

**Imagining Lamanites:  
Native Americans and the Book of Mormon**

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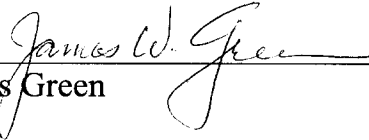
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Abstract

**Imagining Lamanites:  
Native Americans and the Book of Mormon**  
by Thomas W. Murphy

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The Book of Mormon, first published by Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1830 in Palmyra, New York, draws upon colonial and antebellum biblical hermeneutics and nineteenth century myths of the origin and fate of an ancient American civilization of Mound Builders to construct a textual image of people of Hebrew descent called Lamanites. The author casts Lamanites as the antithesis of civilized, Christianized, white Nephites and employs legends of a Semitic patriarchal seed and a Hamitic curse of a dark skin to naturalize the authority of white men. The text formulates a model of conversion that conflates religious with economic, political, social, and biological transformation. Mormons of European heritage drew upon the portrait of Lamanites from this sacred text to target American Indians for conversion, adoption, and assimilation while justifying the usurpation of Native American lands. Rather than facilitating the disappearance of Lamanites, Mormon evangelization fostered the emergence of a new and dynamic Lamanite identity. American Indian converts to Mormonism in the United States, Mexico, and beyond have adopted, contested, and creatively reconstructed Lamanite status in ways that often defied Mormon attempts to turn them white. Meanwhile, Mormon scholars have struggled with archaeological, historical, and biological evidