</sup> Joseph Jr. and Joseph Sr. described this family tree as a literal, patrilineal connection between the modern Josephs and the ancient Hebraic patriarch of the same name. But this family tree was also allegorical. On December 18, 1833, when Joseph Smith Jr. blessed his father, the younger Joseph declared that the elder Joseph was akin to “an olive tree whose branches are bowed down with much fruit.” A year later, Joseph Sr. described his own son “as a fruitful olive and choice vine... laden with precious fruit.”<sup>57</sup> As for those Gentiles converts not deemed to have a

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Marquardt, among others, have questioned the date (December 1833), which the church accepts as the official establishment of the Mormon patriarch, believing that it more likely occurred a year later when Joseph Smith Sr. was ordained Assistant Church President. *EBP*, vii-ix, 11.

<sup>55</sup> Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Brown, “The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–53. Before departing for the New World, Lehi also blessed his sons and prophesied that they would inherit a “land of liberty,” namely America. Foreseeing the fate of the descendants of Laman, Lehi also warned that that his sons’ descendants would be scattered if they did not remain true to the faith of their forefathers (2 Nephi 1:1). Also, see Richard Bushman’s description of Joseph Jr.’s elevation of his father, whose life had been marked with struggles and failures, to the exalted position of the first patriarch of the last dispensation. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 262–263.

<sup>57</sup> *EBP*, 4-5, 14.

literal connection to the Israel covenant, they could be “grafted” onto this allegorical olive tree by accepting the covenantal contract of belief in Christ as humanity’s messiah.

In the first decades of the church, this grafting of converts developed into an elaborate theology of adoption into Abrahamic patrilineal families. The Mormon adoption theology echoed the Book of Mormon precedent, which understood that “all mankind” who seek to participate in Christ’s covenant “must be born again,” necessitating a change from a “carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness.”<sup>58</sup> In his 1837 *Voice of Warning to All People*, perhaps the most complete and systematic treatise of Mormon theology written in the nineteenth century, Parley P. Pratt also echoes this admonition. As it was in Christ’s first church, in this last dispensation no one could be a citizen of God’s kingdom without being adopted into it. And yet Pratt also suggests the existence of a hierarchy within this citizenry. Divinely appointed disciples were charged with unlocking “the door of the kingdom and adopt[ing] strangers and foreigners into it as legal citizens, by administering certain laws and ordinances.” These ordinances included baptism and adoption.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Patriarchal Blessings Book**

Pratt’s *A Voice of Warning* thus hints at a shift in early Mormon epistemology, which led to an evolution in Mormon ontology. At least for those discovering that they were *firstborn* members of the covenant, baptism into the restored church did not lead to a new birth; by dint of their descent from Israel, the most sacred of bloodlines already flowed in their veins. A ritualized mechanism had been established to sort out the patrilineal divisions in the human family. Before the creation of a

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<sup>58</sup> *BofM*, 213 [Mosiah 27: 25], In a revelation from July 1830 (*D&C* 25:1), Smith declared, “all who receive my gospel are his sons and daughters in my kingdom.” Gordon Irving, “The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830–1900,” *BYU Studies* 14, no. 3 (1974): 3; Samuel Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 18.

<sup>59</sup> Parley Parker Pratt, *A Voice of Warning, and Instruction to All People, or an Introduction to the Faith and Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints* (New York: W. Sanford, 1837), 110–111; Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” 18.

new, expanded and (re)united covenantal family tree could proceed, the patriarchal blessing named and ordered converts' relationships to the most favored and least favored lineages of Noah.

This naming and ordering had to be recorded, too. The physical and oral performance of the patriarch's blessing—in which the patriarch lays his hands upon the head of the recipient and (increasingly as time went on) pronounces not only his or her lineage, but also predictions for the recipient's life to come, especially his or her role in the restoration—was compiled in the Patriarchal Blessings Book.<sup>60</sup> The first entry in this special ledger is dated December 9, 1834, and records the patriarch's blessing for Joseph Smith Sr.'s oldest surviving son, Hyrum. Joseph Sr. named Hyrum a “true descendent” of Joseph. He also predicted that Hyrum would “bring many souls to the knowledge of the truth.” And the elder Smith prophesied that Hyrum's own “posterity shall be numbered with the house of Ephraim,” and that his own “salvation [was] sealed on high.”<sup>61</sup>

The blessings of December 9, 1834 did not end with Hyrum. The patriarch blessed several of his children and their spouses. For example, Joseph Smith Sr. blessed his son William as the “seed of Joseph.” And in his blessing for William's wife Caroline, Joseph Sr. declared that her union with William meant that her “seed shall be numbered with the chosen seed.” The blessing also named Caroline a “mother of Israel,” the title that became the standard distinction of Mormon matriarchs. Because of her devotion to her husband, Joseph Smith Jr., the patriarch declared that Emma Hale Smith would enjoy Joseph's blessings, “and rejoice in the glory which shall come upon him.”<sup>62</sup>

As for Joseph Smith Jr., the patriarch's blessing for his son-turned-prophet made note of the fact that the Lord had selected him to bring forth “a marvelous work”—the Book of Mormon—“which shall prepare the way for the remnants of [the Lord's] people to come in among the

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<sup>60</sup> Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 125.

<sup>61</sup> *EPB*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> William's wife Caroline, along with Joseph Smith Sr.'s daughters Lucy Smith and Katharine Smith Salisbury were blessed to instruct the members of their “sex” about “those things which the virtuous.” *Ibid.*

Gentiles, with their fulness, as the tribes of Israel are restored.” Joseph Sr.’s blessing shows that, despite their initial failure to convert the Indian “remnant of Jacob,” the early Saints held out hoped that the some covenant between Gentile and Israelite would still be formed. Yet the definition of Gentile and Israelite had been clarified and expanded. Instead of only among the Lamanites, the patrilineal covenantal connection to the ancient patriarchs could also be found within many white Saints’ own family lines. Joseph Sr. declared that Joseph Jr. was no Gentile. Instead he was the Biblical Joseph’s “seed, scattered *with the* Gentiles [my emphasis]” and counted among the “sons of Ephraim.” Yet Joseph Smith Jr.’s ministry would not be limited to his Israelite “brethren,” but would bring “thousands and tens of thousands” of those Gentiles willing to listen “to a knowledge of the truth.” This union of the faithful would create a new covenantal family that would transcend earthly time and place, and that “shalt rejoice in the Celestial Kingdom” to come. What’s more, the memory of this new family would be archived. The names of Joseph Smith Jr.’s “posterity shall be recorded in the book of the Lord, even in the book of blessings and genealogies.”<sup>63</sup>

Before the restoration of the office of the patriarch, many if not most early converts thought of themselves as Gentiles. For example, in the May 1833 edition of the *Evening & Morning Star*, W. W. Phelps published a letter written by Eliel Strong and Eleazer Miller from Rutland, Pennsylvania. “[A]bove all,” the two converts noted, they were most grateful “that we, as Gentiles, have the privilege of receiving the light manifested” for the “restoration” of God’s elect. Echoing, if not directly referencing the Book of Mormon allegory in which Gentiles are grafted onto Israel’s olive tree so that the fruit produced is “like unto [the tree’s] natural fruit,” Strong and Miller wrote, “by entering into the covenant, we may become the spiritual children of Abraham, and with Israel partake of the fatness and the fulness of the olive tree.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>64</sup> “Extract of Letter,” *E&MS*, May, 1833. *BofM*, 133 [Jacob 5:17].

Smith's early revelations supported the belief that Gentiles could join this family tree.<sup>65</sup> The early Saints were to seek out those Gentiles like Strong and Miller who, as Christ describes in the Book of Mormon (a passage reprinted in the December 1832 edition of the *E&M*), "will not harden their hearts, that they repent and come unto me... and be numbered among my people, O house of Israel."<sup>66</sup> And as the Book of Mormon emphasizes, these Gentiles would become "nursing fathers" and mothers to the Lamanites. At least according to available records, in his first year as patriarch, Joseph Smith Sr. rarely named a Saint to a particular lineage, reinforcing the notion that the early Saints believed that most converts were made up of soft-hearted Gentiles like Strong and Miller.<sup>67</sup> For example, in his March 19, 1835 blessing of early Mormon convert and California pioneer, Samuel Rolfe, Joseph Smith Sr. did not name Rolfe to any Israelite lineage. Instead Smith Sr. told Rolfe that because he had that day received "the blessing of Abraham," he was "now numbered with [Abraham's seed]." On occasion, Smith Sr. even declared that a blessing recipient was "an orphan." Such was the case for John Allen, an early member of the church hierarchy, whom the patriarch described as not having a "father to bless thee." The senior Smith thus took on the role of adoptive father, and through his blessing transformed Allen into "the seed of Joseph."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> In March 1833, Smith revealed that it was the duty of the leaders of the church to "go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews." Revelation, March 8, 1833 [*D&C* 90:9], *RT* (Vol. 1), 315.

<sup>66</sup> *BofM*, 488 [3 Nephi 21: 6].

<sup>67</sup> *EPB*, 11-19. The CHL's policy only to allow direct descendants to inspect their ancestors' patriarchal blessing means that a thorough study of the evolution of the ritual of patriarchal blessings has not been possible. According to the church, these blessings are "too sacred" to be shared with the public. However, for decades, H. Michael Marquardt has collected patriarchal blessings with the intent, he has written, to "aid those who are engaged in the study of the history and doctrine of the LDS Church, and also to benefit the work of family historians and biographers." I am very grateful for his efforts. *EPB*, vii. An examination of Marquardt's recently published collection of Joseph Smith Sr. and Hyrum Smith's blessings suggests that the practice of naming specific lineages became commonplace for male blessing recipients by the time of Hyrum's death in 1844. *LPB*, 527-558.

<sup>68</sup> If necessary, the patriarch even had the power to supersede biological family lineages. For his daughter-in-law Mary Smith, who Smith acknowledged had "left thy father's house" when she accepted the "gospel" and married Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith Sr. "united" her with his own family and thus his own sacred (and ancient) family tree. *EPB*, 23, 99-100, 16; Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 213-218.

For this dissertation's study of the evolution of race within early Mormon history, perhaps the most important of the dozens of "orphans" that the patriarch blessed was Elijah Abel. In 1836, the same year Joseph Smith Jr. gave him his missionary license, Abel received a blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. Laying his hands upon Abel's head, the elder Joseph made no mention of Abel's lineage. Instead, Joseph Sr. declared, "I seal upon thee a father's blessing, because thou art an orphan."<sup>69</sup> The patriarch noted Abel's perilous journey to join the Mormons: "the Lord hast his eye upon thee, and brought you through straits and thou hast come to be rec[k]oned with the saints of the most high." Brought now into fellowship, even an adoptive kinship, the patriarch noted that Abel had "been ordained an Elder." The patriarch did not foresee that this ordination would become a source of contention within a few decades. Instead, Joseph Sr. prophesied that Abel would travel on behalf of church until a "good old age." Joseph Sr. even declared that Abel's blessing was not only archived in the Patriarchal Blessings Book. Abel's name also "is written in the Lamb's Book of Life," the record of those souls who will be preserved after history's final tribulation."<sup>70</sup>

Abel was not the only Mormon of African descent to be blessed by the early church patriarchs. In 1844 Hyrum Smith, who succeeded his father as patriarch after Joseph Smith Sr.'s death in 1840, also blessed the black Mormon pioneer Jane Manning James. Hyrum named James as the "seed of Ham," a lineage that by the time the Saints reached Utah would be deemed ineligible for full inclusion in the Mormon sacred community. The absence of such proclamation in Abel's blessing might be the result of Abel's ambiguous racial background; church leaders described Abel

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<sup>69</sup> *EPB*, 99. Proclaiming that Abel was "an orphan" was not unusual. In his patriarchal blessing of John Allen who like Abel was also a member of the Quorum of Seventies, the patriarch also declared Allen an "orphan." What was unique about Abel's blessing is the absence of Smith's move to assign a lineage from the Hebraic fathers of the tribes of Israel. For example, Allen was named "a seed of Joseph, son of Jacob." *EPB*, 99-100.

<sup>70</sup> *EPB*, 99. Those not found in this book, would be "cast into the lake of fire." See Revelation 13:8; 20:15.



as an “octoroon.”<sup>71</sup> Yet other possibilities must also be considered. During the eight years between the two blessings, much had evolved in the Saints’ hermeneutic of race and lineage. For one, as I argue in this chapter, the distinction among the various branches of Noah’s progeny had become well established. Pronouncing the difference between (Japheth’s) Gentiles and (Shem’s) Israelites had become ritualized in the patriarchal blessing. Likewise, as it was for those Saints born Gentiles, before the descendants of Ham could be adopted into the Israelite covenant, their original lineage had to be named so that they could be remade and then renamed members of Zion.<sup>72</sup>

What’s more, during this period the Saints’ public pronouncements regarding the proper place of African Americans, both within the restored church and in the American republic, also came into sharper relief. In the mid-1830s during their exile from Jackson County, the Saints repeatedly denied any interest in converting blacks. And Joseph himself pledged fealty to slavery’s status quo. Yet in 1844, as I discuss further in the next chapter, from the relative safety of Nauvoo, Illinois, Joseph welcomed black converts like James and Abel into the Mormon community—even into his own home. And as a candidate for the presidency of the United States, Joseph Smith declared himself a gradual abolitionist. In his presidential platform, Smith even described both the persecution of the Saints and the perpetuation of slavery as affronts to the principles of liberty enshrined in the Declaration of Independence.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See Minutes, May, 31 1879, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Adam S. Bennion Papers, MSS 1, BYSC, reprinted in Lester E. Bush, “Compilation on the Negro in Mormonism (1973),” Box 4, Folders-3-8, Lester E. Bush Papers, MS 0685, UUSC.

<sup>72</sup> Also, temple theology had evolved. By the time James received her blessing, the temple had become a site where the “Elders of Israel [would receive] their washings and anointings”—sacred endowments, as Smith declared in the April, 1844 General Conference, which guaranteed their “election” to the highest levels of exaltation. *DHC*, April 8, 1844, VI: 319. James was not—or not yet—a daughter of Israel. As I detail in the next chapter, James would never receive her endowments, and thus never receive her “new name” that Saints receive when they complete their endowments. In Utah, James would be barred from the most sacred chambers of the temple because she was black and because she was a woman who was not sealed to a priesthood holding man, a matrimonial or familial covenant required for women to participate in Mormonism’s most sacred ceremonies.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Jr. Smith, *General Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* (Nauvoo, IL: John Taylor, 1844).

And yet, mention of Abel's African parentage, indirect though it might have been, did make it into his 1835 blessing. Smith declared that Abel "must seek first the kingdom of heaven and all blessings shall be added thereto." For Abel these blessings included overcoming his blackness in the hereafter: "Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren, and thy soul be white in eternity and thy robes glittering."<sup>74</sup> Thus for Joseph Sr., Abel's African blood did not make him existentially ineligible for exaltation, as would be the position of later church leaders. Abel could be made worthy, and even made white, by seeking out the kingdom of heaven and serving the church.

In his blessing of Abel, the patriarch made clear that grafting onto the tree of Israel did not simply result in spiritual changes, but physical ones, too. Four years later after his father blessed Abel, Joseph Smith Jr. explained that for Gentile converts, accepting the gospel into their hearts led to a literal change of their blood. A Gentile's conversion "purg[ed] the old blood, to "make him actually of the seed of Abraham," Smith explained. "That man who has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost."<sup>75</sup> Thus the early Saints expected that conversion would lead to discernable changes in both Gentiles as well as non-white converts.

And yet not all "Gentile" conversions required such drastic changes of blood. In the same 1839 speech, Joseph explained that when the gospel "falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham," conversion is "calm and serene, and his whole soul and body are only exercised by pure spirit of intelligence."<sup>76</sup>

Throughout the second half of the 1830s, many Mormon leaders outside the Smith family were named to the lineage of Joseph.<sup>77</sup> Such designations reinforced Joseph Smith Jr.'s earlier

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<sup>74</sup> Joseph Smith Sr. "A blessing under the hands of Joseph Smith, Sen., upon Elijah Abel," *EPB*, 194.

<sup>75</sup> History, 1838-1856, C-1, (ID # 7513), JSPP, accessed May 14, 2013, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=543>.

<sup>76</sup> Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Many church leaders were blessed and named literal descendants of the House of Israel. On August 27, 1835, Joseph Smith Sr. declared W.W. Phelps a "pure descendent of Joseph, of the blood of Ephraim," as was his wife, Stella Waterman Phelps. On April 18, 1837, future Church President Wilford Woodruff was named a "descendent of Joseph,"

revelations that the progeny of the biblical Joseph, and more specifically his son Ephraim, were destined to receive the greatest blessings and fill the most important roles in the restoration.<sup>78</sup> As Parley P. Pratt implied in *A Voice of Warning*, these descendants of Joseph were the latter-day disciples who had the keys to open “the door of the kingdom.” Their blood carried the covenant that would facilitate the union between Israel and Gentiles about which the Book of Mormon prophesied.<sup>79</sup>

As the number and import of patriarchal blessings increased, the frequency of declaration of lineages also increased. According to at least one estimate, by 1838 the vast majority of blessings contained some kind of declaration of biblical genealogy.<sup>80</sup> This suggests that during the second half of the 1830s, the Saints grew more confident in their belief that the most prominent early converts, as well as more and more “everyday” Saints, were not Gentiles after all. Instead, they were members of the House of Israel scattered in politically defined Gentile nations. These converts not only shared a religion. They were literally long-lost kin, making the covenantal bounds between them both spiritual and familial. And even if a blessing recipient was named a Gentile “orphan,” as for example John Landers’ blessing indicates from July 17, 1840, through the authority vested in the patriarch, this orphan became a “literal descendent, and of the covenant seed of Abraham.” Joseph Smith Sr. declared that the blessing he bestowed upon Flanders cleansed the convert so completely that “little or no gentile blood remain[ed]” in his “veins.”<sup>81</sup>

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and on February 22 of that same year, Willard Richards was named “of the lineage of Jacob, through the loins of Ephraim.” *EPB*, 43, 155, 154; Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 148.

<sup>78</sup> Revelation November 3, 1831 [*D&C* 133: 34], *RT* (Vol. 1), 209.

<sup>79</sup> Rex Eugene Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 75. See also, “Tribe of Joseph,” *E&MS*, November, 1832.

<sup>80</sup> By the 1840s and up to the present day, the designation of lineage is considered an essential element of a patriarchal blessing. Irene M. Bates, “Patriarchal Blessings and the Routinization of Charisma,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 1–29; Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 22.

<sup>81</sup> *EPB*, 194.

Joseph Smith Jr. discovered his true genealogy written on the Nephite plates, which he unearthed on the Hill Cumorah and then translated into the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith Sr. helped other new Saints discover their relationship to the “covenant seed of Abraham” by doing his own revelatory archival digging in the sacred, heaven-bound scriptures. As was the case for Elijah Abel, when pronouncing blessings, Smith frequently declared that recipients’ names were “written in heaven,” or more specifically, “written in the Lamb’s book of life.”<sup>82</sup> As such, the Patriarchal Blessings Book, a compilation of what the Saints began to consider personalized scriptures, became a partial, earth-bound registry of the heavenly record of the names of the righteous to whom the Lord would grant “an inheritance in Zion.”<sup>83</sup>

To be sure, the Mormon temple sealing and anointings, developed mostly during the Nauvoo period with significant changes occurring throughout Mormon history, became the most important covenantal rituals. Temple endowments “sealed” family members together, sealed families with other families, and sealed the Saints to their heavenly father.<sup>84</sup> These rituals created networks of families that the Mormons believed would not only survive, but also expand in the heavenly kingdom to come. However before the temple became the most sacred site for Mormon ritual performance, Joseph Smith Jr. and Joseph Smith Sr. established the ritualized performance of ordering Mormon converts based on their ancient patrilineage, naming them eternal Saints, and recording these names for posterity. And the Patriarch’s Blessing Book became an archived repository of the names of those who belonged to this covenantal Mormon family.

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<sup>82</sup> *EPB*, 99, 102, 211. Joseph Sr.’s blessing for Edward Partridge states, “Thy name is written in heaven and will not be blotted out except for willful transgressions.” *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi, 102. *BoM* 237, [Alma 5:58]; Book of Revelation 3:5, 13:8; *EPB*, 102, 211.

<sup>84</sup> The ritual of baptism for the dead (see Chapter Five), which also developed in the early 1840s, promised that even long-deceased family members need not be lost to ill-timed births, but could also join this eternal chain of belonging. Brown, “The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging,” 21; Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 148–149, 211–218.

Post-modernist scholars—along with skeptics of Mormonism—might call the ritual of patriarchal blessing an act of “invention” of both traditions and ethnicities.<sup>85</sup> Joseph Smith Jr. would certainly reject the notion that he “invented” the office of the patriarch. Instead, the younger Smith would say that the precedent that Jacob established in the Bible proved that he was restoring the patriarchal office and its authority to bless and seal family members to each other and to God. Likewise, the Joseph Smith would say that when he laid his hands upon a Saint, he was not inventing that blessing recipient’s ancestry. Instead, this ritual of naming restored these Mormon converts’ consciousness to something that their bodies already knew—that they were literal descendants of the most ancient and sacred of covenants.<sup>86</sup>

And yet scholars of early Mormonism can understand Mormon identity as an “invented” Israelite ethnicity without evoking, as Werner Sollors has written, “a conspiratorial interpretation of a manipulative inventor who single-handedly makes ethnics out of unsuspecting subjects.”<sup>87</sup> Instead, Mormons created *first* their own conception of a literal covenantal family. And like the emergence of other national or ethnic groups in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only *later* in Utah did they create a specific Mormon ethnicity. This ethnicity was fashioned at the intersection of shared ancient kinships, shared literacy of sacred texts (a common “interpretive community”), shared participation in sacred rituals, as well as shared experiences, most notably persecution, exodus, and gathering to their new Zion in the Great Basin.

As I demonstrate later in this dissertation, soon after the assassination of the prophet, the once universalistic Mormon covenant became even more particularistic. In Utah, the Saints found that true Gentiles showed their true Gentile nature through their indifference or antipathy to the

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<sup>85</sup> Sollors, *The Invention of Ethnicity*, x.

<sup>86</sup> As Alide Cagidemetro has written, “myth-oriented cultures develop a strategy of meaning through a chain of naming acts—each separate from the other and consciously meaningful—which build up the mythological canon. In the interplay of mythical and historical thought, the latter is said to acquire the previous mythical arrangement of real facts and people.” Alide Cagidemetro, “A Plea for Fictional Histories and Old-Time Jewesses,” in *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>87</sup> Sollors, *The Invention of Ethnicity*, xi–xii.

Mormons' message. African Americans wore their less than worthy lineage on their skin. And increasingly, the Saints found that most Indians were by nature unrepentant savages, antagonistic to their own Israelite kin and to their own Israelite selves. Yet a decade before the beginning of the Mormons' exodus to Utah, as white "Gentile" Mormons began to discover their own literal connection to the most ancient and favored covenant, the seeds of this new Mormon ethnicity were already planted.<sup>88</sup>

### **Believing Blood and the British Mission**

The discovery found in patriarchal blessings that many, if not most Gentile converts "naturally" belonged to Abraham's family tree, as Joseph Smith himself put it, had implications for how the Mormons understood their missionary successes in the late 1830s and the 1840s. Many of Smith's earliest American-born converts were of English heritage, some with family still in the Old Country. As such, Smith and other Mormon leaders believed that, based on shared linguistic, religious, and even familial roots, the English would be receptive to Mormon missionaries' message.<sup>89</sup> In the spring of 1837, Smith sent Apostles Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde to establish a mission in England and "open the door to salvation" for that nation.<sup>90</sup>

Soon after making landfall in England in the summer of 1837, the missionaries met with immediate success, especially in the mill town of Preston in Lancashire. In particular, the

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<sup>88</sup> Jan Shipps has written that it was exodus trek to Utah that transformed the metaphorical concept of Israelite ethnicity into a literal one. As she puts it, "it was experience more than doctrine" that made the Saints into a particular, ethnic and "chosen" people. Quoting Timothy L. Smith, Shipps argues that in American history, "migration itself is a 'theologizing experience'... Traversing wildernesses on whose yonder side lands of promise may be found turns migrants into chosen populations, lending a peoplehood character to groups formed from persons who shared migratory experiences." To be sure, this exodus experience, and the theological hermeneutic that the Saints developed in response to it, made the boundary lines between the Mormons and their Gentile persecutors even more explicit. Yet I see no reason not to take the early Saints at their word when, in the 1830s, they declared themselves "literal" descendants of the Biblical patriarchs. Jan Shipps, "Making Saints: In the Early Days and the Latter Days," in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, eds. Marie Cornwall et al. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 71; Jan Shipps, "Mormonism," 59–61; Timothy L. Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 5 (1978): 1155–85.

<sup>89</sup> Ronald W. Walker, "Cradling Mormonism: The Rise of the Gospel in Early Victorian England," in *Coming to Zion*, ed. James B. Allen and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 267–73.

<sup>90</sup> James B. Allen, *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837-1841* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 24, 23.

missionaries made inroads with members of the family of the Mormon missionary Joseph Fielding. Fielding's brother, the Methodist minister Rev. James Fielding, and Fielding's brother-in-law the Rev. Timothy Mathews, lent the missionaries their pulpits and found receptive audiences. Soon word of the new gospel spread quickly beyond these Methodist congregations. By the end of 1837, the missionaries had baptized some 700 new converts. Before he left Preston in the spring of 1838, Joseph Fielding estimated that there were nearly one thousand members organized into twenty branches in and around the city.<sup>91</sup>

Over the next three years, subsequent missions led by other apostles, including Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, and Wilford Woodruff, grew the number of British Saints to some 3,626. English cities like Manchester and Liverpool became home to Mormon congregations that rivaled in numbers the Mormon communities in America.<sup>92</sup> In 1840, Parley P. Pratt established the Manchester-based *Millennial Star*, which became the longest continually running LDS publication until 1970, when the *Ensign* replaced it as the international, church-wide publication. Like the *Evening & Morning Star*, the *Millennial Star* reported church news as well as published large sections of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's revelations.<sup>93</sup> Pratt and Young also oversaw the printing of five thousand copies of the Book of Mormon and three thousand hymnals. English publishing houses also produced thousands of other Mormon tracts, including Pratt's own *A Voice of Warning*.<sup>94</sup> And American and newly-anointed English elders distributed this literature and preached before church congregations, temperance organizations, and the merely curious in rented social halls throughout the urban centers of the British Isles.

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<sup>91</sup> Joseph Fielding, Journals, 1837-1859, April 10, 1838, MS 1567, CHL; Allen, *Men with a Mission*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> Rodney Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application," in *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion*, ed. Eric A. Eliason (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 211.

<sup>93</sup> See "Revelations," *MS*, May, 1840; "Discovery of an Ancient Record in America," *MS*, June 1840.

<sup>94</sup> Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism*, 181.

Why such a bountiful harvest in England? To be sure, part of the answer is that Mormonism responded to practical concerns. As was the case among the converts from Yankee New England and Upstate New York, the Mormons were successful in England because their message was well suited for a rapidly industrializing Victorian England, which was experiencing sweeping economic and social change. The missionaries' willingness to welcome all those interested in the gospel contrasted sharply with English denominations that were increasingly divided along class lines. The possibility of emigrating to America was also an attraction. After all, America was a nation where even the "poor and ignorant," but industrious and ambitious, as Young later described the British converts, could buy land, start businesses, and vote.<sup>95</sup>

Yet according to the Mormon missionaries in England, Mormonism's true appeal was found in the spiritual connections to the new gospel that British converts experienced when they first encountered it. As was the case with Sydney Rigdon's Kirtland-based Campbellite community a decade earlier, the missionaries found great success among British-based movements that also stressed immediate spiritual experiences, social reform, and a lay clergy. For example, Wilford Woodruff later claimed that over a span of several months in 1840, he converted and baptized all but one of the 600 United Brethren of the Gadfield Elm chapel in Worcestershire, including dozens of the movement's lay leadership.<sup>96</sup> Such a large harvest of British converts guaranteed the survival of the church during a period rife with internal dissention and external persecution. By the end of 1840, close to one out of four Mormons lived in England, a proportion that would steadily increase

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<sup>95</sup> Brigham Young, "The Lords' Supper, Etc.," July 11, 1869, *JD*, XIII: 148, Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application," 213-214; Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 181-182.

<sup>96</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors as Recorded in His Daily Journals*, ed. Matthias F. Cowley (Deseret News, 1909), 119. Allen, *Men with a Mission*, 120-130.



throughout the next decade, while in the United States the church experienced its greatest schisms and most trying persecutions.<sup>97</sup>

As natural a fit as Mormonism's message was to religious communities already spiritually primed to receive it, the reaction to the gospel from the British converts was equally natural, perhaps even biological. Though perhaps not as common as the belief that Native Americans were the unredeemed descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, in the first half of the nineteenth century, some Anglo-Americans asserted that scattered among the British were long-lost descendants of the House of Israel. For example in 1840, just as the Mormon missionaries were converting thousands of Englishmen, the Scotsman John F. Wilson published *Our Israelitish Origin*. Wilson became a popular speaker on the lecture circuit in England and in America, proclaiming a literal connection between the contemporary population of the British Isles and the lost tribes of Israel. The Mormons shared with Wilson a belief that their new converts were heretofore "invisible" Israelites whose acceptance of Mormonism was not only a matter of faith, but perhaps also a matter of blood.<sup>98</sup> The British

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<sup>97</sup> Even with the outflow of thousands of English Saints gathering first to Nauvoo and later to Utah, by 1850 there were more than 30,000 Latter-day Saints in Britain. According to the territory's first census, the "white" population of Utah in 1850 was 11,354. Stark, "The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application," 211–213.

<sup>98</sup> John Wilson, *Our Israelitish Origin: Lectures on Ancient Israel, and the Israelitish Origin of the Modern Nations of Europe* (London: J. Nisbet, 1840). Armand L. Mauss, "In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (1999): 134–139; Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 18–19. In a letter that he wrote in an 1838 to the missionaries in the British Isles, Apostle David Patten explained that the elders should expect to find that the gospel will be particular "desirable" to a man belonging to the tribe of Ephraim. Hearing it preached "renders him happy, amidst all his trials and afflictions." The letter was initially printed in the July 1838 edition of the Kirtland-based *Elders' Journal*. "Elder Patten's Letter," *MS*, September 1840. In a letter dated September 11, 1839, Joseph Smith Jr. wrote a missionary progress report to the new Mormon convert and Mormon land agent, Isaac Galland, whom Smith charged with overseeing land purchases for the Saints' new gathering place in and around what was then Commerce, Illinois. Due to the great success in England, the gathering, Smith proudly told Galland, would require quite a bit of land. "In England many hundreds have of late been added to our numbers," Smith wrote. While the missionaries were preaching to Gentile communities far and wide, those that came out to join the Mormons proved their true, Israelite identity. "Ephraim he hath mixed himself among the [Gentile] people," Smith quoted from the Old Testament Israelite prophet Hosea. Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, September 11, 1839, (ID # 482), JSPP, accessed May 17, 2013, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-isaac-galland-11-september-1839?dm=Image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=2&s=undefined&sm=none>. The patriarchal blessings that Joseph Smith Sr.'s successors to the office of Presiding Patriarch, Hyrum and Samuel Smith, performed for the British Saints gathering in Nauvoo, in which descent from Ephraim was frequently named, supported Joseph Smith Jr.'s contention that the British converts' attraction to the Mormon gospel was related to their descent from Ephraim. See for example, Hyrum Smith's patriarchal blessings for Mary Isabella Horne, born in Rocenham, Kent County, England, and Samuel Smith's blessing of Charles Lambert from Weatherby, England. *EPB*, 227, 263.

converts readily accepted the Mormons' message because they discovered that this gospel was both the religion of their immediate families, for example the families of Joseph Fielding, and their ancient kin. As they discovered in their patriarchal blessings, British converts were not Gentiles, but were in fact by their nature the "seed of Abraham." As the Mormons would later describe it, these converts had "believing blood;" their blood was predisposed to believe in the Mormons' gospel.<sup>99</sup>

The relatively scant interest in the Mormons' gospel among the Jews whom Orson Hyde encountered in Europe and in Jerusalem confirmed the Saints' belief that Judah was not ready for restoration. However, the fact that, at the 1841 conference in Manchester on April 6, 1841 celebrating the eleventh anniversary of the church's founding, the British church counted 5,814 members, with 800 having already emigrated to America, clearly demonstrated that the gathering of the lost tribes of Israel was occurring as prophesied.<sup>100</sup>

The initial failure to convert the Lamanites and the Jews proved that believing blood alone does not lead to belief in the new gospel. The Saints reasoned from this that not all believing blood is created equal. After all, the Jews were descendants of Judah, the benighted betrayers of Christ, their own kinsman. Likewise, the Lamanites, and on occasion the Nephites, who showed their antipathy towards the gospel during Book of Mormon times, would come to be associated with Joseph's second, and less favored son, Manasseh.<sup>101</sup> Judah, Manasseh, and Ephraim might all be

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<sup>99</sup> For a nineteenth-century articulation of "believing blood," see Orson F. Whitney, "Why I am a Mormon," *The Contributor*, January 1887. The import of the notion of literal "believing blood" grew during the early and mid-twentieth century and was most forcefully articulated by Church Historian and briefly Church President Joseph Fielding Smith as well as his son-in-law, Apostle Bruce McConkie. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 22–23, 31–34.

<sup>100</sup> "Conference Minutes," *MS*, April 1841. The growth abroad was so great that one church patriarch would not suffice. While his father, and his father's successors would serve as Presiding Patriarch over the entire, globalizing church, on June 27, 1839 Joseph Smith Jr. established the position of a stake patriarch. A year after he became the first patriarch in England Peter Melling blessed John Albertson, named him "of the blood of Ephraim," and ordained him to the office of the Patriarch. One patriarch was not enough to meet the needs of the ever-increasing number of British Saints. *LPB*, 100–101.

<sup>101</sup> Mauss, "In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race," 132, 149.

named Abraham's seed. But each branch of Abraham's tree confirmed their hierarchical order by their relative receptivity to the gospel.

And yet, beyond this explanation it is important to remember that the Mormons rejected the Puritan concept of an "irresistible grace" and "limited atonement," and instead believed that salvation was available to all who choose it. Onetime editor of the *Millennial Star*, Orson F. Whitney wrote decades later that belief in Mormonism was biological, even racial. "As well might the leopard hope to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin... [it is impossible] for a child of Israel to rid himself in this life of the blood that flows in his veins... Believing blood will believe, in the Church." And yet even those who belong to sacred covenantal lineages can reject it. "If spirit can rebel, surely blood can, even the blood of Israel, and forsaking its first love, turn away from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."<sup>102</sup>

However in the second half of the 1830s, the importance of shared lineages, explicitly named in the ritual of the patriarchal blessing, became an increasingly important marker of membership in the church. The Mormons were not just a covenanted community of believers. They belonged to an ever-expanding network of intersecting family trees. And during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, at least for white Saints, the most important branch of this tree was that of Ephraim, Joseph's most favored son. "It is Ephraim that I have been searching for all the days of my preaching," declared the former head of the British mission and then Church President Brigham Young in 1855, "and that is the blood that ran [through] my veins when I embraced the gospel." In 1893, another onetime British missionary leader and then Church President Wilford Woodruff made the connection between the Saints and Ephraim even more explicit. "Ninety-nine out of every

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<sup>102</sup> Orson F. Whitney, "Why I Am a Mormon," *The Contributor*, January 1887.

hundred of this people are descendants of Ephraim that have been scattered among the nations.”<sup>103</sup>

Not all of Ephraim became Mormon. But almost all Mormons were Ephraim.

For the Saints, the great success of the British mission meant that Mormonism was something much more than a new religious movement. It was the restoration of ancient, sacred families. The Saints were kin, “brethren,” both in the body of Christ and in the literal seed of Abraham. The restored Mormon gospel was the salvific catalyst that served to gather these lost and found kin together, first in England and then in the new Zion in America.

### **The Patriarch and the Priesthood**

The ritualized naming of patrilineage defined the hierarchal order in the restored church. And patrilineage defined the priesthood. In 1835, just as Joseph Smith Sr. began performing patriarchal blessings for Saints outside his immediate family, Joseph Smith Jr. revealed that “the order of [the restored] priesthood” was patrilineal, “handed down from father to son.” The prophet specified that “this order” was established at the beginning of human history, with Adam. Adam passed the priesthood to Seth, his firstborn and “a perfect man.” Adam also ordained his great-grandson Methuselah. And “under [his] hand,” Methuselah ordained his grandson Noah.<sup>104</sup>

This 1835 revelation was certainly not the first time that Smith spoke about the central role the priesthood would play in the building the kingdom of God.<sup>105</sup> In 1830, Smith revealed that the priesthood had been lost to the apostasy of the Lamanites in the New World and the “abominable church” in the Old. Yet it had been restored in this last dispensation when the Lord sent Peter, James, and John the Baptist to ordain Joseph Smith, who in turn ordained his first followers. On

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<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Mauss, “In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race,” 131.

<sup>104</sup> *D&C* (1835), Section III [*D&C* 107 40-52], *RT* (Vol. 2), 392-399.

<sup>105</sup> The prophets of the Book of Mormon refer to the priesthood as the organizing principle of God’s creation. Alma describes it as an office “without beginning or end,” and an office that embodies grace, equity, and truth of God. *BofM*, 259 [Alma 13:8]. During his time in America, Christ established the “power” of the priesthood among his Nephite disciples, most notably the authority to baptize believers into his church through the laying on of hand. *BofM* 478, 493 [3 Nephi 11:21–22; 3 Nephi 18:36–37].

April 6, 1830, the day the Church of Christ was established, Smith taught the Mormons' first priesthood holders how to baptize and ordain others.<sup>106</sup> Early the next year, Smith revealed that it was the law of the church that only those Saints properly ordained by priesthood holders have the authority to preach the gospel and “teach the scriptures which are in the Bible & the Book of Mormon.”<sup>107</sup> Yet, beyond baptism, belief in Christ, and ordination by the laying on of hands, no special training was required to hold the priesthood. As such, the Mormons' priesthood stood in sharp contrast with what they often derided as the “priestcraft” of the professional Protestant clergy as well as the priests of the Catholic Church. The Mormons believed that their priesthood was a restoration of the primitive church's priesthood in which all (male) believers had the authority to serve Christ and to expand the kingdom of God.

As much as the priesthood was to be expansive, Smith realized that it also required order. At the June 1831 conference in Kirtland, Smith ordained future apostle Lyman Wight into the priesthood and set him “apart for service to the Indians, and was ordained to the gift of tongues.” Yet Wight apparently took this authority too far when he began speaking in tongues, actions that led other Saints attending the conference to express erratic and uncivilized behavior.<sup>108</sup> In a revelation, Smith chastised Wight, labeling his actions satanic instead of godly. Smith used this occasion to connect true religious experience with priesthood authority. A true “priest” of the restored church would be one whose speech is “meek” and edifying. Such a priest would be known by the “fruits of Praise” that he brings forth, whereas Satan would prey upon those who allows themselves to be “overcometh” with enthusiasm, and thus “bringeth not forth fruit.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Revelation, August 1830 [*D&C* 27: 12-13], *RT* (Vol. 1), 41-43; Revelation April 6, 1830 [*D&C* 20-67], *RT* (Vol. 1), 74-87.

<sup>107</sup> Revelation, February 9, 1831 [*D&C* 42: 11-12], *RT* (Vol. 1), 94-97.

<sup>108</sup> Ezra Booth, “Letter IV,” in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 188–189.

<sup>109</sup> Revelation, June 6, 1831 [*D&C* 52: 12-18], *RT* (Vol. 1), 149. Throughout his lifetime, Smith's conception of the intersection of authentic revelation and the authority of the hierarchical and increasingly hereditary priesthood evolved in

Over the next two years, Smith further ordered the priesthood into an elaborate hierarchy in which priesthood officers were assigned specific duties, ordained with appropriate authorities, and organized into “quorums” according to their offices. For example, recognizing a need for hierarchical structure for the planned-for national and global missions, Smith charged the Quorum of the Twelve and the “Seventy” with the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world. Deacons, teachers, and bishops were called to manage the affairs within Zion.<sup>110</sup> Smith also revealed that within the priesthood itself, there existed two divisions; the higher “Melchizedek” priesthood administers “spiritual” ordinances and holds “the key of mysteries of the kingdom.” The lesser “Aaronic” priesthood administers “outward” ordinances, like baptism and the sacrament.<sup>111</sup>

Though it was an essential building block of the Mormon hierarchy, the priesthood was more than an administrative office. It was also the organizing principle of the Mormons’ reimagined conception of Israel’s covenantal family, a family restored in this lifetime and “sealed” up for the eternal life to come.<sup>112</sup> As early as September 1832, Smith first revealed that, through their ordination, priesthood holders of the latter-day Church of Christ “become sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham.”<sup>113</sup> For the first five years of the church, most latter-day priesthood holders’ patrilineal bond with their Biblical forefathers was believed to be the fruit of spiritual adoption. When Smith first revealed the shape of the Mormon priesthood hierarchy in 1831, there was no mention of ancient biblical priesthood lineages. But in April 1835 when Joseph Smith

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response to such on-the-ground circumstances. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994), 14–15.

<sup>110</sup> *D&C* (1835), Section III [*D&C* 107: 60-100], *RT* (Vol. 2), 392-399. The organization and duties of the Mormon hierarchy remained in constant flux during Smith’s lifetime. The modern-day priesthood took shape only after Smith’s assassination when Brigham Young assumed leadership of most of Smith’s followers. Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 177–178; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 14–38.

<sup>111</sup> Revelation, September 22, 23, 1832 [*D&C* 84: 1-26], *RT* (Vol. 1), 274-278. See also *D&C* (1835), Section IV [*D&C* 84], *RT* (Vol. 2), 399-405; *D&C* (1835), Section III [*D&C* 107: 1-14], *RT* (Vol. 2), 392-394.

<sup>112</sup> Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 148–149.

<sup>113</sup> Revelation, September 22, 23, 1832 [*D&C* 84: 34], *RT* (Vol. 1), 278-279. See also *D&C* (1835), Section IV [*D&C* 84], *RT* (Vol. 2), 399-405. *D&C* (1835), Section III [*D&C* 107: 1-14], *RT* (Vol. 2), 392-394.

expanded the hierarchical organization that he first laid out four years earlier, the distance between patrilineage and priesthood collapsed. The laying on of hands of one Melchizedek priesthood holder conferred the same priesthood to another worthy Saint, whatever the lineage. Yet by birthright, the Saint who was “a litteral [*sic*] descendant of Aaron,” Moses’ brother and the first “high priest” of the biblical Israelites, has the “legal right” to high priesthood, the office required to serve in any leadership capacity in the church.<sup>114</sup>

The priesthood increasingly became a family business, the “keys” of which were passed down from ancient Israelite fathers to latter-day Mormon sons. At the same time that Joseph Smith Jr. was first articulating the import of Israelite patrilineage for the priesthood within the church-wide hierarchy, his father’s patriarchal blessings revealed how individual Saints’ genealogies related to their priesthood authority. For example on April 30, 1835, Joseph Smith Sr. declared that because Jonathan H. Hale, a future bishop of Nauvoo, was already “of the blood of Israel... the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood shall come upon thee.” Likewise, because Wilford Woodruff was a descendent of Joseph and “of the blood of Ephraim,” Woodruff “shalt have great blessings,” including the “power and authority of the Melchisedeck [*sic*] priesthood.” What’s more, the patrilineage authorities would extend into future generations. The patriarch told Woodruff, “thy sons shall receive the priesthood.”<sup>115</sup> These blessings reveal that the early Saints began to understand that rights to the priesthood were a result of birth, and not simply a condition of belief.

By the time the patriarch blessed Hale and Woodruff in 1835 and 1837, it became a matter of course that Joseph Smith Sr. concluded his blessings with a pronouncement of a “seal” of “eternal life,” indicating that the blessing recipient was promised membership in the heavenly kingdom to come. To be sure, the Saints appropriated the term “seal” from both the Abrahamic and

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<sup>114</sup> Compare Revelation, November 11, 1831 [*D&C* 107], *RT* (Vol. 1), 217-219 with *D&C* (1835), Section III [*D&C* 107: 16, 17, 40, 69, 70], *RT* (Vol. 2), 392-399. Green, “Gathering and Election: Israelite Descent and Universalism in Mormon Discourse,” 198. Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers*, 75.

<sup>115</sup> *EPB*, 27, 155.

Puritan traditions, in which seals signified the formation of covenantal bonds between individuals and the community as well as with God. But as the Mormon tradition developed, Mormon sealings took on another meaning. As part of patriarchal blessings, as part of the ordination of priesthood holders and members of the hierarchy, and later, as part of the endowment rituals of the Mormon temple, the act of sealing also conferred authority and responsibilities within the restored church.<sup>116</sup> Wilford Woodruff's seal was intended to both "guard [him] against [Satan] the destroyer" as well as empower him to lead the gathering of Saints. In the blessing that he "seal[ed]" upon the head of Dana Jacobs, and whom he named "a son of Joseph through the loins of Ephraim," Joseph Smith Sr. declared that Jacobs would "stand as Samuel[,] the Lamanite did" on the walls of Zarahemla. Like Samuel, Jacobs would proclaim the "Gospel of the kingdom" before some who would believe him and join the Saints, while "others shall persecute [him]."<sup>117</sup> Seals conferring authority came from the power of the priesthood, which in turn came from literal connections to the ancient patriarchs as well as those connections forged—made literal—through adoption that changed Gentile blood into the blood of Israel.

### **The Book of Abraham**

Revelation and patriarchal blessings were not the only sources for the restored knowledge that priesthood and patrilineage were intricately connected. In 1835, the same year that both Joseph Smith Jr. and his father began declaring the priesthood a birthright for those named descendants of Abraham, the younger Smith began yet another ambitious translation project, which reinforced his belief that a Saint's priesthood authority was inherited from his father and his ancient forefathers.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers*, 22, 64.

<sup>117</sup> Jacobs blessing indicated that he should expect to be persecuted when he proselytizes "in the midst of the Roman Catholics," hoping to find spiritual and even biological kin scattered within the (supposed) most abominable of Gentile churches. *EPB*, 155, 165.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Bushman has written that "the Book of Abraham can be considered an extension of the priesthood revelations that had influenced the Church [in the mid 1830s]." Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 287, 286–293.



After Jean Francois Champollion used the Rosetta Stone to decipher ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics in 1822, interest in all things Egyptian spread across Europe and America. In an attempt to profit off of the public's great demand, Michael H. Chandler purchased a set of mummies and other Egyptian artifacts. Over the next two years, Chandler and his mummies toured the U.S., exhibiting his collections in cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore where, according to Chandler's advertisements, people lined up to see "strangers" from antiquity who "may have lived in the days of Jacob, Moses, or David."<sup>119</sup>

In July 1835, Chandler made a special trip to Kirtland in hopes of employing Smith's translation skills to help him decipher ancient Egyptian papyri that he had purchased with the mummies, and perhaps in hopes of tempting Smith to buy his collection. After all, Smith had already translated one ancient record—the Nephite plates—from their original "middle Egyptian" into the Book of Mormon. While scholars have disputed Smith's claims, to Smith's prophetic eye the papyri's hieroglyphics spelled out "the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt... and written by his own hand."<sup>120</sup> Though the community was already financially overleveraged due to the construction of the Kirtland Temple, with the help of other Kirtland Saints, Smith raised \$2,400 to purchase the papyri along with four of Chandler's mummies.<sup>121</sup>

Ironically a half a century later, the histories of the papyri and the temple would converge again. By the 1880s the exegesis of a few passages of what would be canonized as the Book of Abraham served as a popular scriptural justification for banning black men from the priesthood and banning black men and women from the most sacred parts of the temple where rituals like marriage

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<sup>119</sup> "Egyptian Antiquities," *T&S*, May 2, 1842.

<sup>120</sup> "A Translation," *T&S*, March, 1842. While Smith translated the Book of Abraham in 1835, it was not published until 1842 when *T&S* published it in series. For a summary of the century-long controversy over the papyri see Richard Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 286–290.

<sup>121</sup> Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 286. Oliver Cowdery, "Egyptian Mummies," *Messenger and Advocate*, December 1835, 233-235.

sealings and other ordinances were performed.<sup>122</sup> In 1830s however, the Book of Abraham served a more immediate function. It provided ancient scriptural support for Smith's evolving views on the connection between priesthood and descent from biblical patriarchs.<sup>123</sup>

Like the Books of Mormon and Moses, the Book of Abraham expands on familiar biblical themes. In Joseph Smith's translation, Abraham becomes not only the father of many nations, but also the first patriarch to articulate the origins of the patrilineal priesthood. Abraham explains that the priesthood "was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the beginning of time... [from] the first man who is Adam, our first father." Describing the genesis of ancient Egypt, Abraham writes that "Pharaoh" "the eldest son of Egyptus, and the daughter of Ham," was a "righteous man, [who] established his kingdom and judged his people wisely." Despite receiving "blessings of the earth, and... blessings of wisdom," because he was of the lineage of Ham, he and his descendants were "cursed as pertaining to the priesthood."<sup>124</sup>

The priesthood authority was literally patrilineal. While Ham's (and Pharaoh's) descendants would not have access to it, God explained to Abraham that his own "seed" was synonymous with the priesthood. "In thy seed (that is, thy priesthood) for I give unto thee a promise that this right [of the priesthood] shall continue in thee, and in they seed after thee, (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body)." Yet the Book of Abraham also presents the potential for an ever-expanding covenant. The Lord promised to make of Abraham "a great nation," a nation that would not only include his own progeny, but this progeny would also be charged with "bearing this ministry and

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<sup>122</sup> For the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century use of the Book of Abraham, canonized as part of the Pearl of Great Price, see Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," 79–81.

<sup>123</sup> The papyri also provided an authentic physical connection to the ancient world, which was particularly important due to the conspicuous absence of the Nephite golden plates. In the summer 1835, W.W. Phelps, who worked alongside Smith in his translation, implied that perhaps even better than the testimonies of the eleven witnesses to the physical Nephite archive, "the papyri will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon." W.W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, Liberty, MO, July 20, 1835, cited in "Introduction to Egyptian Material," JSPP, accessed August 12, 2013, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/intro/introduction-to-egyptian-material>.

<sup>124</sup> "A Translation," *T&S*, March, 1842, [Abraham 1:3; 1:26-27].

Priesthood unto all nations... I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed.”<sup>125</sup>

The Book of Abraham thus presents the priesthood as both particular and potentially universal. The priesthood is an inherited authority. But it is also an authority that is intended to be shared: to restore, through the act of adoption—first ritualized in the patriarchal blessing, and later in the temple—the less favored biblical lineages to the heavenly father’s good graces, and to bind up the human family and make it grow in this world and in the next. And yet, the Book of Abraham also makes clear the limitations to this universalism. Certain lineages—namely that of Ham—would not be eligible for the priesthood.

There is no evidence that during his lifetime Smith or any of his followers cited the Book of Abraham to deny black men the priesthood. In fact just months before Smith purchased and began translating the Book of Abraham, in the February 1835 edition of the *Messenger & Advocate*, Oliver Cowdery once again articulated the essential Mormon message of the offer of universal salvation—that Christ’s sacrifice expanded the covenant that once only belonged to Abraham’s seed. “Whether they are descendants of Shem, Ham, or Japheth, in Christ they should be blessed.”<sup>126</sup>

Yet Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham reflects his own ambivalent views on black spiritual potential, views that he recorded in his revelatory translations, but did not act upon in his personal relationships with African Americans. Pharaoh and Ham in the Book of Abraham, along with Cain in the Book of Moses, and Laman in the Book of Mormon, present a caveat to Smith’s own theological universalism, which insisted that every individual enters this world blameless, without shouldering the sins of his fathers. Not until the 1880s when the Book of Abraham was canonized did Pharaoh’s priesthood curse become the “lynchpin” of the black

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. [Abraham 2: 9-11].

<sup>126</sup> “The Gospel,” *Me&A*, February 1835.

exclusion.<sup>127</sup> By then the sons and daughters of Cain and Ham wore on their skin markers that signified immutable curses that even patriarchal adoption into the covenant could not overcome.

### **From Gentile to Israelite**

It is important not to overstate how quickly the Saints' covenantal contract *contracted* from its universal beginnings. What would become in the Utah period a "peculiar" even an "ethnic" Mormon identity, remained in the 1830s and early 1840s largely inchoate. As Jan Shipps has argued, in the first decades of Mormon history, the formula for "making Saints" appeared to differ little from the process of "making converts to Protestant churches." Acceptance of the Mormon gospel, obedience to Joseph Smith's revelations, acceptance of the authority of the priesthood, and baptism into the Church of Christ, was enough to make anybody a Mormon.

Yet unlike members of many evangelical Protestant traditions, Mormons began to understand conversion into their church as the result of heretofore-undiscovered patrilineal descent from biblical patriarchs. Save for the few Gentiles whose conversions made them into "new creations," even with new blood of Abraham coursing through their veins, the Holy Spirit did not have to "renovate" many converts' whole beings, as Charles Grandison Finney might have said about evangelical "rebirth" and sanctification.<sup>128</sup>

Conversion was not the *cause* of new life. Instead it was the *effect* of descent from ancient biblical forefathers still present in their blood.<sup>129</sup> The missionaries in America and in the British Isles

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<sup>127</sup> And Klaus J. Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 187; Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 238.

<sup>128</sup> Mr. Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 19.

<sup>129</sup> Even setting aside the idea of literal descent from ancient patriarchs of the covenant, Mormons understood conversion differently than nineteenth-century evangelical "perfectionists" like Finney, who asserted that the Holy Spirit could so infuse a convert that any trace of the sinner's nature could be eradicated. As Matthew Bowman has written, "there's little sense of the radical regeneration of a depraved human soul in Mormon language about conversion; rather, Mormons emphasize process and effort. They see in conversion not metaphysical transformation but the cultivation of character." Matthew Bowman, "The Conversion of Parley Pratt: Investigating the Patterns of Mormon Piety," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 185.

found receptive audiences because these converts had an innate, perhaps even a “genetic” yearning to hear and accept Mormonism.<sup>130</sup> As much as their minds and hearts, the Saints thought these converts’ blood was predisposed to the message of the gospel.

Likewise, other Gentiles seemed to prove their true Gentile ontology by their indifference or antagonism to the Mormon gospel. And on the pages of their millennialist pamphlets, Mormon missionaries made the distinction between (Israelite) Saints and Gentiles increasingly explicit. In his *Timely Warning to the People of England* (1837) published in the Mormon stronghold of Preston, England, Orson Hyde warned the Gentiles of the great political and natural upheavals—war, famine, earthquakes—that would precede the millennium. Hyde proclaimed that time grew short for Gentiles to join the covenant made available to them through Christ’s sacrifice.<sup>131</sup>

The same promise of the church’s first three years applied: Gentiles could still participate in the covenantal contract by uniting with the remnants of Israel. But by the mid-1830s the category of Israelite meant more than Lamanite. Israel was embodied in those Mormon converts whose patriarchal blessings named them literally Abraham’s heirs. And while the offer to join the covenant was universal, Orson Hyde, for one, made clear that salvation itself was not universal. As was the case “in the days of Noah,” before the great flood, Hyde prophesied that before the “great millennium” not all will heed the warnings, be converted and brought “into the ark of safety.”<sup>132</sup>

During the height of the Mormons’ missionary success in June 1840, writing in his journal, Wilford Woodruff made the distinction between unbelieving Gentiles and (Israelite) Saints unequivocal. Because of the continued persecution the Mormons endured at the hands of the “Gentile” nation of America, most recently the Haun’s Mill Massacre, the Saints’ final expulsion

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<sup>130</sup> Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1986), 86.

<sup>131</sup> Orson Hyde, *Timely Warning to the People of England: Of Every Sect and Denomination, and to Every Individual Into Whose Hands It May Fall* (Preston, England: A. Charlwood, 1837). For descriptions of the “olive tree,” see Romans 11, especially verses 17-28. See also (*BoM*) Jacob 5:10.

<sup>132</sup> Orson Hyde, *Timely Warning to the People of England*.

from Missouri, the five-month imprisonment of Joseph Smith and other leading Saints in the Liberty Jail, and increased anti-Mormonism in England itself, Woodruff wrote that “England & America” would not be “excepted” in the final judgment. Instead these nations “are ownly fuel for the fire & tinder for the Breath of the Almighty.” The Mormons’ Gentile persecutors had “trodden” down the two branches of Israel, “Judah & Ephram.” But Woodruff warned, Israel “will rise again & fullfill the word of God on thee!”<sup>133</sup> For Woodruff, in England as it was in America, a “Gentile” shows his true colors in response to the gospel; a Gentile rejects it, an Israelite embraces it.

This belief that exaltation is somehow an inherited family trait existed in tension with a universalistic, covenantal community to which Saints dedicated themselves in the first three years of the church’s history, and to which, in principle, they remained committed through the early 1840s. In June 1840 as Heber C. Kimball described the nature of the British converts in Preston, “The Saints, in general, as they have been baptized into one body are partakers of the same spirit, whether they be Jew or Gentile, bond or free.”<sup>134</sup> And yet, despite Kimball’s paraphrase here of Paul’s universalistic message to the Galatians (and its echoes of Nephi’s own description of the universal covenant, open to “black and white, bond and free”), race mattered when it came to the creation of the restored House of Israel, and would matter even more in the coming years and decades.

British, and later, Scandinavian converts passed with relative ease into the “universal” category of American whiteness. These converts from “Gentile” nations were easily renamed the seed of Abraham.<sup>135</sup> And their new, or rediscovered, name allowed these (male) converts to be appointed to the priesthood. However, as the Saints made the priesthood a birthright reserved only for those who could claim Abrahamic lineage, the difference between “black and white” did affect

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<sup>133</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898: Typescript*, ed. Scott C. Kenney, vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 469. Reports of the “Missouri Persecutions” were frequently printed in the *MS*. For example, dsee December, 1840; January, 1841.

<sup>134</sup> Heber C. Kimball, “Letter to the Editor,” *MS*, June, 1840.

<sup>135</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 39–90.

who could participate fully in the Mormon covenant. Those who wore their biblical lineages on their skin—the cursed descendants of Cain, Ham, and Canaan—could not so easily be renamed as Abraham, Joseph, or Ephraim.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: “Aunt Jane” or Joseph’s Adopted Daughter?**

In late 1843, Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma Hale Smith, greeted Jane Manning and eight of her family members at the front door of the Nauvoo Mansion House, the prophet’s home in the Saints’ booming city-state built on the banks of the Mississippi in western Illinois. The travelers were exhausted. The Mannings had trekked from their home in Connecticut, where the black converts first heard and accepted the Mormon gospel, to join their new spiritual brethren in Nauvoo. Yet before he sent them to bed, Joseph ushered the Mannings into the Mansion House’s sitting room. He also gathered the house’s other residences, including the prophet’s personal physician John Bernhisel, his mother Lucy Mack and perhaps even his secret plural wives, Eliza and Emily Partridge and Sarah and Mariah Lawrence who also lived in the house as servants. Joseph was anxious to hear from Jane Manning, whom he called “the head of this little band,” about how the Mannings managed to make the 1,000-mile trek, much of which they had completed on foot.

And Jane did not disappoint. She told Smith and the rest of the Mansion House’s residences of a faith-testing journey, during which her family faced destitution, race-based persecution from both Mormons and non-Mormons alike, even threats of imprisonment for traveling without “free papers,” as well as early autumn snows. Jane explained that they were guided only by their faith in the Lord and the promise of fellowship at the end of their voyage.

This harrowing story, which won Jane Manning the admiration of Joseph Smith himself as well as others who heard it, was not written down in 1843 in Nauvoo, but a half-century later in Salt Lake City. In 1893, Elizabeth J. D. Roundy helped Jane Manning James—she would take the surname James after marrying another black Mormon, Isaac James, in the mid-1840s— to record the black Mormon pioneer’s autobiography. By then, James was no longer a young, new convert, nor a stranger to most Mormons. Instead she was the elderly “Aunt Jane,” the most famous black



Mormon in the Great Basin, respected for her indefatigable faith in Mormonism and for her memories of Mormonism’s first prophet, whom she called “the finest man I ever saw on earth.”<sup>1</sup>



Figure 5:1. 1897 Pioneer Jubilee Photograph, Temple Square, Salt Lake City, Utah.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1890s, despite her advanced age, James’s face belied her seventy-one years. It lacked the deep creases and liver spots that marked the faces of most of the other “old folks” as they were known in turn-of-the-century Salt Lake City, who first settled the valley a half century before. It also helped that she still had most of her teeth.

Yet an illness had left her thin. And her eyesight was all but gone. Because she could no longer read or write, James asked Roundy to help her create a written record of her “verbal statement,” as Roundy wrote in the preface to the original copy of the narrative. Over the next several years, the women worked together to archive not only the story of James and her family’s conversion to Mormonism and the trials of their trek to Nauvoo, which she first told the Mansion House residents in 1843. But James also regaled her scribe with all that came after it: how James became a servant to Mormonism’s first two prophets; an early Mormon pioneer; a matriarch of a large Mormon family; and a faithful, tithe-paying Saint throughout the second half of the nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Susa Young Gates [editor and compiler], “Aunt Jane” James in “Joseph Smith, the Prophet.” *Young Woman’s Journal* 16, no. 12 (December 1905): 551–53.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, accessed January 3, 2013, <http://www.dupinternational.org/jubilee/pioneers.htm>.

century, a time during which she, her husband, and their children participated in the building up the Mormons' Zion in the high plains desert of the intermountain West.<sup>3</sup>

For her part, Roundy was perhaps more interested in James's memories of Joseph Smith than she was interested in James's own history. An English convert who settled in Utah in 1870, Roundy had spent the previous two decades championing efforts to document and commemorate the life of Mormonism's founder. Sometimes accompanied by her friend, the poetess and Joseph's widowed plural wife, Eliza R. Snow, Roundy traveled the Salt Lake Valley collecting firsthand accounts of the life and words of the prophet from his earliest converts before this first generation of Mormons passed away.<sup>4</sup>

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Roundy was one of a number of prominent Latter-day Saints who worked to preserve the Mormon people's peculiar identity in a post-polygamy era. These Mormons emphasized their faith's origin myths, especially around the personage of Joseph Smith, his mandate to restore Christ's church, and the authority of his prophetic successors to continue to speak in the present tense on God's behalf.<sup>5</sup> In contrast James's stake in further affirming Joseph Smith as the exemplar of prophethood was at once more personal and political: a revisionist history about Smith's attitudes and actions towards Mormons of African descent.

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<sup>3</sup> Jane E. Manning James and Elizabeth J. D. Roundy, "Biography of Jane E. James," circa 1902, MS 4425, CHL. In his groundbreaking study of James, Henry Wolfinger points out that while James began her autobiography in 1893 it was clearly revised and updated. For example, James implies that Joseph F. Smith was church president, a position that Smith did not assume until 1901. Henry Wolfinger, "A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community," 170 n. 86.

<sup>4</sup> In 1887, Roundy and Snow visited the elderly Hosea Stout, Smith's onetime bodyguard, Utah pioneer, and territorial politician, at Stout's home outside of Salt Lake City. Like James, at the end of his life Stout, who had been one of early Mormonism's most prolific diarists, turned to Roundy to record his memories because his health prevented him from writing them down himself. "Hosea Stout Statement," September 1887, transcription by Elizabeth J. D. Roundy, MS 3096, CHL. Roundy also organized a successful campaign to establish Joseph Smith's birthday, December 23, as a church-wide day of remembrance and memorialization. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1901), 810–811.

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Flake, "Re-Placing Memory: Latter-day Saint Use of Historical Monuments and Narrative in the Early Twentieth Century," *Religion and American Culture* 13, no. 1 (2003): 69–109.

According to James, such a revision was needed. In turn-of-the-century Utah, James was publicly celebrated as a Smith family confidante, and lionized as a pioneer of 1847 (Figure 5:1), the first year that Mormons settled in the Great Salt Lake Basin. For the last two decades of her life, when the church gathered for General Conference and other special occasions, James and her brother Isaac Manning occupied a cushioned seat at the front of Salt Lake City's tabernacle.<sup>6</sup> Just hours after her passing at noon on April 16, 1908, the *Deseret News* rushed to publish an obituary of "Aunt Jane" on the front page of its evening edition. The church-owned paper lauded the "aged colored woman" for remaining "loyal and true to [Smith's] memory" since the prophet's death in 1844. Five days later, the *Deseret News* reported that Joseph Smith Jr.'s nephew and namesake, Church President Joseph F. Smith spoke at James's funeral during which she was praised as a woman of "undaunted faith and goodness of heart."<sup>7</sup>

Yet, the great fanfare with which the Mormon leadership marked James's death belies the fact that because she was black, James was excluded from full participation in the most important rituals of the church to which she had shown unbound dedication from the moment of her conversion in the early 1840s until her death in the spring of 1908.<sup>8</sup> For the last several decades of her life, James engaged in a letter writing campaign, petitioning church presidents to allow her access to the temple. Before she died, James desperately wanted to participate in the sacred temple ordinances that Mormons believed are required for exaltation in the life to come. But, as she makes clear in her autobiography and in her letters to the prophets of Zion, she was not alone in her desire that she be raised above the lowly, cursed station into which she was born. James claimed that in Nauvoo, the Smith offered to adopt her as his spiritual child, which would allow James to join his

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<sup>6</sup> "Prophet's Servant, Old Negro, Dead," *The Salt Lake Evening Telegram*, April 13, 1911.

<sup>7</sup> "Death of Jane Manning James," *Deseret News*, April 16, 1908; "Aunt Jane Laid to Rest: President Joseph F. Smith Speaks at the Funeral of Aged Colored Woman," *Deseret News*, April 21, 1908.

<sup>8</sup> Portions of this chapter have been published in: Max Perry Mueller, "Playing Jane: Re-Presenting Black Mormon Memory through Reenacting the Black Mormon Past," *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 4 (2013): 513–61.

family for eternity. James did not just want a seat in the tabernacle. She wanted a place in the prophet's eternal household.

Joseph Smith Jr.'s successors, most notably Joseph F. Smith, declared this impossible. Even for the faithful Jane Manning James, there was no place for a black woman in the eternal family of the prophet—except, perhaps, as a servant. The doors to the temple and to the highest levels of heaven were closed to James and all sons and daughters of Cain, Ham, and Canaan.

Yet James chronicled a time in Joseph Smith's Nauvoo Mansion House when the Mormon covenant was not so racially circumscribed, memories that she verbally recounted to Roundy, and which Roundy recorded with pen and paper. This archived memory of a more racially inclusive first Mormon prophet—and more racially inclusive period in Mormon history—stood in sharp contrast with the opinions of the Mormon brethren in late nineteenth-century Utah. They insisted that the ban on full black church membership had been in place since the beginning of the restoration. And with the canonization of Joseph Smith's translation of the Books of Moses and Abraham in 1880, which contained descriptions of divine curses placed upon Cain, Ham, and their progeny, church leaders increasingly argued that these curses extended back to history's first family, Adam and Eve, and carried through to the establishment of the Abrahamic covenant itself.

While Smith successors were actively working to marginalize or redact altogether Joseph Smith's racial open-mindedness, James had the advantage of having lived in the prophet's own home. She was thus a first-hand witness to and, she would argue, a beneficiary of, Smith's racial magnanimity.<sup>9</sup> And for James, such a privileged experience carried authority. James deployed this authority to subtly challenge the hierarchy's theologies regarding the incompatibility between full church membership and supposed black accursedness.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 524.

Using the case of Jane Manning James as the point of entry, in this chapter I explore the place of people of African descent in the restored church during the Nauvoo period, roughly 1839-1846. It was during this short-lived era—when Joseph Smith oversaw the largest, and most successful Mormon community established during his lifetime—that the early Latter-day Saints most fully expressed, and to a certain degree acted out an inclusive attitude about the potential for reconciliation of the supposedly cursed sons and daughters of Cain and Ham with the original, white human family. When it came to racial mutability, many leading Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo held to the Book of Mormon’s anti-Calvinistic precedent; even for those born of lineages burdened with the curses of their forefathers, paternity was not destiny. Likewise, in this chapter, I briefly demonstrate that during the Nauvoo period, the inverse was also true. Through the persecution of God’s chosen people and the rejection of God’s designated prophets on earth, even people born white can become cursed. I also briefly discuss the Mormon’s attitude and limited outreach to the Lamanites during the Saints’ time in Illinois.

However Nauvoo is not this chapter’s only point of reference for early Mormon relations with black people. The most detailed source for the Nauvoo period is James’s own autobiography, written in Salt Lake City fifty years removed from the events that she remembered and had written down. Thus, much of this chapter looks back upon the relationship between blacks and Mormons in Nauvoo in the mid-1840s through the lens of Salt Lake City a half a century later when James attempted to correct the vision of Joseph’s predecessors on the potential for blacks to become full members of the Mormon sacred community.

### **Nauvoo: A Place of Refuge, A City on the “Border of the Lamanites”**

The City of Nauvoo was the closest that Joseph Smith Jr. ever came to establishing a New Jerusalem in the New World. Out of a “wilderness” of thick bushes and bogs, which made the ground “so wet,” Smith later recalled, “that it was with the utmost difficulty a foot man could get

through,” beginning in 1839 the Nauvoo rose out of swampland to become a bustling, frontier metropolis home to at its height some 15,000 residents, and the site of a new temple where the Saints would perform sacred ordinances intended to bind families together for eternity. Horrified by the abuses that the Mormons endured at the hands of government of Missouri, in December 1840, the Illinois legislature established a generous city charter for Nauvoo, which granted the city’s leaders all but complete autonomy, including provisions for a university and a militia, which the Saints would call the Nauvoo Legion. Nauvoo became the gathering place of Mormon converts from the eastern United States and British Isles. It was also a place of succor for the thousands of Mormons who streamed out of Missouri in the fall and winter of 1838-1839 during the so-called “Mormon Wars,” which culminated in Missouri Governor Liburn W. Boggs’ October 1838 executive order declaring that the Mormons “must be exterminated or driven from the State.”<sup>10</sup>

To avoid further bloodshed, Joseph Smith and a few other Mormon leaders, including Hyrum Smith and Sidney Rigdon, surrendered to Missouri officials on charges of treason and were imprisoned from November 1838 to mid-April 1839. Before he was able to escape from the small jailhouse in Liberty, Missouri, Smith dictated a letter to his followers already at work building Nauvoo. In the letter, Smith revealed that for their “dark and blackening deeds... Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed.”<sup>11</sup> Those cursed included the Mormons’ political enemies in Missouri, a state that, in a September 1840 *Times & Seasons* article was compared to “Western Egypt” and occupied by people worse than “Savage Indians.” The cursed also included

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<sup>10</sup> Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 385.

<sup>11</sup> “Joseph’s Epistle from the Liberty Jail,” April 4, 1839 [*D&C* 123:10; 121:11-18], “History, 1838-1856, vol. C-1 (ID# 7513), JSPP, accessed June 30, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=84>; Joseph Smith et al., to the church at Quincy, IL, [*D&C* 121: 11-18] (ID# 430), JSPP, accessed June 30, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839?p=9#!/paperSummary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839&p=9>. Parts of the revelation were first printed in *T&S*, May, 1840.

Mormon apostates Oliver Cowdery, W.W. Phelps, and David and John Whitmer.<sup>12</sup> This group of Smith's most trusted followers had challenged the prophet's authority in response to the failed Kirtland Safety Society Bank in 1837 and in response to the growing rumors that Joseph had taken a plural wife.<sup>13</sup>

Like the curse on the progeny of Cain and Ham, according to Smith's revelation these curses—including for the first time in Mormon history a declaration of a priesthood ban—would also follow these offenders' posterity “from generation to generation,” though repentance could bring them back into the fold. By the early 1850s in Utah, the priesthood ban would become synonymous with people of African descent. Yet the first priesthood restriction was not placed upon blacks for their supposed inferior lineages, but against whites for their perfidy and anti-Mormon violence. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, as the Saints were once again forced to find another location to build their millennial city, curses and blessings were not birthrights. According to Joseph Smith, they were earned by being “servants of sin” or by being faithful “servants” of God, of God's church, and of God's prophet.<sup>14</sup>

Like the American “City [of] Zion,” which in the early years of the 1830s Smith prophesied would be built “on the borders by the Lamanites” in Jackson County, where the Missouri River separated the United States from Indian Territory, the city of Nauvoo was another Mormon frontier

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<sup>12</sup> “Burglary! Treason! ARSON!!! MURDER!!!!,” *T&S*, September, 1840. Phelps was eventually reinstated. While Cowdery and the Whitmers were not, there is no evidence that they ever recanted their testimony to having witnessed the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Terry L. Givens, *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 99.

<sup>13</sup> Ironically, in terms of white apostates earning curses, it was Phelps who drew the most explicit connection with the biblical and Book of Mormon precedents. In March 1835, Phelps wrote in the *Messenger and Advocate*, “is or is it not apparent from reason and analogy as drawn from a careful reading of the Scriptures, that God causes the saints, or people that fall away from his church to be cursed in time, with a black skin?” Phelps also drew parallels between Cain, Ham, and Mormon apostates with the Lamanites' own dark skin. Phelps concludes: “And can or can we not observe in the countenances of almost all nations, except the Gentile, a dark, sallow hue, which tells the sons of God, without a line of history, that they have fallen or changed from the original beauty and grace of father Adam?” *M&A*, March, 1835.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith et al., to the church at Quincy, IL [*D&C* 121: 11-18], (ID# 430), JSPP, accessed June 30, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839?p=9#/paperSummary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839&p=9>.

city built directly across the Mississippi River from Indian settlements in the Territory of Iowa.<sup>15</sup> The proximity to large populations of “Lamanites” led to unprecedented contact between Mormons and Native Americans. Delegations of Sac and Fox Indians crossed the river to visit the prophet. During these meetings, Joseph Smith taught the Indian chiefs the essentials of the Book of Mormon, including the Indians’ true Lamanite identity. Smith also offered them the same covenantal contract proposed to the Delaware in 1831; their redemption was in reach if they “cease killing each other and warring with other tribes” and if they “keep peace with the whites.”<sup>16</sup>

Yet unlike in the early 1830s, during the Nauvoo period, the Saints invested few resources in missionizing the Lamanites. Instead, the missionaries sent into Indian Country were more explorers than proselytizers. They scouted the west for possible Mormon expansion opportunities, or if need be, exodus from the United States. Proposed sites not only included the Rocky Mountains, but also what was then the Republic of Texas; both regions held the promise of distancing the Saints from potential “Gentile” American persecutors, while also bringing them closer to large populations of Indians.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Latter-day Saints purchased 18,000 acres of what were called “Half-Breed tracts”—areas that the federal government set aside for “mixed-blood” people of American Indian and European ancestry—located on or near the western bank of the Mississippi. And in March 1841, Joseph Smith revealed that God called the Saints to “build up a city unto my name” upon these newly acquired lands, and that this city would be named “Zarahemla,” after the great Nephite capital city described in the Book of Mormon. Richard L. Jensen, “Transplanted to Zion: The Impact of British Latter-Day Saint Immigration upon Nauvoo,” *BYU Studies* 31, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 77–87.

<sup>16</sup> August 12, 1841, “History, 1838-1856, vol. C-1, addenda,” (ID# 8119), JSP, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-addenda?p=11#!/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-addenda&p=11>; *DHC*, VI: 401-402; Lawrence G. Coates, “Refugees Meet: The Mormons and Indians in Iowa,” *BYU Studies* 21 (Fall 1981): 491–514.

<sup>17</sup> On Joseph Smith’s 1842 “Rocky Mountain Prophecy,” in which the prophet purportedly foresaw that the Saints would not find peace until they were “driven to the Rocky Mountains,” see Jared Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 150–151. In early 1844, Apostle Lyman Wight suggested that Texas would be an ideal gathering place for “rich planters” from the southern states who had joined the church and would migrate west if they could plant crops and “plant their slaves” in fertile Texas soil without fear of federal interference. Wight, who in the early 1830s had been set apart as missionary to the Lamanites, also believed that a Mormon stake in Texas would allow for greater contact with Indians, including the wealthy, slave-owning Cherokee and Choctaw nations who, according to Wight, were already “very desirous to have an interview with the Elders of this Church, upon the principles of the Book of Mormon.” See the two letters Wight and other leaders of the Black River Falls timber mission in Wisconsin sent to Smith, Lyman Wight et al., to Joseph Smith et al., February 15, 1844; Lyman Wight to Joseph Smith et al., February 15, 1844, *DHC*, VI: 255-260.



A few Native Americans did settle in Nauvoo, including a set of brothers of Shawnee and European heritage, Joseph and George Herring. Joseph Herring along with the Oneida Lewis Dana were ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood. And in October 1845, in the Nauvoo Temple, Brigham Young performed a marriage sealing between Dana and Mary Gont. As Heber C. Kimball explained it in his journal, this unprecedented union of the Lamanite Dana and Gont, “a white woman,” was sanctioned because Dana “was civilized and had been an Elder about four years.”<sup>18</sup>

But the assimilation of Indian converts into the Nauvoo community was, at best, of mixed success. Dana became the first “Lamanite” to join the church hierarchy and later became a trusted emissary to the Native American communities whose lands the Saints crossed on their way to Utah. Yet after Joseph Smith’s assassination, Joseph Herring grew frustrated with the church leadership and refused to follow the Saints west. According to Mormon pioneer Hosea Stout, Joseph Herring even threatened to take the life of apostle and future church president Wilford Woodruff. Herring’s heavy drinking, Stout recorded in his journal, certainly did not help the Indian’s demeanor. Well before the Saints reached Utah, the Herring brothers disappeared from the Mormon community (as well as the Mormon archive). They left either by their own volition or were forced out by the Saints who refused to abide bodily threats to their apostles. Hosea Stout was disappointed in the two Indians brothers’ inability to mold themselves to the exigencies of membership within the Mormon covenantal community, which included acceptance of the authority of the church prophets’ leadership. “So it appears that all the trouble & expense laid out in [the Lamanites],” Stout wrote in January 1847, “will prove futile, because they have not integrity and stability enough.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Helen Mar Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo, and Incidents from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Woman’s Exponent*, May 15, 1883.

<sup>19</sup> Thanks to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich for pointing out Stout’s record of the Herring brothers’ activities. Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1889*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 224, 229.

## **Black Brothers and Sisters in Nauvoo**

While the Mormon archive suggests that some Lamanites who joined the Saints in Nauvoo proved to be unworthy of membership in the restored covenant, during the same period, records indicate that, of the forty or so African Americans who lived in Nauvoo from 1839 to 1846, a few black converts established themselves as respected members of the Mormon community.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, during this period, leading Mormons, especially the Smiths, moved to create a more inclusive covenant of which at least some blacks were invited to become full members.

Soon after the first black Mormon priesthood holder, Elijah Abel, moved to Nauvoo from Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith appointed him the city's official undertaker. And in 1840, Abel joined the "House Carpenters of the Town of Nauvoo," an informal guild comprised of prominent white Saints including Levi Jackman, who would become a member of Brigham Young's vanguard pioneering company to Utah in 1847, and Joseph Smith's younger brother, William Smith, who would replace his brother Hyrum as the church's Presiding Patriarch after Hyrum and Joseph were assassinated on June 27, 1844.<sup>21</sup> Before he was sent to Cincinnati to support that city's burgeoning Mormon population, Abel likely joined his fellow carpenters in the construction of the Mormon temple.<sup>22</sup> "Men were as thick as blackbirds busily engaged upon the various portions [of the temple]," wrote Wandle Mace, a convert from New York City and a mechanical engineer who Brigham Young appointed to speed up construction efforts after Joseph Smith's assassination and

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<sup>20</sup> Thanks to Joseph Johnston for providing me with an approximation of the black population in Nauvoo.

<sup>21</sup> Newell G. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism," 25. "House Carpenters of Nauvoo," Ebenezer Robinson memorandum of agreement, February 20, 1840, MS 2983, CHL.

<sup>22</sup> Newell Bringhurst has noted that Abel's time in Cincinnati was not without controversy. During a June 1843 regional conference, the Cincinnati branch leadership, along with a visiting delegation of church apostles including Orson Pratt and Heber C. Kimball, agreed to limit Abel's missionary outreach to the "coloured population." There is no indication that Abel himself had done anything wrong. Wanting to avoid renewed accusations that they were meddling with blacks, the church leadership wished to lower Abel's visibility. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism," 23.

before the Saints' impending exodus. "[A]ll [were] intent upon its completion: although we were being in constant expectation of a mob."<sup>23</sup>

In Nauvoo, Abel not only became a respected member of the city's economic culture. He also joined the Mormons' evolving religious community. In 1841, Abel was reordained a lower-ranking member of the church hierarchy.<sup>24</sup> And starting in late summer of 1840, Abel gathered with other Latter-day Saints on the banks of the Mississippi River where the faithful performed a newly established Mormon ritual: proxy baptism for the dead. In the early 1840s, Joseph Smith began teaching that in this last dispensation the living and the dead could be reunited, creating one eternal family, "from the days of Adam to the present time."<sup>25</sup> Vicarious baptisms by the living would provide the opportunity for the unbaptized dead to participate in the first rite of passage into the newly restored Christian covenant.

Baptism for the dead expanded Mormon universalism across time, allowing for the creation of covenant of all God's chosen people unbound by the strictures of history. Implicitly, baptism for the dead expanded this universalism across the races too, allowing even those cursed descendants of the Book of Mormon's Laman, as well as the descendants of the Bible's Cain, Ham, and Canaan, to be reconnected to the eternal chain of human belonging. Like the Mormon notion of conversion, Smith's understanding of baptism thus diverged from the Pauline theology of rebirth into a new form. Smith's intention was less progressive and more restorative. His vision was to return the whole of humanity to the ancient days before the first and second falls—before Adam's sin against

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<sup>23</sup> Wandle Mace, autobiography circa 1890, MS 1189, CHL. The Mormons were asked to tithe one day of labor out of ten, as well as tithe money and other supplies to the construction of the temple. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 246.

<sup>24</sup> According to the minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meeting on June 4, 1879, Abel was given a certificate indicating his status as a "Seventy." Minutes, June 4, 1879, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Adam S. Bennion Papers, MSS 1, BYSC.

<sup>25</sup> September 11, 1842, Journal, December 1841-1842, (ID# 6545), JSPP, accessed June 15, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1841-december-1842?p=76>; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 422-424.

God separated the first man from his heavenly father, and before the sins of Adam's son Cain, Noah's son Ham, and Lehi's son Laman sinned against their raceless, (white) human families, creating a hierarchy of distinct lineages in which the less worthy were marked off by dark skin.

Early black Mormons like Elijah Abel participated in this restoration, vicariously baptizing their own dead loved ones into the covenant of the restored church. For his part, Elijah Abel performed three baptisms for the dead, including for a friend John F. Lancaster, for his mother Elisha and for a daughter named Delila.<sup>26</sup> Signaling the formal inclusion of the newly baptized into the Mormon archive, witnesses to the baptisms made a record of the names that Abel and other Saints temporarily took as their own as they dunked themselves in the shallows of the Mississippi.<sup>27</sup>

Abel also became a Smith family intimate. In 1840, Abel was at the deathbed of Joseph Smith Sr. Four years earlier, the church patriarch had blessed Abel and told him that his dedication to the gospel would allow him to transcend his own blackness in the afterlife.<sup>28</sup> In June 1841 after Joseph Smith Jr. was arrested on another warrant from Missouri, Abel along six other men including Hosea Stout, set off to rescue the prophet from his captures.<sup>29</sup> A few years later, in 1843 the prophet publicly praised Abel as a model for his downtrodden race: an “educated negro... a man who has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability.”<sup>30</sup> While most Negroes “come into this world slaves mentally and phy[s]ically,” if they are given the chance to “change their

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<sup>26</sup> Susan Easton Black and Harvey Bischoff Black, eds., *Annotated Record of Baptisms for the Dead 1840-1845* (Provo, UT: Center for Family History and Genealogy, Brigham Young University, 2002), 8–9.

<sup>27</sup> Revelation, September 1, 1842, *D&C* (1844), Section CV [*D&C* 128:2-3], (ID# 7271), JSPP, accessed July 3, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1844?p=422#!/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1844&p=421>.

<sup>28</sup> *EPB*, 99.

<sup>29</sup> *DHC* 4:365. Joseph was eventually released on the orders of an Illinois State Supreme Court judge named Stephen A. Douglass. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 425-427.

<sup>30</sup> As Eddie Glaude has shown, the year 1843 was an important one for the “politics of respectability” in race-based American political discourse. Though not intentionally, Smith uses similar language of the “color-blind appeal of moral reform,” which, according to the National Negro Convention meeting in Buffalo in 1843, would bring black Americans up to the level of white Americans, while white Americans were called to assist in such uplift. Glaude, *Exodus!*, 143–144.

situation,” the prophet explained citing Abel as his example, then they can become like “the white[s].” After all, Negroes “have souls & are subjects of salvation.”<sup>31</sup>

## Jane’s Joseph

While Elijah Abel came to Nauvoo in 1840 as a respected member of the Mormon community, in late 1843 young Jane Manning and her family arrived as strangers on the prophet’s Mansion House doorstep.<sup>32</sup> Penniless, threadbare and exhausted, the nine black Mormon converts had little more than the clothes on their backs. Yet according to her own autobiography, the twenty-one year old Jane Manning did carry with her something of great value: a story of conversion to the Mormon gospel as well as a story of perseverance in the face of adversity for which she would win the admiration of the prophet himself.

But perhaps more importantly for James, the autobiography tells a story of the first prophet for whom James’s cursed race was not an insurmountable barrier to acceptance in the restored covenant. James added this portrait of the racially benevolent Joseph Smith to the Mormon archive in the late nineteenth century, when Smith’s views on the matter, as well as his translations of sacred texts, most importantly the Books of Abraham and Moses, became canonical and normative.

Jane Manning James’s autobiography is, by nature, retrospective. When she and her scribe Elizabeth Roundy sat down to compose the short—some 2,300 words—but detail-rich narrative, James looked back on her life as a young, black servant in a wealthy New England manor, as a convert to Mormonism, as a confidante to Joseph Smith and his family, and as an intrepid Mormon pioneer. James’s autobiography thus bridges two nineteenth-century literary genres. First, though

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<sup>31</sup> January 2, 1843, Journal, December 1842-June 1844, (ID# 7997), JSPP, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843?p=47#!/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843&p=47>.

<sup>32</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.” In her autobiography, James recalls that the family departed Connecticut in 1840. Yet an advertisement printed in the December 6, 1843 edition of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* seeking information about a trunk of James’s belongings, which became separated from her during her trek, indicates that the Manning family converted sometime in 1842 or 1843. Their subsequent trek to Nauvoo happened in late 1843. Henry Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 262 n. 16.

James was born free to a formerly enslaved mother, because her life experiences at times crossed the blurred boundary between slavery and freedom, elements of her life story—especially those, as we will see, over which she lost control—parallel those of slave narratives.<sup>33</sup> As is the case in the narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, because she often functioned as an object of racial exclusion and patronizing condescension in her own community, in her writings Jane Manning James demonstrates keen awareness of the distance between her experiences and those of her readers.<sup>34</sup> And yet like Parley P. Pratt’s archetypal nineteenth-century Mormon autobiography, James’s narrative also moves in the other direction: towards her Mormon readership by adhering to tropes of Mormon conversion narratives and early Mormon origin and pioneer mythos.<sup>35</sup> In other words, James creates credibility about her more fantastic claims—including her would-be familial connection to Joseph Smith—by repeating Mormon common verisimilitudes. James presents herself at once as a racial other, and a fellow Saint. Still, while James tentatively tries to collapse her black self into her Mormon self, she makes sure to not pass over the line where her race would make her story intolerable for her white Mormon audience.

In this sense, James’s autobiography is polemical. To be sure, James compliments the church’s six prophet-presidents, “Brother Brigham, Taylor, Woodruff, Snow,” and Joseph F. Smith, whom she praises for “rul[ing] this great work” since the martyrdom of Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>36</sup> James’s professed reverence of the Mormon hierarchy was typical in turn-of-the-century Mormon Utah

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<sup>33</sup> Jane Manning was born to Isaac and Phillis Manning. Jane’s mother likely changed her name to Eliza after she was freed. Jane Manning James’s autobiography hints at the ambiguous nature of her mother’s name. In the original handwritten copy of the autobiography, the name Phillis is scratched out and replaced with Eliza. James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.” In the patriarchal blessing Jane Manning received in 1844, her parents are listed as “Isaac and Eliza Manning,” but in her 1889 patriarchal blessing “Isaac and Phillis Manning” are listed.

<sup>34</sup> Molly Abel Travis, *Reading Cultures: The Construction of Readers in the Twentieth Century* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 72; Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Neal Lambert, “The Representation of Reality in Nineteenth Century Mormon Autobiography,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11 (Summer 1978): 63.

<sup>36</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

when the prophets' authority on ecclesiastical and cultural matters were unquestioned. And yet this public profession of submission creates the space in James's narrative in which she can author an implicit critique—what James C. Scott calls a “hidden transcript”—of the prophets' anti-black theologies and the church's practices developed after Joseph Smith's death.<sup>37</sup> James's narrative challenges Joseph's prophetic successors who claim that Mormonism's original prophet believed that the sins committed by blacks' biblical ancestors put their contemporary progeny beyond the pale of full acceptance in the Saints' covenantal community. For Jane's Joseph, the categories of black and Mormon were not mutually exclusive, at least not always so.

### **Jane Manning James's Nauvoo**

Despite its half-century remove from the Mormons' exodus from Illinois, in her autobiography James creates a sense of immediacy with the time she spent with Joseph Smith and his family in Nauvoo's Mansion House by rhetorically relocating when and where she narrates much of this history. The first part of James's autobiography is an embedded narrative. In her home in Salt Lake City in the late nineteenth century, James repeats for Roundy (and for her future readers) the story that she first told to Joseph and Emma Smith, along with the Mansion House's other residence, soon after the Manning family completed their thousand-mile trek through the cold fall and early winter of 1843 from Wilton, Connecticut, to Nauvoo.<sup>38</sup>

Soon after the company was gathered in the Mansion House, Jane Manning recounted at the prophet's behest what brought her and her family of black converts to the Mormons' bustling capital. Jane Manning explained that since the age of six she had lived in the home of the wealthy Fitches of Wilton, and had been raised by the couple's daughter. A year and a half before her conversion to Mormonism, Jane Manning became a member of the local Presbyterian Church. “Yet

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<sup>37</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

I did not feel satisfied,” she explained. “It seemed to me there was something more that I was looking for.”<sup>39</sup> Over the objections of the pastor of her church, Jane Manning attended a Mormon meeting, likely in nearby Norwalk where the missionary Charles Wandell had established a branch of the church.<sup>40</sup> And after hearing the Mormon elder speak, “[I] was fully convinced that it was the true Gospel he presented and I must embrace it.”<sup>41</sup>

Jane Manning explained to her audience in the Mansion House that she quickly immersed herself in Mormon culture. The first Sunday after she heard the missionaries, Manning was baptized and confirmed a member of the church. A few weeks later, while praying, “the Gift of Tongues came upon me.” While this ecstatic encounter with the Holy Spirit initially “frightened [my] whole family who were in the next room,” soon seven members of her family also converted. Jane Manning told Joseph Smith that within a year, this extended Manning family—she does not mention her own son Sylvester (for reasons I discuss later), born sometime around 1834—joined a large group of converts led by Wandell heading west to gather with the Saints in Nauvoo.<sup>42</sup>

Jane Manning’s expression of dissatisfaction with the “sectarian” offerings from antebellum Protestant churches, her immediate adoption of Mormonism, her powerful experiences with the

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<sup>39</sup> In her analysis of James’s autobiography, Quincy Newell argues that James’s memory here is faulty. In the 1840s there was no Presbyterian church in Wilton. Instead, Brittany Chapman at the CHL has located James’s membership records in the New Canaan Congregational church. Jane E. Manning is listed as having been excommunicated on February 22, 1844 from that religious community. The record states: “The case of Jane E. Manning was further considered and the church adopted the following preamble and resolution: Whereas Jane E. Manning has without our approbation or consent wholly withdrawn and separated herself from the fellowship of this church and has since gone to a distant part of the country and thus placed herself beyond the reach of this church to labor farther with her; therefore *Resolved* that we withdraw our watch and care over her, and consider her as no longer a member of this church.” New Canaan Congregational Record Book, Typescript, pp. 27, 45–46, Rev. Theophilus Smith Collection, New Canaan Historical Society Library, New Canaan, Connecticut. Quincy D. Newell, “The Autobiography and Interview of Jane Elizabeth Manning James,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 2 (2013): 278 n. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Wandell and his companion Albert Merrill had been tasked with establishing branches in southern New England and eastern New York State. Clarence Merrill, “History of Albert Merrill with some information and some dates of His Ancestors,” MS 1101, CHL.

<sup>41</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. In 1843, Wandell reported from Connecticut that “the brethren here are very anxious to emigrate to Illinois; so you may expect to see all of us in Zion this Fall that can possible get there.” *T&S*, August 15, 1843. Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 126–129.



gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the conversions of the several members of her family, follow closely the conventions of early Mormon conversion narratives. For those predisposed to it, once introduced to the gospel truth of the restored church, rejection of all other churches as false and adoption of Mormonism came quickly.<sup>43</sup> And, as I argued in the previous chapter, the Mormon missionaries' great success among large numbers of families in England during this same period led Mormons to develop a belief that converts carried in their veins "believing blood," an inherited predisposition to Mormonism. Jane Manning's description of her own family's quick adoption of Mormonism subtly challenged the idea that blacks' supposed descent from a spiritually inferior lineage made them less capable of recognizing what the young Jane Manning called the "true Gospel."

In her autobiography, Jane Manning James establishes her Mormon bona fides is to demonstrate the strength of her faith in the face of persecution. For example, in the Mansion House's sitting room, Jane Manning explained to the prophet that the Mannings experienced racial discrimination as they made their way to west. After taking the Erie Canal across New York State, the migrating Mormons arrived in Buffalo. There, Charles Wandell refused to pay the Mannings' fare for the ferry that was take the Saints across Lake Erie. Though he was acquitted of any wrongdoing, a few months after the Connecticut Mormons arrived in Nauvoo, Wandell was charged by the church's High Council for "Unchristian conduct towards certain colored brethren."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Brigham Young famously quipped about his own conversion to Mormonism, "I reasoned on revelation." Yet in his biography of Young, John Turner asserts that Young's conversion was the result of his careful study of the Mormons' new scripture, his observations of the behavior of the Mormon people—including tongue speaking—and his own experience with what his longtime friend and aide Heber Kimball described as their encounter with "the glory of God [which] shone upon us" and "caused such great joy to spring up in our bosoms, that we were hardly able to contain ourselves." John G. Turner, *Brigham Young*, 26. See also Steven C. Harper, "Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts," *Religion and American Culture* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 99–118; Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith, the First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 101–102.

<sup>44</sup> John S. Dinger, ed., *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 480–481. In her autobiography, while she makes no mention of Wandell's trial, James does state, "During our trip I lost all my clothes, they were all gone, my trunks were sent by Canal to the care of Charles Wesley Wandel." James and Roundy, "Biography of Jane E. James."

Jane Manning does not mention Wandell by name. Yet she did explain to Joseph Smith that, after the missionaries “would not take us further,” her family continued on foot the eight hundred miles to Peoria, Illinois. “We walked until our shoes were worn out,” Jane Manning recounted, “and our feet became sore and cracked open and bled until you could see the whole print of our feet with blood on the ground.” To heal the pain caused by their fellow Mormons’ refusal to recognize her as an equal member of their community, pain manifested in real physical suffering, the black Saints prayed to God, “and our feet were healed forthwith.”<sup>45</sup> Even before she joined the Mormon exodus to Utah, James had already experienced persecution, which led to bodily suffering, and in turn, led to faithful prayers and Heavenly Father’s response of miracles of deliverance.

In Peoria, the Mannings were once again forced to stop their trek as they experienced firsthand the region’s legal and political turmoil over slavery. Though Illinois was officially a free state, its black codes were similar to those found in the Mormons’ former home in the slave state of Missouri. Illinois forbade African Americans without a certificate of freedom to settle in the state, and required them to register a bond of \$1,000 in the county in which they wished to settle, to ensure that they would not become a financial burden to the state. Blacks who could not produce such a certificate and bond would “be deemed a runaway slave or servant,” and subject to arrest by the local sheriff who was empowered to hire them out “for the best price he can get.”<sup>46</sup> Though the Mannings “had never been slaves,” because they could not produce “free papers,” Jane explained that a local official threatened to throw them in jail.<sup>47</sup>

Jane Manning told the prophet that the official in Peoria eventually “concluded to let us go.” Yet after trekking the last hundred miles west, when the Mannings finally reached “beautiful

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<sup>45</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>46</sup> See the “An Act Respecting Free Negroes and Mullatoes” in *The Revised Laws of Illinois* (Vandalia, IL: Greiner & Sherman, 1833), 463–464.

<sup>47</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

Nauvoo,” they faced another round “of hardship, trial, and rebuff.” Though she does not specify the form these difficulties took, James’s description highlights the fact that Nauvoo was far from a utopia of racial inclusion and equality.<sup>48</sup>

To be sure, the Saints’ great missionary success at home and abroad led the church’s leadership in October 1840 to envision Nauvoo as the gathering place for converts from around the world, including “the polished European, the degraded Hottentot, and the shivering Laplander.”<sup>49</sup> Yet in reality, Nauvoo’s free black Mormons were never full members of the Saints’ growing religious or civil community. While Elijah Abel baptized his dead in the Mississippi River along with white Saints, in January 1841 God revealed through Joseph that the river’s waters were provisional, acceptable only “in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me.”<sup>50</sup> Thousands of baptisms were performed in the river in 1841. Yet once the Saints finished the temple’s font in November of that same year, baptisms for the dead moved inside the “House of the Lord.” And this sacred ritual became, for the most part, inaccessible for black Saints whom Joseph Smith’s successors would deem unworthy to enter into the Mormons’ holiest spaces. According to extant records, no black Saints performed temple rituals in Nauvoo after the temple was completed in 1845. This includes Abel who years later, like Jane Manning James, petitioned without success church leaders to receive his endowments and to be sealed to his wife and children, endowments that if he had in fact received in Nauvoo would not have to be repeated in Utah.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>49</sup> “First Presidency, Report,” *T&S*, October, 1840.

<sup>50</sup> See *D&C* 124:29-30, Alexander L. Baugh, “‘For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House’: The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 50.

<sup>51</sup> Lisle G Brown, ed., *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: A Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841-1846* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006). In her autobiography, James states that in Salt Lake, “I have had the privilege [*sic*] of going into the Temple and being baptized for some of my dead.” Yet she was not permitted to partake in more sacred temple ceremonies, including sealings and endowments. See the temple recommend issued to James by Angus M. Cannon on June 16, 1888, transcribed in Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 148.

Full black citizenship was also out of the question. The Nauvoo city charter limited voting rights in municipal elections to white male citizens.<sup>52</sup> Interracial marriage was outlawed and offenders faced criminal sanctions in the city's court.<sup>53</sup> And at least one black resident of Nauvoo was the victim of vigilante violence. In March 1844, a man named Chism was savagely whipped after being accused of robbing a local store. After the city court failed to convict his attackers, just months before he became victim of a lynch mob himself along with Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the editor of the *Nauvoo Neighbor* John Taylor excoriated the court and the perpetrators of vigilante violence for making a "mockery of justice." "Lynch law will not do in Nauvoo, and those who engage in it must expect to be visited by the wrath of an indignant people, not according to the rule of Judge Lynch, but according to law and equity."<sup>54</sup>

Even the line between freedom and slavery was blurry. In 1842, Joseph Smith advised southern slave-owning converts "to bring slaves into a free country and set them free."<sup>55</sup> And two years later, Smith ran for president of the United States as a gradual abolitionist. In the preface to his presidential platform, Smith claimed that the only group of Americans who had been systematically denied their rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" more than the Mormons were enslaved blacks.<sup>56</sup> Yet many if not most of the some two-dozen black "servants" whom John Brown and his southern converts brought to Nauvoo between 1843 and 1845 found themselves once again deemed "slaves" when Brigham Young and the Utah territorial legislature legalized chattel slavery in 1852.<sup>57</sup> What's more, positions of employment open to free black Mormons were the same as those

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<sup>52</sup> "An Act to Incorporate the City of Nauvoo," reprinted in *DHC*, IV: 241.

<sup>53</sup> On February 8 1844, in the city's Mayor's Court, Joseph Smith tried "two negroes" for attempting to marry white women. For their offences, the mayor fined one twenty-five dollars and the other five dollars. *DHC*, VI: 210.

<sup>54</sup> "Comment on the Negro Chism's Case," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 1, 1844; See also, March 30, 1844; April 1, 1844 in *DHC*, VI: 280, 284-285.

<sup>55</sup> Willard Richards, Journal, December 30, 1842, quoted in Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 56.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Smith Jr., "Views on the Government and Policy of The U.S.," *T&S*, May 15, 1844.

<sup>57</sup> For example, though they were supposedly freed in Nauvoo, the slaves owned by Utah's first territorial representative in Congress William H. Hooper found themselves once again in perpetual servitude when they arrived to Utah with their

performed by free blacks and slaves: house servants, washerwomen, coachmen, manual laborers, and field hands. Even his “calling” to be Nauvoo’s undertaker was perhaps a more elegant term for what occupied most of Elijah Abel’s time performing his office—digging graves. In the first three years of the Mormons’ sojourn in Illinois, this profession kept Abel occupied constructing coffins and interring Saints lost to plagues of malaria during the summers of 1839, 1840, and 1841.<sup>58</sup>

As for her own family, Jane Manning told the prophet that it was only when they reached the Mansion House did this group of black converts finally find sanctuary and acceptance. In James’s autobiography, the Mannings’ arrival to the Mansion House also marks the conclusion of the embedded narrative of her family’s faith-testing journey. Shifting the narrative perspective from the Mansion House’s sitting room in 1843 to her home in Salt Lake City in the 1890s, James recalls for Roundy’s dictation the prophet’s reaction to Jane Manning’s story. Joseph Smith was so impressed by the Mannings’ dedication to the Mormon gospel that he turned to John M. Bernhisel who also just finished Jane Mannings’ story, “slapped [him]... on the knee,” and asked him, “Isn’t that faith?” James tells Roundy that Bernhisel, who in 1851 would become Utah’s first delegate to Congress, responded, “Well I rather think it is.” According to James, this respected white physician, politician, and Mormon leader acknowledged that a lowly, black Mormon woman’s faith was

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master in 1850. On April 7, 1844, the same day Brown ordained James M. Flake into the priesthood, Brown baptized Flake’s slave “Green Flake,” the most well documented black Mormon slave. Later that same year, Green Flake and his master moved to Nauvoo. Green Flake was a member of Brigham Young’s Vanguard Company, which entered the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. Before leaving Utah for the Mormons’ settlement in San Bernardino, California, in 1854 James Flake’s widow Agnes Flake tithed Green Flake to the church. According to James Flake’s son, William J. Flake, Green then worked two years for Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball before the Mormon leaders freed him. Green Flake lived in Union, Utah’s small black community, before settling in Idaho where he died in 1903. In 1897, along with the some 250 surviving pioneers of 1847, including Jane Manning James, Green Flake was awarded a golden badge made by Tiffany’s in New York as part Utah’s 1897 Pioneer Jubilee. William J. Flake, letter to Church Historian, February 14, 1894, transcribed in Dennis Lythgoe, “Negro Slavery in Utah” (MA thesis, University of Utah, 1966), 27–28. See also “Green Flake (1828-1903),” in Richard Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker,, *A Book of Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 87; Ronald Coleman, “A History of Blacks in Utah, 1825-1910” (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1980), 59. Throughout his journal, John Brown refers to white southern converts’ slaves as “servants.” John Brown, *The Autobiography of John Brown: A Member of the Original Company of Utah Pioneers of 1847*, ed. John Zimmerman Brown (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1941). As I further discuss in Chapter Seven, this slippage between “slave” and “servant” even shows up in the proposed legislation to legalize slavery in the Utah territory.

<sup>58</sup> Newell G Bringhurst, “Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism,” 25.

stronger than his own. “[I]f it had have been me I fear I should have backed out and returned to my home!” The prophet next blessed the Mannings, and promised to care for and protect them from further trials. “You are among friends now,” Joseph declared.<sup>59</sup>

In her autobiography, Jane Manning James hopes to do more than to detail her own exceptional faith or even to demonstrate how this faith won her some impressive admirers. After all, the prophet’s nephew and Church President Joseph F. Smith himself praised the depth of James’s commitment to Mormonism at James’s funeral in 1908. Yet her faith alone had not proven enough to gain her recognition as a full member of the church. Thus in her autobiography, James creates her own place in the Mormon community and history by writing herself into some of the most sacred spaces and events of the Mormon origin myth.<sup>60</sup>

In turn-of-the-century Salt Lake City, the image of an intrepid, industrious and faithful Mormon pioneer was certainly a key part of this myth. And as a member of the first wave of pioneers to enter the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, James was counted among the most revered members of the Mormon pioneering generation.<sup>61</sup> In 1897, Salt Lake City marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Mormons’ Kingdom of Zion in the high plains desert with a grand jubilee. James was among the 250 remaining pioneers of 1847 (Figure 6:1) who were able make the trip to

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<sup>59</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>60</sup> Quincy D. Newell, “‘Is There No Blessing for Me?’ Jane James’s Construction of Space in Latter-Day Saint History and Practice,” in *New Perspectives in Mormon Studies: Creating and Crossing Boundaries*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Quincy D. Newell (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 41–68.

<sup>61</sup> Brigham Young organized and led the first few hundred Mormons who, between the spring of 1846 and the fall of 1847, established a viable route from Winter Quarters in Nebraska to the Salt Lake Valley, and who began the farming and homebuilding needed to supply and house the thousands of Mormons who would follow them. James was not in the famed “Vanguard Company,” which included three slaves, Green Flake, Hark Lay, and Oscar Crosby who arrived on July 24, 1847, now celebrated as Utah’s “Pioneer Day.” With the Spencer/Eldredge Company, James entered the valley on September 22, 1847. “Daniel Spencer/Ira Eldredge Company,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed January 4, 2012, <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companyPioneers?lang=eng&companyId=285>. Also, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 130-153.

the state capital where they were paraded on floats down Salt Lake City's main streets, with golden badges made by Tiffany's in New York pinned to their chests.<sup>62</sup>

In her autobiography, Jane Manning James records her own pioneer credentials. When they left Nauvoo in spring 1846 for their yearlong journey to Utah, James and the other pioneers of 1847 did not follow a well-established trail, as later Mormon pioneers would. Instead, they put their faith in the Lord, believing that he would “be with us and protect us all the way” as they trekked toward the “Great and Glorious [Salt Lake] Valley.”<sup>63</sup> And the Lord did protect them, James recalls. A cattle stampede created the only real moment of concern; giving birth to her son Silas during the trek across the open plains was treated as a matter of course for a hardy pioneer like James. While the midwife Patty Sessions, who helped James deliver Silas, identifies her as “black Jane” in her Mormon trail journal, in her autobiography James hopes that before her readers identify her by her race, they will recognize her as a pioneer of 1847 who was among the first Saints to make the twelve-hundred-mile journey from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>64</sup>

Yet James makes claims to an even more exclusive history, and for that matter, an even more exclusive space than the Mormon trail—the Nauvoo Mansion House. And by chronicling this history, James asserts the strongest challenge to her exclusion from the most sacred of Mormon rituals and sacerdotal spaces. During the time she spent living under the prophet's roof, James's race

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<sup>62</sup> Marvin S. Hill and James B. Allen, *Mormonism and American Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 140. See James in “Utah's 1897 Pioneer Jubilee,” *Daughters of the Utah Pioneers*, accessed January 3, 2013, <http://www.dupinternational.org/jubilee/pioneers.htm>. Green Flake does not appear in the photograph. Yet in 2012, the LDS Church History Library placed on display a medal with Flake's name engraved on the back.

<sup>63</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.” I have argued that the chronological specificity James provides for her trek—spring 1846 to early fall 1847—is important for her claim to membership in Mormon pioneer history. When James was composing her autobiography, early black Mormon pioneers to Utah were being marginalized or removed altogether from the church's official pioneer narrative. Mueller, “Playing Jane,” 530.

<sup>64</sup> Patty Sessions, the great Mormon midwife credited with delivering close to 4,000 babies, traveled for a time with James and her family in the pioneer company led by Daniel Spencer. On Wednesday June 10, 1846 close to Mount Pigsah in Iowa, a way station for the Saints heading to Council Bluffs, Sessions helped James deliver her second child, Silas F. James. As Sessions recorded it, “put black Jane to bed with a son,” a service for which Sessions was paid twenty-four pounds of flour. Less than a year later, Sessions once again attended to James, this time putting her “to bed with a daughter.” Donna Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 8, 24.

did not prevent her from ascending to ever increasing levels of intimacy with members of the Smith household: from houseguest to live-in servant, to family confidante, and even to would-be family member. Absent the testimonies of others—including those of the Smiths—it is James who controls how her place in the Nauvoo home of Mormonism’s first family gets remembered and archived.<sup>65</sup>

James recalls that not only did Emma greet her family at Mansion House’s front door; Joseph himself coordinated his newly arrived guests’ sleeping arrangements. “Brother Joseph said to some White sisters that was present, Sisters I want you to occupy this room this evening with some brothers and Sisters that have just arrived.” James remembers that the Mormon prophet integrated the Mansion House’s living quarters without a thought about the racial implications of placing black and white Mormons in the same room.

James also remembers that soon after their arrival, one morning Joseph found young Jane Manning in tears because every other member of her family had secured housing and employment.<sup>66</sup> Joseph told Jane, “you have a home right here if you want it, you must[']nt cry, we dry up all tears here.” Emma and Joseph also gave her a job as a laundress, a position that allowed her to come into contact with some of early Mormonism’s most sacred objects, as well as becoming an indirect witness to some of the faith’s most defining events. Soon after she began working, James recalls:

[Emma Smith] brought the clothes down to the basement to wash. And among the clothes, I found Brother Joseph’s robes. I looked at them and wondered—[as] I had never seen any before—and I

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<sup>65</sup> Mueller, “Playing Jane,” 526.

<sup>66</sup> Isaac Lewis Manning also lived for a time in the Mansion House, working there as a cook. “Isaac Manning Servant of Prophet Joseph Smith Dies in Salt Lake,” *Vernal Express*, April 21, 1911. Joseph Smith III, the son of Emma and Joseph and the first President of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Community of Christ) describes Isaac fondly as a drummer in the Nauvoo Legion. Isaac Manning “beat [the drum] so vigorously when the Legion was on parade in Nauvoo that its reverberations could be heard, it was said, in Fort Madison, twelve miles away.” Joseph Smith, *Joseph Smith III and the Restoration*, ed. Bertha Audentia Anderson Hulmes (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1952), 36. In June 25, 1901, Isaac Manning, who moved to Utah sometime in the 1880s to care for his ailing sister, paraded in Salt Lake along with other veterans of the Nauvoo Legion. “Reunion of Utah Veterans: Grizzled Heroes of the Past Recall Scenes of Yore,” *Deseret News*, June 25, 1901. Most of the Mannings were officially accepted into the church at Nauvoo in early 1844, while others were recorded as being accepted the following year. Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 159 n. 10.



pondered over them and thought about them so earnestly, so sincerely that the Lord made manifest to me that they pertained to the new name that is given the saints that the world knows not of.<sup>67</sup>

James here describes a mystical experience with the prophet's dirty laundry—the robes Smith and other Saints wore when performing rituals in the Nauvoo temple. By suggesting that she knows that Saints are given a “new name” as part of these rituals, James insinuates that she knows something of the rituals that go on inside the temple, rituals in which she would never be permitted to participate.<sup>68</sup>

Young Jane Manning also became a confidante to other members of the household, including the prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith. James recalls that one day “Mother Smith” invited her into her room where the Smith family matriarch told her “all of Brother Joseph[']s troubles, and what he had suffered in publishing the Book of Mormon.” Mother Smith allowed James to hold the Urim and Thummim, the instruments with which Joseph Smith had translated the Book of Mormon. James recalls that Mother Smith wanted the young Mormon convert to recognize the significance of holding these objects: “You will live long after I am dead and gone,” Mother Smith said, “and you can tell the Latter-day Saints that you was permitted to handle the Urim and Thummim.”<sup>69</sup> While she was never allowed to set foot in the most sacred chambers of a Mormon temple, in Mother Smith's bedroom and in the Mansion's basement, James handled the sacred artifacts that helped bring about the Mormon dispensation as well as the sacred robes that the

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<sup>67</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>68</sup> Brigham Young remembers the first time he participated in the sacred rituals involving such robes: “We were washed and anointed had our garments placed upon us and received our New Name. And after [Joseph] had performed these ceremonies, he gave the Key Words signs, tokens and penalties.” Quoted in David John Buerger, “The Development of the Mormon Temple Endowment Ceremony,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 4 (1987): 47. As Quincy Newell has explained it, “anthropologically speaking, the endowment ceremony functions as an initiation ceremony in which initiates review sacred history, make sacred vows, and receive sacred promises and knowledge. The ‘new name’ to which Jane refers was one way the Latter-day Saints marked their new identities.” Newell, “The Autobiography and Interview of Jane Elizabeth Manning James,” 282 n. 89.

<sup>69</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

prophet wore in the temple where he performed rituals intended to bind together, and for eternity, the communal Mormon family.

Houseguest, servant, confidante. All of these identities served to solidify James's claim that she should be recognized as a witness to elements and events of Mormon origin myths. But it is James's claim that she is—or at least should have been—an adopted daughter of Joseph and Emma Smith that becomes the most important identity to which she lays claim. James tells Roundy that in the Mansion House her intimacy with the Smiths developed to the point that:

Sister Emma asked me one day if I would like to be adopted to them as their child? I did not answer her. She said I will wait awhile so you can consider it. She waited two weeks before she asked me again. And when she did, I said No mam! because I didn't understand or know what it meant.<sup>70</sup>

“What it meant” was that, in Mormonism's evolving soteriology, such an adoption would have allowed a lowly, black washer-girl to ascend to the same levels of heaven as the prophet himself.

In the early 1840s, Joseph Smith began teaching that husbands and wives could be “sealed” to one another, and children to their parents, binding family units together that would endure in the heavenly kingdoms. Yet Smith's vision for such families exploded the bounds of the Victorian-era nuclear kinships. Baptism for the dead reached back in time. By descending into first the waters of the Mississippi, and later, into the font in the basement of the temple, living Saints rescued from oblivion generations of dead family members and brought “multitudes of their kin into the Kingdom of God,” as Smith taught in 1841.<sup>71</sup> By entering into the upper rooms of the temple and giving themselves to their adoptive parents—almost exclusively leading members of the church—Saints became the celestial kin and legal heirs of their adoptive parents.<sup>72</sup> What's more, adoptive children born outside the Abrahamic covenant completed the “grafting,” which began with their

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> October 3, 1841, “History, 1838-1856, vol. C-1, addenda,” (ID # 7513), JSPP, accessed June 30, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=401>.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” 4, 28–32; Jonathan A. Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 66–67.

conversion, onto the Israelite family tree.<sup>73</sup> As I argued in Chapter Four, the early Saints understood such grafting as more than metaphorical. Jane Manning James believed that a temple adoption to Joseph Smith would have separated her from her cursed ancestral lineage and connected her to those of her adopted parents. Born the daughter of Cain, Ham, and Canaan, by becoming the daughter and legal heir of Joseph Smith Jr. James would have become the daughter of Abraham, Jacob and his son, Joseph, the ancestor and namesake of the prophet of the Latter-days.<sup>74</sup>

Lamenting this decision that would become one of the greatest regrets of her life, James tells Roundy that her younger self “did not know my own mind[.] I did not comprehend.”<sup>75</sup> But James’s older self did comprehend. In her idealized recollection, Joseph Smith and Emma Smith were not patronizing, but paternalistic. Instead of “Aunt Jane,” as she became known in the Salt Lake Valley, to Mormonism’s first couple’s Jane would have become Jane Manning James Smith.<sup>76</sup>

James’s claim that the Smiths offered to adopt her has implications for Joseph Smith’s treatment of other black Mormons. James’s portrayal of Joseph Smith can also be read as a challenge to the notion that, as his nephew Joseph F. Smith would assert in 1908, “the Prophet himself” stripped a close and trusted servant like the indefatigable missionary, Elijah Abel, of his priesthood because Smith discovered Abel was “tainted with negro blood.”<sup>77</sup> As Joseph Smith’s own appraisal

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<sup>73</sup> Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” 28–37.

<sup>74</sup> In 1894, Church President Wilford Woodruff transformed the temple liturgy, ending the practice of Mormons adopting individuals “outside the lineage of [their] fathers.” Yet in the decades before, such spiritual adoptions, especially to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, as well as to Woodruff himself, were common. Irving, “The Law of Adoption,” 294, 309, 312; Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism.”

<sup>75</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>76</sup> Susa Young Gates [editor and compiler], “‘Aunt Jane’ James” in “Joseph Smith, the Prophet,” 551–53. As Jonathan Stapley has shown, for a brief period, “scribes recorded individuals in the temple ledgers with their adoptive parents’ last name adjoined to their own. Though this naming custom was implemented only for a short time, Brigham Young preached that individuals were to use these new names publicly.” Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” 71.

<sup>77</sup> Minutes, August 26, 1908, “Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, Dealing with the Rights of Negroes in the Church, 1849–1940,” Box 74, Folder 7, George Albert Smith Papers, MS 0036, UUSC. The racial identity of Abel (sometimes spelled Able) seems to have been somewhat fluid. The religious autobiography (1891) of one of his converts, Eunice Kinney, describes him as “a black Elder . . . ordained by Joseph, the martyred prophet.” “Letter from Sister Kinney, September 1891,” in Wingfield Watson Correspondence, 1891, MS 16323, CHL. Yet in the 1867 Salt Lake City directory, while the members of the James family are listed as “colored,” no such label

of Abel as an “educated negro... [who] has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability” suggests, the prophet believed that even those born into the lowliest of lineages could, through faith in the gospel, obedience to Christ’s church, and self-improvement, join the restored Abrahamic covenant, and even rejoin the original, white family of humanity.

### **A Reliable “[Auto]biography”?**

The “Biography of Jane E. James,”—the title that Elizabeth Roundy first scrawled atop the handwritten copy of the narrative—makes a case for James’s inclusion in the present by highlighting her inclusion in the past. Because her history is also a polemic, the question of the narrator’s reliability must be raised. James herself acknowledges that during the sixty or more years since her time in Joseph Smith’s household, “many incidents has [*sic*] passed from my memory.” Yet the narrative matches fairly consistently with timelines and contemporary accounts of her arrival in Nauvoo, her recollection of who also lived in the Mansion House during her time there, and the Mormon exodus to Utah.<sup>78</sup> However, regarding her more fantastic claims, most importantly Emma and Joseph Smith’s invitation of spiritual adoption, the archive begins and ends with James’s words.

And yet, are these actually James’s words? After all, James’s autobiography is an “[auto]biography.” The verbal memories of James only became part of the Mormon archive—and thus part of Mormon history—when Elizabeth Roundy transcribed them. The narrative was not

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accompanies the entry for “Elijah Able.” Salt Lake City Directory (Salt Lake City: G. Owens, 1867), 33, 67. Newell Bringhurst has suggested that “the Abels stood apart from the other well-known black Mormons,” and his descendants, some of whom held the priesthood, may have “passed over the color line.” Newell G. Bringhurst, “Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism,” 30.

<sup>78</sup> See advertisement for James’s lost luggage, *Nauvoo Neighbor*, December 6, 1843. For a timeline of the presence of the Partridge and Lawrence sisters, whom James claims to have met in the Mansion House, in the Smith household, see Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 132–144. For trek details, see “Daniel Spencer/Ira Eldredge Company.” “Daniel Spencer/Ira Eldredge Company,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed January 4, 2012, <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companyPioneers?lang=eng&companyId=285>.

“written by [James] herself,” as was so important to the authorial authority of other nineteenth century black women’s narratives.<sup>79</sup>

Why did James not write own autobiography? There are two, interrelated answers to this question. The first is practical. The long held assumption among scholars who have studied Jane Manning James’s life has been that James was illiterate.<sup>80</sup> When she and Roundy met to record James’s life story, this was true. But there is ample evidence to suggest that James’s illiteracy was the result of the loss of physical ability, and not due to an absence of aptitude. After all, in another interview about her memories of Joseph Smith published in 1905, James stated, “I used to read in the Bible so much and in the Book of Mormon and Revelations.” James also claimed that the Smiths expected the Mannings’ arrival “because I wrote them a letter.”<sup>81</sup> And yet in her old age, James could no longer read. As she states in her autobiography, “I am nearly blind which is a great trial for me.”<sup>82</sup> Federal census records from 1860 to 1900 correlate with James’s statements that she lost the ability to read and write, most likely sometime between 1880 and 1900.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Katherine Clay Bassard, *Spiritual Interrogations: Culture, Gender, and Community in Early African American Women’s Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 21, 87.

<sup>80</sup> All scholars of early black Mormons are indebted to the work of Henry J. Wolfinger. Yet in his 1976 “A Test of Faith” article, the first scholarly examination of the archival record of Jane Manning James, Wolfinger assumes that James was unable to write because she used a scribe for her autobiography, and perhaps for the letters she sent to leading LDS officials. Wolfinger also bases his conclusion about James’s limited literacy on the fact that six months before her death, she deeded her estate to her daughter Ellen M. Mclean. In the court record involving a lawsuit, which Sylvester James brought against his sister over their mother’s estate, James signed her name with what appears to be an “X.” Yet, according to a May 21, 1909 *Salt Lake Herald* article, the court declared, “Mrs. James Elizabeth James... was mentally incompetent when she deeded her property to her daughter.” “Old Woman’s Deed is Set Aside by Court,” *Salt Lake Herald*, May 21, 1909. In my examination of the original letters James wrote to leading church officials, two almost identical letters from 1890 appear to be composed in the same hand. Jane E. James to Joseph F. Smith, February 7, 1890, Box 18, Folder 12, Joseph F. Smith Papers, MS 1325, CHL; Jane E. James to Joseph F. Smith, April 12, 1890, Box 18, Folder 12, MS 1325, CHL. A letter from 1903 does appear to be composed in a different hand. By this time, census records along with James’s own testimony indicate that she was blind. James E. James to Joseph F. Smith, August 31, 1903, MS 1325, CHL. None of these letters indicate that they came from anyone else’s hand but James’s.

<sup>81</sup> Gates [editor and compiler], “Aunt Jane” in “Joseph Smith, the Prophet.”

<sup>82</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>83</sup> The census records from 1870 and 1880 have separate columns in which the census taker indicated by marking a forward slash whether the individual “cannot read” and “cannot write.” In 1870 and 1880, the census taker canvassing Salt Lake City’s Eighth Ward where James lived was recording this information, as the taker indicated that some of James’s neighbors could not read, nor write. In 1870, there is no slash in the “cannot read” column for James, but there is a slash, which is smugged and might have been erased, in the “cannot write” column. However, in the 1880 census, no

The second reason is racial. As was the case with the most prominent nineteenth-century slave narratives, James's story required a white Mormon to validate its claims. Attesting to its authenticity, William Lloyd Garrison provided a preface to Frederick Douglass's *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (1861), was validated twice, once by Amy Post, who is credited with helping Jacobs write the text, and a second time by Lydia Marie Child, who edited the volume. And though he wrote letters seeking assistance from New York benefactors during his enslavement, when it came to compose *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853), Solomon Northup verbally recounted his experiences to a white scribe and editor, David Wilson who in the book's preface testified to the narrative's accuracy.<sup>84</sup>

The cultural exigency to validate these narratives reinforces the connection between literacy and race in the nineteenth century. To write is to be white. And the assumption of James's illiteracy—and the tendency to disregard her own statement and ignore, or fail to examine other archival evidence about her ability to read and write—emphasizes the intractability of literacy as a signifier for whiteness. What's more, the assumption of James's illiteracy underscores the challenge for non-whites to add their own, unmediated written voices to the historical archive. Even if Jane Manning James actually put pen to paper, her words remain in the liminal space between the oral and written until a white writer intervenes to testify to their historical credibility.

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slashes appear in the literacy columns for James, indicating that she could both read and write. The 1860 census is not conclusive on the question of James's literacy. In this census, only one column, which reads, "persons over 20 y'rs of age who cannot read & write" is provided to the census taker. While this column is not marked for James's entry in this census, the census taker did not mark the column for any of James's neighbors, suggesting perhaps that the census taker was not recording this information. The 1890 census for Utah was lost to fire. In the 1900 census, in the entry for James, the census taker wrote, "no" and "no" in the two columns dedicated to literacy, which were labeled "can read" and "can write." "Jane James," 1870 U.S. Census, Salt Lake City, UT, pg. 595B; "Jane E. James," 1880 U.S. Census, Salt Lake City, UT; pg. 39A; "Jane E James," 1860 U.S. Census, Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory, pg. 84; "Jane E James," 1900 U.S. Census, Salt Lake City, UT, pg. 9A. All these records were accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>84</sup>See Wilson's "Editor's Preface," Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup*, ed. David Wilson (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), xv–xvi. For the requirement of a white reader to authenticate black writer's narratives, see Robert B. Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 17–20.

Because James is functionally illiterate, her symbolic inability to add her own words to the archive becomes literal. Her text became subject to direct intervention by her scribe, who believed it her responsibility as the white validator of a black woman's testimony to correct the text. Thus before asking if Jane Manning James is reliable, we must ask the same question of Elizabeth Roundy.

Recall that, in describing the members of the "little band" of black Mormon converts that she led from Connecticut to Illinois, James did not include her eldest son, Sylvester. Sylvester's absence is conspicuous. By the time his mother dictated her autobiography to Roundy, Sylvester James was a wealthy farmer. He was one of just two African Americans listed in the popular biographical encyclopedia, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*.<sup>85</sup> Why does James not mention the fact that her successful son was born in Connecticut? Why not mention that as a small boy, Sylvester too made the harrowing trek halfway across the country to gather with the Saints in Nauvoo?

Elizabeth Roundy also wondered about James's "reticence pertaining to one of her children," as Roundy herself describes it. Thus, after recording James's verbal account of her life story, Roundy steps away from her role as faithful scribe and interjects her own prerogative into the narrative. In a one-page epilogue to James's statement, Roundy implies that she believes almost all of James told her. For example, Roundy finds no cause to challenge James's claims that she was the beloved servant, and even the potential adopted spiritual daughter of the Smith family, who handled both the prophet's temple robes and the sacred Book of Mormon translation aides, the Urim and Thummim. Yet Roundy believed it her responsibility to correct the statement's "only error, or you may call it evasion," as Roundy explains on the last page of the handwritten original document. This

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<sup>85</sup> The other African American listed in this volume, published by the Utah Pioneers Book Company, a group of Mormon and pro-Mormon Utahans, was Franklin Perkins, a former slave and farmer who was the father of Sylvester James's wife, Mary. *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneer's Publishing Company, 1913), 86, 1096. For a period in the 1870s, Perkins was also Sylvester James's stepfather; records show that Jane Manning James was briefly married to Perkins after she divorced Isaac James in 1870. Ronald G. Coleman, "Is There No Blessing for Me?: Jane Elizabeth Manning James, A Mormon African American Woman," Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 150.

“error” was the true paternity of Sylvester James, who was often described as a “half-breed.”<sup>86</sup>

Roundy writes that while she “could not get any thing out of Jane” about Sylvester, Roundy learned from James’s brother, Isaac Manning, that Sylvester “was born in Conn . . . that he was the child of a white man[,] a preacher.” Roundy writes that “Jane was nearly eighteen or quite that old when the child was born,” and that she left the infant in the care of her own mother to return to her work as a servant in the Fitch household. Soon after this ordeal, Roundy writes, young Jane Manning “heard the Gospel and was baptized.”<sup>87</sup>

The consensus among contemporary Mormons who celebrate Jane Manning James’s faith by performing reenactments, plays, and fictionalizing her life in historical novels, is that the “preacher” whom Isaac Manning claims was the father of Sylvester was Jane Manning James’s onetime Presbyterian “pastor.” The consensus is also that James did not consent to this sexual relationship.<sup>88</sup>

To be sure, it is plausible to connect the unsympathetic Presbyterian “pastor” whom James describes in her own statement with the “preacher” whom her brother Isaac Manning told Roundy was the father of Sylvester. It is also plausible to imagine that this minister used his position of authority to abuse a young, black servant in his flock, especially when such an image heightens the contrast between this religious and perhaps even sexual tyrant and Joseph Smith Jr., the beloved Mormon prophet and fatherly figure who, in James’s own telling, fulfilled his promise to protect her, both in this lifetime and the next. In antebellum America, even in a free state like Connecticut, the laws protecting African American women against rape by respected white men were all but nonexistent. Yet twenty-first-century understandings of sex and power make a truly consensual

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<sup>86</sup> For example, see the May 18, 1874, article in the *Deseret News*. “Yesterday afternoon, the stable of Mr. Sylvester James, a half-breed, in the lower part of the First Ward, took fire and was soon wrapped in flames.”

<sup>87</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.”

<sup>88</sup> In their trilogy of historical novels about early black Mormons, Margaret Blair Young and Darius Gray imagine a rape scene in the pastor’s church office during which Sylvester was conceived. Margaret Blair Young and Darius Aidan Gray, *One More River to Cross* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 2000), 52.



relationship between two people of such different social standings all but impossible.<sup>89</sup> What's more, such an implied depiction of Joseph Smith as a protector of young, female virtue also subtly challenges the common, non-Mormon view of Mormonism's founder as his own kind of sexual tyrant who, many believed, also used his authority to coerce dozens of young women into entering into polygamous marriages with him.

Today, as was the case more than a century ago when Roundy interjected family gossip into James's "[auto]biography," attempting to determine the nature of James's relationship with Sylvester's father is no more than an act of speculation. But what is not speculation is that Roundy's act alters the identity that James constructed for herself at the point of her conversion. Roundy adds experiences of great pain into James's purposefully positive, faith-promoting spiritual narrative. After Roundy's intervention into the text, James is no longer simply a spiritual seeker, dissatisfied with the local religious offerings, who finds a spiritual home in Mormonism, then becomes a would-be adoptive daughter to the prophet Joseph Smith, a celebrated Mormon pioneer of 1847, and a mother to a large Mormon family. She becomes the young, unwed mother of a mixed-race son, perhaps looking for a new community that would not know her past, and thus not hold it against her. After Roundy's intervention, James also becomes the Mormon matriarch who failed to keep her own family within the church. In her autobiography, while James highlights the fact that she was able to convince her family to leave their homes in Connecticut and join the Mormons in Nauvoo, she does not mention that the only other family member who eventually settled in Utah and remained Mormon was her brother Isaac, the source of the family gossip about Sylvester's paternity. In fact, by the time of James's death in 1908, Sylvester had been excommunicated for "unchristian

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<sup>89</sup> Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 57–63, 171.

like conduct.” All her other children had either died or left Utah, and none of her grandchildren were active members of the church.<sup>90</sup>

James “evades” the question of whether or not she lost control over her own (sexual) body back in Connecticut.<sup>91</sup> But there is no question that because she could not write her own autobiography, James could not maintain control over her written-self. Like Samuel, the Lamanite in the Nephite archive, and the Delaware Indians in Parley P. Pratt’s autobiography, James is captured in the very text in which she attempted to fashion her Mormon self—a self that, despite its blackness, she believed had proven worthy of a place in the sacred Mormon community, even in Joseph Smith’s eternal household.

When she tacked her unsolicited epilogue onto the end of Jane Manning James’s [auto]biography, Roundy made clear that, at least when it came to discussing the paternity of Sylvester, the white scribe believed her black narrator was unreliable. And yet putting aside her motives, Roundy’s interrogation of James’s potential interracial relationship does in fact relate to another question regarding James’s reliability on the most important claim in her autobiography: that the Smiths wanted to adopt her as their spiritual daughter.

In the last few decades of her life, Jane Manning James grew concerned over her spiritual future. Beginning in the 1880s, James wrote several letters to a series of church presidents in an effort to secure her own exaltation and that of her family members. She petitioned them to allow her

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<sup>90</sup> Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 145–46 168 n. 73. Jane Manning James, her son Sylvester, and her husband Isaac James, whom she married in 1845, were the only members of the Connecticut Manning-Stebbins group who cast their lot with Brigham Young and trekked to Utah. After traveling to Winter Quarters during the winter of 1846 during the Mormon exodus of Nauvoo, most of James’s family settled in Illinois or Iowa. In the 1860s and 1870s, many of this group joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Roger D. Launius, *Invisible Saints: A Study of Black Americans in the Reorganized Church* (Independence, MO: Herald Pub. House, 1988).; Connell O’Donovan, “Cato Treadwell (1762-1849): A Black Revolutionary War Veteran and Nauvoo Mormon?,” accessed June 18, 2014, <http://www.connellodonovan.com/treadwell.html>

<sup>91</sup> John Stauffer has argued that Hannah Crafts defined the difference between freedom and slavery as the ability to choose one’s sexual partner, specifically one’s spouse, to whom one is bound through the “holy ordinance” of marriage. John Stauffer, “The Problem of Freedom in The Bondwoman’s Narrative,” in *In Search of Hannah Crafts: Essays on the Bondwoman’s Narrative*, ed. Henry Louis Jr. Gates and Hollis Robbins (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), 64–65.

to enter the temple and obtain her own endowments and those of her dead family members. For the most part, James pegged her hopes that church leaders would grant her the necessary temple privileges on the notion that the church's current leaders would accept what she claimed were the wishes of Mormonism's first prophet.

Yet James also tried different approaches in what she recognized was an uphill battle to convince church leaders to grant a black woman access to the temple. As she explained in an 1884 letter to Church President John Taylor, James accepted the church's position that, because of his sin against humanity's original family—namely killing his brother—Cain's seed would only have their curse removed, as Brigham Young began teaching in the early 1850s, “when all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the priesthood,” including access to Mormon temples.<sup>92</sup> “I recognize that my race and color [mean I] can[']t expect my endowments as those who are white,” James wrote to Taylor. From Cain to Ham and Canaan, “My race was handed down through the flood.” Still, James asked for a dispensation. “You know my history,” she reminded Taylor, “& according to the best of my ability I have lived all the requairments [*sic*] of the Gospel.” Because she had proven herself worthy—the evidence for which she would provide in her autobiography—despite her inferior lineage, James pleaded to Taylor, “is there no blessing for me[?]?”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> As Young explained in 1854, Cain “deprived his brother of the privilege of pursuing his journey through life, and of extending his kingdom by multiplying upon the earth; and because he did this, he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God.” Young, “Spiritual Gifts etc.,” December 3, 1854, *JD*, II: 142-3. Lester Bush asserts that Young made his first statement against black men holding the priesthood in 1849. And throughout the 1850s, Young repeatedly turned to the curse against Cain as the rationale for black spiritual and political inferiority. Young also justified instituting African chattel slavery in Utah based on the widely-held biblical genealogy of Africans as descendants of Canaan, his father Ham, and their supposed antediluvian progenitor, Cain. Following Young's death, to justify the restriction, church leaders began citing passages in Joseph Smith's translations of the Books of Moses and Abraham, which referenced curses against Cain and Ham. Bush, “Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” 68–86.

<sup>93</sup> Consciously or not, in her request, James echoes Esau's plea to his father Isaac, “Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?” Though Esau was Isaac's eldest son, and thus his rightful heir, Jacob used deception to steal Esau's inheritance, including the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 27). Thanks to Jonathan Sarna for pointing out this connection. Jane E. James to John Taylor, Salt Lake City, December 27, 1884, transcribed in Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 148.

Eight years later in 1890, James wrote to then Apostle Joseph F. Smith. She asked that church officials seal her as a wife to the long-deceased, early black priesthood holder, Walker Lewis.<sup>94</sup> Not surprisingly, Joseph F. Smith ignored this request. To grant it would have been a tacit recognition that a “seed of Cain” had been ordained to the priesthood in the early years of the church.<sup>95</sup> Yet James’s choice of Lewis as a prospective posthumous husband highlights the fact that James understood the Mormon leadership’s antipathy for and fear of miscegenation. Had James been white, as a widow—in 1870 she divorced Isaac James, and he died in 1891—she would have likely become a plural wife to a living priesthood holder. This man would have been responsible for her earthly and heavenly wellbeing. The Saints argued that not only was plural marriage, and the bounty of progeny that accompanies it, the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, but that it was necessary for the chosen must “multiply and replenish the earth” to reach the highest levels of heaven. Plural marriage was also moral and humane.<sup>96</sup> In 1885, at the height of the U.S. government’s anti-polygamy campaign, church leaders argued that plural marriages functioned as a safeguard against the prostitution, infanticide, and disease produced by a surplus of poor women and overly libidinous men, social ills that the Saints asserted plagued monogamous societies.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> There is no evidence that James’s own husband, whom she divorced in 1870, ever received the priesthood. Jane E. James to Joseph F. Smith, February 7, 1890; Jane E. James to Joseph F. Smith, April 12, 1890. The February 7, 1890 letter is transcribed in Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 149.

<sup>95</sup> As late as 1879, church leaders, including Joseph F. Smith, accepted as fact that Walker Lewis and Elijah Abel had been ordained to the priesthood. Minutes, May 31, 1879, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Adam S. Bennion Papers, MSS 1, BYSC.

<sup>96</sup> *D&C* 132: 63, 19. See also Genesis 1:20-25; Jacob 2:30. Though the July 12, 1843 entry in William Clayton’s hand was most likely first record of the revelation on plural marriage, the consensus among scholars of early Mormon polygamy, as well as the church itself, is that Joseph Smith received the revelation as early as 1831. See among others: Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 56–60; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 4, 10, 27–28, 33; Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 318 n. 33; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 323–326. See also “Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah,” the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed February 4, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-and-families-in-early-utah?lang=eng>.

<sup>97</sup> “Epistle of the First Presidency,” April 4, 1885 reprinted in James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 11. B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 84–104; Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 169.

Yet in Utah, for a black woman like James to be sealed in marriage to a white Mormon man—dead or alive—was out of the question. According to Brigham Young, “under the law of God” relative to the “African race,” “if the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty... is death on the spot.”<sup>98</sup> The restoration of Ephraim, whom God had elected to be God’s “holy nation, a kingdom of priests, a people to receive the covenants,” as Apostle Erastus Snow declared in 1882, was central to the Saints’ covenantal contract. To allow the “[seed of ] Cain” into Mormon families, explained Church President John Taylor that same year, in which he cited the recently canonized Book of Moses, would corrupt the blood increasingly purified by unions among Ephraim’s sons and daughters.<sup>99</sup>

It is possible that James’s willingness to observe Mormonism’s rigid boundaries regarding sex between the most and least favored lineages also manifests in her relative reliability about what in fact transpired between herself and the Smiths during her time in the Mansion House. According to extant records from the Nauvoo period, James’s claim that an offer of adoption occurred in 1843 appears to be suspect. While certain important rituals, including baptisms for the dead and marital sealings took place in temporary locations—for example, the Mississippi River and the Mansion House—the evolving “Law of Adoption” theology required a completed temple for adoptive sealings. When the temple was finished in December 1845, in the flurry before the impending exodus, 211 individuals were adopted to sixteen prominent Mormon couples. Though hundreds, if not thousands of Latter-day Saints would be sealed to Joseph Smith in Utah temples, only one person was adopted to him in Nauvoo. The adoptee was not Jane Manning James, but her onetime

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<sup>98</sup> Brigham Young, “The Laws of God Relative to the African Race,” March 8, 1863 *JD*, X: 110. In another particularly graphic example of such rhetoric, Young declared in the winter of 1852, “And if any man mingles his seed with the seed of Cane the only way he Could get rid of it or have salvation would be to Come forward & have his head Cut off & spill his Blood upon the ground. It would also take the life of his Children.” Quoted in Wilford Woodruff Journal, undated entry between January 4, 1852 and February 8, 1852, Vol 4. 97; Bush, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” 42.

<sup>99</sup> Erastus Snow, “God’s Peculiar People,” May 5, 1882, *JD* XXIII: 186-187. John Taylor, “Hostility of the World to the Gospel,” February 12, 1882, *JD* XXVI: 87-97.

Mansion House housemate, John M. Bernhisel. According to the Nauvoo “Book of Proxey Sealings,” on February 3, 1846, Bernhisel presented himself to the “sacred Alt[a]r” in the most sacred room of the “House of the Lord” where he became the martyred prophet’s “legal heir to all the blessings bestowed upon Joseph Smith pertaining to exaltations,” the same blessings that a half a century later James petitioned Joseph F. Smith to grant her.<sup>100</sup>

With this in mind, what are we to make of James’s claim that she should have been the spiritual daughter of Joseph and Emma Smith? Of course, one possibility is that the Smiths offered nothing to James. In this case, perhaps a contrived memory of the adoption offer dates not from 1840s Nauvoo, but from 1870s and 1880s Utah when, following the opening of the first Utah temples, Joseph Smith became the adoptive father to thousands of living and dead Saints. In fact, on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1885 in the Logan Temple, James’s scribe, Elizabeth Roundy was adopted to the prophet. “Anxious” as she was for the spiritual wellbeing of her dead and for her own “Welfare for the future,” as she explained to Joseph F. Smith in her letters from 1890, James also hoped that she too could participate in the rush of Saints eager to seal themselves to the first prophet.<sup>101</sup>

And yet, a second possibility must be raised: that the offer made was to seal young Jane Manning to Joseph not as his daughter, but as his plural wife. In Nauvoo, with almost no exceptions, the ritual of spiritual adoption was reserved for men, while plural marriages were the relationships that united the female faithful to what Smith envisioned would be the ever-multiplying heavenly family.<sup>102</sup> Would-be plural wife or not, Jane Manning James was not a stranger to

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<sup>100</sup> Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” 3–5; Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” 66, 67; Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*.

<sup>101</sup> Roundy’s adoptive mother was her dear friend, and Joseph Smith’s widowed plural wife, Eliza R. Snow. Church Patriarch John Smith served as proxy for his uncle and Lucy Walker Smith Kimball stood in for the ailing Eliza R. Snow. Elizabeth J. D. Roundy, Temple Ordinance Book, 1876-1914, MS 16964, CHL. Jane E. James to Joseph F. Smith, February 7, 1890; Jane E. James to Joseph F. Smith, April 12, 1890. Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” 5.

<sup>102</sup> Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” 38; Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” 68–71. Thanks to Jonathan Stapley for helping me navigate this complicated and ever evolving theology of adoption and celestial marriage.

polygamy. In her autobiography, James claims to have been a witness to the early, secretive days of what the Saints called “celestial marriage.”<sup>103</sup> James recalls that while “discussing Mormonism” with four other servants in the Mansion House, the sisters Emily and Eliza Partridge and Maria and Sarah Lawrence, “Sara said [to me] what would you think if a man had more wives than one? I said that it is all right! Marie said well we are all four Brother Josephs wives!” Jane Manning responded with glee: “I jumped up and clapped my hands and said that’s good.”<sup>104</sup>

Setting aside the critical question of race, there was little to differentiate Jane Manning from these other female servants in the Mansion House. All five were all single. All five were in their late teens or early twenties. All five were fatherless. All five lived in Joseph Smith’s home where the prophet pledged to care for their material and spiritual wellbeing.<sup>105</sup>

And yet the question of race is critical to this potential offer of marriage. But which race? As I will discuss further in Chapters Six and Seven, since the earliest years of the church, leading Latter-day Saints leadership had encouraged white missionaries to take Indian plural wives. Such unions would join together the two most favored Isrealite bloodlines, the (mostly white) progeny of Ephraim and the (mostly red) sons and daughters of Manasseh. Such unions would also help civilize the Indians so that they could fulfill the Book of Mormon precedent to become “white,

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<sup>103</sup> Kathryn Daynes coined the term “protopolygamy” to describe this early era of the institution. Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 31.

<sup>104</sup> James and Roundy, “Biography of Jane E. James.” For an analysis of Joseph Smith’s secret marriages to the Emily Dow Partridge and Eliza Maria Partridge in March 1843 and to Sarah and Maria Lawrence in May 1843, see Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 132–144. In his own memoir, Joseph Smith III remembers Jane Manning James’s reaction to polygamy very differently. Perhaps influenced by the RLDS’ views on Joseph Smith’s polygamy, Joseph III recalls a 1905 conversation with James, whom he misidentifies as Maria. James’s brother Isaac Lewis Manning, who joined the Reorganized Church before moving to Utah, “was living in a small but comfortable house with his sister Maria who, in the old days in Nauvoo, had worked as a domestic for Mother. This aged woman mad a quite characteristic statement about my mother: ‘She was the best woman I ever new.’ Then she added, ‘And them was all lies about the Prophet Joseph having any other wives than her!’” Joseph Smith III, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III, 1832-1914: The Second Prophet of the Church*, ed. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, (Independence, MO: Price Publishing Company, 2001), 26; Newell, “The Autobiography and Interview of Jane Elizabeth Manning James,” 283 n. 93.

<sup>105</sup> Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 6, 396–456, 473–485. Even before the Nauvoo period, Smith had already established a pattern of marrying servant girls who worked in his household. Fanny Alger, who was probably no older than sixteen she lived with the Smiths in Kirtland in 1835, is likely to have been Smith’s first plural wife. Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 20; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 323.

delightful, and just.” “We will have intermarriages with [the Indians],” Brigham Young purportedly taught, so “the curse of their color shall be removed, and they [shall be] restored to their pristine beauty.”<sup>106</sup>

The creation of covenants—in this case marriage covenants—between white Latter-day Saints of “chosen seed” and the Native American descendants of the lost tribes of Israel was the fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecy.<sup>107</sup> A marital union between the “seed of Cain” and any Mormon man, let alone Joseph Smith, was beyond the pale of acceptability. Thus if Joseph did ask her to marry him in Nauvoo, a half a century later in Utah, James had to perform a sleight of memory: she had to forget marriage and remember adoption. James understood that in the minds of Utah’s late nineteenth-century Mormon hierarchy, James would never be welcomed into the heavenly-bound household of the prophet as a wife. Yet James believed that, if she could write herself into the history of Joseph Smith’s Mansion House as a beloved and faithful convert, then Smith’s successors might accept her as the prophet’s adopted daughter.

### **A Covenantal Contract for a Daughter of Cain, Ham, and Canaan**

Though decades removed from the Mansion House, in her letters and autobiography composed in 1890s Utah, Jane Manning James provides the only firsthand testimony of her would-be adoption to the prophet. Yet James’s writings are not the only sources from Nauvoo that shed

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<sup>106</sup> William Hall, *The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed* (Cincinnati: Published for the Author by I. Hart & Co, 1852), 58–59. In the 1840s, it was not uncommon that church patriarch designate a white Saint to the lineage of Manasseh. But the frequency of the Ephraim lineage designation for white Mormons became more and more the norm throughout the nineteenth century. Mauss, “In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race,” 131–132, 149. For Gertrude Martineau, her designation as Manasseh related directly to her prophesied work for the restoration. In March 15, 1885, patriarch William McBride declared that Martineau was “of the blood of Manassah [Manasseh].” McBride foresaw that Martineau’s shared bloodline with the Lamanites would allow her to “become an instrument in the hands of the Lord in doing much for the restoration of the daughters of Mannasah, in teaching them the gospel in languages that thou dost not understand, and administer ordinances unto them in the temples of the Lords that will their salvation.” *LPB*, 259. Similar to Joseph Smith marrying his wards, “the Apostle to the Lamanites” Jacob Hamblin married one of his own adopted Indian children, a teenage Paiute named Eliza. Hamblin later brought her and other Indian polygamous wives on missions into Arizona, “thinking that they might be a great help in introducing something like cleanliness in cooking” to the Hopi and Navajos he was sent to convert. Todd Compton, “Civilizing the Ragged Edge: The Wives of Jacob Hamblin,” *Journal of Mormon History* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 160.

<sup>107</sup> See among others, Nephi 15:17, 13-14; 2 Nephi 10:18.



light on how Joseph Smith Jr., and those church leaders closest to him, viewed the potential for the spiritual redemption of people of African descent. On May 11, 1844, less than six weeks before he was assassinated alongside his younger brother, Church Patriarch Hyrum Smith performed for Jane Manning James the first of two patriarchal blessings she would receive in her lifetime. As is the case in her autobiography, from the contents of the blessing, young Jane Manning was clearly worried for her material and spiritual wellbeing. And yet, according to Hyrum’s blessing Jane Manning had the ability to ensure that her concerns about “food and Raiment and habitations to dwell in,” as well as her desire to know the “Mysteries of [God’s] Kingdom,” would be met. “[I]f you will keep the commandments of God you shall be helped Spiritually and Temporal.”<sup>108</sup>

This “if” appears in many patriarchal blessings of the era. The blessings of the Lord were conditional—as I’ve called it a covenantal contract. This was not the Calvinism of the elect who could not resist God’s grace even if they tried.<sup>109</sup> While God’s providence was paramount, Joseph Smith taught that God gave humanity agency to choose right from wrong. As such, men and women create their own destiny, to follow the path of sin or the path of righteousness through “obedience to the gospel,” as Hyrum described it in Jane Manning’s blessing. Hyrum’s blessing to William Rufus Rogers Stowell of Oneida County, New York, dated January 31, 1844, also included such a covenantal contract that emphasized Stowell’s agency: “Therefore I say unto you, William, *if* [my emphasis] you will continue faithful as you have begun [*then*] you shall be a bright and shining light unto this generation.”<sup>110</sup>

Yet Jane Manning did not enter into this world on equal footing with her fellow white Mormon convert, Rogers Stowell. According to his patriarchal blessing, Stowell was born into the

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<sup>108</sup> Hyrum Smith, “A Patriarchal Blessing of Jane Manning,” May 11, 1844. My great thanks to Louis Duffy, Jane Manning James’s great, great grandson, for helping me to secure a copy of her first patriarchal blessing.

<sup>109</sup> As recorded in the organizational meeting of the “Church of Christ” on April 6, 1830, Joseph Smith revealed, “There is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God.” *DeC* 20:3 2. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 157.

<sup>110</sup> *EPB*, 226–227.

avored “lineage of Ephraim,” and “blessed with the Priesthood.” Jane Manning came “down in the lineage of Canaan (sic) the Son of Ham which promise the fullness thereof is not yet revealed.” And though only after Joseph’s death did Canaan’s progeny become excluded from the Mormon priesthood, Joseph Smith believed and taught that Canaan’s sons and daughters carried with them the burden of their forefathers’ misdeeds, even if the full extent of this burden was not yet known. The March 1, 1842 edition of the Nauvoo-based *Times & Seasons* contained the first published version of Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham, which includes the vague reference that the descendants of Canaan’s father, Ham, were “cursed... as pertaining to the priesthood,” the passage that by the 1890s became popular among church leaders as a justification for the priesthood ban. Ironically, the same edition of *Times & Seasons* published for the first time the church’s Articles of Faith. “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins,” Smith explained, “and not for Adam’s transgressions.”<sup>111</sup> Jane Manning was not born guilty of Adam’s sin. But she was born guilty of Ham’s, and she carried the mark of this transgression on her skin.

And yet Hyrum’s blessing does not end with the declaration of Jane Manning’s lineage. For Hyrum—and I would argue for his brother, too—Jane Manning’s inferior birth did not determine her spiritual destiny. Hyrum promises Jane that through faith and obedience, she “shall have a place and a name in the midst of the people of zion.” The Saints would not turn her out because of the sins of her ancestors. In fact, Hyrum offers Jane Manning a covenantal contract that would allow her to secure her place and her name in Zion by parting ways entirely with the sinful forefathers—Ham, his son Canaan, and perhaps most importantly, Cain—that have cut her off from the rest of her fellow (white) Saints.

Cain is not explicitly named in Jane Manning’s patriarchal blessing. But by reading Manning’s blessing intertextually with Joseph Smith’s early translations, Cain’s dark shadow becomes present.

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<sup>111</sup> “The Book of Abraham,” *T&S*, March 1, 1842; “Church History,” [Letter to John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*], *T&S*, March 1, 1842.

To be sure, it was Smith’s successor Brigham Young who would implement the restriction against black men holding the priesthood, and relatedly against black men and women access to the temple. “Any man having one drop of the seed of [Cain]... in him cannot hold the priesthood,” Young famously declared in his January 1852 address to the Utah territorial legislature, “and if no other Prophet ever spake it before I will say it now.”<sup>112</sup> Yet, as I discussed in Chapter Three, in the church’s first years, Joseph too was particularly interested in the origins of the curse of Cain, and the implications of this curse for Cain’s supposed African progeny. Ten years before *Times & Seasons* published Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham, in its August 1832 edition, the *Evening & Morning Star* printed large sections of Joseph’s translation of the Book of Moses. These excerpts contained Smith’s revisions and expansion of the first six chapters of the Book of Genesis. It also contained prophetic visions of the inhabitants of the millennial city. Zion would be populated by “a mixture of all the seed of Adam,” with the exception of the “seed of Cain.” The fallout from history’s first murder—Cain killing his brother, Abel—would remain until the end of time. “[F]or the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among” the other sons and daughters of Adam.<sup>113</sup> Elsewhere in the Book of Moses, while Cain is exiled both from God’s presence and from his family, the Lord protects Cain from other children of Adam who wish to avenge the death of Abel. But the protection comes in the ironic form—“a mark upon Cain”—a mark that many leading Latter-day Saints insisted for the next century and a half only God could remove.<sup>114</sup> In Smith’s translation of the Book of Moses, which reflected standard antebellum ideas of immutable African accursedness, the mark placed upon the seed of Cain rendered them ineligible for full membership

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<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Bush, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” 72.

<sup>113</sup> This part of the Book of Moses was initially titled “Extracts from the Prophecy of Enoch,” *E&MS*, August, 1832; Moses 7: 22. Reading Moses 5:32 intertextually with 2 Nephi 5: 3, 19, we see that, motivated by envy, both Cain and Laman act violently against their brothers, for which they are separated from their family and marked off with dark skin.

<sup>114</sup> Moses 5: 41, 40.

in the human family. And according to Smith's revisions of Genesis even at the end of time, they would have no place in the city of Zion.

And yet in Jane Manning's patriarchal blessing, Hyrum Smith indicates that all is not lost. Like the potential redemption of the Native American descendants of the Lamanites, whose cursed dark skin could be transformed and made "white and delightsome" through faith and piety, Hyrum comforts Jane, "for he that changeth times and seasons and placed a mark upon your forehead, can take it off and stamp upon you his own lineage."<sup>115</sup> In Nauvoo, not only did God's prophet offer Jane Manning the chance to be adopted into his family, the church patriarch tells Jane that she can part ways with her inherited identity as a daughter of Canaan, Ham, and Cain. She too can join the blessed lineage of Heavenly Father's chosen people.

Yet such a change was conditional on Jane Manning's decision to properly exercise her agency. In the conclusion of his blessing, Hyrum establishes a pathway towards this alternative lineage by offering Jane Manning a very tailored, racially specific covenantal contract: "Behold I say unto you jane if thou doest well thou shalt be accepted; if thou doest not well Sin lieth at the Door."

The import of Hyrum's choice of words here cannot be overstated. Hyrum cites word for word Moses 5:23, which is his brother Joseph's translation and slight alteration of Genesis 4:7.<sup>116</sup> In the Bible and in the Book of Moses, this passage is part of the conversation between God and Cain that comes directly before Cain rises up against his brother and slays him.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> See Daniel 2:21, "And he changeth the times and the season; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

<sup>116</sup> Genesis 4:7 reads: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Joseph changes the rhetorical question found in the King James Version of Genesis to a definitive period.

<sup>117</sup> Genesis 4:8 reads: "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." The implications of Hyrum's use of Moses 5:23 go much deeper than is possible to discuss here. But suffice it to say that in the nine verses between Moses 5:23 and 5:32, when Cain kills Abel (comprising the "plain and precious things" (1 Nephi 13) that Joseph restores to the Genesis account), Joseph further articulates Cain's wickedness. In fact, out of his jealousy, Cain covenants with Satan, "that I may murder to get gain" (Moses 5: 30).

By citing this passage, Hyrum reads Jane Manning into the Cain and Abel narrative. He places her right at the scriptural precedent before the Second Fall—at the moment before Cain sins against the first human family, for which God curses him with dark skin, and segregates Cain and his seed (including his postdiluvian progeny, Ham and Canaan) from the rest of the children of Adam. In other words, Hyrum provides Jane with the opportunity to write her own conclusion to the Genesis story. She need not follow Cain into sin. By doing “well,” she can be accepted as a Latter-day Saint: “shun the path of vice,” Hyrum tells Jane earlier in the blessing, “turn away from wickedness be fervent unto prayer without ceasing and your name shall be handed down to posterity, from generation to generation.”<sup>118</sup>

### **Jane Manning James: “Aunt,” Servant, or Daughter?**

Near the end of her life, when she met with Elizabeth Roundy to compose her life story, Jane Manning James sought to demonstrate that she had successfully followed Hyrum’s admonition to turn away from the wickedness of her black ancestors and choose a more righteous path. And in James’s autobiography, literal paths—a journey to Nauvoo and trek to Utah—become a metaphor for her devotion to the restored church and obedience to the church’s divinely-appointed leaders. James believed that she made herself worthy to have her name handed down to posterity, as Hyrum foresaw. And this name should not be “Aunt Jane,” the colored servant to the prophet. She should be remembered as Jane, the prophet’s adopted daughter. And this name should not only appear in the archives of the *Deseret News*, but also in the archives of the temple.

After all, in Nauvoo, the prophet and his brother, the patriarch, taught young Jane Manning that her blackness, and the spiritual and intellectual limitations that it signifies, did not define her

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<sup>118</sup> Hyrum Smith, “A Patriarchal Blessing of Jane Manning.” Again, Hyrum is quoting his brother and the Church’s First Presidency, of which he was a member. See “Report from the First Presidency,” *T&S*, April 15, 1841. In her 1889 patriarchal blessing, Hyrum Smith’s son, John Smith repeats the promise that James’s name “shall be handed down to posterity.” What’s more, it seems that James’s material concerns did not abate in the forty-five years since her first patriarchal blessing. John Smith declares, “thou shalt not lack for food raiment or shelter.” John Smith, Patriarchal Blessing for Jane Elizabeth James, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1889, CHL.

destiny. She was born into the least favored of lineages. But James believed that she successfully disassociated herself from her cursed biblical forefathers and restored herself to God's favor and to God's original, white human family. For James, this restoration was all but total. In 1899, James declared to her longtime friend, fellow Mormon pioneer and medical doctor Elvira Stevens Barney, "I am white with the exception of the color of my skin."<sup>119</sup>

Dr. Stevens, along with Elizabeth Roundy, were just two prominent Mormon women in late nineteenth-century Utah whom James could count as friends, a network of sisters in the gospel that James built up over decades and upon whom she could count for social, spiritual, and sometimes financial support. Not only was James a weekly presence in her own Salt Lake City's Eight Ward's Relief Society for over three decades.<sup>120</sup> James also was involved in meetings of the church-wide Relief Society, during which she was frequently invited—or invited herself—to speak about her experiences in the prophet's household, and indirectly about her unique but precarious place within the Mormon community. For example, in December 1893, the influential suffragist magazine, the *Woman's Exponent* reported that during a recent semi-monthly Relief Society meeting, James declared that she maintained hope that the "light [of the gospel] would yet reach her people" as it had reached her. James also recounted yet another half-century-old conversation that she had with Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, praying that her son, most likely the prosperous but by then excommunicated Sylvester James, "might be faithful and go to [her people], as the Prophet Joseph had predicted."<sup>121</sup> The *Woman's Exponent* also provided James with the written, public space to

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<sup>119</sup> Dr. Elvira Stevens Barney, "Jane Manning James," *Deseret News*, October 10, 1899.

<sup>120</sup> James joined the Eighth Ward Relief Society soon after moving to the ward from Salt Lake City's First Ward after divorcing her husband in 1870 and she remained a member until her death in 1908. During her membership, James frequently bore her testimony and made "other remarks." In the form of cash and sundries, she both donated to and received support from the Relief Society's funds for the poor and sick. Yet despite her many years of membership, she was never called to any leadership or formal service position. "Eighth Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records, 1867-1979," LR 2525 14, CHL.

<sup>121</sup> Lydia D. Alder, "Ladies' Semi-Monthly Meeting," *Woman's Exponent*, December 1, 1893.

articulate the same implicit polemic of her autobiography. The minutes of another Relief Society meeting included the report:

Sister James felt to bear her testimony and rejoice that she had beheld the Prophet and Patriarch Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and wished she could go into the Temple; but she felt to wait in patience on her Heavenly Father. Prayed to be faithful unto the end and alluded to the time she embraced the Gospel, and how she rejoiced even until today in the same.<sup>122</sup>

And in January 1894, Relief Society President and the widow of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Zina D. H. Young even wrote to then Apostle Joseph F. Smith to support James's request that she "be adopted into Joseph Smith's family as a child."<sup>123</sup>

Joseph and Hyrum Smith's male successors did not see James the way her female supporters saw her, let alone how James saw herself. As Brigham Young first began teaching in the 1850s, the leaders of the church's hierarchy believed that she was born into a class of "the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in the habits, wild and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is general bestowed upon mankind." And she, along with all other seeds of Cain, would remain so until "all the rest of the children [of Adam] have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood."<sup>124</sup> In other words, not any time soon.

For James this also meant she was deemed unworthy to enter the most sacred places in the temple. In her autobiography, James does state with pride, "I have had the privelege (sic) of going to the Temple and being baptized for some of my dead."<sup>125</sup> Yet James was never granted permission to receive her endowments, or to be sealed to her husband and children. In May 1894, church leaders

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<sup>122</sup> Lydia D. Alder, Minutes of Ladies' Semi-Monthly Meeting, October 31, 1896, reprinted in, "Ladies' Semi-Monthly Meeting," *Woman's Exponent*, December 15, 1896. Thanks to Jonathan Stapley for locating and reporting on some of many James's many appearances in the Relief Society's archive. Jonathan Stapley, "Jane Manning James in the Woman's Exponent," *By Common Consent*, accessed June 18, 2014, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2007/10/19/jane-manning-james-in-the-womans-exponent/>.

<sup>123</sup> Zina D. H. Young to Apostle Joseph F. Smith January 15, 1894, transcribed in Wolfinger, "A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community," 150.

<sup>124</sup> Brigham Young, "Intelligence, Etc." October 9, 1959, *JD*, VII: 290-291. See also *JD* XII: 272 and *JD*, II: 142-143.

<sup>125</sup> Because the Salt Lake City temple was not yet complete, in 1888 James traveled north to Logan to perform this temple work. Linda King Newell Papers, Box 12, Folder 27, MS 447, UUSC.

did grant James's request to be sealed to the prophet, with the exception that she would be the Joseph's "servitor," not his adopted daughter. The Salt Lake Temple records indicate that James herself was not permitted to participate in her own circumscribed sealing. Instead, suffragist Bathsheba W. Smith served as James's proxy during the ceremony—an unusual occurrence, since proxies were almost exclusively employed for dead participants. President Joseph F. Smith stood in for his uncle and also officiated the ceremony. He declared that the "Negro Woman" Jane Elizabeth Manning James was a "Servitor to Joseph Smith... and to his household for all eternity."<sup>126</sup>

Jane Manning James's minor personal victory may have played an ironic role in the hardening of membership restrictions for current and future black Saints in the Mormon community. Her quest to receive her temple endowments—one she herself framed as a special exception for her special case—may have encouraged the church leadership to form a more formal racialized sense of who was understood to be a Saint worthy of admission to the temple. Though the practice of excluding blacks from full membership was well established by the first decade of the twentieth century, according to available records, it was only in August 1908, just a few months after James's death in April, that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met to discuss formalizing a policy of exclusion. During the meeting, Joseph F. Smith raised the case of "Aunt Jane," and her adoption to Joseph "as his servant," a ritualized relationship with the Prophet that "did not satisfy her."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Salt Lake City Temple Adoption Records, A, p. 26. John Nicolson, Temple Recorder, May 18, 1894. This temple record labeling James a "servitor" is unique in Mormon history. This identity of "servitor" however might relate to the political and theological history of early Utah's experience with "white" indentured servitude and "Indian" and "African" slavery, which I discuss in Chapter Seven. As for why James was not permitted to participate in her own sealing, her race seems to be the most obvious reason. Yet there are other possibilities, too. It is possible that because James did not have her temple endowments, which are necessary for participation in sealing rituals, she was therefore not allowed to participate in this adoption sealing. It is also possible that James was too infirm to make the trip to the temple, though because she demonstrated such a strong desire to participate in her temple work, this seems unlikely. And James was well enough to participate in other community events, like "Old Folks Day" and the 1897 Jubilee celebrations (See Epilogue). Whatever the case, Bathsheba W. Smith, who served as an ordinance worker in the Salt Lake Temple during this period, was a logical choice for a proxy for James. See "Smith, Bathsheba Wilson in Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1: 699–702.

<sup>127</sup> Minutes, August 26, 1908, "Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, Dealing with the Rights of Negroes in the Church, 1849–1940."



Such gray area in the church's stance toward "descendants of Cainan" could not continue, the current church president and prophet declared. The Quorum of the Twelve thus passed a motion—without opposition—stating that "if negroes or people tainted with negro blood apply for baptism themselves they might be admitted to Church membership in the understanding that nothing further can be done for them." In particular, this meant that from August 1908 forward, it was the church's official policy that while membership would be open to people of African descent, the church would not seek out black converts. And those black Saints who did join the church would not be admitted to the temple, nor could they hold the Mormon priesthood.<sup>128</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the church not only moved to remove the possibility of a black Mormon future. It also dismantled the memory of a black Mormon past. There is no evidence that Joseph Smith Jr. ever cited his translations of the Books of Abraham and Moses to justify black exclusion during his lifetime. Yet the curses against Cain and Ham described in these texts served as the de rigueur scriptural defense of the exclusionary policies until the 1950s. Even Joseph Smith's attitudes towards specific black Saints were rewritten to fit the attitudes of the day. At the same August 1908 meeting during which the ban on black membership was formalized, Joseph F. Smith asserted that his uncle declared the ordination of the "octoroon" Elijah Abel "null and void" when he discovered that Abel was "tainted with negro blood." This perspective contradicted Joseph F. Smith's own assertions from 1879 on the same question of whether the prophet supported Abel's ordination.<sup>129</sup> What began as a practice in the 1850s, and was formalized as church policy in 1908, became doctrine by the mid-twentieth century. "The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood," the First Presidency asserted in

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Minutes, August 26, 1908, "Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, Dealing with the Rights of Negroes in the Church, 1849–1940"; Minutes, May 31, 1879, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

an August 17, 1949, “[a] direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization.”<sup>130</sup>

In life and even in death, Jane Manning James subtly challenged the church leaders on this bad history by writing herself into the Mormon archive. She left a record of her direct, personal experiences that she believed were demonstrably authoritative, even more authoritative than the abstract justifications for her exclusion issued by the church’s hierarchy. On the first page of the original handwritten autobiography, Roundy writes that James “wishes [this verbal statement] read at her funeral by EJD Roundy.” And on April 21, 1908, five days after James’s passing, the *Deseret News* reported that Roundy fulfilled this instruction, reading “a sketch of her life as dictated by Mrs. James” at “Aunt Jane’s” memorial service, a service at which Joseph F. Smith eulogized James. This means that the Mormon president and prophet most responsible for institutionalizing the racial restrictions against full black membership had to sit and listen as James—from the grave—told the story of a pioneering black Mormon woman, who shook the prophet’s hand, who washed the prophet’s robes, who “handled” the “Urim and Thummim,” and who should have become the spiritual daughter of Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>131</sup> Turn-of-the-century Mormon officials might not have allowed her to enter the “House of the Lord.” But at her own funeral, by asserting her intimate relationship with the objects and bodies that brought about the Mormon dispensation, James claimed that her place among the Saints was recognized in another cherished house in the communal Mormon memory: in the Smiths’ Nauvoo home, and perhaps even in the Smiths’ eternal household.

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<sup>130</sup> “LDS Church First Presidency Statement on the Question of Blacks within the Church,” August 17, 1949, reprinted in Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 230.

<sup>131</sup> “Aunt Jane’ Laid to Rest,” *Deseret News*, April 21, 1908.

## CHAPTER SIX: People Building, On Bodies

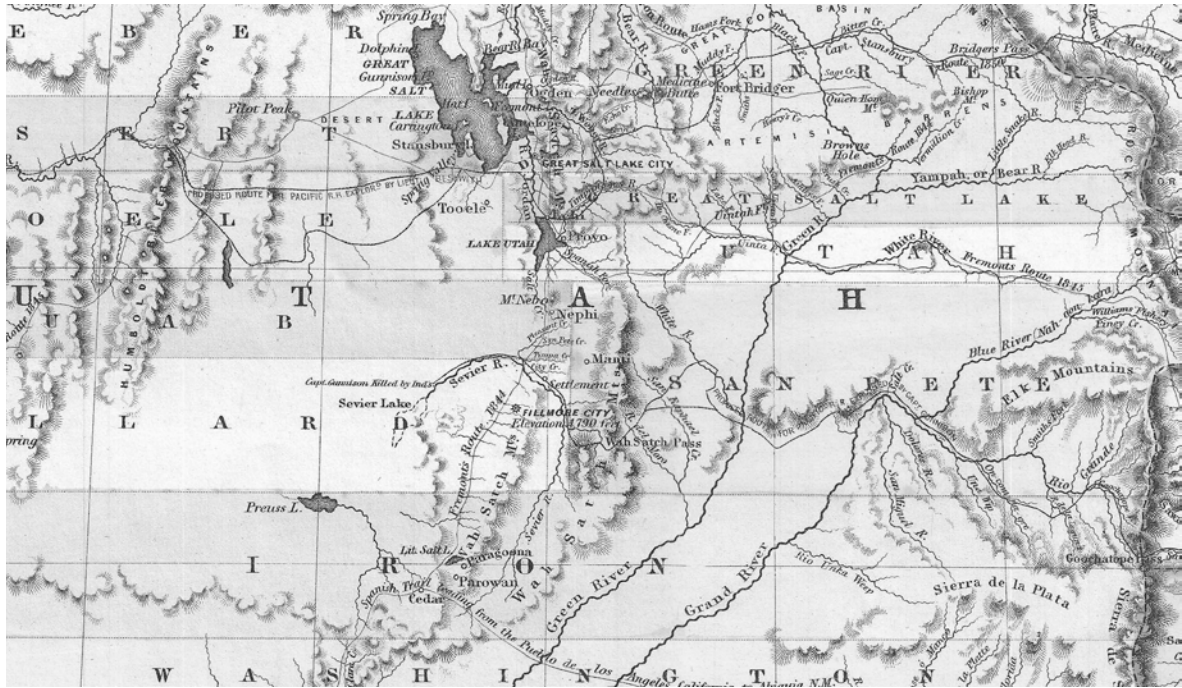


Figure 6.1: The Territory of Utah (1855).<sup>1</sup>

On May 6, 1854, the daguerreotypist and portrait artist for John C. Fremont's final Rocky Mountain expedition, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, traveled south from Salt Lake City with Brigham Young, the president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Utah's territorial governor, and its ex-officio superintendent of Indian Affairs. Young had invited Carvalho, a Sephardic Jew from South Carolina, to join his Mormon cavalcade. The large party, which was making a late spring swing through the Saints' growing communities south of the Mormon capital, included Young's first counselor Heber C. Kimball, Apostle Parley P. Pratt, and future Church President Wilford Woodruff, and fifty mounted militiamen who kept watch over a train of more than a hundred wagons. The show of force was also a show of largesse. The Saints brought with them sixteen oxen and several wagons stuffed with blankets, clothing, arms and ammunition—all gifts intended for the Ute peace delegation that the Saints would meet in the Utah Valley.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: George Woolworth Colton, "The Territories of New Mexico and Utah," in *Colton's Atlas of the World Illustrating Physical and Political Geography* (New York: J.H. Colton & Co, 1855) [Cropped and adjusted by author].

During the three-day journey, Carvalho scaled rocky outcrops to take in the vista. With an artist's eye for landscape, he observed as the company lengthened out to more than a mile along the Mormons' well-maintained wagon-road that ran some 250 miles from Salt Lake City in the north to the Iron Mission's outposts of Parowan and Cedar City in the south (Figure 6:1). Carvalho watched the convoy "winding leisurely along the side of a mountain, or trotting blithely in the hollow of some of the beautiful valley through which we passed, to the sound of musical choruses from the whole party, sometimes ending with: 'I never knew what joy was/Till I became a Mormon.'"<sup>2</sup>

The Saints' high spirits contrasted with the solemnity of the trip's purpose. On May 10, the Mormon company met a large contingent of Utes, headed by their military chief Walkara, at his camp near the Mormon settlement of Nephi. The purpose of this parley was to end the hostilities between the settlers and the natives, a conflict soon dubbed the "Walker War."

Neither Walkara nor Young—perhaps the two most powerful men in the Utah Territory—wanted to fight.<sup>3</sup> Since arriving in the Great Basin in 1847, Young had pledged to live in peace with the Indians, to trade with them, to help civilize them, and hopefully to convert them. For his part, Walkara of the Timpanogos band of Utes, whom Saints and Gentiles alike described as an intelligent and ruthless leader, saw the Mormon gathering as a new market for trade in horses, in firearms as well as in his most valuable commodity, Indian slaves.

Yet in the summer of 1853, Walkara, who had previously promised his political as well as religious allegiance to the Saints—he was baptized a Mormon in 1850—turned against his would-be brethren. In July, after a Mormon man killed one of the chief's relatives during a trade deal gone bad, frustrations over Mormon encroachment into Ute land as well as the Saints' continued efforts

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<sup>2</sup> Solomon Nunes Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859), 180–189. Thomas Bullock, Minutes, May 4-10, 1854, Box 2, Folder 52, GCM.

<sup>3</sup> Walkara (known to the Mormons as "Walker") was the military chief of the powerful, northern confederacy of Ute bands. Sowiette, whom some sources call Walkara's "half brother" or "uncle," was the confederacy's civil chief. John Alton Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 60.

to disrupt the chief's slave trading operations, led to open conflict.<sup>4</sup> Over a ten-month period, Utes sporadically attacked Mormon communities in southern Utah, communities that Walkara had helped establish only a few years before. Though not always under Walkara's direct orders, Ute warriors engaged in what the Saints called "Indian depredations," pilfering Mormon cattle, stealing crops and horses, and attacking and killing some Mormon settlers. In total, perhaps a dozen Saints were killed, mostly settlers in isolated regions of the territory.<sup>5</sup> Other Mormons living in outlying areas abandoned homes as well as crops still in the ground to find shelter in fortified towns.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the Nauvoo Legion went on the offensive, attacking Ute villages with bloodlust that often matched that of their Ute enemies. A mile from Walkara's camp, a group of Ute noncombatants sought shelter in the Mormon fort at Nephi. Yet there they were "shot down like so many dogs," remembered Adelia Wilcox, one of Heber C. Kimball's plural wives who witnessed the massacre. Their bodies were "picked up with pitch folks, put on a sleigh and hauled away" to be dumped in a mass grave. "The squaw they took prisoner," and sent her north to Salt Lake.<sup>7</sup>

According to Carvalho, to secure peace, Walkara made Brigham come to him. Brigham obliged, "If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain."<sup>8</sup> After the Mormon company arrived at Walkara's camp, Carvalho accompanied Young and the brethren into Walkara's lodge, where they found the Ute chief seated on a "buffalo-robe, wrapped in

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<sup>4</sup> Howard A. Christy, "The Walker War: Defense and Conciliation as Strategy," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1979): 395–420.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Gottfredson, *Indian Depredations in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Skelton Publishing CO, 1919), 44–58. For a non-Mormon perspective on the "Walker War" published in the 1850s, see Gwinn Haris Heap and E. F. Beale, *Central Route to the Pacific* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Company, 1854), 91–92.

<sup>6</sup> See Nauvoo Legion Papers, July-August 1853, MS 17208, CHL; Heap and Beale, *Central Route to the Pacific*, 92.

<sup>7</sup> Adelia Almira Wilcox Kimball, *Memoirs of Adelia Almira Wilcox; One of the Plural Wives of Heber C. Kimball*, (New York: Stanley Kimball, 1956), quoted in Ronald J. Rood and Derinna Koop, "The Archeology of a Mass Grave and One of the Walker War, Utah, Territory," *Salt Creek*, 2012, accessed July 01, 2014, <http://www.saltcreek.info/home/1-news/4-ute-stampede.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West*, 189.



Figure 6:2. Walkara (ca. 1855).<sup>9</sup>

his blanket,” and surrounded by his own council. During a two-day long series of meetings, Carvalho drew likenesses of Ute chiefs, including Walkara (Figure 6:2) and Kanosh, “the chief of the Parvain Indians.” Young and the Utes negotiated terms. Young told the chiefs that he “loved them like a father, and would always give them plenty of clothes and good food,” remembered Carvalho. However, Young’s paternalistic generosity was conditional, based on the Indians’ promise to cease “slay[ing] any more white men.” As a token of goodwill, Young presented Walkara with the oxen and the chief happily accepted them. Like the Mormon prophet, Walkara explained that he too talked “with Great Spirit; Great Spirit say—‘Make peace.’” Yet, Walkara had his own conditions; the Saints could settle on the Utes’ lands as long as Young reciprocated by “giving Wa[[kara plenty of bread, and clothes to cover his wife and children.”

After the peace pipe was smoked, the trading commenced. But not only in beef and bread. Before the Mormon company left the Ute camp, Young purchased two Indian toddlers, Walkara’s spoils of war from the Utes’ ongoing battles with the Snake Indians. Carvalho wrote that Walkara provided so little sustenance for his captors that Young found the two “living skeletons” “digging with their fingers for grassnuts” in the ground, still hardened from the winter’s snow. Young sent them north to “have them cared for and educated like his own children.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Solomon Nunes Carvalho. *Wakra, Indian Chief* (ca. 1855). Thomas Gilcrease Museum. Tulsa, Oklahoma [cropped and adjusted by author].

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

Two weeks later, Young, Walkara, and their respective entourages met again, this time in Parowan, the regional capital of the Iron Mission. According to Parowan's clerk James H. Martineau, Young told Walkara, "the war is over," and over for good. Young brought Walkara to Parowan to show him why. The Mormon prophet's implicit message to the Indian chief was that the Mormons' victory had perhaps less to do with military conquest as it did with proper cultivation of the Utah land. "Walkara had long considered himself President Young's equal," wrote Martineau. The Ute chief would demonstrate this belief in his broken English, which he accented with exuberant gesticulation, holding "up his forefinger and say 'Brigham: Great Chief!' Then placing his other forefinger beside the first would say, 'Me Walker! Me big chief all same as Brigham!'" But from Martineau's perspective, any Saint, Indian, or Gentile who examined "Little Salt Lake," as Parowan was sometimes called—a bustling town of 100 houses laid out in the square-shaped Mormon plat, with an irrigation system that supplied water to vegetable and flower gardens that ornamented each home, as well as the 400-acre field outside of town that produced bounties of wheat and corn—had to acknowledge that this was not true. Since the Saints had establish the Iron Mission in 1850 to exploit the area's iron ore and rich soil, the Saints had done more with southern Utah in four years than Walkara and his people had done in a century.<sup>11</sup>

Not only had Walkara misunderstood the value of Utah land, but he had also misunderstood the value of Utah people. Inside the modest, but dignified homes of Parowan could be found "one or more Pah-Utah children," observed another western explorer Gwinn Harris Heap.<sup>12</sup> Young instructed his faithful that whenever they could, they should purchase Indian slaves from slavers like Walkara. While Walkara thought of them as no more than commodities to be bought, sold, and

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<sup>11</sup> James S. Martineau, Iron County Mission Historical Record, 1850-1859, LR 6778 25, CHL. See Armand Mauss' discussion of the centuries old "Doctrine of Discovery," which differentiated European and European colonial landownership from indigenous land occupancy, and its application in early Mormon Utah. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 44–66.

<sup>12</sup> See Heap's description of Parowan in Heap and Beale, *Central Route to the Pacific*, 90–91.

abused, the Mormons believed it their duty to turn these slaves into people, or more specifically into Lamanites. Treat them with kindness, teach them to farm, to blacksmith, to keep house, Young and other leading Saints instructed their faithful. Teach them to read and write, so they might learn for themselves about their own true ontology in their own sacred scriptures, most notably the Book of Mormon, which was, after all an abridged history of their Lamanite ancestors and “written to” the Lamanites’ modern-day descendants. As the Saints had mastered the Indians’ land, it was time that Walkara and other Indians like him were “made to understand” that the Saints were the Indians’ “friends,” but also their paternalistic “masters,” as Brigham Young explained during the 1854 meeting at Parowan.<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter and in the next, through an investigation of Mormon missionary efforts to build a Lamanite people with whom they could finally covenant, as well as through an investigation of the Mormons’ views and practices of slavery and indentured servitude—the black, Indian, and even white kind—I argue that the Mormon reform of the Native Americans of the Intermountain West was focused on transforming the Indians’ bodies to the standards of the white Saints. And this work was both literal and literary. In this chapter, I chronicle the efforts to restore the Indians to their true selves—make them a Lamanite people, and then white and delightful Latter-day Saints—which manifested in attempts to physically transform the Native Americans whom the Saints encountered, attempted to convert, bought into freedom or into service in white Mormon homes, and on occasion even into marriage. In the next chapter I focus on how these efforts not only took place on the bodies of Utah’s native peoples but also on the pages in which the Saints chronicled Mormon-Indian encounters.

In both body and paper work, “Walker”—described as a onetime friend, brother in the Mormon gospel, as well as an unrepentant slave trader and Indian marauder—serves as a

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<sup>13</sup> James S. Martineau, Iron County Mission Historical Record, 1850-1859, LR 6778 25, CHL.



synecdoche for the volatile Mormon-Indian relations in early Utah. In the history of early Mormon encounters with Utah's native peoples, to invoke his name is to invoke the project of "people building" in which the Saints engaged during Brigham Young's tenure at the head of the church and state of Zion, as well as the limitations of this people building project. When they first arrived in Utah, the Saints did not doubt that they had located a remnant of Israel about which the narrators of the Book of Mormon had written. Yet, in journals, in letters, in church as well as in territorial legislature minutes and, as I focus more on in the following chapter, even in the new territory's laws—especially those related to "Indian" as well as "African" slavery—the Mormons asked, out of this remnant, what portion could be "nursed" up to the standard of the white Saints? Who could be made into Lamanites, a people whom the white Saints were called to bring into the covenantal fold? And who would prove to be too Indian—too far gone into savagery—to be redeemed?<sup>14</sup>

#### **"A Good Place to Make Saints"<sup>15</sup>**

The problem of how to deal with Walkara had troubled the Saints long before Brigham and the Ute leader met in May 1854. In fact, even on July 24, 1847—now celebrated annually in Utah as "Pioneer Day," marking the arrival of the Saints to their Rocky Mountain Zion—Walkara was probably on Brigham's mind. According to Utah's pioneering mythology, on that day Wilford Woodruff drove his wagon out of a canyon that opened onto the northeastern edge of Utah's Great Basin. Brigham Young, who had been fighting off the flu for the previous week, was laid out in back. But the prophet arose from his sick bed to take in the full view of the snow-capped Wasatch

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<sup>14</sup> Here, I understand the term "people building" as related to the politics and policies of "nation building." People building involves a foreign power that, through systems of laws, languages, religions, and culture, imposes a set of norms onto a people whom the foreign power has colonized or occupied. On the level of rhetoric and politics, such work of people building creates two distinct, but mutually constitutive peoples: a people whom the outside power can incorporate into its new nation-state or colony and; a people whom, because it violently resists accepting its norms, the outside power can justify eradicating for the peace and security of the newly-formed people. Francis Fukuyama, "Introduction: Nation-Building and the Failure of Institutional Memory," in *Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, ed. Francis Fukuyama (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 3–4.

<sup>15</sup> Brigham Young, "The Holy Ghost Necessary in Preaching," August 17, 1856, *JD IV*: 32.

Range to the west and the Great Salt Lake to the east. Young told Woodruff that the Saints in exodus had trekked far enough. “This is the place,” Young proclaimed, the place God had appointed to “make Saints.”<sup>16</sup>

However, the Great Basin was not an empty wilderness, waiting for the Saints to cultivate it, gather their people to it, and build their kingdom. In the vicinity lived diverse tribes of Native Americans with an estimated population of between 12,000 and 35,000. The Natives surveyed the Saints, seeing them as potential trading partners as well as threats to land and resources.<sup>17</sup> The Saints surveyed the land to lay down their plat, while also keeping an eye on their new neighbors. The famed western explorer Jim Bridger told Young that the Salt Lake Valley was caught between the often-warring Utes to the south and Shoshone to the north.<sup>18</sup> In particular, Young was careful to not cross paths too soon with the Ute chief known by white settlers as “Walker.” The Mormon leader understood that Walkara could either ease or obstruct the building up of Zion.<sup>19</sup>

The Mormons in exodus also had to contend with potentially dangerous Gentile trekkers moving west. In 1846, historian Francis Parkman wrote about his firsthand experience with the tension created by the triangle of Mormon-Indian-Gentile populations on the overland trails. The Indians presented enough worry for westward bound companies of whites. But Parkman declared that adding Mormons to the mix meant “[n]o one could predict what would be the result when large

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<sup>16</sup> *The Utah Pioneers: Celebration of the Entrance of the Pioneers in to Great Salt Lake Valley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1880), 23. Not unlike the multiple versions of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, the archival memory of Young’s first vision of the Salt Lake Valley went through a series of revisions, additions, and ultimately concisions. See Brigham Young, “The Holy Ghost Necessary in Preaching,” August 17, 1956, *JD IV*: 32; Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898: Typescript*, ed. Scott Kenny, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 333–334.

<sup>17</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 210; Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 95.

<sup>18</sup> William Clayton, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 348–353; Juanita Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 1–2 (1944): 3.

<sup>19</sup> On July 21, 1847, Apostles Willard Richards and George A. Smith sent word to the Vanguard Company’s advance party to bear north “toward the region of the Salt Lake” on their approach out of the Wasatch. “Young gave us his views concerning a stopping place in the Basin... he felt inclined for the present not to crowd upon the Utes until we have a chance to get acquainted with them.” Quoted in Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 144.

armed bodies of these fanatics should encounter the most impetuous and reckless of their old enemies on the prairie.”<sup>20</sup>

Once they arrived in the Great Basin, the Saints erected squares to protect them from the dangers of Parkman’s triangle. On July 28, 1847, four days after the main body of the Vanguard Company entered the valley Young ordered the construction of “a foart... 40 rods squir 10 ft high,” in which the Saints would live, “that we might not be surprised by the Indians.”<sup>21</sup> This infrastructure staked the Saints claim to the land, over which by Anglo-American tradition the nomadic Indians had no ownership, and which other westward migrating white pioneers were legally, or at least honor bound to respect.<sup>22</sup>

The “Old Fort” housed some 1,700 Saints who arrived the first year of the migration, quickly making the settlement one of the largest white communities in the Rockies. Green Flake, Hark Lay, and Oscar Crosby were the first African-American Mormons—or at least first African Americans owned by Mormons—to arrive in the valley. Jane Manning James, her son Sylvester, and her husband Isaac and their son Silas, also lived in the fort, and were the first free blacks to settle in Utah.<sup>23</sup> Over the next decade, similar forts were erected in many of the early Mormon settlements. The beginning of Utah’s urban sprawl started with the log cabins built on the lands further afield from the strongholds, lands that were cleared of trees and rocks, and when necessary, unfriendly Indians. For the first decades of Mormon Utah, to frighten children who wandered too far into the diminishing, but not completely vanquished Utah wilderness, mothers warned, “Old Sanpitch will

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Richard Edmond Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri: Winter Quarters, 1846-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 20–21.

<sup>21</sup> Levi Jackman, Journal, July 28, 1847, MS 138, CHL.

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 150–190.

<sup>23</sup> Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 104; Wolfinger, “A Test of Faith: Jane Manning Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community,” 130–132.

get you!” Long after the Saints killed Sanpitch during the so-called Black Hawk War of the mid-1860s, the Ute foe—or at least his specter—continued to lurk in the shadows.<sup>24</sup>

In Utah the building of Zion was to go apace on three fronts. The first was the expansion of a built environment fit for the Mormon people. The second was the creation of a missionary network to the Natives. And when the Natives proved too savage to participate in these first two fronts, a third front would root out Indians who opposed the expanding Mormon civilization.<sup>25</sup>

On July 28, 1847, the same day that he ordered the construction of the Old Fort, Brigham Young told the Saints to “form connections with the different tribes of the Indians.” These connections would braid together religious, political, and familial lines with the Natives, linking them into the chain of covenantal belonging that Joseph inaugurated and Brigham was called to extend. Once they were taught to accept their true origins and true destinies, Indians-turned-Lamanites would throw off the curses of their forefathers and become, as Young explained in 1847, “white and delightsum.” They would unite with their white brethren and build one kingdom of the latter-days.<sup>26</sup>

Connections originate with communication. Brigham Young’s first goal was to communicate the message that the Mormons were different from the “Americats,” as some Indian leaders named the Gentile pioneers who, at least according to the Mormons’ message to the Indians, took both native lands and lives with little regard to their land claims or even to their humanity.<sup>27</sup> Young’s basic

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<sup>24</sup> During what was dubbed the Black Hawk War (1865-1872), the Ute leader Sanpitch, along with his son Antonga (Black Hawk), created a pan-Indian alliance, which violently resisted the growth of Mormon settlements in southern Utah. Mormon militiamen killed Sanpitch in 1866. Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War*, 300.

<sup>25</sup> In her introduction to the *U.S. Army/Marine Corp Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, Sarah Sewall writes, “the field manual directs U.S. forces to make securing the civilian, rather than destroying the enemy, their top priority... The real battle is for civilian support for, or acquiescence to, the counterinsurgents and host nation government. The population waits to be convinced. Who will help them more, hurt them less, stay they longest, earn their trust.” Sarah Sewall, “A Radical Field Manual,” in *The U. S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press), xxv.

<sup>26</sup> Levi Jackman, Journal, July 28, 1847.

<sup>27</sup> Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West*, 191.

belief that the Saints were called to redeem the Indians was in fundamental conflict with what Young assumed was the American policy—that the only good Indian is a dead Indian.<sup>28</sup>

Theology informed policy. Unlike the Americans who foresaw no place for Natives in their own vision of a Columbia destined to stretch from sea to sea, the Saints understood their exodus from the United States as a providential move towards the Indians. After all, the Indians were “the house of Israel,” as prolific pioneer diarist Levi Jackman called them, “and the children of the covenant seed unto whom belongs the priesthood and the oricals of God.” The attempt to covenant with the Indians, which began almost two decades before with the ill-fated 1831 expedition to the Delaware, was finally at hand. And though they were currently little more than “filthey, degraded and miserable beings,” it was in the Great Basin where the Saints would find “a people to commence” this work with, a people who, unlike the tribes in the East, “have not been paisoend with sectarian impositions” of other Christians missionaries. The stakes were high. Jackman acknowledged that nothing less than the creation of “Zion [to] be built up no more to be throne down” was contingent on building up the “Lamonites.”<sup>29</sup> In the interest of both their particular Christian duty and economic practicality—“cheaper to feed them, than to fight them” was Young’s axiom—the Saints reached out to the Indians as the Book of Mormon taught them they should: to nurse them and lift them up to the standards of their would-be white brethren.<sup>30</sup>

Young wanted to clearly communicate this message. When he did not meet with them himself, Young sent emissaries with letters in hand to be read to the Indians. For example, as the Saints moved south in the late 1840s, Young sent Dimick Huntington to Fort Utah, a settlement built near the fishing villages of the Timpanogos Utes in Utah Valley, which served as the gateway

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<sup>28</sup> John R. Young, *Memoirs of John R. Young, Utah Pioneer, 1847* (Salt Lake City: The Desert News, 1920), 55; Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 210–217.

<sup>29</sup> Levi Jackman, Journal, July 28, 1847; Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 60.

<sup>30</sup> 1 Nephi 22:6-12; Turner, *Brigham Young*, 217.

through the mountains between the Great Basin and the fertile plains of southern Utah.<sup>31</sup> In the spring of 1849, Huntington reported to Young that he was working to distinguish in the minds of “influential Indian[s]” the difference between the Mormons and the Americans who wished death upon the Saints as well as upon the Indians. Huntington also worked to distinguish between Indian friend and foe. While there were many “very friendly” Indians in the area, the mood was precarious. The settlers at Fort Utah needed both carrot and stick—more guns to forge Indian friendship as well as a stronger show of force to frighten the fence-sitting Indians into compliance. “We fired the [fort’s] cannon once and it had good effect,” Huntington wrote to Young.<sup>32</sup>

In response to Indian attacks in the Utah Valley, in January 1850 Young ordered the creation of a company of “minute men,” drawn from the best fighters in the Nauvoo Legion. After the first skirmish with the Timpanogos that produced a body count, General Daniel H. Wells authorized the legionaries to “act as the circumstances may require exterminating [Indian fighters] such as do not separate themselves from their hostile clans.”<sup>33</sup>

Of course, the Saints had personal experiences with orders of extermination. When he announced his 1838 “extermination order,” Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs deemed the Mormons enemies of the state. In contrast, Wells cautioned his minutemen that when possible, “sue for peace,” and “exercise every principle of humanity compatible with the laws of war.”<sup>34</sup> But in February 1850, the laws of war proved inconvenient. The militia swept throughout the Utah Valley, tracking down and killing several dozen Timpanogos, along with a few other Utes who were not

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<sup>31</sup> Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 27, 66, 79.

<sup>32</sup> D. B. Huntington to Brigham Young, May 5, 1849, BYP; D. B. Huntington to BY, April 19, 1849, BYP.

<sup>33</sup> Special Order No. 2, issued by Daniel H. Wells to G. D. Grant January 31, 1850, Utah Territorial Militia Records, 1849-1877, Utah State Archives and Records, Series 2210, reproduced by Family Search, accessed June 23, 2014, <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1951-22024-3922-55?cc=1462415&wc=14229733>; Christy A. Howard, “‘What Virtue There Is in Stone’ and Other Pungent Talk on the Early Utah Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59 (Summer 1991): 303.

<sup>34</sup> Special Order No. 2, issued by Daniel H. Wells to G. D. Grant, January 31, 1850.

involved in the fighting.<sup>35</sup> According to John Gunnison, a military officer and explorer who helped survey Utah for thruways for the transcontinental railroad, Mormon fighters coaxed a group of Indians into surrendering. The Mormons then executed them en masse.<sup>36</sup> One of Gunnison's expeditionary colleagues, the surgeon, James Blake, helped the Mormons decapitate the Indians. Blake wanted to box up the forty to fifty Indian heads and send them back to Washington for study. The headless bodies were left to freeze and then to rot in the warming Utah spring air. A young, Mormon-friendly Ute named Antonga had taken shelter in Fort Utah during the fighting. Antonga, whom the Mormons would later dub "Black Hawk," watched with horror as his clansmen's heads were prepared for shipment east, a gruesome scene that he and other Utes would not soon forget.<sup>37</sup>

In the midst of their first "Indian War," the Mormon military leadership understood the seeming incongruity between their mandate to bring the gospel to the remnant of Israel and the massacre of these very same Indians.<sup>38</sup> Yet the message from the Mormon leadership was that the Saints need not cry over a few dead Indians. During a February 1850 meeting of church and legion officials, Young cited a previously unrecorded prophecy from the Mormons' first prophet. In the process of restoring the Lamanites, Joseph Smith himself prophesied, "many of the Lamanites will have to be slain by us." These unredeemable Indians would be "better off on the other side of the veil [*sic*]" than continue to live in open opposition to Zion.<sup>39</sup> The onetime missionary to the Delaware, Parley P. Pratt said during this meeting that he also believed it "best to kill the Indians." By Indian, Pratt meant male Indians. Unlike an Indian brave, women and children were malleable to

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<sup>35</sup> Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 52–56.

<sup>36</sup> John Williams Gunnison, *The Mormons* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Company, 1852), 147; Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*, 74.

<sup>37</sup> Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> In his travelogue chronicling his time among the Mormons published in 1852, Gunnison also took note of the irony "that those whose *mission* [emphasis in original] it is to convert these aborigines by the sword of the spirit, should thus be obliged to destroy them" Gunnison, *The Mormons*, 147.

<sup>39</sup> February 10, 1850, Box 2, Folder 17, GCM. Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*, 73.

the civilizing will of the Saints. “I would take the women and clothe them and dictate [to] make them do what we want,” Pratt said. Young agreed to limit this extermination to Indian men. While “we have no peace until the men are killed off,” Young proposed to “let the women and children live if they behave themselves.”<sup>40</sup>

The Nauvoo Legion executed this plan. After turning them into widows and orphans, the militiamen brought several “squaws & children” north to Salt Lake. John Gunnison observed that they were “placed [in Mormon homes] as servants to make white people of them.”<sup>41</sup> Gunnison, of course, was only half right. The Saints had greater aspirations for the captives: to make them into Lamanites who could be folded into the (white) Mormon people. Yet the Mormon leadership soon recognized that it overestimated these Indian women’s ability and desire to be made into a Lamanite people. After feeding them and caring for them through the rest of the winter, many “ran back to their Indian camps,” while others died, recalled Daniel Wells. Either way, most Timpanogos men, women, and children were not “able to stand our way of living.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Walkara: Lamanite Elder, Lamanite Missionary**

Brigham Young and his counselors recognized that it was both impractical and unchristian to kill off all male Natives. The fulfillment of gospel and the realities of diplomacy dictated that the Saints attempt to make Lamanites out of some leading Indians. During the first few years in Utah, the Saints hoped to turn Walkara and other members of his family, who constituted the elite of the Northern Utes, into exemplars to which lesser Indians would aspire.<sup>43</sup> After all, as Parley P. Pratt observed in 1850, Walkara and his men had shown that they were different from most of the other

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<sup>40</sup> January 31, 1850, Box 2, Folder 17, GCM. Also, see Howard, “‘What Virtue There Is in Stone’ and Other Pungent Talk on the Early Utah Frontier,” 302.

<sup>41</sup> John Gunnison to Martha Gunnison, March 1, 1850, quoted in Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 76.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel H. Wells, “Daniel H. Wells’ Narrative,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 6 (1933): 126; Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 177.

<sup>43</sup> Many of the Ute chiefs were Walkara’s relations. Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War*, 60.



more belligerent Timpanogos.<sup>44</sup> The Saints abhorred Walkara's slave trading. Yet, they recognized that his travels on the Old Spanish Trail, which ran west from the Spanish settlements and slave markets in Santa Fe, north through Utah, and then west again to California's Catholic missions, had refined him to some degree.<sup>45</sup> Conversant in several Indian dialects as well as Spanish, and English, Walkara was viewed as something of a cosmopolitan Indian. He occupied a state between savage and civilized, a liminality exemplified in his dress. In March 1850, the Mormons' chief Gentile ally, Thomas L. Kane told the Historical Society of Pennsylvania that Walkara wore "a full suit of the richest broadcloth, generally brown and cut in European fashion, with a shining beaver hat and fine cambric shirt." To this ensemble, the chief "adds his own gaudy Indian trimmings."<sup>46</sup>

In the late 1840s, Young frequently met with or sent letters to Walkara in the hopes of winning his support for Mormon plans to expand south to warmer, more fertile land, as well as to missionize Utah's southern Natives. For example, in a November 1849 letter, which Dimick Huntington read to the Ute chief, Young explained what Walkara might gain from an alliance with the Saints, offering him a practical as well as spiritual covenantal contract. If the chief allowed the Saints to settle the Utah Valley, then the Saints would instruct Walkara's people on how to cultivate the land, thus creating stable food supplies. The Utes could then cease to live and die by the vagaries of the valley's wild flora and fauna.<sup>47</sup> "Deer are few, and you must make corn this year, and learn to work like white men," Young told Walkara in a May 1850 letter. The Indians must put down their guns, bows and arrows and take up the hoe and plow and build their own farms.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> January 31, 1850, Box 2, Folder 17, GCM.

<sup>45</sup> The Mormons were not the first to observe and object to the Indian slave trade along the Old Spanish Trail. See Sondra Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 19–52.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Leiper Kane, *The Mormons: A Discourse Delivered Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, March 26, 1850* (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1850), 72.

<sup>47</sup> Brigham Young to Chief Walker, November 22, 1849, Box 16, Folder 17, BYP.

<sup>48</sup> Big Chief Brigham Young to Pe-tete-net, Walker, Tow-ee-ette, Blackhawk, Tab-bee, and other good Indian Chiefs, May 6, 1850, quoted in Lawrence George Coates, "A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830-1900" (PhD diss., Ball State University, 1969), 73–79.

Young's didactic messages point to a second goal of early Mormon-Indian relations. Not only did Saints want to prove that they were distinct from the "Americats." The white Saints also wished to become teachers to their Indian pupils. They were messengers of instruction, bringing the knowledge of modern civilization and the ancient truth of the origin of the Indians' cursed identity as well as the knowledge of how to overcome this fallen state. In language that echoed the Saints' message to the Delaware Indians almost two decades before, in a November 1849 letter that Huntington read for Walkara, Young explained, "we are sent here by the Great Spirit to teach you, and do all of you good." If you cease the fratricide, and begin to "love one another," "[then you will] become a great, united, and good people," Young explained to Walkara, "and you will realize all the blessings that have been told [to] you by your forefathers."<sup>49</sup> Young expected that Walkara would accept this lesson as would a child. After all, in May of 1849, Huntington reported that after spending a peaceful night with the Utes in the Utah Valley, during which they displayed their happiness by singing "around the Fort," and warming themselves by a fire, "Walker lay[ed] in my arms... I told [the Utes] of the Book of Mormon [and that] they must be our friends, & we yours."<sup>50</sup>

Most of the Timpanogos Utes had proven that they were unable and unworthy to be given such instruction. And Young predicted this would hold true for most Indians who were too set in their heathen, horse stealing ways to respect Mormon property, let alone to "enter into the new and everlasting covenanting" with the Saints.<sup>51</sup> Yet soon after the Fort Utah battles, followed by a measles outbreak that killed a large number of his tribe, on March 13, 1850, Walkara asked Isaac Morley, head of the new Manti settlement in the Sanpete Valley, to baptize him in Manti's City Creek. And Walkara began his own missionary work, encouraging others to enter the waters and

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<sup>49</sup> Brigham Young to Chief Walker, November 22, 1849, Box 16, Folder 17, BYP.

<sup>50</sup> Dimick Huntington, Minutes of Meeting with Indians, Fort Utah, May 14, 1849, Box 16, Folder 17, BYP, quoted in Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*, 66.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Howard A. Christy, "Open Hand and Mailed Fist: Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah, 1847-52," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (Summer 1978): 221-222.

“wash away [their] sins.” With Walkara’s blessing, Manti was established explicitly as a mission to cultivate the Indians: to convert them from hunters and gatherers into landed Mormon farmers. The hope was that a peaceful, Lamanite neighborhood would be in place when white Mormons moved in.<sup>52</sup>

The plan seemed to work. By summer, more than one hundred Indians followed Walkara into the baptismal waters and were confirmed members of the church in Manti.<sup>53</sup> Fellow Ute chiefs Arapene and Sowiette were also baptized. And in May the three chiefs were ordained church elders. Morley was overjoyed. Two months after they were forced to exterminate troublesome Indian foes in the Utah Valley, in Manti the Saints found that “[t]he [gospel] door is open,” Morley wrote to Young in April 1850, “and they are coming in with expression of good feelings, and kindness as could probably be expected from uncultivated minds.”<sup>54</sup> Young was equally elated. He saw these baptisms as fulfillment of ancient prophecy. “The spirit of the Lord is beginning to operate upon the hearts of the Lamanites,” Young wrote to Morley. The prophet hoped that the spirit’s work would be so complete that these Lamanites would leave their Indian ways behind and only “do good.”<sup>55</sup>

The Book of Mormon taught that Walkara’s ancient ancestors had periodically been good too. But Walkara’s ancestors did not record the gospel’s truths in a manner that could be passed down from generation to generation. Their illiteracy meant forgetting and falling away from the Lord. For the incipient goodness to endure and mature in the hearts of Walkara and other modern-day Lamanites, these new members had to be further converted: from an oral people to reading and

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<sup>52</sup> Morley named Manti after the hill in the Book of Mormon whose summit was said to be “between heaven and earth” (Alma 1:15). Lawrence Coates has called Manti Brigham Young’s “peace corps” for Chief Walkara’s Indians. Coates, “Brigham Young and Mormon Indian Policies.” Yet because Young and other Mormon leaders were always prepared to use force to quell Indian resistance to Mormon settlement expansion, the better modern analogy might be that Manti was part of the Mormons’ “counterinsurgency” efforts.

<sup>53</sup> Isaac Morley to Brigham Young, March 15, 1850, BYP. See also Ronald W. Walker, “Walkara Meets the Mormons, 1848–52: A Case Study in Native American Accommodation,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 70 (Summer 2002): 226.

<sup>54</sup> Isaac Morley to Brigham Young, April 17, 1850, quoted Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The Presidency to Isaac Morley and the Saints in Sanpete, March 24, 1850, quoted in Ibid.

writing people of the book. Young explained to Morley that Walkara must learn to read if “the Book of Mormon might be a great blessing to [him]... & through him to ma[n]y of his kindred.” Young instructed Morley to do all he could to assist Walkara to become literate as quickly as possible. Morley should translate the Book of Mormon into the Indian language, and as any attentive tutor would, see to it that Walkara “apply himself diligently by study & also by faith.”<sup>56</sup>

A month later, Young told Walkara in person how the Indians could learn to form an “everlasting covenant” with their white brethren. In Walkara’s tent in the Utah Valley, cramped full of Mormon apostles and Indian chiefs, including the three Indian priesthood holders, Walkara, Arapene, and Sowiette, Young explained that the Mormon covenant was a package deal of literacy and Mormon agrarian respectability. Indian children needed to learn to read and write, Indian squaws needed to learn to keep house, and Indian braves needed to learn to farm effectively and traded equitably. Young concluded the meeting with the Ute chiefs by gathering them into “in a large round ring.”

My friends I want you all to be brothers tho we are strangers now, we expect to be intimately acquainted (yes) We have come here to settle on your land but our Father the Great Spirit has plenty of land for you and for the Mormons. We want you to learn to raise grain and cattle and not have to go and hunt and be exposed to other Indians, but build houses, raise grain and be happy as we are.

The chiefs said that they understood Young’s message. For his part, Walkara told Young that he wished to settle and build a home in “Sanpete close to Mormon’s house.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Indian Dependents, Lamanite Farmers**

Despite early indications that some Utah Indians were on the path to redemption, Young was less than sanguine about the prospect that most of the Rocky Mountain Natives could be made into a Lamanite people. In December 1850, Young told the representatives of the incipient Utah Territory that the Indians’ inability “to leave off their habits of pilfering and plundering” and work

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<sup>56</sup> The Presidency to Isaac Morley and the Saints in Sanpete, March 24, 1850, quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> “Meeting with Utes,” May 22, 1850, Box 74, Folder 42, BYP.

like civilized, white people, was a failure of physiognomy. Many Indians who had tried to live like and live with the white man, had died trying. The Indians' "physical formation" made them ill-equipped for the hard work of a white man's existence. Another interpretation could have been that the Indians' immune systems were ill-equipped to fight off the white man's diseases, especially measles and smallpox, which decimated Utah's native population in the late 1840s and 1850s.<sup>58</sup>

In 1850, Young believed that the few redeemable Indians, like the Walkara-led Utes, would be made into Lamanites and then absorbed into the growing Mormon kingdom. Echoing Andrew Jackson's 1830 Indian Removal Address to Congress, Young predicted that while the more savage element of Utah's natives would fight violently against the expansion of Mormon settlements, as had been the case for their red cousins east of the Mississippi, these Indians would eventually be rendered completely benign, if not completely extinct. In the interim, however, hostile Indians posed a threat to the peace and prosperity of the Mormon settlements. Thus, while they were working to form religious and familial covenants with the few Indians capable of change, church leaders tried to form political covenants with Washington. They petitioned federal lawmakers to apply Jacksonian-era logic to the Indian problem in Utah, and authorize and fund the Saints' efforts to remove the antagonistic Indians from the territory's most fertile lands.<sup>59</sup>

The Mormons' request to displace the Indians went unanswered. As such, Mormon leaders sought to make Utah safe for the building up of Zion by engaging in a particular form of pedagogy. If the white men in Washington would not disentitle the Indians, the white Mormons in Utah would

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<sup>58</sup> Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders had hoped that their "State of Deseret" would be admitted as a state, allowing the Saints to govern their new settlements with little interference from Washington. Instead, the Utah Territory was created as part of the Compromise of 1850. Brigham Young, *Governor's Message to the Senators and Representatives of the State of Deseret* (Salt Lake City, December 2, 1850), MS 353.9792 D 451, CHL. For a study of the decimation of Utah's Native population following the Saints' arrival, see Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 103.

<sup>59</sup> Coates, "Brigham Young and Mormon Indian Policies," 446.

teach them to be dependent on the white Mormon ways of living.<sup>60</sup> To secure peace and establish friendship in the short term, as well as to remove the Indian threat in the longer run, the Mormons needed to teach the Indians “to depend upon us until they eventually will not be able to get along without us,” Young said soon after the end of the Walker War. However, the way to the Indians’ heart was not through their minds.<sup>61</sup> The Mormons’ paternalistic generosity—gifts of cattle, grains, guns, and clothes—would first educate the Indians’ bodies by changing what they ate, how they dressed, and where they lived. Those few Indians who survived these changes would then naturally want to learn for themselves how to live like the white man.

During the 1850s, church leaders established three points of contact where the work of adapting the Indians’ bodies and minds would take place. First, out of community storehouses located in most Mormon villages, many destitute Indians were provided with essential commodities. The rebirth of the women-led Relief Society in Utah came initially in the form of Indian relief societies, which were first established to feed and clothe Indian women and children dislocated during the Walker War.<sup>62</sup> Yet the Saints did not want to create an Indian welfare state. Young explained that the Mormons should “require the Indians to pay in labor for every article” that they received. Physical labor, Young believed, “learns them to work upon their own exertions for a subsistence.”<sup>63</sup> As such, the second point of contact was the so-called “Indian farms.” On lands that the territorial government set aside for Indian use, Mormon overseers taught their Indian pupils the

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<sup>60</sup> Daniel H. Wells to John M. Bernhisel, November 20, 1850, BYP, quoted in *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 452. In his own recollection of the meeting with Walkara in May 1854, Brigham Young described the bodily transformation the chief underwent before accepting peace. The chief had been “dull and sulky,” unsure “whether to turn to the side of peace or of war.” Yet after Brigham and other Mormon leaders laid their hands upon his body, the chief began to feel “better... full of kindness, and love to God,” and pledged never attack the Mormon people again. Brigham Young, “The Lamanites,” December 3, 1854, *JD* II: 143.

<sup>62</sup> Jill Mulvay Derr, “‘Strengthen in Our Union’: The Making of Mormon Sisterhood,” in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 170–171. See Thirteenth Ward Relief Society Records, 1854-1857, LR 6133 21, CHL.

<sup>63</sup> Brigham Young to Isaac Haight, 18 August, 1854, quoted in Coates, “A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830-1900,” 174.

science and art of agriculture so that one day they could run the farms themselves. As the Mormons dug deeper in and spread further out—disrupting the Indians’ hunting grounds and fishing stocks—the Indians would be forced to stop simply watching the Mormons “throw the dirt,” as some Indians called plowing and hoeing, and start throwing dirt themselves.<sup>64</sup>

In general, the same goals held true for the third point of contact: Indian mission outposts established in the wake of the Walker War and in the far-flung regions of “Mormon Country.”<sup>65</sup> Through preaching the gospel, feeding and clothing the Indians, and teaching them agricultural skills, these missions would further cleave local Natives to the Saints. These Lamanite brethren would then serve as emissaries to other Natives in the region. And if needed, they would also serve as defensive forces, protecting Zion from Indian as well as American enemies.<sup>66</sup> Young tasked the missionaries with establishing permanent settlements among the Indians, learning their languages, and creating covenants of trade as well as covenants of marriage.<sup>67</sup>

Some early records suggest that the strategy worked. In late May 1854, after leaving the peace meeting at Nephi, Solomon Carvalho traveled south with Young’s cavalcade, before Carvalho and the rest of the Frémont Company headed west to California. At Cedar City, Carvalho made note of the improved state of the Indians since the arrival of the Saints to the southwest corner of present-day Utah. The “Piedes,” a band of Paiutes, had been “considered the most degraded” in the region, subsisting on “reptiles, insects, [and] root.” Yet under the care and tutelage of the Saints, they had become more civilized, dressing in manufactured clothes and eating the cultivated grain and meat that the Saints provided. They were learning “the arts of agriculture and husbandry.” And

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 172–173; Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” 3. See “Brigham Young and the Famine of the Fish-Eaters in Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 54–104.

<sup>65</sup> See Figure 1, “Map of Brigham Young’s Indian Missions,” in Corey Smallcanyon, “Contested Space: Navajos and Hopi in the Colonization of Tuba City” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2010), 177.

<sup>66</sup> Brigham Young, “Practical Religion,” June 7, 1857, *JD*, IV: 346. Charles S. Peterson, “Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites, and the Indian Mission,” *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975): 28.

<sup>67</sup> For a fuller treatment of the Indian missions, see Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier”; Peterson, “Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites, and the Indian Mission.”

many had been baptized into the Mormon faith. A few days later, Carvalho was able to take the true measure of the Mormons' influence on the Piedes, when a group of the tribe who had not yet benefited from Mormon education and patronage paid a visit to his camp on the banks of the Santa Clara River to beg for food, and did so "almost in a state of nudity."<sup>68</sup>

Carvalho's encounter with the Piedes at Santa Clara came just before the Saints established there the most successful and long-lasting missionary outpost among the Indians in Utah.<sup>69</sup> This "Southern Indian Mission," headed by "the Apostle to the Lamanites," Jacob Hamblin, was first established to proselytize the Southern Paiutes, Utes, and Goshutes, and later expanded to include the Hopis, Navajo, and Zunis of modern-day Arizona and New Mexico.<sup>70</sup>

Early in 1854, the Mormon missionaries' assessment of the Indians at Santa Clara matched that of Carvalho. They were little better than "dogs" or indigent "children," one missionary observed. They survived on a hand-to-mouth diet of porridge, ants, and roasted heads of porcupine, "brains and bones" not excluded. The prospects of redeeming such depraved creatures, the mission's official recorder Thomas D. Brown believed, were slim.<sup>71</sup> And yet ironically it was their destitute state that led to the missionaries' success. After years of enduring attacks from Walkara and other Indian slave traders, who took advantage of their poverty to steal Paiute women and children, the Paiutes turned to the Mormons for protection and training in farming. At least according to Mormon records, some even handed over their own children to the Mormons' care; better they grow up as the Mormons' adopted children, clothed, fed, and taught to farm, read and write, than in the hands of Walkara who would sell them to the highest bidder, or kill them if he did not get his

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<sup>68</sup> Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West*, 219, 215, 213, 224.

<sup>69</sup> The Santa Clara Mission was initially established in 1851 at Harmony, making it the first official Indian mission in Utah. The Harmony settlement was abandoned following attacks related to the Walker War. In 1854, it was reestablished and renamed the Southern Indian Mission. Brooks, "Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier," 9–10.

<sup>70</sup> Smallcanyon, "Contested Space: Navajos and Hopi in the Colonization of Tuba City," 11.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Brooks, "Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier," 12; Thomas Dunlop Brown, *Journal of the Southern Indian Mission: Diary of Thomas D. Brown* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1972).



price.<sup>72</sup> According to Mormon records, even the Paiute chief Tutsegavits recognized that his tribe's future as a civilized people was embodied in these children. "We cannot be good," he told Jacob Hamblin. "Some day, maybe, our children will be good. Now we only Paiutes."<sup>73</sup>

On occasion in the Southern Indian Mission, adopted children became wives of Mormon missionaries. Jacob Hamblin married his third wife Eliza, a Paiute girl who had grown up in Hamblin's household.<sup>74</sup> Hamblin's longtime missionary companion, Ira Hatch, married Sara "Maraboots," the adopted daughter of missionaries Andrew and Rispah Gibbons.<sup>75</sup> From the 1850s through the 1870s, Hamblin, Hatch, and their Native American wives served as economic and cultural intermediaries between the Mormon settlers and the Indians of southern Utah and Northern Arizona, securing peaceful trading relations as well as some native converts.<sup>76</sup>

### **Indians at Home, Lamanites on the Horizon**

Yet the Southern Indian Mission was an exception to, not the rule of the Mormons' efforts to establish permanent missions to the Native Americans during much of Brigham Young's time as church president. Neither church leaders nor the Indians showed much interest in the Indian farms,

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<sup>72</sup> Peterson, "Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites, and the Indian Mission," 26; Brooks, "Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier," 12–13. Thomas D. Brown, "Extracts of a letter to Governor Young," *Deseret News*, July 20, 1854.

<sup>73</sup> Juanita Brooks, "Jacob Hamblin: Apostle to the Lamanites," *The Pacific Spectator* 2, no. Summer (1948): 323. Despite his supposed low self-appraisal, Brigham Young ordained Tutsegavits a Mormon elder in September 1857, promising the chief that, as the Book of Mormon predicted, the "2 [3?] Nephites" would come and teach him how to "go & preach the gospel" and baptize his branch of the "House of Israel." Dimick Huntington, Journal, 1845-1859, September 10, 1857, Folder 2, MS 1419, CHL. For an analysis of the mythology of the Three Nephites in early Mormon history, see William A. Wilson, "The Three Nephites," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1477–78.

<sup>74</sup> Compton, "Civilizing the Ragged Edge," 160–161.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 178–180; Ezra Clark Robinson, *The Life of Ira Hatch, Famous Indian Missionary and Scout* (Bountiful, UT: s.n., 1940), 5. Also, see Corey Smallcanyon's thesis in which he problematizes the family memory of Ira and Maraboot's relationship. Smallcanyon, "Contested Space: Navajos and Hopi in the Colonization of Tuba City," 29 n. 48.

<sup>76</sup> According to Hatch's biographer, instead of serving as an intermediary Sarah Spaneshank (Maraboots) created tension between the missionaries and the Navajo during one missionary expedition. The Navajo attempted to abduct her because they "claimed her as a member of their tribe" as her father had been a prominent member of their tribe. Robinson, *The Life of Ira Hatch, Famous Indian Missionary and Scout*, 1, 10; Ira Hatch, *Ira Hatch: Indian Missionary 1835-1909, Pu-Em-Ey*, ed. Richard Ira Elkins (Bountiful, Utah: R. I. Elkins, 1984), 64–66. In his thesis, Corey Smallcanyon asserts that many Hopi and Navajo saw the Mormon settlers not as teachers but as invaders. In 1903 Mormons were expelled from their settlement at Tuba City, Nevada, when the Navajo Nation reservation was created. Smallcanyon, "Contested Space: Navajos and Hopi in the Colonization of Tuba City."

which were poorly financed and poorly maintained, and were abandoned a few years after they were established.<sup>77</sup> For the most part, the same held true for the Indian missions. Like the first missionaries to the Lamanites in 1831, missionaries to the Indians in Utah described great enthusiasm for the Mormon message among the Natives they encountered, only to report that their hopes for Lamanite conversions were dashed when anti-Mormon agitators—in Utah they most often took the form of other Indians—began to interfere. For example, on July 22, 1855, the missionaries sent to Elk Mountain in central Utah baptized fourteen men and one woman. Four of the new converts were renamed after the Book of Mormon prophets Nephi, Lehi, Samuel, and Joseph and were also ordained Mormon elders. Yet by late summer, the handful of local Indians who had initially objected to the Mormon presence began stealing the missionaries' crops, horses and cattle, and even attacking the missionaries themselves. By October, the missionaries fled Elk Mountain for the safety of the Mormon settlement at Manti.<sup>78</sup>

By 1858, most of the missions to the Indians had been deserted due to Indian ambivalence or outright hostility. In 1857, the impending arrival of the U.S. army also contributed to church leaders' decisions to close ranks around Mormon Country's north-south cordon.<sup>79</sup> Yet even the more established, and better-protected settlements from Salt Lake to Cedar City were not immune to Indian raids.<sup>80</sup> Young promised his people that the Nauvoo Legion would protect them from such attacks. But he also made clear that the militia was charged with "preserv[ing] peace," not

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<sup>77</sup> Beverly Beeton, "Teach Them to Till the Soil: An Experiment with Indian Farms 1850-1862," *American Indian Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (December 1, 1977): 299–320.

<sup>78</sup> Elk Mountain Mission Journal May-October, 1855, MS 2204, CHL. See also Wesley R. Law, "Mormon Indian Missions, 1855" (M.S., Brigham Young University, 1959), 23–36.

<sup>79</sup> Eugene E. Campbell, "Brigham Young's Outer Cordon-A Reappraisal," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41 (1973): 220–53.

<sup>80</sup> In his autobiography, the first Senator elected to represent Utah after it gained statehood in 1896, Joseph Rawlins Jr. recalled that in 1855, with his father serving as a missionary at the doomed Elk Mountain Mission, his mother Mary kept her children fed, ran the farm, and fended off Indian attacks. "When Indians in hideous war paint surrounded the house, dancing and making the air vibrate by terrifying noise... my mother stood composed, tactful and unblanched and by sheer moral courage and force of character seemed to keep the enemy at bay." While his father was away spreading the gospel in a place where "the white man had seldom if ever penetrated," at home it was only his mother, Rawlins wrote, who kept the family on this side of civilization, or they would have been either "overrun by the Indians or degraded to their condition." Joseph Rawlins Jr. Autobiography, Box 2, Folder 4, MS 2056, UUSC.

seeking vengeance against the Indians. Not only was an eye for an eye ineffective at “check[ing] their depredations.” But “to retaliate for every outbreak” would also be to “descend to their grade of conduct.”<sup>81</sup>

And yet by 1857, and certainly by 1865 when (Antonga) Black Hawk organized a Pan-Indian resistance to Mormon encroachment, it was clear to Brigham Young that his 1850 predication about the inability of the Utah branch of Israel to be redeemed had proven prophetic. These Indians had demonstrated that they were simply incapable of becoming a peaceful and productive people living within the ever-expanding Mormon Kingdom.<sup>82</sup>

Yet the failures of the Utah Indians to become Lamanites did not end the white Saints’ quest for the Book of Mormon’s promised red kin. Instead, church leaders looked to find Lamanites on more distant horizons. To the east, in 1855 the church sent missionaries to proselytize among the more “civilized” and literate tribes, notably the Cherokee, who had been forced to settle in the Indian territories in Oklahoma after the Indian Removal Act of 1830.<sup>83</sup> To the South in Arizona, in 1858 and 1859 Young sent Jacob Hamblin to bring the gospel to the Hopis, whom, five years earlier, Walkara had described as blond haired and blue eyed.<sup>84</sup> Some Saints thought these “white” Indians were in fact long-lost Welshmen, the descendants of a twelfth-century King of Wales who, according to Welsh folklore, sailed to the New World in 1164 with a dozen ships and three thousand

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<sup>81</sup> Brigham Young, “Governor’s Message,” *The Deseret News*, December 19, 1855.

<sup>82</sup> In the second half of the 1860s, Young and federal Indian agents convinced some tribal leaders to accept governmental payments and consolidate in reservations in northern Utah, agreements for which Black Hawk and his allies demonstrated their disdain by increasing their raids. Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> After establishing the “Cherokee Branch,” mission president Henry W. Miller sent a report to Salt Lake praising the Cherokee Nation, which had a constitution that grants “all preachers... free access” to its people, as well as “a written language, and a Bible printed in it; they nearly all read and write.” This combination of religious liberty and literacy led Miller to believe that once the missionaries “get a few native Elders to work,” the Cherokee nation could be turned into a Mormon one “in a short time.” Henry W. Miller, “The Cherokee Nation,” *MS*, October 6, 1855.

<sup>84</sup> *Deseret News*, 17 April 1852.

men, never to be heard from again.<sup>85</sup> Though their language seemed to contain remnants of Gaelic gutturals, interpreter and missionary James Davies failed to communicate with the Hopis in his native Welsh. The missionaries found Spanish a more effective common tongue.<sup>86</sup>

To the north, in Idaho and Wyoming in the early 1870s, the Mormon missionaries found a religious awakening among the Shoshone. The combination of prophecies of millenarian pan-Indianism and Book of Mormon theologies of Lamanite people building circulated among the first Ghost Dance participants.<sup>87</sup> According to Orson Pratt, the visions that one Indian convert recounted, in which three strangers appeared to him and explained that the Mormons' Heavenly Father was also the father of the Indians, and as such the Indians must be baptized and learn to live like white men, matched the descriptions of the Book of Mormon's fabled "three Nephites" who were destined to roam the earth as immortal missionaries until Christ's return. Pratt declared that the white Saints had laid the foundation of Zion—"our farms fenced and our ditches dug," cities and towns built out around their original forts "for some four hundred miles north and south," stretching from the Logan River to the Cotton mission at St. George. It was time, Pratt declared, that the white Saints turn their minds to fulfill the Book of Mormon promise to fold into this infrastructure and into the restored covenant the red "remnant of the house of Israel."<sup>88</sup> The excitement about the Shoshone revival even pulled an aged Dimick Huntington out of retirement to perform baptisms in a font that he built himself. Writing to Apostle Joseph F. Smith, Huntington

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<sup>85</sup> Ronald Dennis, "Captain Dan Jones and the Welch Indians," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (1985): 112–19. During later expeditions, Welshman Llewellyn Harris also noted the similarities between "Zuni" Indian language and Welsh. He also made anthropological study of the "cement" and "stone" ruins of homes, buildings, and canals, which once made up of "densely populated" cities inhabited "by an Enlightened people." But in a Book of Mormon-like apocalyptic war "all the indian tribes" joined together to massacre the "White Race." The few remaining survivors "annexed themselves to some of the indian tribes and became entermixed with them." Llewellyn Harris, Notebook, 1881, MS 16228, CHL.

<sup>86</sup> Charles S. Peterson, "Hopis and Mormons," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 189–190.

<sup>87</sup> Peterson, "Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites, and the Indian Mission," 28–29.

<sup>88</sup> Orson Pratt, "Redemption of Zion," February 7, 1875, *JD* XVII: 299–300.

declared, “Oh Joseph, how I do rejoice in [this work]. They are coming in by the hundreds to investigate, are satisfied and are baptized.”<sup>89</sup>

Finally, to the far west, Mormon missionaries’ success among Polynesians expanded the definition of the Lamanite to include Pacific Islanders and extended the geographic boundaries described in the Book of Mormon to include the Pacific Islands. In 1851, while the white populations in the Sandwich Islands ridiculed them, Mormon missionaries generated a fair amount of interest among the native population. Mission leader George Q. Cannon received a revelation that the Hawaiians were in fact the long-lost progeny of the Israelites’ first patriarch in America, Lehi. As the number of Polynesian converts grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Saints began to view these converts as they did those Ephraimite descendants from the British Isles. By dint of their birth into the lineage of Manasseh, the Polynesians were already favored members of the covenant; exposure to the gospel led their minds to discover what their blood already knew.<sup>90</sup>

Save for the large number converts in the Pacific Islands, the Mormon missionaries had only moderately more success among the Indians whom they found on Utah’s distant horizons than they did within the borders of the territory. In 1855, a Cherokee chief promised the missionaries that he would read the Book of Mormon; by 1860 the Cherokees told the missionaries to leave their nation.<sup>91</sup> Among the Hopi, the missionaries never found their white Indians. However by the 1870s, one convert, Hopi Chief Tuba (Tuuvi) helped Hamblin and other missionary leaders establish their first permanent settlement in Arizona, later named Tuba City. Tuba also oversaw the construction of

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Peterson, “Jacob Hamblin, Apostle to the Lamanites, and the Indian Mission,” 28–29.

<sup>90</sup> Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “Assembling Bodies and Souls: Missionary Practices on the Pacific Frontier,” in *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630-1965*, ed. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Leigh Eric Schmidt, and Mark R. Valeri (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 67; Hokulani K. Aikau, *A Chosen People, a Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai‘i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 1–54. The written record of Cannon’s revelation came decades after 1851 and thus has been questioned as apocryphal. See Jared Farmer’s review of Aikau’s study of the Mormon presence and growth in Hawaii. Jared Farmer, “A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai‘i,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 17, no. 2 (2013): 109.

<sup>91</sup> Law, “Mormon Indian Missions, 1855,” 84–1121.

a short-lived wool factory in the settlement, which was dedicated to “benefit the Indians and the [LDS] Church.”<sup>92</sup> Though there remains a Hopi Mormon presence in Arizona to this day, many Hopi and Navajo saw the Mormon settlers not as teachers of the gospel but as invaders with little regard to native land claims. The competing claims to the land brought by the Mormons, the federal government as well as Native Americans eventually led to the expulsion of the Mormons from their settlement at Tuba City in 1903 when the Navajo Nation reservation was created.<sup>93</sup> Even the great fervor among the Shoshone, which in the early 1870s had been heralded as the realization of the Book of Mormon covenants between white Saints and Lamanites, died out quickly. What’s more, by the end of that decade, the priorities among Saints had also shifted as integrating the great bounty of white, European converts arriving by the trainload became a top priority. Legal battles with Washington over anti-bigamy laws, which sent many Mormon polygamists to jail or into hiding, also drew their attention away from Lamanite people building.

A half century after the failed first mission to the Delaware, the would-be Lamanites’ would-be white brethren resigned themselves to the fact that this and most likely many future generations of Indians were simply not ready for redemption. As John Nicholson, a Scottish convert, long-serving missionary in the British Isles, and a convicted bigamist who in the mid-1880s spent time in Utah’s territorial penitentiary, explained in an 1881 address, since its earliest days, the church had sent elders to Native Americans, “to endeavor to bring them to a knowledge of their fathers.” And yet, unlike the great number of Israelite Saints found scattered in Europe, but for a few exceptions, these efforts among “the portion of Israel on this continent” had been fruitless. The Indians “had fallen so low in the scale of being, so depraved that it seemed next to impossible for the rays of truth to penetrate their minds.” Because of their current status, Nicholson, a rhetorician by trade,

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<sup>92</sup> James H. McClintock, *Mormon Settlement in Arizona* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 159.

<sup>93</sup> Smallcanyon, “Contested Space: Navajos and Hopi in the Colonization of Tuba City.” Peterson, “Hopis and Mormons,” 193–194.

interpreted the Book of Mormon prophecy regarding Lamanite restoration to read the exact inverse to that of the earliest church leaders' interpretation.<sup>94</sup> In the early 1830s, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Parley P. Pratt believed that the gathering of Israel was to begin with the Lamanites. In 1881, Nicholson asserted that the Lamanites would be the last to be restored, not the first.

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<sup>94</sup> John Nicholson, "The Church of Christ Organized Anciently on this Continent," February 6, 1881: *JD* XXII: 17-27.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: People Building, On Paper**

### **Mormon Masters, Indian and African Slaves**

On January 23, 1852, Brigham Young took to the podium in the central chamber of the “Council House,” a stately two-story granite and adobe edifice built at the southwest corner of what would become Salt Lake City’s Temple Square. Utah’s newly constituted territorial legislature had gathered in the Council House to listen to the Mormon prophet and territorial governor call for the enactment of a set of laws that would sanction slavery in the territory. Young not only urged his brethren and fellow lawmakers to legalize the enslavement of the “Africans” whom wealthy southern coverts, including a few territorial legislatures, had brought as slaves into the Mormons’ new Zion of the Intermountain West. Young also wanted legal sanction for the Mormons who were already buying the most vulnerable Native Americans as slaves from the powerful Indian slave traders whom the Saints had at first befriended and converted, and subsequently warred with and displaced since they first arrived in the Great Salt Lake Basin in July 1847.

In Young’s proposed legislation, the African slave would not be the same as the Indian. In particular, the laws would require Utah’s territorial government to legally view the potential for Native and African Americans to participate in the civil life of the territory in the same way the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints viewed the spiritual potential of these two branches of the human family to participate in the Mormon covenantal community. Young explained to Utah’s lawmakers that, just as they could not enjoy all the privileges of the restored gospel, Africans should not partake in all of the political affairs of the Mormons’ incipient theodemocracy. Whether enslaved or free, Young declared that Africans were, by dint of their birth, “servants of servants,” and should remain so “until the curse is removed from them.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brigham Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Council on a Bill Relating to African Slavery,” January 23, 1852, Box 1, Folder 14, CR 100 317, CHL. Patrick Q. Mason, “God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century



Yet while Young argued that indefinite African servitude in Utah should be an end unto itself—leading to the creation of a legally separate and unequal class of people—Indian service should be a means to a particular end. Young declared that it had always been and continued to be the Saints’ duty to care for the Indians, to build up their spiritual, intellectual, and physical capacities so that they could become equal to their white brethren. Yet not all Indians were alike. By 1852, the Saints had found that while a handful had proven redeemable and could be built into a Lamanite people, through their rejection of the gospel and through their acts of violence, most others had proven that they were too Indian—too savage and too evil—to be saved from their Indian selves.<sup>2</sup>

As I argued last chapter, the Saints mostly failed to create the long-prophesied Lamanite people in and beyond the Rocky Mountains. However, in this chapter I argue that on paper, the Saints succeeded in creating Indians and Africans, too. And the rhetoric and actions of the Saints, these literary, paper Indians and Africans took literal on flesh and bone bodies. Through the act of writing about Africans’ cursed descent from Cain and Ham as a justification for their divinely-mandated servitude, the Saints made Africans into a people inherently unfit for political participation in Utah as well as an intolerable threat to the purity of the white Saints’ sacred, Israelite bloodlines. Likewise, through the act of writing about their savage “depredations,” which many Saints understood as signifying their innate incorrigibility, the Mormons made most Indians into intolerable threats, ironically enough, to the few redeemed Lamanites as well as to the white Mormon communities in Utah. In particular, the way the Mormons wrote about the Indian slave trade created literary Indians who became literal Indians—and gendered Indians at that—upon whom the

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Mormonism,” *Journal of Church and State*, 53, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 349–75; See also Brigham Young, “Governor’s Message to the Council of Representatives of the Legislature of Utah,” January 5, 1852, printed in the *Deseret News*, January 10, 1852.

<sup>2</sup> “Lamanite” is the Book of Mormon name for the ancient ancestors of America’s Native peoples whom the early Latter-day Saints believed they were divinely called to redeem. I discuss this Book of Mormon theology in Chapter One.

Mormons could act: a (female) Indian to buy, a (female) Indian to free, (a female) Indian to civilize, (a female) Indian to marry, a (male) Indian to blame, and a (male) Indian to kill.

Almost as soon as they arrived in Utah, the first Mormon pioneers were confronted with what they described as the horrors of the Indian slaving. In his 1880 memoir, *Forty Years among the Indians*, pioneer and Indian missionary Daniel W. Jones chronicled the lucrative slave trade along the Old Spanish Trail. A more powerful set of Indians, namely “Walker and his band” of Utes, turned the women and children of their weaker Paiute and Piede brethren into a commodity, which they brought south to the slave markets of Santa Fe or other Mexican cities. There, boys fetched “on an average \$100, girls from \$150 to \$200.” Jones explained that girls made better “house servants.”<sup>3</sup> With the arrival of the Saints in Utah—the most northern point along the Old Spanish Trail—the slavers hoped to create a new market for their human wares. When the Mormons attempted to stop the trade, “Arapine, Walker’s brother, became enraged,” Jones recalled, “saying that the Mormons... had no right to do so, unless they bought them themselves.” At the Fort Utah camp in Provo in 1848 or 1849, Arapene “took one of these children by the heels and dashed its brains out on the hard ground, telling us we had no hearts, or we would have bought it and saved its life.”

It was a strange argument, “the argument of an enraged savage,” Jones wrote.<sup>4</sup> But it was also an effective one. The Mormon response to the enslavement, trading, and brutal killing of Indian children was to purchase them. “Buy up the Lamanite children,” Young told the settlers at Parowan in 1851, “and educate them and teach them the Gospel.” On its face this business of slave trading was pure evil. Yet below the surface, Young detected God’s providential hand at work. “The Lord could not have devised a better plan, than to have put the Saints where they were, in order to

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Webster Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor office, 1890), 49. The potential of concubinage also added to the value of young female slaves. Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians*, 53. Sondra Jones has explained that most early Mormon writers as well as most scholars of early Mormon-Indian relations have wrongly identified Arapene and other Ute chiefs as Walkara’s brothers, failing to understand the Ute kinship system in which brothers, half-brothers, and cousins would have all been considered “brothers” in Ute culture. Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 147–148 n. 25.

accomplish the redemption of the Lamanites.” Before they were lost either to slavery or savagery, the Mormons would purchase the innocent and place them in Mormon homes where they would learn the truths of civilization and Christianity as well as the truths of their own Israelite parentage. While “the Indians would dwindle away,” Young explained, “[the Lord would] let a remnant of the seed of Joseph be saved.”<sup>5</sup>

For a time, following his baptism and ordination, the Ute military chief Walkara, who had long been the most powerful slaver in the territory, was enlisted to assist in this salvific work. In March 1851, the founder of the Parowan settlement, George A. Smith sent a “talking paper” north with Walkara, certifying that “Captain Walker” and his band of Utes had “showed themselves Friends and gentlemen.” Those Saints to whom Walkara presented Smith’s certificate should accord the Indians goodwill and trade with him for his “horses, Buckskins and Piede children.”<sup>6</sup> Having helped the Saints settle the south, having dedicated himself to the gospel, and having led other Indians into the baptismal waters, Smith reasoned that Walkara had been transformed from an Indian purveyor of human flesh to a Lamanite protector of his Lamanite brethren. And yet less than a year later, as Brigham Young testified in the January 1852 trial of the Mexican slave trader Don Pedro León Luján, “Indian Walker” proved himself not to be a Lamanite brother in the gospel. Instead he was an unrepentant Indian who instead of transporting them to freedom, continued to “traffic” in Indian slaves. “He offers them for sale,” Young testified during the trial, which served as a test case against the Indian slave trade in the Utah territory. “[W]hen he cannot get what he thinks they are worth, he says he will take them to the Navahoe Indians, or Spaniards, and sell them, or kill them which he frequently does.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “President Young’s Visit,” *Deseret News*, June 28, 1851.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” 6.

<sup>7</sup> Brigham Young, “Testimony Given in First District Judicial Court, January 15, 1852,” *United States v. Pedro León et al.*, quoted in Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 49–50. Sondra Jones argues that it was the trial of León Luján that served as the catalyst for the creation of Indian slavery legislation in Utah.

## Sally, the Lamanite

In the Mormon archive, if “Walker” signifies “Indian,” then “Sally,” the adopted Indian daughter of Brigham Young, signifies “Lamanite.” Sally’s presence in the Mormon historical record and collective memory serves to demonstrate that, along with the appropriate amount of paternalistic white Mormon influence, even the lowliest Indian girl could be transformed into a faithful Lamanite woman.

In his testimony at the trial of Léon, Brigham Young described what was perhaps the first instance of Mormon participation in the Indian slave trade. In 1847, soon after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, an Indian warrior whom the Saints called Batiste brought two teenaged Paiute captives, one boy and one girl, to the Old Fort looking to trade humans for guns. Batiste responded to the Mormons’ initial refusal by killing the boy. Charles Decker, who was married to Brigham Young’s daughter Vilate, intervened to save the girl from a similar fate, trading the “squaw” for a rifle. Decker then gave the girl to his sister Clarissa who was one of Brigham Young’s plural wives. In Young’s household “Kahpeputz” was renamed “Sally.” And according to Young’s testimony against Léon, by 1852 Sally was “far[ing] as [well as the prophet’s other] children, and is as free.”<sup>8</sup>

Other contemporaneous records indicate Sally’s body became the site of intense religious and cultural work intended to remake the Indian into a Lamanite. In 1849, Zina D. H. Young, who would fifty years later petition church leaders to allow Jane Manning James to be adopted to Joseph Smiths’ family, recorded in her diary how she had worked to bring Sally more fully into the Mormon sacred community. After singing in tongues, Zina was moved by the spirit to seek out “Sally (the lamanite that Charles Decker bought)” and bless her. Zina explained that while laying “my hands upon her head ... my language changed in a moment and when I had finished she said she

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<sup>8</sup> Brigham Young, “Testimony Given in First District Judicial Court,” January 15, 1852, quoted in Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 48.

understood every word. I had talked in her mother tongue.” Zina told Sally that soon “her mother and sisters were coming” to join Sally, “and She must be a good girl.”<sup>9</sup>

Sally did become a “good girl,” at least according to Brigham Young. During his 1852 testimony, Young said that after being purchased and adopted, Sally initially preferred to sleep outdoors and “preferred the meat she gathered from the gutters instead of good fried beef.” But under the civilizing influence of the Saints, Sally became an excellent housekeeper and cook. Her aversion to her old, Indian life was so strong that her body reacted viscerally to the thought of it. “[She is] ready to vomit now at the recollection of her former habits,” Young said.<sup>10</sup>

Sally’s Lamanite goodness and disdain for all things Indian was also captured in the collective memory of Utah’s second generation of Saints who were occupied with both preserving and idealizing the pioneering past.<sup>11</sup> In her own sentimentalized retelling of Sally’s life published in the *Improvement Era* in 1906, Brigham Young’s daughter, Susa Young Gates remembers that her adopted Lamanite sister became a regular fixture in her adopted father’s Beehive House. One evening Young met with a set of chiefs including Walkara and Sowiette in Salt Lake City to discuss the Mormons’ intentions to settle the valley. During this meeting, Sally caught the eye of the Pahvant chief Kanosh. Kanosh was an exemplar of the noble savage, full of “rugged Indian

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<sup>9</sup> Zina D. H. Young, “‘A Weary Traveler’: The 1848-1850 Diary of Zina D. H. Young,” ed. Marilyn Higbee, *Journal of Mormon History* 19 (1993): 109–110. See also Turner, *Brigham Young*, 215. Over the years, in the Mormon archive the contrast between the horrors of Sally’s pre-Mormon life and the love with which the Mormons embraced her only grew starker. In his memoirs published in 1920, Brigham Young’s nephew John R. Young, who would have only been ten years old at the time, recalls in vivid detail Sally’s harrowing arrival at the newly-completed fort in the Salt Lake Valley. “[In the] fall of 1847 a band of Indians camped near us. Early one morning we were excited at hearing their shrill, blood-curdling war whoop, mingled with occasional sharp cries of pain. Father sent me to the Fort for help.” Young explains that members of “Wanship’s band” of braves had captured two girl prisoners. “One of these they had killed, and were torturing the other. To save her life Charley Decker bought her, and took her to our house to be washed and clothed. She was the saddest-looking piece of humanity I have ever seen. They had shingled her head with butcher knives and firebrands. All the fleshy parts of her body, legs, and arms had been hacked with knives, then fire brands had been stuck into the wounds.” Young, *Memoirs of John R. Young, Utah Pioneer, 1847*, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Brigham Young, “Testimony Given in First District Judicial Court,” January 15, 1852,” quoted in Turner, *Brigham Young*, 216.

<sup>11</sup> See Lisa Tait’s work on the *Young Woman’s Journal* and the gendered, generational concerns it and other youth-oriented Mormon publications including the *Improvement Era* hoped to address. Lisa Olsen Tait, “The Young Woman’s Journal: Gender and Generations in a Mormon Women’s Magazine,” *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 22, no. 1 (2012): 51–71.

manliness,” writes Gates, “his dark proud face was a model of Indian power and sagacity.” Kanosh was so smitten with Sally that he offered “a whole band” of ponies in exchange for the Indian girl. Young said no. Gates explains, as a “member of the white chief’s family she should follow the customs of the white maidens and choose her own husband.” By buying her from her slave master who denied Sally her humanity, the Saints freed her so that she could exert her own God-given, human agency. And Sally, who under the influence of “nimble-fingered white women” grew more “civilized,” exercised this agency by initially refusing Kanosh’s advances. After all, “He Indian!,” Sally exclaimed, and thus “He no beau to me.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Susa Young Gates, Sally learned to overcome this prideful character, which she had “inherited from her progenitor, the proud Laman,” by studying “the strange black lines and curves which spelled out this wonderful story [of the origins of her race], on the printed page of the Book of Mormon.” Once Kanosh proved his love by intervening to rescue Sally after she was captured by none other than the “brute, Walkara” who planned to sell her to other Indian braves, Sally’s own heart softened towards the noble savage. After Young officiated their wedding, Kanosh built Sally “a white man’s cabin of trees, and glass.” In turn, Sally made Kanosh a white man’s home, decorated by needlework instead of bearskins and nourished with meals cooked on a stove instead of on an open fire.<sup>13</sup> Over their years together, Sally “did much towards civilizing” her husband, remembered another biographer of Sally, and he “died a faithful Latter-day Saint.”<sup>14</sup>

Written at more than a half-century remove, during a period when tales of brave Mormon benefactors and ferocious Indians became commonplace in pioneer memoirs, Susa Young Gates’

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<sup>12</sup> Susa Young Gates, “The Courtship of Kanosh: A Pioneer Indian Love Story” *Improvement Era*, vol. 9 (Salt Lake City: General Board, Y.M.M.I.A., 1906), 21–22. Brigham Young, “Testimony Given in First District Judicial Court, 15 January 1852,” *United States v. Pedro León et al.*, quoted in Turner, *Brigham Young*, 216.

<sup>13</sup> Gates, “The Courtship of Kanosh: A Pioneer Indian Love Story,” 22–37. According to Gates, Walkara attempted to capture Sally twice. The first instance occurred when, against the wishes of her Mormon caretakers, Sally took a nighttime stroll to splash her feet in Salt Lake’s City Creek. Sally narrowly escaped reenslavement by outrunning Walkara to the safety of her mistress’s home. “He bad Indian,” Sally described Walkara. “All Indians bad!” *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Kimball, “From Thrilling Experiences,” printed in Gottfredson, *Indian Depredations in Utah*, 16–17.

addition to the archive of Sally's and Kanosh's courtship is at best romanticized, if not completely mythologized. The census records of 1860 list Sally not as an adopted daughter of her "White Father" Brigham Young. Instead "Sally," to whom the last name of "Indian" is given, not "Young," is grouped with the other female servants of the Young household.<sup>15</sup> What's more, there is no other record indicating that Walkara ever took Sally prisoner. And Sally and Kanosh were not young teenagers, expecting to find their mates through the performance of romantic gestures, when they officially married on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1877. Instead, they were both in their fifties. And it was not Brigham Young but Dimick Huntington who officiated the marriage of "Kanosh (Indian)" and "Kahpeputz or Sally also an Indian," as the handwritten marriage certificate reads.<sup>16</sup> According to contemporary correspondence, Sally did not demonstrate her agency, as Susa Young Gates would have it, by choosing to accept Kanosh. Sally entered into the marriage reluctantly if not unwillingly, as a bargaining chip, even perhaps as a "present" to Kanosh, to strengthen the alliance between the Indian chief and Brigham Young.<sup>17</sup>

Yet the mythologies built up around Sally, Kanosh, and Walkara reveal a long-held and deeply-engrained Mormon vision of the mutually constructive nature of the two Native American historical and literary characters created out of the same fallen branch of Israel: the redeemable Lamanite and the unrepentant Indian. Young believed that he and his followers were divinely called to purchase children like Sally from savage slavers like Walkara in order to feed, educate, and love them as their own. This system of buying Native children into freedom afforded the Saints the best opportunity to make Lamanite people out of the remnant of Joseph that they encountered in Utah.

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<sup>15</sup> See "Sally, Indian" in entry for "Brigham Young," 1860 U.S. Census, Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory, pg. 268, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>16</sup> Marriage Certificates, 1876-1888, Folder 4, CR 100 424, CHL.

<sup>17</sup> Turner, *Brigham Young*, 347-348.

## Lamanite Servants, African Slaves

Yet, this millenarian ideal had a real cost. In exchange for Indian children, the Mormons traded foodstuffs, sheep, oxen, horses, guns and ammunition as well as cash.<sup>18</sup> Charles Decker's rifle for Sally's life, for example. This at a time when most Mormons could ill afford such expenditures as they were still working to create their own sustainable economies of agriculture, goods, and currency in Utah. In March 1852, the newly formed territorial legislature, composed mostly of high-ranking church leaders, passed "An Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners." The law's purpose was to provide a practical mechanism to make the ideal of buying Indian slaves into freedom a reality, and a cost-effective one at that. This new law was also explicitly gendered: to stop men like Léon, Arapene, and Walkara from buying and stealing "women and children of the Utah tribe of Indians." In the act's preamble, the authors of the legislation stated that these women and children were treated with the most loathsome savagery by their male captures:

Frequently carried from place to place packed upon horses or mules; lariatied out to subsist upon grass, roots, or starve... and, when with suffering cold, hunger and abuse they fall sick so as to become troublesome, are frequently slain by their masters to get rid of them.

To turn these "troublesome" poor creatures into "delightful" Lamanites, while also not breaking the bank, the act authorized settlers to indenture for up to twenty years the Indians whom they purchased.<sup>19</sup> This law was meant to codify the compensation in labor for the "favors and expenses which may have been incurred on their account," explained Young to the territorial legislature in January 1852.<sup>20</sup> Yet while working to pay off their debt, the law stipulated that their Mormon parents/masters were required not only to clothe, and feed their children/servants, but also to

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<sup>18</sup> See Table 6, "Known Costs of Trade for Native American Children in Mormon Households," in Michael K. Bennion, "Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity: Native American Children in Mormon Homes, 1847-1900" (MA thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012), 249.

<sup>19</sup> "An Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners," March 7, 1852, Utah Territorial Legislature, Salt Lake City, Utah, in *Acts, Resolutions and Memorials Passed at the Annual Sessions of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Brigham H. Young, 1852), 92-94.

<sup>20</sup> Brigham Young, "Governor's Message to the Council of Representatives of the Legislature of Utah," January 5, 1852, printed in the *Deseret News*, January 10, 1852.



ensure that the children received three months of schooling per year.<sup>21</sup> This act was designed to clearly distinguish the Mormon home in Utah, in which Indian women and children would be legally and lovingly placed for a time-limited indenture, from the brutal slave auction blocs of Santa Fe, where Natives were mere property, to be bought, sold, abused, and killed.

“An Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners” was not the first law that the Utah legislature enacted in 1852 related to human bondage. Earlier in the session, the legislature passed “An Act in Relation to Service,” which legalized African chattel slavery. According to Brigham Young, the fratricidal enslavement of Native Americans by other Native Americans was not only abhorrent. It was also antithetical to Book of Mormon prophecies, which foresaw the reunification of the Lamanites as one people, and this people’s redemption as the American branch of the House of Israel. The enslavement of Africans was also scripturally based. As Young explained to the legislature a few days before it voted to make Utah the first U.S. territory to legalize African slavery, ever since “old Cain[’s]” ancient act of fratricide, “the colored race have been subjected to severe curses... [U]ntil the curse is removed by him who placed it upon them... they must suffer under its consequences.” Neither Young nor any Bible-believing man was “authorized to remove the curse.”<sup>22</sup> Such a position stood in stark contrast with the views of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. As was evident in Joseph’s acceptance of Elijah Abel’s ordination to the priesthood, and as was evident in Hyrum’s patriarchal blessing of Jane Manning James, the Smith brothers believed that Cain and Ham’s progeny need not necessarily carry the sins of their fathers in their hearts or even on their skin.

What’s more, like his distaste for Indian slavery, Young’s “firm” belief in African slavery was caste in a particular Mormon valence. As he explained to a council of territorial legislators, Young acknowledged, “the African enjoys the right of receiving the first principles of the gospel,” including

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<sup>21</sup> “An Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners,” 94.

<sup>22</sup> Brigham Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Council on a Bill Relating to African Slavery,” January 23, 1852, Box 1, Folder 14, CR 100 317, CHL.

baptism. But Young stated plainly what had not been so plain to his prophetic predecessor: that “Africans cannot hold the priesthood.” For Young, the fact that Africans lacked the right to the priesthood meant that Africans lacked the right to self-rule. Young called the legislature to enact a bill that would codify in the law books the truth already written in the Bible: “[African] slaves serve their masters” in perpetuity.<sup>23</sup>

And yet though he supported the legislature’s efforts to legalize slavery, after reading over the initial bill entitled “An Act in Relation to African Slavery,” Young offered “a few alterations.” Most significantly, he replaced the word “slavery” with the word “service” in the bill’s title and removed reference to “African” altogether.<sup>24</sup>

Young was advised to do so by John M. Bernhisel, the Mormons’ lobbyist in Washington and Jane Manning James’s onetime fellow houseguest in Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo Mansion House. Bernhisel did not want Utah to draw the attention of the federal government just two years after it had once again precariously balanced the nation into equal parts free and slave with the Compromise of 1850.<sup>25</sup> Yet this sleight of hand on paper—Young scratching a line through “slavery” on an early draft of the bill and inserting “service” in its place—did little to change the flesh and bone status of African Americans in bondage in Utah. African slaves were to be “servants” to their owners until the end of time.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Council on a Bill Relating to African Slavery.” It is important to note that in his gubernatorial address, Young declared that “slavery” or any system in which “human flesh dealt in as property, is not consistent or compatible with the true principles of government... My own feelings are, that no property can or should be recognized as existing in slaves, either Indian or African.” Brigham Young, “Governor’s Message to the Council of Representatives of the Legislature of Utah,” January 5, 1852, reprinted in *Deseret News*, January 10, 1852.

<sup>24</sup> Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Council on a Bill Relating to African Slavery.”

<sup>25</sup> Bernhisel successfully lobbied Congress to create the Utah Territory as part of the Compromise of 1850 in part by convincing them that there were no slaves in Utah. Nathaniel R. Ricks, “A Peculiar Place for the Peculiar Institution: Slavery and Sovereignty in Early Territorial Utah” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007), 2–3, 50–133.

<sup>26</sup> “An Act in Relation to Service,” February 4, 1852, Utah Territorial Legislature, Salt Lake City, Utah in *Acts, Resolutions and Memorials Passed at the Annual Sessions of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah*, 80–82. For a side-by-side comparison of the early and final versions of the Utah Territory “Act in Relation to Service,” see Appendix Three, Ricks, “A Peculiar Place for the Peculiar Institution,” 161–162. An original member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as well as a territorial legislature, Orson Pratt also delivered a speech before the legislature on slavery. Pratt lambasted his

Yet Young also said he objected to the word “slavery” because it poorly represented the system of bondage he hoped to establish. For him slavery, as opposed to service, did not connote mutual obligation between master and servants. To be sure, Christian defenders of American southern slavery, including Joseph Smith himself in the 1830s, asserted that slavery was a system of paternalistic benevolence. Masters treated their slaves as children because they were, by nature, incapable of caring for themselves.<sup>27</sup> Yet according to Young, “service” connoted biblical mutuality, as both master and servant fulfilled their biblically-mandated duties. The white man governs and cares for his black servant; the black man serves his white master. But it is not biblical, Young insisted, to have masters knocking slaves down “and whipping them and breaking their limbs,” as was often the reality in the south. That form of slavery also led to abuse and misuse of the “negro” as a resource.<sup>28</sup>

Young and the Utah legislature intended to differentiate African chattel slavery in Utah from the peculiar institution practiced American South in two concrete ways.<sup>29</sup> First, under the threat of

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brethren and fellow lawmakers’ move to bring slavery to Utah. Pratt even called for black male suffrage and voted against municipal legislation that did not include it. LaJean Purcell Carruth, “‘To bind the African because he is different from us in color enough to cause the angels in heaven to blush’: Orson Pratt’s Opposition to Slavery in the Territorial Legislature,” (annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, San Antonio, TX, June 5-9, 2014). The year before, on the question of slavery, Orson Hyde wrote in the *Frontier Guardian*, “a man in the Southern States embraces our faith, and is the owner of slaves, the church says to him, if your slaves wish to remain with you, and to go with you, put them not away; but if they choose to leave you, or are not satisfied to remain with you, it is for you to sell them, or to let them go free, as your own conscience may direct.” Yet Hyde was writing from Kanesville, Iowa and thus did not witness, or chose to ignore, the facts on the ground in Utah where slaves were not in fact empowered to free themselves. Christopher Rich acknowledges that there is no known case of a master in Utah freeing his slave based on the slaves’ request. Yet Rich still argues that Hyde here articulated “the *de facto* position of African slavery in the Great Basin.” Christopher B. Rich, “The True Policy for Utah: Servitude, Slavery, and ‘An Act in Relation to Service,’” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2012): 62–63.

<sup>27</sup> *M&A*, April, 1836. On slavery as paternalism see, Eugene D Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3–112. For one of many rebuttals of Genovese, Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), esp. 108–128.

<sup>28</sup> Brigham Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Council on a Bill Relating to African Slavery.”

<sup>29</sup> Christopher C. Rich has recently argued that “An Act in Relation to Service” was designed to in the short term protect the property interest of Mormon slaveholders by legalizing slavery, and in the longer term to solve the problem of slavery by foreseeing a day when slaves would be freed. Rich, “The True Policy for Utah: Servitude, Slavery, and ‘An Act in Relation to Service’”; Christopher B. Rich, “Responses: Rich Answers Ricks on Utah Servitude/Slavery,” *Juvenile Instructor*, accessed August 9, 2014, <http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/responses-rich-answers-ricks-on-utah-servitudeslavery/>. In 1859, Horace Greeley asked Brigham Young if Utah’s territorial laws recognized slavery. Young replied, “Those laws are printed—you can read them for yourself. If slaves are brought here by their owners in the

prison, a hefty fine, and loss of ownership of slaves, the Act in Relation to Service criminalized “carnal intercourse” with “servants of the African race.” Sleeping with slaves was both a storied pastime for southern masters as well as a means of increasing slave owners’ wealth. Yet this part of the law was as much about preserving the Saints’ pure Israelite bloodlines than it was about protecting slave women from abuse. As Young made clear in his January 5, 1852 address to the legislature, the religious punishments for producing offspring with “Africans” were even more severe than those spelled out in the law. “Any person that mingles his seed with the seed of Canaan forfeits the right to rule and all the blessings of the Priesthood of God,” Young proclaimed. “[A]nd unless his blood were spilled and that of his offspring he nor they could not be saved until the posterity of Canaan are redeemed.”<sup>30</sup> Second, the legislature required masters to send their servants “to school, no less than eighteen months.”<sup>31</sup> Utah’s compulsory education stood in sharp contrast with the practice of compulsory illiteracy in which most states in the antebellum south made it a crime to teach slaves to read and write out of fear that education might lead to slave revolts.<sup>32</sup>

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states, we do not favor their escape from the service of their owners.” Yet Young told Greeley that he expected that when Utah was admitted to the Union, Utah “shall be a free state.” For Young however, his concern in this matter was for the welfare of the masters not for the would-be freeman. “Slavery here would prove useless and unprofitable,” Young continued. “I regard it generally a curse to the masters. I myself hire many laborers, and pay them fair wages; I could not afford to own them.” Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 211–212.

<sup>30</sup> Brigham Young, Address to the Utah Territorial Legislature, January 5, 1852, Box 9, Volume 22, CR 100 102, CHL. Connell O’Donovan has argued that it was this fear of corrupting the Israelite bloodlines that most directly led to the priesthood ban. “‘I Would Confine Them to Their Own Species,’ LDS Historical Rhetoric & Praxis Regarding Marriage Between Whites and Blacks,” (Sunstone Symposium, Cupertino, CA, March 28, 2009). At least before they converted to Mormonism, if not after, too, it is likely that some Mormon slave owners did procreate with the female slaves. See the slave entries for Robert M. Smith in which several young children of the slave “Biddy” are listed as “yellow” or “Mulatto.” See Utah’s 1850 Slave Schedule, in which the twenty-six slaves listed are noted as “Going to California,” though several of them remained in Utah. “Slave Inhabitants in Utah County, Deseret,” 1850 U.S. Census, Slave Schedules, accessed through *Ancestry.com*. See also, Max Perry Mueller, “Hemings and Jefferson Together Forever?,” *Slate*, March 29, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> “An Act in Relation to Service,” Utah Legislative Assembly, Utah Legislative Assembly, *Journals of the House of Representatives, Council, and Joint Sessions of the First Annual and Special Sessions of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah: Held at Great Salt Lake City, 1851 and 1852* (Great Salt Lake City: Brigham H. Young, 1852), 81.

<sup>32</sup> Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, “Race, Realities, and American Education: Two Sides of the Coin,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 59, no. 2 (1990): 119.

Young also wanted to replace the term “slavery” with “service” because he wanted a provision that encompassed the permanent state of African bondage as well as indentured servitude for white European immigrants who agreed to work off the cost of their transportation to Zion. Established in 1849, the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF) provided funds to poor converts from the Eastern United States, England and, in the 1850s, increasingly Scandinavian countries, to cover part or all of their travel costs. Such emigrants signed contracts in which they promised that, once in Utah, their labor would go to repaying their travel expenses to the PEF.<sup>33</sup> Thus “service” functioned as a euphemism for African chattel slavery, and provided legal cover for Mormon slave owners, including territorial legislator John Brown and Apostle Charles C. Rich. “Service” also empowered the PEF to enforce “contracts to labor” for white migrants and immigrants.<sup>34</sup>

The rhetoric related to and contained within these two acts passed by Utah’s first territorial legislature legalizing service—both the *time-limited* red and white kind as well as the *timeless* black kind—reveal the kind of Mormon people building in which the Saints were engaged during the early 1850s.<sup>35</sup> Utah’s civil and religious leaders found the American branch of the remnant of Joseph in

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<sup>33</sup> Scott Alan Carson, “Indentured Migration in America’s Great Basin: Occupational Targeting and Adverse Selection,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32, no. 3 (2002): 67–68; Scott Alan Carson, “Indentured Migration in America’s Great Basin: An Observation in Strategic Behavior in Cooperative Exchanges,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 157, no. 4 (2001): 651–76; William Mulder, “Mormons from Scandinavia, 1850-1900: A Shepherded Migration,” *Pacific Historical Review* 23, no. 3 (1954): 227–46.

<sup>34</sup> In January 1850, Young also told the legislature that he wanted to create religious as well as legal environment favorable to the migration of slaveholding Mormon converts. Conversion to Mormonism, and its universalistic principles, had produced confusion as to the morality of slavery. Some Mormons “commence to whisper around their views upon the subject saying, ‘do you think it is right? I am afraid it is not right.’” Young directed the territorial leaders to settle the question. “I know it is right, and there should be a law made to have the slaves serve their masters.” Brigham Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Council on a Bill Relating to African Slavery.”

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Rich has argued that at least in intent there was little difference between how the legislature and later Utah’s courts envisioned the terms of service for white servants and black slaves. Children born to slaves “could only be forced to work as long as necessary to repay any debts that were owed to their parent’s master,” Rich writes. “This reflected the old gradual emancipation laws which authorized a period of servitude to be extended over the children of slaves before they were legally free. Yet, it also specifically disallowed perpetual servitude based on heredity.” Rich, “The True Policy for Utah: Servitude, Slavery, and ‘An Act in Relation to Service,’” 68. Yet as would often be the case for post-emancipation system of black sharecropping, the level of debt was almost certainly decided, and the debt ledgers kept by the masters not be the slaves, thus establishing *de facto* hereditary debtorship, if not slavery, in the territory until the end of the Civil War. Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor, 2009).

peril; the unrepentant Indian threatened the incipient Lamanite. God placed the white Saints in Utah to save the innocent sons and daughters of Manasseh, the Indians' supposed Israelite progenitor, who could still be redeemed from those whose wickedness put them beyond redemption. Those who could be saved were to be bought. And while they paid off their debts, they were to be brought up in Mormon homes, trained to be domestics, farmers, brothers and sisters in the gospel, and sometimes, plural wives. Their former captors and other belligerent Indians were to be run off, corralled, or killed.

For poor white converts from the eastern U.S. or northern Europe, the codification of service helped make the gathering not just a luxury of the rich. Instead, the “worthy poor,” as Young described them, who pledged to prove their worth by repaying their debts, could also come to Zion.<sup>36</sup> The “Act in Relation to Service” and the PEF created financial and religious covenants to cleave converts further to the church. This system also imported manpower used to construct Utah’s public buildings, telegraph and railroad lines, and cultivate Zion’s fields and mines. This system also imported sons and daughters of Ephraim who, once their debts were paid, would buy up their own parcel of Zion and fill voting roles and public offices before Utah’s Gentiles threatened the Saints’ hold on the economic and political levers of power in the territory.<sup>37</sup>

Yet the “Act in Relation to Service” created black Africans on paper, too, bonded for (all but) eternity to the sins of the cursed originators of their race. Earlier versions of the act’s text even included direct references to the standard justification for African slavery; masters were entitled to the services of their servants “until the curse of servitude is taken from the descendants of

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<sup>36</sup> Brigham Young, “Message of Governor Brigham Young, delivered to the Legislative Assembly of Utah Territory,” December 11, 1854, reprinted in Brigham Young, *The Teachings of President Brigham Young, Volume 3, 1852–1854*, ed. Fred Collier (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing, 1987), 427.

<sup>37</sup> While the “Act in Relation to Service” provided the PEF the legal authority to enforce these contracts, the fact that many migrants and immigrants settled in rural parts of Utah, which lacked a strong justice system, meant that legal enforcement proved difficult and costly. Instead, Mormon social norms pressured many debtors to honor their contracts. Carson, “Indentured Migration in America’s Great Basin,” 67–68, 65.

Canaan.”<sup>38</sup> Though this language was removed from the final version of the act, the supposed biblical precedent implicitly remained. “The negro... should serve the seed of Abraham,” Young explained to the territorial legislators on January 5, 1852 as they prepared the act’s language. This state of perpetual servitude curtailed the “negro,” free or enslaved, from holding civil or ecclesiastical positions of authority in Utah where “the decree of God that Canaan should be a servant of servants unto his brethren (i.e. Shem and Japet [sic]) is in full force.”<sup>39</sup> The Indian slavery act legalized the Mormon practice of buying Lamanites into freedom, so that, in theory, they could fully realize their God-given agency and leave behind the curse of their forefather Laman. The Utah territorial legislature also sought to create laws to match leading Saints’ beliefs that God curtailed blacks’ agency through ancient, biblical curses, with which blacks could only part after the more worthy lineages of humanity received their blessings. The white universalism preached by Joseph Smith and practiced by his church in Nauvoo did not accompany Brigham Young’s Saints to Utah.<sup>40</sup>

The creation of this cursed “African” on paper translated directly into the Saints’ attitude to the embodied blacks in bondage. Until the Civil War officially ended slavery throughout the United States and its territories, even enslaved blacks who were members of the church were not free to act upon their own agency. Green Flake and Oscar Crosby, who had been baptized into the church and who were part of Brigham’s Vanguard Company, were not permitted to settle and cultivate their

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<sup>38</sup> “Appendix Three” in Ricks, “A Peculiar Place for the Peculiar Institution,” 160–161.

<sup>39</sup> Brigham Young, Address to the Utah Territorial Legislature, January 5, 1852,

<sup>40</sup> Brigham Young’s plural wife, Eliza R. Snow put these distinctions into verse. In 1854, soon after the end of the Walker War, Snow wrote the poem “The Day is Dawning” to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Saints’ July 1847 arrival in the Salt Lake Basin as well as their first contact with Utah’s Indians whom Snow names “Joseph’s children in the West.” As “Glory beams on Ephraim’s mountain/Beauty smiles on Ephraim’s plains,” Snow invited the “wand’ring sons of Lehi” to “Learn the ways the white men love.” If they did so, the curse that had long “rested upon you/God will soon the curse remove.” Derr and Davidson, *Eliza R. Snow*, 240. See also Snow’s 1865 poem “Lamanite.” This poem reframes her poem, “The Red Man of the West,” which she wrote before her conversion to Mormonism, in Book of Mormon theology and prophecy. *Ibid.*, 351. In her poem, “The New Year 1852,” written just a few months before the Utah legislature legalized black slavery in the territory, Snow addresses Ham’s children. She informs them that they can do nothing but wait on the Lord to have their curses removed. “Japhet shall dwell within the tents of Shem,” Snow writes, “And Ham shall be his servant;... The curse of the Almighty rests upon/The colored race: In his time, by his/Own means, not yours, that curse will be remov’d.” *Ibid.*, 419–420.

own lands as did their white brethren. Instead they, along with the estimated several dozen to a few hundred other slaves brought into the territory between 1847-1860, labored for their masters as the slave-owning Saints often settled together in Utah and worked to create communities patterned after those they left behind in the south.<sup>41</sup> Mormon slave owners sold their slaves like any other piece of property, separating mothers and fathers from their children, and husbands from their wives.<sup>42</sup> In 1857, the leader of the Mississippi Saints, John Brown, even tithed an “African Servant Girl” to the church, whom he valued at 1,000 dollars.<sup>43</sup>

If this “Servant Girl” had been a daughter of Shem instead of Ham, the Mormons might have valued her more, as her worth would have not have been measured merely in her ability to serve her master. At least in theory, Utah’s territorial law against Indian slavery was designed to buy native children out of the clutches of their Indian slave owners and place them in Mormon homes so that they could fulfill the Lamanite destiny: to join Mormon economic, religious, and matrimonial covenants. And as Brigham Young explained in 1851, the ultimate hope—and Book of Mormon prophecy—was that “many generations would not pass” until the difference between red Lamanite and white Saint would cease to exist. And a unified, covenantal “white and delightsome people” would emerge.<sup>44</sup> While “Africans,” be they slave or free, could be saved, Mormon whiteness—and the spiritual exaltation it signified—was unattainable, at least not attainable anytime soon. The

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<sup>41</sup> The number of slaves who lived in Utah at one time or another is difficult to estimate, in part due to the Mormons’ efforts to hide slaves from census counters. For example, see Utah’s 1850 Slave Schedule, in which the twenty-six slaves listed are noted as “Going to California,” though several of them remained in Utah. “Slave Inhabitants in Utah County, Deseret,” 1850 U.S. Census, Utah County, Deseret, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>42</sup> In 1850, William Lay moved to San Bernardino and brought his slave Hark with him, separating Hark from his wife and children, who belonged to the Bankhead brothers. William Lay did try to buy Hark’s wife, but did not have the money to do so. William Crosby to Brigham Young (on behalf of William Lay), March 12, 1851, BYP.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *The Autobiography of John Brown: A Member of the Original Company of Utah Pioneers of 1847*, 144–145. Brown tithed “Betsy” during the so-called Mormon Reformation. As the Saints prepared to do battle with the U.S. government, to inculcate the Mormon community from apostasy, Young called on his followers to recommit themselves to the church through demonstrations of religious piety, including increased numbers of plural marriages as well as the consecration of property to the church. One man even tithed his own daughter. Turner, *Brigham Young*, 248.

<sup>44</sup> “President Young’s Visit,” *Deseret News*, June 28, 1851.



governmental laws and ecclesiastical dictates were meant to marginalize blacks from the priesthood, and from the priesthood holder's bed, so as not to corrupt the Israelite bloodlines to which the priesthood belonged and upon which the foundation for the building of the Mormon people rested.

At least in a few well-documented cases, and in its holiest spaces, the church succeeded in keeping the prophesied fates of the African and Lamanite servants separate. After decades of missionary work throughout the United States and Canada, the priesthood holding Elijah Abel settled in Salt Lake City in 1853. A former member of the "House Carpenters of Nauvoo," Abel tithed his labor to work on Salt Lake's temple, as he had likely done in Nauvoo a decade before. Yet Brigham Young refused his requests to enter Temple Square's Endowment House—a temporary space in which Saints performed some of Mormonism's most sacred rituals before a temple was completed—so that he could receive his endowments and "have his wife and children sealed to him." Young explained that these sacred ordinances were "privilege[s]" that were not available to black members of the church, no matter how worthy they had proven to be.<sup>45</sup> And near the end of her life, Jane Manning James was sealed in the Salt Lake temple as a "Servitor" to Joseph Smith and his family "for eternity," not as Smith's spiritual daughter as she claimed the prophet himself wished. However, in 1859 Ira Hatch was sealed to his Lamanite wife, Sarah Maraboots in the Endowment House, and later their children were sealed to their parents. Four years later, Hatch's longtime missionary partner Jacob Hamblin was sealed to Eliza, his onetime adopted Indian daughter turned plural wife.<sup>46</sup> When she died in 1878, the year after Brigham Young's death, Sally Kanosh was buried in the temple clothes that her "White Father" had given her.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Newell G. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism," 28–29; Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," 22–29. On the Endowment House see Lisle Brown, "'Temple Pro Tempore': The Salt Lake City Endowment House," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 1–68.

<sup>46</sup> February 14, 1863, Salt Lake Temple Records, Book D, 543, cited in Brooks, "Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier," 42.

<sup>47</sup> George Crane, "Funeral of a Lamanite," *Deseret News*, December 18, 1878. Edward Leo Lyman, "Chief Kanosh: Champion of Peace and Forbearance," *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 1 (2009): 199. Mormon elites and Mormon

In the Mormon archive, Sally's is not the only recorded success story of adopted Indians remaking themselves into the Mormon image of the redeemed Lamanite. In his old age, Zenos Hill told a newspaper reporter that his white, adoptive parents, the Hills of Ephraim, were "the only parents I ever knew." They provided him with fourteen years of education. He even attended Brigham Young Academy (the precursor to Brigham Young University). Zenos so identified with the Mormons that he fought against (Antonga) Black Hawk during the mid-1860s Mormon-Indian conflicts. "I thought it my duty to do my part on the side of the whites," Zenos explained. However, because he had the "instincts" for it, Zenos put his supposed Indian nature to use on behalf of his white brethren, employing the tactics of his Indian enemies, including horse stealing and scouting. By 1880, Zenos Hill had his own home in Ephraim with his wife Amelie, an English convert, with whom he was raising "'half-blood' children."<sup>48</sup>

It was rare for Indian men to take white women as wives. Leading Latter-day Saints responded with bemused disgust to Walkara's 1851 request that Brigham Young give him a white wife as part of his status as an elder in the church. No white woman would demean herself with such a match, they told him.<sup>49</sup> Matrimonial unions between daughters of Manasseh and sons of Ephraim were more accepted, and on occasion quite fruitful. Ira Hatch wrote in his journal that after he was sealed to Sarah Marabouts in the Endowment House on October 11, 1868, their five children would be "born-in-the-covenant."<sup>50</sup> According to Juanita Brooks, who was not only Dudley Leavitt's biographer but also his granddaughter, in 1860 George A. Smith offered a covenantal

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missionaries were not the only Latter-day Saints to purchase and house Indian slaves. Hundreds if not thousands of Indian children were either bought or given to Mormon families in the second half of the nineteenth century. Juanita Brooks found documentation for some thirty-two Indian adopted children. Brooks, "Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier." Michael Kay Bennion provides a much more recent count of over 400 children in Mormon homes, See Appendix II, Table I in Bennion, "Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity," 245.

<sup>48</sup> Bennion, "Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity," 218–219. Census records indicate that Zenos Hill was literate. 1880 U.S. Census, Fountain Green, Utah Territory, pg. 381B, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>49</sup> George A. Smith, "Disobedience of Counsel," October 7, 1853, *JD* I: 197.

<sup>50</sup> Hatch, *Ira Hatch*, 105.

contract in the rhetorical register of a patriarchal blessing to convince a hesitant Dudley to take the Indian girl “Janet,” as his fourth wife. “Brother Leavitt,” Smith explained, “I promise you in the name of the Lord, that if you will take this girl, give her a home and a family, and do your duty by her, you will be blessed. You will count her descendants as among the choice ones of your offspring.” Smith also promised Dudley that these offspring would eventually be “white and delightful.”<sup>51</sup>

Both Janet and Dudley eventually agreed to the match, were married, and produced eleven children, eight of who lived to adulthood. As George A. Smith promised, the children self-identified with their white father, not with their Indian mother. According to Juanita Brooks, Janet and Dudley’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren, some of who held important offices in civil and ecclesiastical governance, either forgot or purposefully misremembered their Indian matriarch—at least in public settings and in public records.<sup>52</sup> Janet and Dudley’s union, among others like it, represents a fulfillment of Book of Mormon precedent and prophecy that, in not so many generations children produced from unions between whites and the remnant of Israel would subsume their Indianness into the universal racial category of whiteness—a stepwise move towards the teleology of a Mormon people without “Lamanites, nor any manner of –ites,” in essence a Mormon people devoid of race altogether.<sup>53</sup>

The archive of early Mormon-Indian relations contains many such success stories of Indians-turned-almost white-Lamanites, which are accompanied by testimonies of Mormon parents’

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<sup>51</sup> Juanita Brooks, *Dudley Leavitt, Pioneer to Southern Utah*, 1942, 47.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*; Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” 39, 48. See census entry for Annie, Calvin, Jane, and Heleman Leavitt, in which they are listed as white. 1870 U.S. Census, Hebron, Utah Territory, pg. 374, accessed through *Ancestry.com*. Strangely, “Jennette” (Janet) is also listed as white. Another of Dudley and Janet’s daughters Rozena Leavitt McKnight is listed as white in 1930, while her unmarried sister Deborah who lived with Rozena and her husband Wright McKnight in Beaver Dam, Arizona, is listed as Indian. The records also indicate that Rozena could “read and write” while her sister could not. 1930 U.S. Census, Beaver Dam, Arizona, pg. 282, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>53</sup> 2 Nephi 30:6; 4; Nephi 1: 17.

unwavering paternalistic patience towards their Indian children.<sup>54</sup> Yet how these children were actually treated remains a question of debate. Juanita Brooks claims that Brigham Young and others spoke with sincerity and accuracy when they declared that they treated their native children as well as any white child. To be sure, Indian adoptees always maintained a sense of otherness within the white Mormon world. While they viewed the Lamanites to be a key part of their own millennial vision, many white Mormons also viewed Native Americans as did other Americans: an innately inferior race that was destined to disappear either through natural (or violent) annihilation or absorption into the expanding, white Mormon peoplehood. Yet Juanita Brooks places the maltreatment of Indian Mormon children outside the home and in public spaces like the schoolhouse, where “with characteristic thoughtlessness [of all young children], their playmates made sarcastic comments” about the Indians’ supposed inferiority.<sup>55</sup>

Still others argue that, for the most part, Indian children remained “servants,” not “brothers” or “sisters” in the homes of their adoptive Mormon parents. This was the case for Sally who as late as 1870 was counted as a servant, not as a child, in Brigham Young’s household.<sup>56</sup> And despite the legal and ecclesiastical requirements to send indentured servants to school, more than half of the Indian children that appear in the 1860 U.S. census had yet to receive formal education.<sup>57</sup>

Whether they were truly loved or merely tolerated, if the narratives of the lives of Zenos Hill and Sally Kanosh are any indication, Indian children were certainly taught to hate the Indian—the one they read about in the Book of Mormon, the one they saw marauding through Utah’s valleys and plains, the one they saw in the mirror. Though it is embellished, if not fictive, in her story of

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<sup>54</sup> However, for the vast majority of Indian adoptees the archive contains no record of their existence. Many of these nameless Indian children succumbed to diseases like measles within months of their initial placement in Mormon homes. Others ran away and returned to their Indian families. Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” 33-34.

<sup>55</sup> Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” 47-48.

<sup>56</sup> See census entry for Sally in the 1870 U.S. Census, Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, pg. 701A, accessed through *Ancestry.com*

<sup>57</sup> Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 109.

Sally's courtship with Kanosh, Susa Young Gates writes that as she studied the Book of Mormon, which purportedly contained the history of her cursed, ancient lineage from Laman, Sally's "fear and dislike of her own race seemed rather to increase than to abate."<sup>58</sup>

### **The Mormon Narrator**

How the untold—or, better yet, unrecorded—number of purchased and adopted Indian women and children were treated at the hands of the Mormon mistresses/mothers and masters/fathers/husbands is an important question. But it is essentially not mine. Instead, I have sought to analyze how, in writing about the Indian slave trade, the Mormons constructed the Indian and the Lamanite as mutually constitutive racial identities—along with the "African" as a fixed, immutable, black point of reference. And as the narrator who gets to create his story in which he plays the white savior of red slaves, the white teacher to red savages, and the white redeemer of red heathens, the Mormon looms large, even if he is mostly absent from the narration's foreground.

Yet, the archivists and narrators of early Mormon-Indian relations in Utah can be located in the ways in which the early Saints depicted Walkara and Sally. When the Mormons held up "the Indian Walker"—their onetime ally and fellow Mormon who also demonstrated Laman-like perfidy by waging war on his brethren—against the image of "Sally, the Lamanite," Sally appears pale in comparison. After all, in Susa Young Gates' telling, what made Sally the target of Walkara's wrath was that she had parted ways with her Indian self. When she is captured by Walkara and paraded in front of a group of braves who Walkara hopes will buy her, Walkara asks, "who is she[?]," and then proceeds to answer his own question, "why does she wear the white squaw's dress?"<sup>59</sup>

In their respective relationships with white Mormon settlers, and white Mormon narrators, the distinction between Sally's complexion and that of Walkara is as evident in the stories of their

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<sup>58</sup> Gates, "The Courtship of Kanosh: A Pioneer Indian Love Story," 27–28.

<sup>59</sup> Gates recounts two separate incidences when Walker attempts to capture Sally. *Ibid.*, 31–33.

deaths as it is in the stories of their lives. On January 29, 1855, Walkara died at Meadow Creek, fifty miles south of Nephi where Walkara and Brigham Young had reestablished peace in May 1854. The Ute chief, probably only fifty years old, had fallen ill ten days before. George A. Smith reported that on his deathbed, Walkara once again pledged friendship to the Mormons and “expressed great anxiety for peace with the whites.” But his burial ceremony shocked his would-be white friends. According to Smith, along with a letter from Brigham Young, Walkara was buried with fourteen of his best horses, which had been slaughtered for the occasion, along with “two or three Piede Squaws, and some prisoners.”<sup>60</sup> Later retellings elaborated on the account. The horses were not killed, but buried alive. So were “an Indian boy and girl,” explained Peter Gottfredson, a Danish convert who became the Mormons’ most prolific compiler of firsthand and secondhand accounts of nineteenth-century “Indian depredations.” The captives were “secured near the corpse of the Chief at the bottom of a deep pit... and left until death brought them relief,” wrote Gottfredson in 1919. Two Indians who passed by the pit heard the boy begging to be freed. “The boy said that Walker was beginning to stink.” The Indians ignored his requests.<sup>61</sup>

According to Mormon narrators like Smith and Gottfredson, at his burial, Walkara and his Utes showed their true colors by treating human slaves no better than horses. The story of Sally’s death, and what followed it, is equally grotesque. But while in death Walkara demonstrated the depths of his savagery, Sally died a martyr to the Mormon way of life. In his memoirs published in 1920, Brigham Young’s nephew, John R. Young writes that after Sally and Kanosh’s marriage, Sally spent several pleasant years living “in the white man’s house which he built for her.” Kanosh eventually took another plural wife, a traditional Indian, who grew jealous of Sally and “hated her

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<sup>60</sup> George A. Smith to Franklin D. Richards, printed in *MS*, April 28, 1855.

<sup>61</sup> Gottfredson, *Indian Depredations in Utah*, 84. See also Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker, “Chief Walker (1801-1855),” in *Book of Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 372–77. A late nineteenth-century archeological examination—or grave robbing depending on one’s perspective—of Walkara’s burial site does suggest that at least one young Indian joined him in his grave. Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America’s Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2010), 200–201.

because of her white man's ways." While Kanosh was away, she killed Sally and buried her in a gully. After locating Sally's body, Kanosh seized his Indian wife and would have killed her on the spot, "but white men interfered." Nevertheless justice—"Indian justice"—did come to the "murderesses." John R. Young recalls that after the Indian woman confessed, she

offered to expiate her crime by starving herself to death. The offer was accepted, and on a lone hill in sight of the village, a 'wick-i-up' was constructed of dry timber. Taking a jug of water, the woman walked silently toward her living grave. Like the rejected swan, alone, unloved, in low tones she sang her own sad requiem, until her voice was hushed in death. One night when the evening beacon fire was not seen by the villagers, a runner was dispatched to fire the wick-i-up, and retribution was complete.

A few days later, at Sally's funeral a caravan of one hundred carriages followed the hearse carrying Sally's casket. "For Sally had been widely loved among the white settlers for her gentle ways."<sup>62</sup>

Sally's actual death announcement, which was printed in the *Deseret News* on December 18, 1878, makes note of the white community's great affection for her. It also makes note that even in death, Sally's body was the site of civilizing work. The late Heber C. Kimball's wife Adelia and other members of the Relief Society descended on the small settlement of Kanosh, named after its most famous resident and, ironically enough, located just a few miles away from Walkara's own grave. They took Sally's body from the Indians, and prepared it for an interment in what the author of the obituary called "our burying ground." At the well-attended ceremony, "the old faithful chief, Kanosh" declared that Sally's death and funeral would produce a "good effect... upon his people, as contrasting a kind and Christian burial with the rude manner of disposing of the Indian dead." Sally had become all that the Mormons could hope of her. "Beneath that tawny skin," read the obituary, "was a faithful, intelligence and virtue that would do honor to millions with a paler face."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Young, *Memoirs of John R. Young, Utah Pioneer, 1847*, 63.

<sup>63</sup> George Crane, "Funeral of a Lamanite," *Deseret News*, December 18, 1878. John Young's memory of Sally's death was repeated throughout the twentieth century. See, among others, Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 210; Susa Young Gates and Leah Eudora Dunford Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 136; Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 158 n. 21.

Yet according to the *Deseret News*, Sally died not at the hands of one of her sister wives, as John R. Young recalled. She died of a sickness.<sup>64</sup> A decade earlier, Kanosh had in fact lost an Indian wife to violence. According to a *Deseret News* report from 1869, like Sally, Kanosh's wife "Mary" was raised in a white Mormon home. And she lived separately from Kanosh's other wives, in a house kept in the "Mormoné fashion," with doors, windows, a high-post bed, her own livestock and vegetable garden. Mary's sister wives became jealous, and one "squaw" cut her throat while she tended her garden. This wife was sentenced to a wickiup to die of thirst and hunger.<sup>65</sup>

In some ways, the conflation of Mary's death with Sally's is understandable. Both were wives of Kanosh reared by white Mormon adoptive parents. Both abandoned Indian wares and wigwams for "Mormoné" homes. And both of their deaths were noteworthy enough that the Mormon newspaper of record covered them.<sup>66</sup> What's more, unlike many other Mormon families in nineteenth-century Utah, the Kanoshes did not write their own history to provide clarity on this tragic but pivotal movement in the family's history.

But perhaps just as important, Sally simply makes for a better victim. After all, she was the first Indian child whom the Mormons bought into freedom. She was the adopted daughter of Brigham Young, and a cherished member of his Beehive House. She was the beloved and cultivated bride of an Indian ally, whom she herself molded into a faithful, Latter-day Saint. And she died because of her relative whiteness. Moreover, while in life Sally demonstrated her acceptance of her Lamanite identity, her death at the hands of uncivilized savage Indians reinforces the limits that the

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<sup>64</sup> George Crane, "Funeral of a Lamanite," December 18, 1878.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Callister, "Fillmore City," *Deseret News*, July 35, 1869. See also, Elizabeth Wood Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey Through Utah to Arizona*, 1874, 79–80. Recently, both academic and popular narratives about Chief Kanosh and his relationships with Mormon elites have separated Sally's death from Mary's. Lyman, "Chief Kanosh," 99. See also Twila Van Leer, "Chief Praised by Indians, Whites Alike," *Deseret News*, March 12, 1996.

<sup>66</sup> Besides the *Deseret News* reports, I have found no records of Sally's and Mary's deaths in extant church or state documents. For example, Kanosh's wife "Betsykin," who is blamed for killing Sally in some narratives, was never charged for the murder. Gates and Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young*, 136; Carlton Fordis Culmsee, *Utah's Black Hawk War: Lore and Reminiscences of Participants* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1973), 68.



Mormons faced as they attempted to redeem the cursed branch of Israel. As Joseph Smith prophesied, many if not most would be killed, while only a few would prove worthy of joining the Mormon covenant.<sup>67</sup>

As did their spiritual predecessors Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni, the Mormon narrators of more modern histories of white-Indian relations abridge their histories. In doing so, Mary is remembered too little. Sally is remembered too much. And while Mary all but disappears from the archive, Mormon narrators write her death onto the body of Sally. The construction of Sally's martyrdom serves to mask how Sally actually became a member of Kanosh's household. Instead of the relatively horizontal progression of slave to servant to reluctant sister wife, in the writings of the white Mormon narrators who get to tell her story, Sally's life forms an arc, moving upward from Indian slave to Mormon daughter to Mormon martyr. It is of little import to the Mormon narrator if it was Sally or Mary who died so horrifically. Mary's story, which becomes Sally's, is reduced to a didactic tale of the Mormons' ability and limitations to redeem the Indians. Mary, Sally, along with Kanosh, and Walker are real people. But in these stories, they also become characters in a Mormon morality play.

### **Walkara Writes Back**

In Utah, Native Americans encountered the Mormons, too. And when they did, they had things to say. To be sure, the Mormon-Indian dialogues often ended in violence, not words. But before arriving at this conclusion, Utah's Native Americans tolerated and sometimes welcomed the arrival of the Saints. They told their new, white neighbors that they wanted to trade: blankets for grain; horses for beef; guns for humans. Some of them even said yes when the Mormon missionaries asked if they would like to be baptized.

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<sup>67</sup>February 10, 1850, Box 2, Folder 17, GCM. Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*, 73.

To contemporary scholars of such encounters between Native and Euro-Americans, it is axiomatic to acknowledge that whether by accepting, acquiescing, or resisting white Mormons' efforts to reshape them and their lands into the Saints' particular vision of Zion, Native Americans participated in the type of "people building" in which the Latter-day Saints were engaged during the second half of the nineteenth century. It is also axiomatic that, because Indians rarely wrote their own histories, preserving them instead in more ephemeral oral traditions, historians almost always have to pass through the highly mediated archive created on the "white" side of these encounters to locate and reconstruct an (approximation of an) authentic Indian perspective.<sup>68</sup>

The archive's asymmetries make it a racialized space. The written word weighs more than the spoken one, tilting the archive's floor in the direction of the white perspective. These asymmetries however also destabilize an older historiographical axiom; "history is written by the victors" proves inaccurate when the victor—at least of some battles—is an Indian.<sup>69</sup> In the mid-1860s, objecting to the treaties between other leading Utah chieftains and the federal government in which Indians agreed to cede the land already settled by the Saints and to relocate to reservations in exchange for cash settlements, (Antonga) Black Hawk and his pan-Indian alliance of Utes, Navajo, and Paiutes warriors successfully halted and briefly reversed Mormon expansion in southern Sanpete Valley.

Yet neither Black Hawk, nor any another Native historian, narrates the conflict's causes. Instead, one of Sanpete's many Danish converts, Peter Gottfredson provides the most often-cited narrative of the Black Hawk War. In his *History of Indian Depredations in Utah* (1919), Gottfredson dismisses Native Americans' complaints that Mormons were "trespassers on their domain." He does the same with Indian accusations that white settlers "were to blame in some way for" smallpox outbreaks, which decimated native communities throughout Utah. Instead, Gottfredson portrays

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<sup>68</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 12–15, 82–83.

<sup>69</sup> Lepore, *The Name of War*, 47, 118.

Black Hawk as an all but unprovoked aggressor, whose perfidy against his onetime professed “friends” is manifested in stealing Mormon beef and murdering Mormon herdsman and settlers. Throughout Gottfredson’s narrated compilation of firsthand reports of the Black Hawk War and other incidents of Indian depredations, Black Hawk is all but silent. He makes his mark in the archive through violence.<sup>70</sup> In Gottfredson’s history, only in defeat, and near death from the gunshot wounds he received during the war, is Black Hawk allowed to speak. According to Gottfredson, the chief spent his last days travelling to every settlement that he once attacked to beg for forgiveness for the “trouble” he had caused and to pledge peace with “the pale faces.”<sup>71</sup>

Ambivalence characterized the Mormons’ attitude to the lack of direct contribution from Black Hawk and other Indians to the written archive. The Saints professed a Book of Mormon-imperative to make Indians into reading and writing people, with the same historical sensibilities—the desire to write down both personal and communal sacred histories—as those of the white Mormons. Yet the Saints also located Indian apathy, even resistance to becoming a literate people in the Book of Mormon itself.<sup>72</sup> As I have argued earlier, even more than skin color, it was the Lamanites’ disdain for the written record that differentiated them from the recordkeeping Nephites.

Yet the Mormon archive shows that not all Native Americans whom the Saints encountered, befriended, attempted to convert, and killed, were antagonistic to pen and paper. If we believe early Utah Mormon records, and there is evidence that we can, Walkara himself understood the power of the written word. From his earliest encounters with the Saints in the late 1840s to his death in 1855, Walkara and other chiefs witnessed Mormon emissaries and interpreters read letters that contained

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<sup>70</sup> Gottfredson, *Indian Depredations in Utah*, 3, 129. As Jill Lepore has written regarding how the history of the “King Philip’s War” was narrated and thus remembered, “War is a contest of words as much as it is a contest of wounds.... On Englishman said that the war, through the wounds Indians inflicted on English bodies, was Philip’s only chance to be ‘found in print,’ ‘drawing his own report in blud not Ink.’” Lepore, *The Name of War*, 47.

<sup>71</sup> Gottfredson, *Indian Depredations in Utah*, 226–227.

<sup>72</sup> Mormon records two sets of plates and buries one knowing that if the records of the Nephite history and faith were “to fall into the hands of the Lamanites” then “the Lamanites would destroy them.” Mormon 6:6.

messages for them sent from Brigham Young. These chiefs then witnessed Mormon scribes transform the chiefs' spoken responses into written text to be carried back to the prophet. The fact that, along with his horses and Piede prisoners, he chose to be buried with a letter from Brigham Young shows that Walkara understood the value and power of the written word.

As such, Walkara and other Ute chiefs recognized that words matter, and words on a page matter even more. As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, shortly after his death, Walkara's heir-apparent Arapene sought out the Mormon leaders of the Sanpete Valley. Arapene asked them to transcribe the "visions" he had received and to share them with the Mormon leaders in Salt Lake. "Walker appeared unto me," Arapene explained, "and told me... not fight the Mormons but cultivate good peace." The Lord also spoke to Arapene and charged him with preventing further hostilities. If the Indians stole the Mormons' cattle and horses, the Lord commanded Arapene "to put a ball and chain on them [and] for me to whip them." But the Lord did not want Arapene "to kill them or spill blood on the land."<sup>73</sup> The Lord also promised that, once permanent peace was established and once "all people was good," the Lord would return to "earth and not go back." Arapene also "saw three personages and their garments were white as snow and as brilliant as the sun," most likely a reference to the fabled Book of Mormon Three Nephites. "And by and bye," Arapene continued, "all good people would seem as they did," becoming both as faithful and white as the three, immortal Mormon missionaries. Yet the Arapene's vision also contained a warning, which the Lord directed at the Saints: "If the Mormons throw away the lord's words," which Arapene was instructed to "have... written down," "the lord would not go to their meetings."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> "Visions of Arapine on the night of the forth of February 1855," Box 74, Folder 49, BYP.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*, 94–95.

The transcription of Arapene’s visions contains such particular biblical and Book of Mormon valences that the relationship between what the Ute chief actually said and what the scribe wrote down remains unclear. What is clearer is that the existence of this record demonstrates that Arapene understood the power of the written word to contain messages and convey meaning. By February 1855, Arapene along with the recently deceased Walkara had been on the receiving end of dozens if not hundreds of missives of instructions, demands, and prophetic warnings. Arapene wanted to send his own prophetic message—or more precisely the messages of Walkara and the Lord—back to Brigham, in the hopes that the Saints too would be convinced to heed these written admonitions, and not simply to “throw [them] away.”<sup>75</sup>

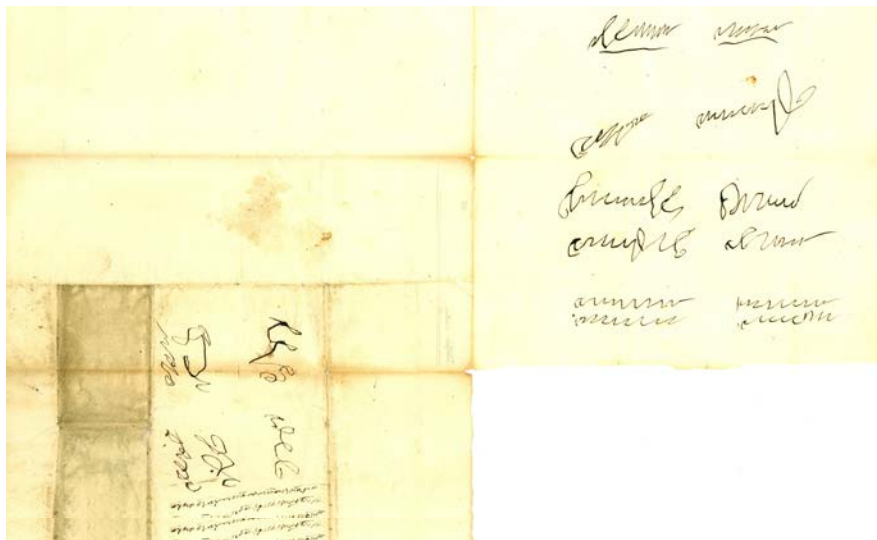


Figure 7:1. Walker’s Writing (1851).<sup>76</sup>

In life as in death Walkara also understood the authority that came with the performance of words. In March 1850, during his lecture before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Thomas Kane provided the most colorful description of Walkara’s oratory prowess. Having learned English, Spanish, and other Indian dialects, Walkara was also a “particularly eloquent master of the graceful

<sup>75</sup> This was certainly not the first, nor probably the last time Arapene called on Mormon scribes to record his messages. See Isaac Morley to Brigham Young, on behalf of Arapene, September 1, 1851, Box 22, Folder 7, BYP.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Bullock, “Walker’s writing 1851,” Box 74, Folder 44, BYP.

alphabet of pantomime, which stranger tribes employ to communicate with one another.”

According to Kane, Walkara’s linguistic faculties came in handy when he demanded from weaker Indian tribes “black mail salary”—often in the form of Indian slaves—and “obsequious and distinguished attention,” enforced by his troop of merciless warriors.<sup>77</sup> The records of his face-to-face meetings with Brigham Young also demonstrate that Walkara was a speaker who could also hold his own with the most formidable of interlocutors.<sup>78</sup>

In his description of Walkara as an intelligent and ruthless leader, Kane does not mention if Walkara’s verbal eloquence extended to the “graceful alphabet” used by literate men and women. But there is no question that Walkara like Arapene understood the power behind the written word, especially when the recipient of his words was at some remove. Thus in 1851, instead of calling on translators and scribes to compose a letter to Young, Walkara wrote one himself. Or at least tried to.

Walkara’s letter is illegible (Figure 7:1), at least to readers of English. It is a set of looping

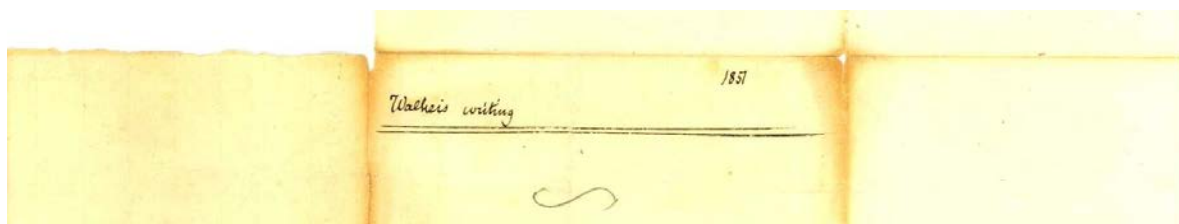


Figure 7:2. Thomas Bullock’s notation on Walker’s Writing

lines, composed on a sheet of the yellow-tinted paper that the early Saints in Utah preferred because of its durability and thickness. Some of the lines appear to be Ws written in nineteenth-century cursive, as if a young child attempted to imitate the writing of his parents or teachers. Yet the writing is not of a child, but of the forty-something year-old chief. On the flipside of the paper, in the distinct, compact hand of Thomas Bullock appear the words, “Walker’s writing 1851” (Figure 7:2).

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<sup>77</sup> Kane, *The Mormons*, 72.

<sup>78</sup> Meeting between Walkara and Young, June 13, 1849, BYP.

Bullock knew Walkara intimately. In May 1850, the clerk of the church historian's office recorded the minutes of the meeting between Young, other leading Saints and Walkara and his fellow Ute chiefs during which the two sides first pledged to establish peaceful and productive relations of trade, land sharing, and friendship. In 1852, Bullock again met Walkara and other Ute leaders, this time to measure and record their physical characteristics, including their weights and heights.<sup>79</sup>

While Bullock labeled the Walkara document "writing," the Ute chief clearly intended it to be a letter. Like other letter writers in early 1850s Utah, Walkara used one half of one side of the sheet to compose his missive. He strung together what appear to be distinct words in a series of rows from left to right and from top to bottom. He then folded the paper, so that his one sheet could serve as both the letter and its own envelope. On the front panel, which was formed after the sheet was folded into tenths, Walkara wrote the address of the intended recipient. One can perhaps make out a series of cursive Bs (Figure 7:2).

Walkara demonstrated that he could put pen to paper. But this act of improvisational writing, this act of "pantomiming" words on a page, did not explicitly capture Walkara's meaning. While it cannot be read in a literal sense, this letter in fact has much to say about Walkara's understanding of the power of creating a "writerly self," a self that the writer as well as his intended reader would have to recognize and contend with.<sup>80</sup> Thus, while historians cannot read the lines of Walkara's letter, perhaps we can read between them. Perhaps there, based on other, more legible archival material from the early 1850s, we can find in Walkara's writing a rebuttal to the Saints' paper Indian: an ahistorical savage capable only of acts of depredations against the forward march of civilization, and thus worthy only of removal, sequestration, or extermination.

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Bullock "Weight, size, etc. of Indians," August 2, 1852, Box 74, Folder 46, B.Y.P. Jerald Simon, "Thomas Bullock as an Early Mormon Historian," *BYU Studies* 30, no. 1 (1990): 71–88.

<sup>80</sup> Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (New York: Random House, 2007), xii.

Walkara was at the height of his power and wealth when he penned his letter in 1851. The previous decade (1840-1849) had been a very successful one for him and other Indian slavers; they brought at least 225 captive Indians, most of whom were Paiutes, from Utah to market in New Mexico.<sup>81</sup> Yet, by 1851 the recently arrived Saints had already disrupted the slave trade, and they promised to end it altogether. For Walkara, Indian slavery was not the unmitigated horror that the Saints made it out to be. The Utes did not share the Mormons' view that all Indians were one people descended from one common Israelite ancestor, and thus were responsible for the wellbeing of their supposed kin. Centuries before, while the southern Paiutes remained pedestrian and thus forced to rely on local food sources, the Utes became respected and feared horsemen, travelling throughout the Rockies and the Great Plains to hunt buffalo and to capture and sell other Indians, especially their poorer, less advanced Paiute neighbors.<sup>82</sup> Of course, Brigham Young too believed in a hierarchy of peoples. He felt morally justified, even compelled to support the enslavement of African Americans whom he believed were spiritually and intellectually inferior to whites. As such, Walkara might have viewed efforts to abolish Indian slavery as Brigham viewed efforts to abolish African slavery: as an affront to the culturally and theologically prescribed order of humanity.

And yet the Saints did not dismantle the Indian slave trade. Through their claims to legal and doctrinal exigencies, as well as through displays of force, the Mormons usurped control over the trade from the Utes. Thus, instead of trading partners and friendly neighbors, the Mormons became existential threats to the Utes' traditional way of life. As the federal Indian agent, Jacob Holeman explained in a series of reports that he wrote in the early 1850s to his bosses in Washington, the Mormons and other white settlers had destroyed the Utes' hunting and foraging grounds. As such,

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<sup>81</sup> The next decade marked a precipitous decline of the Indian slave trade in and out of Utah. See Chart 13, "Number of Ute/Paiute Captives in New Mexico, 1730-1870," in Jones, *Trial Of Don Pedro Leon Lujan*, 97.

<sup>82</sup> At least during the early 1850s, the Mormon-Paiute alliance formed to stop Ute aggression and slaving, as well as the Mormons' efforts to buy and adopt Paiute children, suggest that the Saints also learned to differentiate between Utah's Indian tribes. Sally is a Paiute; Walkara is a Ute. Martha C. Knack, *Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes, 1775-1995* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 30-36, 54-59.



the Utes were forced to rely even more on trading humans for the guns and horses they needed to hunt ever vanishing game, to defend their lands, and to steal Mormon cattle and grain.<sup>83</sup> The same year that Walkara penned his own letter, in January 1851 another Indian agent, H. R. Day reported that the Utes considered Mormon thievery of land and resources, including Indian slaves, as the cause of the escalating Mormon-Indian tensions. Day reported a conversation he had with Sowiette, a Ute chief who, along with Walkara and Arapene, had been baptized and ordained a Mormon elder just a few months before. “The old chief... said to me, American-good! Morman-no good! American-friend, Morman-Kill-Steal,” wrote Day.<sup>84</sup> As is the case with Mormon “transcriptions” of Indian speech, the “Gentile” Indian agent might have written his own anti-Mormon bias into Sowiette’s words. And yet, the Ute chief’s emphatic denouncement of the Mormons suggests genuine frustration with the effects of the expanding Mormon presence on the Utes’ lands.

For these Indians, what the Mormons called the depredations of unrepentant savages—grain stealing, horse and cattle thievery—could have been seen as attempts to restore unjust imbalances in Mormon-Indian relations. When Brigham Young and other leading Saints met Walkara, Sowiette, and Arapene in the Utah Valley in May 1850, the Saints and the Utes formed covenants of trade, land use, and friendship.<sup>85</sup> Such agreements established relationships of reciprocity. The Indians believed that they were entitled to the fruits produced on these lands—fat cows, golden grains—which they shared with the Mormons. What the Mormons called their Indian policy of largesse—feeding the Indians, instead of fighting them—was to the Indians just deserts.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Jacob E. Holeman to Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 12, 1851; Jacob E. Holeman to Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 29, 1852. Quoted in Coates, “A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830-1900,” 88.

<sup>84</sup> H.R. Day to Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 2, 1851, MS 16773, CHL.

<sup>85</sup> “Meeting with Utes in Utah,” May 22, 1850, Box 74, Folder 42, BYP; Brooks, “Indian Relations on The Mormon Frontier,” 6.

<sup>86</sup> What Martha C. Knack has suggested in terms of later Mormon-Paiute agreements in the southern settlements of the Sanpete Valley can be applied to Mormon-Ute agreements in the late 1840s and early 1850s. “By cooperating with local bishops or even Brigham Young himself, Paiutes need not have been acknowledging white supremacy in wisdom or

If the Mormons broke the covenants by not providing the Indians their fair share, then the Indians were justified in taking what they needed, and with force if necessary. From this perspective, the Indians saw the Mormons, not themselves, as the dishonest, violent aggressors against whom the Indians had no choice but to fight back to protect their lands and their lives once it was clear that the Mormons could not be held to their word.

On July 6, 1853, just days before the start of the Walker War, a veteran Mexican trader M.S. Martenas interviewed Chief Walkara. In Spanish, the polyglot Ute chief provided a counter-narrative to what had already become the dominant Mormon view of Mormon-Indian relations in Utah. Though not employing the same ontological Lamanite lens through which the Saints read Walkara and other Indians of Utah, Walkara explained to Martenas that his claim to the lands of Utah was, in fact, inherited. These were the lands “on which his band resides and on which they have resided since his childhood, and his parents before him.” Walkara acknowledged, “[w]hen [the Mormons] first commenced the settlement of Salt Lake Valley... [they were] friendly, and promised [the Indians] many comforts, and lasting friendship.” The Mormons’ neighborly behavior continued for a short time “until they became strong in numbers, then their conduct and treatment towards the Indians changed—they were not only treated unkindly, but many were much abused.” What’s more, the Mormon settlements expanded further into the Utes’ “hunting grounds in the valleys” without consideration of the disruption that such sprawl caused their native neighbors, trading partners, and would-be religious brethren. “[A]nd the graves of their fathers have been torn up by the whites.”

According to Walkara, this was the state of Mormon-Indian relations in July 1853. Ironically, instead of helping the Indians create permanent settlements, as they had pledged to do, the ever-

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power or submitting themselves to political subordination; they may have been trying to manipulate the Mormon wealth by placing the Mormons under the kind of obligations Paiutes assumed would result: to share reciprocally in exchange for natives’ initial gift of very land Mormons occupied.” Knack, *Boundaries Between*, 61. For a discussion of the creation of alliances with Utes through acts of reciprocity, see Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 56–80.

expanding Mormon people had forced the Utes to become refugees on their own lands, “driven by this population,” as Walkara explained to Martenas, “from place to place.”<sup>87</sup>

Over the next ten months, Walkara turned to violence to push back Mormon encroachment. But by May 1854, like the Delaware Chief Anderson before him, and like the Ute Chief Black Hawk after him, Walkara made peace with the whites, only to die soon after. Though the Americans in the case of Anderson, and the Mormons in the case of Walkara and Black Hawk, saw it this way, the Indian chiefs most likely did not interpret their decision to sue for peace as submission to white supremacy. Instead it was a recognition of a new future in which the Indians would have to live with the whites. Peace became a strategy, though one that rarely if ever worked, by which Chief Walkara hoped to create a future with some dignity for his people.

Walkara is no innocent. Like his “Big Chief” counterpart Brigham Young, Walkara has blood on his hands; that of the Mormons whom he and his braves killed; and that of the Paiute and Snake women and children whom he enslaved, abused, and murdered. But Walkara’s attempt at letter writing suggests that he also did not want to be reduced to a character in the Mormons’ faith promoting history, in which the faith of the Saints in their own delightful worthiness (and that of their noble Lamanites) is highlighted in contrast to the dark-skinned, and dark-hearted Indian.

Consciously or unconsciously, Walkara recognized that writing was the means by which he could become a historical subject in the new, literate world that the Saints were building up around him. As much as the forts, farms, and roads that the Saints constructed on the land of his forefathers—and according to Walkara, sometimes literally digging up his forefathers’ graves to do so—the written word was a keystone to the infrastructure of Zion.

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<sup>87</sup> Walker Statement, M. S. Martenas, interpreter, July 6, 1853, Box 58, Folder 14, BYP; David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil War, 1857-1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 234.

**EPILOGUE:**  
**Performing Red, Black, and White American**



Figure 8:1. Jane Manning James (ca. 1870).<sup>1</sup>

Jane Manning James is dressed in her Sunday best. She wears a dark, silk dress, cinched at her neck and adorned with a white collar—the preferred fashion of most late nineteenth-century Mormon women. The dress bundles at her waist, then flows down to her feet. She is seated, leaning slightly on her left arm, which is bent at a ninety-degree angle and placed on the drape-covered table next to her. Clutching a white handkerchief, her right hand is positioned in her lap. Her hair is parted in the middle and pulled back to a bun. Her ears are gilded with gold rings (Figure 8:1).

James looks straight into the camera as Salt Lake City photographer, English convert to Mormonism, and captain of the tragic 1856 Martin handcart company, Edward Martin, takes her likeness.<sup>2</sup> From her choice of fashion to her stern, unsmiling face and stiff pose, Jane Manning James’s image, first recorded on a plate-glass negative and then printed as a carte-de-visite sometime in the 1860s or 1870s, is the model Mormon respectability. Peering through his lens, Martin sees a black woman who stares back and sends a message. Despite her blackness, James asserts that she has successfully conformed to the standards of piety and bodily discipline that should earn her a place in the white, Mormon sacred community—a community itself increasingly forced to face

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Edward Martin, Box 1, Folder 25, PH 5962, CHL.

<sup>2</sup> See entry for “Martin, Edward,” in Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: A Biographical Dictionary, 1840-1865* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 382–383.

down a racialized gaze from anti-Mormon Americans who viewed them as something less than white.<sup>3</sup>

In 1878 just before her death, Sally Kanosh also sat for either Martin or, more likely, Charles R. Savage, the most sought after photographer in Utah. After he and his partner George Ottinger opened their studio in 1861 less than a hundred yards to the south of Temple Square, dignitaries including Sally's adoptive father Brigham Young, prominent Indian chiefs like her husband Kanosh, as well as hundreds of other Latter-day Saints visited Savage to have their likenesses taken.



Figure 8.2. Sally Kanosh (1878).<sup>4</sup>

Sally's dress, her expression, and her pose resemble a Collodion-copy of James's carte-de-visite (Figure 8:2). The evolution of cheaper and more reliable photographic technologies provided marginalized women in Zion like James and Sally another way to make their mark in the Mormon archive.<sup>5</sup> The photographs become a visual "hidden transcript" in which they perform Mormon identities against the limitations placed upon their racial identities.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, the technology's

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<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of Mormon women had their likenesses taken during the 1860s and 1870s. For a comparison of style, pose, and dress, see Charles's Savage portrait of Vilate Kimball (1866) in Box 1, Folder 25, PH 5962, CHL. For a discussion of the use of photography as part of the politics of respectability, especially for black women, see Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 77–112. For an analysis of anti-Mormon construction of Mormons as non-whites, and the Mormon response, see W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Source: Photo Number 14401. Utah State Historical Society. Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>5</sup> Bradley W. Richards, "Charles R. Savage, the Other Promontory Photographer," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 137–57. For a description of 1860s photographic techniques that Savage used, see *Ibid.*, 143–144.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of reading photographic images as texts, which reveal implied meaning, see Allan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 3–20.

limitations also helped make their case that, through their performance of acculturation to the standards of Mormon nineteenth-century piety and respectability, James and Sally should be recognized as members of the (white) Mormon people: the black and white photography's inability to detect the various shades of these women's skin tones result in the washing out of their faces.<sup>7</sup>

For non-white Mormons, earning respectability involved such demonstrations of adherence to standards of Mormon identity. Not only did they need to show that they could dress and speak the part. For men, performing Mormon identity also included demonstrating a capacity to cultivate land or build up a trade; for women, performing Mormon identity included cultivating what, in titling a composite sketch of two dozen rosy-cheeked Mormon babies whom he had photographed, Charles Savage dubbed "Utah's Best Crop."<sup>8</sup>

Sally Kanosh, who died childless, did not contribute to this bounty. But Jane Manning James certainly did, raising six children in Mormon Utah. In large measure, her letter-writing campaign to gain access to the temple was the result of a parent's desire to care for the eternal souls of her offspring. Thus James's literary performances in the 1880s and 1890s—a single type of performance that was triply Mormon in that it called attention to her piety, her literacy, and implicitly, her persecution—was in service of her progeny. As she had wished for herself, James hoped that her children and grandchildren could learn to shed their supposed-accursed identities, so that they too could be members of the white—as in raceless—Mormon people.

James tried to teach her children the key to this aspirational identity—the ability to chronicle on paper evidence of their worth as respectable Mormons. There is evidence of the early, tentative fruits of such lessons, evidence that is literally written into a copy of the sacred Mormon archive. On

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<sup>7</sup> In contrast, the 1857 daguerreotype of the abolitionist John Brown is underexposed, making his skin appear darker. John Stauffer has suggested that Brown's darkened likeness—the image of a man who “blurs the line between white and black”—allowed him to further identify with blacks. John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 56–58, 45–70.

<sup>8</sup> Charles R. Savage, *Utah's Best Crop*, 1879, Box 3, Folder 65, PH 500, CHL.

a blank page in the James family's *Doctrine & Covenants* (1852 edition), with gestures similar to, but perhaps with more success than those of Walkara from 1851, a young Vilate James put pen to paper, leaving her own mark in a leather-bound copy of some of the most treasured and important written records of Mormon history.



Figure 8.3. James Family *Doctrine & Covenants* (1852, Liverpool edition).<sup>9</sup>

Vilate, who was born in 1859 in Salt Lake, appears to be doodling (Figure 8:3). One can imagine that her drawings are the work of a daydreaming child, sitting quietly in a Sunday church meeting. Like many children, after she tries her hand at naming herself on paper, she looks around to observe her surroundings. And Vilate draws a profile of a woman dressed in her Sunday best. It is hard not to read Vilate's sketch together with her mother's *carte-de-visite*, despite what appears to be significant embellishments to her James's modest ensemble—adding a train, a bustle, and perhaps an elaborate hair-do. One can perhaps read in these two images the attempt of Jane Manning James to have her likeness frozen on paper as the ideal of Mormon respectability, and in Vilate's case to draw her mother on paper as the respectable, but fashionable Latter-day Saint.

While he did not photograph Jane Manning James for her *carte-de-visite*, Charles Savage documented James and her family's uniquely visible presence in turn-of-the-century Utah. In 1875,

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<sup>9</sup> Source: *Doctrines & Covenants: Revelations by God* (Liverpool: S W. Richards 1852). Private collection and courtesy of Dr. Robert Van Uitert.

Savage helped establish “Old Folks Day,” which provided annual recreational outings for the oldest members of the Mormon community, events that he often chronicled with his camera.<sup>10</sup> James was a regular attendee at these events, allowing her the opportunity to perform her own status as the “colored” exemplar of the early Mormon pioneer class. James did so before her own aging cohort of pioneers and, with the help of Savage, the rest of the Mormon people. In June 1907, Savage took a photo of the octogenarians Jane Manning James and her brother Isaac Manning at the Old Folks gathering at the Lagoon Amusement park on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. This photo of Jane and Isaac, standing upright but leaning on their canes, was featured in the *Deseret News* report of that year’s Old Folks Day activities. Less than year a later, the same photo was reprinted with James’ death announcement on the front page of the *Deseret News*.<sup>11</sup>

Vilate James was not in Utah to see her celebrated mother’s photograph appear in the church’s newspaper of record. To be sure, Jane Manning James tried to teach her daughter that she too could earn a place among the white Saints of Zion. Like any good Latter-day Saint who had known him, Jane certainly regaled Vilate with her memories of the beloved and big-hearted prophet, Joseph Smith, during her halcyon days in Nauvoo when her race did not define her ultimate destiny.

To be sure, Vilate was, as Savage might note, a crop of Utah. But among the Mormons, her kind was seen as less fruit and more weed. Like all of her brothers and sisters, Vilate left the church. And like many of her brothers and sisters, she also left Utah to settle in California. There she married a black Methodist minister and spent six years in Africa as a missionary before dying in Oakland in 1897 at the age of thirty-eight.<sup>12</sup> Vilate felt more at home among those who, unlike her mother, did not feel the need to break from her African heritage to a find spiritual home.

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<sup>10</sup> Richards, “Charles R. Savage, the Other Promontory Photographer,” 152.

<sup>11</sup> “Were Royally Entertained,” *Deseret News*, June 26, 1907; “Death of Jane Manning James,” *Deseret News*, April 16, 1908.

<sup>12</sup> “The Dead,” *Deseret News*, March 13, 1897. During the early to mid-twentieth century, members of the California branch of James’ family periodically returned to Utah to visit relatives. Louis Duffy, great, great-grandson of Jane Manning James, interview with author, June 17, 2010.



## Whitening the Mormon Archive

Vilate understood something that her mother's dedication to her memories of Joseph Smith blinded her to: that the church's evolving anti-black theologies meant that Vilate and Jane Manning James's blackness was seen as a fixed, immutable identity. No matter how many letters she wrote, no matter how pious and obedient she proved herself to be—and did so before the camera—in the eyes of the gatekeepers to full acceptance in the restored church, Jane Manning James, her husband, and their children would forever be the children of Ham. As such, the doors to the temple and to the highest levels of heaven would be closed to them, until the Lord who “changeth the seasons,” as James's first patriarchal blessing pointed out, also changed their supposedly accursed identity.

As such, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Jane Manning James's presence in Zion presented a problem for the leading brethren who believed black and Mormon were mutually exclusive identities. During the seven decades since the founding of the church, Mormonism's original universal covenant had contracted, circumscribing itself to exclude black people from its most intimate and sacred spaces. James's passing in April 1908 provided these church leaders with the occasion to begin to make these racialized distinctions of identity more explicit. A visible vestige from Mormonism's more racially inclusive beginnings would no longer disturb the picture of an all white Zion when the church gathered for important meetings. Thus after eulogizing her in April 1908, in August of that same year, Church President Joseph F. Smith met with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and voted, for the first time in church history, to formalize a policy towards the “negro race.” In 1844, Church Patriarch Hyrum Smith told James that if she demonstrated worthiness, then the Lord would remove from her the cursed lineage into which she was born and make her one with the blood of the covenantal, Mormon people. Sixty-four years later, Hyrum's son made it clear that the Lord would do no such thing for James for or any descendant of Cain and Ham. In August 1908, the Quorum passed a motion—without dissent—stating:

Our Elders should not take the initiative in proselyting among the negro people, but if negroes or people tainted with negro blood apply for baptism themselves they might be admitted to Church membership in the understanding that nothing further can be done for them. It was also understood that the secretary was to get together the rulings of former councils on this question, also the public utterances of President [Brigham] Young and others on the same subject.<sup>13</sup>

Soon after James's death, while the church hierarchy searched the archive for pronouncements from Joseph Smith's successors with which the church could justify exclusion of black converts from gospel privileges beyond baptism, the black Mormons of the past disappeared from the official historical narratives of the church.<sup>14</sup> B. H. Roberts' multivolume *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, first released in 1930 as part of the centennial celebration of the church's founding and republished in 1965, mentions the "black race (Negro)" only to explain the biblical roots of the curse against "the descendants of Egyptus."<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, during much of the twentieth century, church leaders, including Joseph F. Smith's son, longtime church historian and briefly church president, Joseph Fielding Smith, moved the advent of African accursedness back even before biblical times. In his *Way to Perfection*, an extended treatise on Mormon practical divinity first published in 1931 and reprinted well into the twenty-first century, Smith adds the "pre-existence thesis" to the scriptural justifications for denying blacks the priesthood.<sup>16</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith explains that the pre-existent life is much like the mortal life.

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<sup>13</sup> Minutes, August 26, 1908, "Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, Dealing with the Rights of Negroes in the Church, 1849–1940," Box 74, Folder 7, George Albert Smith Papers, MS 0036, UUSC.

<sup>14</sup> In the 1914 edition of the *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Assistant Church Historian and Danish immigrant, Andrew Jenson, does include the deaths of Green Flake in 1903, who was probably the first black person to settle in the Salt Lake Valley, and Jane Manning James's passing in 1908, the first black Mormon woman to settle in Utah. Yet while Jenson's historical precision extends far enough to point out that Flake and James were "colored," Jenson simply indicates that they were "original" or "early" pioneers, failing to credit them with the status of a "pioneer of 1847," which was Jenson's convention when indicating the deaths of the white Mormons who first settled the valley in 1847. Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Connected with the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1914).

<sup>15</sup> B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 128. This reissue came at the height of the civil rights era, which prominent brethren including apostle and future church president, Ezra Taft Benson labeled as a communist front. See Ezra Taft Benson, "Trust Not in the Arm of Flesh," LDS General Conference, Salt Lake City, UT, September 29, 1967.

<sup>16</sup> Until the church removed it from Amazon.com in the wake of racist comments from a BYU professor in March 2012, which brought unwanted attention to the church's complicated relationship with people of African descent, Deseret

Human souls exercise agency, choosing whether or not to act in obedience to God. During a pre-mortal war between the forces of God and Satan, certain souls “were indifferent” or even “sympathized with Lucifer” while other souls proved their worthiness by siding with God. Smith explains that the “worthiest” souls enter mortality through the most favored of Israelite lineages, notably that of Ephraim, while those souls who did not stand “valiantly” with the forces of “Righteousness” enter the mortal life through the lineage of Ham.<sup>17</sup> Until the 1978 revelation lifting the ban priesthood and temple restrictions, the church insisted that people of African descent had never been nor, by dint of their inferior birth, could ever have been a part of the history of the Mormon people. During much of the twentieth century, the official narration of the history of latter-days, their biblical antecedents, and even the history of pre-existence, reflected this whitening of Mormon history and of the Mormon historical archive.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Conquest of the Utah’s American Indian**

At least officially, Joseph Fielding Smith and his church did not forget about the less favored branches of Israel. In *Way to Perfection*, Smith announces that “a better day is dawning for the Jew and the Lamanite.” When he first wrote the book in 1931, Smith saw it as providential that the British had taken control of Palestine. As the end times approached, the Lord had seen fit to remove the curse upon the deicidal remnant of Judah scattered throughout Europe and Asia. Soon they too would be permitted to return to their homeland. Smith also foresaw the day when the “Lamanite” in America would once again receive the attention of the Latter-day Saints who had been called to redeem them.<sup>19</sup> In 1947, then Apostle Spencer W. Kimball spearheaded the Indian Student

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News had made available a Kindle-ready version of *Way to Perfection*. Max Perry Mueller, “Is Mormonism Still Racist?,” *Slate*, March 2, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection, Short Discourses on Gospel Themes* (Independence, MO: The Genealogical Society of Utah, 1931), 43–44, 97–111.

<sup>18</sup> Max Perry Mueller, “History Lessons: Race in the LDS Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 139–155.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *The Way to Perfection, Short Discourses on Gospel Themes*, 134–135.

Placement Program, through which white Mormon families fostered Native American children, providing educational opportunities to which these children did not have access in their native communities. Following decades of accusations that it undermined Native American values, and that church leaders coerced Natives to participate, in the 1990s the placement program stopped enrolling new pupils and graduated its last student in 2000.<sup>20</sup>

Yet as I mentioned in Chapter Six, during much of the half century between Brigham Young's death in 1877 and the advent of efforts like the Indian Student Placement Program—a key feature of what Armand Mauss has called the mid-twentieth century “Return of the Lamanites” as a focus of Mormon proselytizing efforts—the church once again postponed Lamanite redemption.<sup>21</sup> With Lamanite restoration forestalled until the last of the latter-days, in the final decades of the nineteenth century, Mormons understood Native Americans as did most other white Americans: a quickly disappearing race whose conquest was met with feelings of both triumphalism and nostalgia.

To be sure, when Indian conversions did occur the Saints understood them as the realization of providence. In his 1881 speech in Salt Lake's Assembly Hall highlighting the triumphs and trials of the Saints' fifty years of missionary efforts to the Lamanites, the long serving missionary John Nicholson mentioned that 300 Indians had recently been brought into the Mormon fold, fulfilling the Book of Mormon promise that the “remnants” of the Lamanites would be restored “to a knowledge of their progenitors.”<sup>22</sup> Nicholson was likely referring to the mass baptisms of the Shivwit band of Paiutes in the 1870s, which Charles R. Savage photographed near the Southern Indian mission that Jacob Hamblin established three decades before.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Brandon Morgan, “Educating the Lamanites: A Brief History of the LDS Indian Student Placement Program,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 191–217.

<sup>21</sup> Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 74–114.

<sup>22</sup> Nicholson, “The Church of Christ Organized Anciently on this Continent.”

<sup>23</sup> Charles Savage, “Baptism of Shivwits,” March 19, 1875, Folder 1, PH 1401, CHL.

But Savage did not take most of his Indian photographs in the mission field. Instead, in his Salt Lake City studio, Savage not only photographed prominent Indians like Kanosh, and the Shoshone chief Washakie who was briefly a member of the church in the 1880s. He also took



Figure 8:4. Charles Savage's Photographs of Utes (ca. 1890).<sup>24</sup>

dozens of carefully staged photographs of unnamed Indians. Savage's anonymous female and male Indian subjects wore threadbare shirts and pants, wore "traditional" Indian clothing, or wore almost nothing at all. Indian mothers posed with their young "papposes." And they sat on fur-skin robs, limestone rocks, or beds of grass or sticks (Figure 8:4). Perhaps due to improving photographic techniques, unlike the "white" image of Sally Kanosh, the icon of Lamanite civilized redemption, Savage did manage to capture the Indians' darker skin tones. To be sure, this increased sensitivity can be attributed to improved photographic techniques. Yet even when considering technological advances, these photographs were clearly not of Lamanite Mormons, but instead simply of Indians in what Savage imagined was their natural state.

Savage's Indian photographs were to be read not as biography or history, but as ethnology, with the emphasis on the "ethno." Like many other white American photographers at the turn-of-the-century, Savage documented the disappearing Indian race, visually preserve the vanishing

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<sup>24</sup> Source: Charles Savage, Box 3, Folder 61, PH 500, CHL.

traditional Indian customs and even Indian bodies.<sup>25</sup> As such, these photographs belong not only, nor even principally, to the archive of Mormon history, but to the archive of American history. Attendees at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago flocked to see Savage's award-winning exhibit in the Utah Territory's exhibition house, which included landscapes, infrastructure under construction, as well as portraits of Native Americans.<sup>26</sup>

As John Gast's famous painting *American Progress* (ca. 1872) exemplifies, the teleological narrative of American triumphalism over the American frontier required not simply wild wilderness, which plucky Americans and intrepid European immigrants tamed with farms and railroads, telegraph wires, and great cities. It also required the image of a conquered Indian and his bison herds, fleeing (in vain) ever westward. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, these Indians were rendered so benign that Savage could bring them into his studio, tell them what to wear, where to sit, and how to pose. They were an ahistorical people, frozen in silver-coated paper while American history fulfilled its destiny. Coincidence or not, Savage's Indian subjects were most often members of Walkara's Ute tribe who fifty years before presented the biggest threat to Mormon expansion in Utah.

Not only did the conquered Indians become literal and metaphorical set pieces. They also became artifacts in the Mormon and American archive, and displayed as such in Mormon and American museums. In 1830, Andrew Jackson spoke of American progress inevitably treading "on the graves of the extinct [Indian] nations." Two decades later, Walkara bemoaned the disturbance of his forefathers' graves. Yet even Walkara, whose sacrificial horses and Paiute children were meant to serve him in the afterlife and perhaps help protect his remains from disturbance, was not immune to grave robbers-cum-ethnographers. In fact, it was precisely Walkara's elaborate burial that intrigued

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<sup>25</sup> Carol J. Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 12–26.

<sup>26</sup> Bradley W. Richards, *The Savage View: Charles Savage, Pioneer Mormon Photographer* (Nevada City, CA: Carl Mautz Publishing, 1995).

Henry C. Yarrow who, under the auspices of the Bureau of American Ethnology, led the excavation of the chief's remains in the 1870s. Yarrow sent the skull of “Wah-ker, a celebrated Ute Chief, long the terror of the People of Utah, New Mexico, and California,” as well as the “cranial bones of a Piede or Piute Indian said to have been buried with him” to the Army Medical Museum in Washington, D.C., where scientists measured the cranial volume in order to compare them with dimensions of other “races.”<sup>27</sup>



Figure 8:5. *Deseret News*, (September 20, 1919).

Forty-five years later in 1919, the same year Peter Gottfredson published his *Indian Depredations in Utah*, the bones of the Saints’ other chief Indian enemy, Black Hawk, went on display in the church’s history museum in Salt Lake City. When the exhibit opened in September, the *Deseret News* publicized the event with a front-page story accompanied by a photo of both the new exhibit and the smiling miner who unearthed the remains posing with Black Hawk’s skull as he stands over the chief’s emptied grave (Figure 8:5). As the *Deseret News* put it, “[a] case on the north side of the L.D.S. Church museum is destined to become the center of interest to many a student of early-day Utah history... For resting peacefully in the midst of the very white settlers whom he loved to harass

<sup>27</sup> George A. Otis, *List of the Specimens in the Anatomical Section of the United States Army Medical Museum* (Washington, D.C.: Army Medical Museum, 1880), 50–51; Fabian, *The Skull Collectors*, 197–203.

is all that remains of Chief Black Hawk.” The paper explained that, decades before, under Black Hawk’s command, an army of Indian warriors attacked both the infrastructure and the people that made up Mormon civilization. “Women and children were tortured and carried away, homes devastated, ranchers murdered, and all sorts of Indian deviltry.” But the chief had since been defanged. He had been turned from a devil into a benign, friendly ghost under a glass case into which Mormon children could peer and dream up their own games of pioneers and Indians.<sup>28</sup>

### **Redface, Blackface, and White faces**

Mormons began recasting Mormon-Indian pioneer history as a sanitized pastime well before 1919. At an 1878 Pioneer Day celebration in Provo, thousands of residents witnessed a reenactment of the first “Indian War” of 1849. White Mormons dressed up as Indians entered Old Fort Utah on horseback, yelling “war whoops ... firing their guns and shooting arrows,” reported the *Deseret News*. Other Mormons, some of whom were veterans of the conflicts, dressed in their old Nauvoo Legion uniforms to ceremonially rebuff the Indian raid by firing the fort’s canon, just as the stronghold’s original defenders had done three decades before.<sup>29</sup>

From the 1890s to the 1920s when the last of their cohort died, veterans of the Nauvoo Legion made such reenactments at Fort Utah annual affairs. By day, the legionnaires reenacted the violence they had endured and perpetrated, some playing the role of the Indians, adorning their faces with Indian war paint, and sporting quivers full of arrows on their backs. By night, they swapped stories of anti-Mormon Indian violence. Many of their tales were reprinted in Gottfredson’s *Indian Depredations in Utah*. As was the case in William Cody’s Buffalo Bill shows,

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<sup>28</sup> “Bones of Black Hawk Indian Warrior Now on Exhibition L.D.S. Museum,” *Deseret News*, September 20, 1919. The Church History Museum displayed Black Hawk’s remains for the next several decades. They were eventually moved to BYU’s Museum of Peoples and Cultures. There they remained in storage until 1995 when, as part of his Eagle Scout project, Shane Armstrong tracked them down and petitioned the U.S. Forest Service to have them registered with the U.S. Forest Service under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. In 1997, the remains were reinterred at Black Hawk’s birthplace and burial site near Spring Lake, Utah. Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War*, 78.

<sup>29</sup> “The 24<sup>th</sup> in the Settlements: Provo City,” *Deseret News*, July 31, 1878, quoted in Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 136, 130–138.



which debuted in 1883 at North Platte, Nebraska, along the Old Mormon Trail, in these reenactments and in their complimentary archived records, the Mormons became actors in the theater of “inverted conquest;” a mythologizing of invasion in which the Euro-American conquerors of the American west retell the history so that they, and not the Indians, whose land they took often through force, deceit, and disease, were the victims of unprovoked aggression.<sup>30</sup>

Even Indian children adopted by white Mormons participated in these performances. Though he was a combatant on the “white” side of the conflict, during the annual gatherings of the Black Hawk War veterans in the 1920s and 1930s, the Mormon-reared Indian Zenos Hill played the role of Chief Black Hawk. As a reporter from the *Spanish Fort Press* noted in 1937, Hill wore the medals and ribbons, which marked him as a veteran legionnaire, pinned to his chest. But because he was “red-skinned in the true sense that the words apply to Indians,” Hill was cast as the Saints’ last significant Indian antagonist during the annual performances.<sup>31</sup>

The Saints played redface. They also played blackface. And they did so like other Americans, as a response to national anxieties over the changes to race relations created in the aftermath of the Civil War. Many church leaders did not like the growth of Utah’s black population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Opportunities in mining, ranching, railroad construction and service led to a twenty-five-fold increase in the numbers of blacks in the Salt Lake Valley, from 59 in 1860 to 1,446 by 1920.<sup>32</sup> Nor did the brethren appreciate the federal government placing an all-black infantry regiment at Fort Douglas, built on the hills overlooking Salt Lake City. Ostensibly, in 1896 Washington sent the troops to Utah to help monitor the Indian populations in Utah, Colorado,

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<sup>30</sup> Richard White, “Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill,” in *The Frontier in American Culture*, ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 7–66; Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Bennion, “Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity,” 218–219.

<sup>32</sup> On the increase of the black population in Utah, see Bringham, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 155, 228.

and Wyoming. Yet Mormon officials believed that anti-Mormon Republicans decided to station a large black military force in Salt Lake City to monitor and antagonize the church hierarchy.<sup>33</sup>

One block to the west of Charles R. Savage's studio, starting at the height of the Civil War and continuing into the early twentieth century, on the stage of the church-financed Salt Lake Theater, minstrel shows as well as farcical productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Octoroon* entertained packed houses of Utahans. The minstrelsy performances became such a regular feature that the theater developed its own collection of curly black wigs, "nigger coats," calico-colored "nigger shirts" and a banjo.<sup>34</sup> A 1905 article in the *Deseret News* explained that one minstrel troupe, whose "cast included the most prominent members of the younger set of Salt Lake Society" performed in the Salt Lake Theater to raise funds for philanthropic organizations. "In addition to burnt cork and grease paint faces of jet black, [the players] wore pure snow white hair, and big white chrysanthemums."<sup>35</sup> Kentucky-born Mormon pioneer, *Deseret News* editor, and amateur actor, Scipio Africanus Kenner played "Sambo" in his troupe of minstrels, which regularly performed for leading members of the church hierarchy when the brethren wintered in southern "Dixie" Utah.<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, Kenner's unusual middle name caused him some trouble when he asked the parents of Isabella Park to give their blessing to his and Isabella's marriage engagement. In 1870, Kenner wrote to Brigham Young requesting that the prophet intervene on his behalf when the Parks accused him of having "negro blood in [his] veins" and thus initially refused to support the marriage, worried that such a union would result in an unholy mixing of white and "African" blood.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>34</sup> The Inventory of the Theater, October 19, 1877, Deseret Dramatic Association Papers, CHL, quoted in Michael Hicks, "Ministering Minstrels: Blackface Entertainment In Pioneer Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1990): 53.

<sup>35</sup> "Leaves from Old Albums," *Deseret News*, December 30, 1905. Hicks, "Ministering Minstrels: Blackface Entertainment In Pioneer Utah."

<sup>36</sup> Kenner published his own 600-page tome of Utah history. S. A. Kenner, *Utah As It Is* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1904); Kate B. Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 15 (Salt Lake City, UT: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1972), 524.

<sup>37</sup> Scipio Africanus Kenner to Brigham Young, November 20, 1870, Box 33, Folder 16, BYP.

To reinforce his offstage whiteness, Scipio Africanus Kenner performed blackface on stage, as did “redface” reenactors on the former battlefields of the Mormon-Indian conflicts. After the shows and reenactments, performers took off their “nigger wigs” and Indian headdresses. They washed off the black and red masks to reveal their whiteness, a possibility that, by the turn of the century, church leaders asserted was impossible for black and Indian Mormons who hoped to perform their own kind of Mormon whiteness.<sup>38</sup>

These red and blackface performers’ intended audiences were local—even as local as one’s own prospective in-laws—as well as national. After all, Scipio Africanus Kenner was not the only Mormon whose whiteness was in question. The increase in Washington’s prosecution of “co-habiting” Mormon men during the 1870s and 1880s reenergized the anti-Mormon press, which depicted Mormon wives as “white slaves” of the lascivious Sultan-like patriarchs of the Utah deserts, and described the offspring of these unions as less than white “Mormon coons.”<sup>39</sup> In his 1880 *New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide*, designed to encourage Americans to exploit the expanding rail networks and visit the wonders of the American west, George A. Croffut included two front pieces. The first was the largest mass printing of Gast’s *American Progress*. The second was a reprinting of George Savage’s *Utah’s Best Crop*. Yet the painting’s original celebration of Utah families’ fecundity was inverted to imply that Columbia too would eventually conquer the foes of white American overland travelers, both the Indians as well as “hostile Mormons.” Croffut wrote that the arrival of the railroad to Utah had already begun to check the accumulation of Mormon wealth and property

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<sup>38</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> See “Mormon Coon,” Songbook, New York, 1905 published by Sol Bloom, cover reprinted in William R. Handley, *Marriage, Violence and the Nation in the American Literary West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109. For a classic example of Mormon women, in particular Mormon immigrant converts, depicted as victims of Mormon male lust, see William Jarman, *Startling Revelations for Saints and Sinners, Hell Upon Earth, How Women and Girls are Ensnared* (Exeter England, 1884), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. In *A Study in Scarlet* (1889), the first novel to include Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle depicts Mormon men as corrupt and violent tyrants who force innocent women into Muslim-like harems.

as “nearly all the religious denominations have secured a foot-hold [in Salt Lake City].” This better breed of Christians would soon produce a better crop of American children in Utah.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Changing Face of Mormon Universalism**

Six years after Church President Wilford Woodruff announced that the Saints would abandon the practice of polygamy, thus removing the major barrier to Utah’s full acceptance in the American political culture, in 1896 Utah became the forty-fifth state of the United States. Yet statehood did not end the marginalization of the Mormon population in the Gentile imagination, a marginalization that continued to be cast in racialized terms. Some Saints countered this marginalization as did some Jewish immigrants.<sup>41</sup> Performing blackface as well as redface allowed Jews and Saints to play against the tropes of the grotesque “African” and the savage “Indian,” making themselves appear white and “American” in contrast.

As a generation of scholars have noted, over the course of the twentieth century the Latter-day Saints succeeded, in large measure, in making Mormonism synonymous with white, and for that matter American, if American means patriotic, politically and socially conservative, devout, and family-oriented. Jan Shipps has written that particularly during the social and political upheavals of the 1960s, “it was the dramatic discrepancy between clean-cut Mormons and scruffy hippies that completed the transformation of the Mormon image from the quasi-foreign, somewhat alien likeness that it had in the nineteenth century to the more than 100 percent super-American portrait of the late sixties and early seventies.”<sup>42</sup> To “scruffy hippies,” one should add the image of

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<sup>40</sup> George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt’s New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide* (Omaha, NE: Overland Pub. Co., 1880), 92, 174; Handley, *Marriage, Violence and the Nation in the American Literary West*, 29. Despite his anti-Mormonism, Crofutt had no problem availing himself of Charles Savage’s iconic photographs of Utah, including those of the Echo Canyon railroad pass, the Mormon Tabernacle and Brigham Young. Crofutt, *Crofutt’s New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide*, 80-89.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 100. See also, Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana and

protesting black civil rights leaders and their allies to the list of those people whom many leading members of the Mormon hierarchy viewed as anti-American agitators, even communist puppets, as then Apostle Ezra Taft Benson described them in a 1967 church general conference talk.<sup>43</sup>

Certainly the most visible example of the Mormon ascendancy to the status of “super-Americans” was marked by the growing popularity of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. George Pyper, the manager of the Salt Lake Theater, which served as the longtime home to many Mormon minstrel troupes, was also manager of the choir in 1911. That year, the choir completed a 6,000-mile tour of the eastern United States, which included performances at Madison Square Garden and the White House. Over the next several decades, through its extensive touring, weekly radio and later television broadcasts celebrating national holidays like the Fourth of July and Memorial Day, as well as Christmas and Easter, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir became “America’s Choir,” as Ronald Reagan dubbed it when the choir sang at his first inauguration, a symbol of the (all but) exclusively white face of American family, nation, and (increasingly generic) Judeo-Christian faith.<sup>44</sup>

Against this most well worn of backdrops of Mormonism—Mormons as the epitome, or the stereotype, of white, conservative America—this dissertation’s central goals have been to demonstrate that the story of Mormonism and race is not simply a story of how Mormons became “super” white Americans. This holds true for the first half century of Mormon history, the period about which this dissertation has been most concerned, as it holds true for the century that followed, even as the lines in Mormon culture between blacks and whites, and to a lesser degree Native Americans, grew increasingly rigid. Throughout the twentieth century, even as they attempted to erase the church’s own black Mormon past, leading Latter-day Saints participated in

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Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 21–76; R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 44.

<sup>43</sup> For Benson’s conflation of the civil rights protestors with communism, see Ezra Taft Benson, “Trust Not in the Arm of Flesh,” LDS General Conference, Salt Lake City, UT, September 29, 1967.

<sup>44</sup> Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 350–351; Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music: A History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 152–172.

national debates about race and American democracy. For example, in their support for Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee Institute as an instrument of black uplift, which they saw as similar to their own successes at creating prosperous, self-sufficient communities, the Mormons' participation involved more than simply arguing for the perpetuation of segregation and white supremacy.<sup>45</sup> What's more, throughout this period, Africans and Africans in diaspora continued to join the church and continued to petition for access to the priesthood and temple, forcing the church to continue to rearticulate, and eventually, motivating it to end the ban on full black membership.

Almost exactly a century after the death of Brigham Young, who was the church president and prophet who first articulated the ban, in 1978 another church prophet and president Spencer W. Kimball received a revelation to lift it.<sup>46</sup> A week after the announcement of the revelation, an article in the LDS paper *Church News* claimed that Mormon prophets—from Joseph Smith and Brigham Young down to current President Kimball—had all “spoken of the day when the blessings of the priesthood would come to blacks.” However, conspicuously absent were any universalistic statements from Joseph F. Smith or Joseph Fielding Smith. In the same edition, *Church News* printed an article describing Jane Manning James and Elijah Abel as steadfast converts and pioneers. Yet it neglected to mention that Abel was a priesthood holder, and did not include the fact that both James and Abel had waged decades' long campaigns to get access to the temple.<sup>47</sup>

For much of the last thirty-five years since the revelation, the church has, for the most part, held to the position articulated in 1998 by then Church President Gordon B. Hinckley. On the twentieth anniversary of the 1978 revelation, in response to calls from some black Mormons that the hierarchy disavow the racist positions of their prophetic predecessors, Hinckley declared, “[The

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<sup>45</sup> Max Perry Mueller, “Twice-told Tale: Telling Two Histories of Mormon-Black Relations during the 2012 Presidential Election,” in *Mormonism and Politics*, eds. Randall Balmer and Jana Reiss (New York: Columbia University Press, in press).

<sup>46</sup> Max Perry Mueller, “History Lessons: Race in the LDS Church.”

<sup>47</sup> “Prophets Tell of Promise to All Races,” *Church News*, June 17, 1978; “Since Early Church Days, Blacks Have Set an Example,” *Church News*, June 17, 1978.

revelation] speaks for itself.”<sup>48</sup> However in the last few years, the church has made great efforts to place the increasingly racial and international diversity of its membership center stage. Launched in 2011, the “I’m a Mormon” campaign—with billboards, radio and TV spots in major American markets—is the church’s own intervention into the media landscape in which outsiders often define what Mormonism is and who the Mormon people are. The most visible part of the “I’m a Mormon” campaign is a carefully curated set of video testimonials posted at [mormon.org](http://mormon.org) of “typical” Mormons. For example, one of the campaign’s stars was Mia Love, a Mormon convert, a first generation Haitian immigrant, and mayor of Saratoga Springs, a booming bedroom community in Utah Valley. Love shot to fame in 2012 when during her first, unsuccessful run for Congress and she spoke at the Republican National Convention.

Yet the “I’m a Mormon” campaign mirrors the church’s own bottom-up and top-down organization—a religious institution run by local, lay leaders that is also overseen by a strong, centralized hierarchy. At [mormon.org](http://mormon.org), any Latter-day Saint can create their own profiles in which they are encouraged to place Mormonism within the context of the rest of their lives. As such, the “I’m a Mormon” campaign has become an ever expanding, twenty-first century Mormon archive in which Mormons and their church perform modern-day Mormonism, a faith that is increasingly non-white and non-American.

Though not directly a part of the “I’m a Mormon” campaign, even the world’s most famous Mormon family participated in presenting this new, racially inclusive image of Mormonism. On Christmas Eve 2013, Mitt Romney tweeted a family Christmas photo featuring the former Republican presidential candidate and his wife Ann surrounded by their twenty-two grandchildren, including Kieren, his adopted African-American grandson, sitting on Romney’s right knee (Figure 8:6).

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1999), 105.



Figure 8.6. Romney Family Christmas Photo (December 24, 2013).<sup>49</sup>

This is the present face of Mormonism, or at least the face the church and many of its members hope to showcase. Yet it is a face that not everyone is ready to accept. During a December 29, 2013 segment of her MSNBC show, Melissa Harris-Perry and her guests mocked the photo, deriding it as incongruent with Romney's (white) faith and his (white) politics.<sup>50</sup> Even within certain Mormon circles, this new image of a racially diverse Mormon family has not always sat well. During Romney's run for the White House, in a March 2012 *Washington Post* article about the history of race and Mormonism, Randy Bott, a popular professor at BYU, not only cited the century's old Book of Abraham curse as justification for discrimination against the supposed black descendants of Cain and Ham. He also compared allowing blacks to have the priesthood before 1978 with giving the keys to the family car to a child before he is responsible enough to drive.<sup>51</sup>

Troubling as they are, both of these reactions to the depiction of a more racially diverse modern Mormonism highlights that when it comes to race and Mormonism, the past is not history. In response, the church has turned to the Internet where it has provided its own take on the history of race and the faith. At the end of 2013, the church added a new article entitled, "Race and the

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<sup>49</sup> Romney, Mitt. Romney Family Christmas Photo. Posted December 24, 2013, 1:48 pm, <https://twitter.com/MittRomney/status/415569809267384321>.

<sup>50</sup> A week later, Harris-Perry, herself the daughter of a white Mormon mother and an African-American father, offered a tearful apology to the Romneys. Michael Walsh, "Mitt Romney Accepts MSNBC's Melissa Harris-Perry Apology over Black Grandson Jokes, *New York Daily News*, January 5, 2013, accessed May 28, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/romney-accepts-msnbc-harris-perry-apology-black-grandson-joke-article-1.1566923>.

<sup>51</sup> Jason Horowitz, "The Genesis of a Church's Stand on Race," *The Washington Post*, February 28, 2012, accessed May 23, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-genesis-of-a-churchs-stand-on-race/2012/02/22/gIQAQZYfR\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-genesis-of-a-churchs-stand-on-race/2012/02/22/gIQAQZYfR_story.html)



Priesthood,” to the lds.org “Gospel Topics” website, an official church resource for historical and theological issues. A group of historians working for the Church History Library wrote the new 2,000-word history lesson, which celebrates the fact the Joseph Smith opposed slavery when he ran for president in 1844, and embraced the likes of Jane Manning James and Elijah Abel as church members. Unlike the 1978 *Church News* articles, the new history lesson acknowledges that Abel was a priesthood holder, that he and James were denied access to the temple, and that church leaders often cited the curse of Cain as justification for such exclusion. What’s more, in this statement, the church officially acknowledges that the restrictions on full black membership was a product not of divine design, but “merely the opinion of men”—in particular the opinions of the church’s own prophets, from Brigham Young to Joseph Fielding Smith.<sup>52</sup> The church still offers no apology for its past exclusionary policies and theologies. However, in what is perhaps the lesson’s most important passage, the church states:

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects actions in premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks are or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else.<sup>53</sup>

From Joseph Smith Jr. to his grandnephew Joseph Fielding Smith, the presidents and prophets of the church taught that black skin marked people of African descent off as unworthy of full participation in the restored church, though the first Mormon prophet believed that blacks could overcome their curses and become white and delightful members of the Mormon covenant. In 2013, for the first time, the church officially repudiated the view that black and Mormon are, or should have ever been considered, mutually exclusive identities.

However, to end where this dissertation began—with the Book of Mormon—this modern move to decouple the “peculiar” Mormon identity with any particular racial identity started at least

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<sup>52</sup> “Race and the Priesthood,” Gospel Topics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed May 26, 2014, <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>; Max Perry Mueller, “History Lessons: Race in the LDS Church.”

<sup>53</sup> Race and the Priesthood.”

two decades before. In 1981, the church released an updated Book of Mormon, which included footnotes correlating Mormonism's foundational text with other texts in the Mormon canon, including the Bible. The new edition also included twenty significant revisions to the text itself.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the most significant change was to 2 Nephi 30:6, in which the phrase "they shall be a white and a delightsome people"—the passage cited countless times to support the belief that Native Americans could be redeemed from the ancient curses—to "they shall be a *pure* [my emphasis] and a delightsome people." Many critics of the church have asserted that this change was an attempt to cover up the fact that located in the faith's foundational text is a belief in the supremacy of the white race.<sup>55</sup> However the church as well as Mormon apologists have argued that the change was a restoration itself; they point to the fact that in the 1840 edition of the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith made the same scriptural adjustment, though subsequent printings did not follow suit.<sup>56</sup>

Whatever the reason, in 1981 the choice to change "white" to its signifying synonym "pure" corresponds with a post-1978 church attempting to become the spiritual home to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples. This universalism—be it restoration or an innovation—has become decoupled from whiteness in the modern church.

Yet in Mormon culture whiteness and purity have another synonym: unity.<sup>57</sup> Joseph Smith's mandate to end schisms within the human family remains central to the church's modern mission. In today's church, this manifests in the centralized authority invested in the hierarchy in Salt Lake City. The literal gathering of the church to Zion has ended. But, starting in the second half of the

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<sup>54</sup> Grant Hardy, *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), xv.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 420; Walter Martin and Ravi Zacharias, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2003), 208.

<sup>56</sup> Hardy, *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition*, 666. See also, "Book of Mormon/Textual changes/'white' changed to 'pure,'" Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, accessed May 29, 2014, [http://en.fairmormon.org/Book\\_of\\_Mormon/Textual\\_changes/%22white%22\\_changed\\_to\\_%22pure%22](http://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Mormon/Textual_changes/%22white%22_changed_to_%22pure%22).

<sup>57</sup> As Willard Richards put in an 1852 *Deseret News* editorial, "Jesus said, 'if ye are not one, then ye are not mine;' and the true extended meaning of this is, *one in all things*; one in language, one in color, one in faith, and one in act." "To the Saints," *Deseret News*, April 3, 1852.

twentieth century, as the central tent pole in Salt Lake has attempted to correlate every stake and branch across the globe—to have Latter-day Saints in Kenya and Kentucky, Provo and Prague, literally on the same page each Sunday—the metaphorical gathering continues. This gathering occurs around a unified set of intersecting identities: upwardly mobile, married with children, and socially conservative, if not politically, too.

This gathering is also virtual. Every spring and fall, Mormon communities from around the world tune in to the church’s semi-annual general conference now broadcast live online. And as they look at the all-but exclusively white brethren, they might remark, as one black Mormon woman Jerri Harwell who frequently reenacts Jane Manning James autobiography before civic and religious gatherings throughout the Salt Lake Valley, has quipped, “Zion is still all white. All is well in Zion.”<sup>58</sup>

This will change. More non-white Mormon men—Mormon authority, of course, remains patriarchal—will achieve such levels of success in their career and family life that they will be called to join the ranks of the hierarchies of seventy, twelve, three, and perhaps even one. Yet the image of these successful men (as well as a handful of women), whose talks are projected outward from the grand conference center to the rest of the Mormon world, demonstrate that, even as whiteness slips off of the Mormon body, the Mormon identity remains aspirational, in this world and the next.<sup>59</sup>

To be Mormon is not to *be*, but to *become* pure and delightsome.

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<sup>58</sup> Max Perry Mueller, “Playing Jane,” *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin* 39, no. 1 & 2 (Winter/Spring 2011).

<sup>59</sup> For a study of how televangelists, in particular prosperity gospelers, create aspirational identities for their national and international audiences, see Marla Frederick, *Colored Television: Religion Media and Racial Uplift in the Black Atlantic World* (forthcoming).

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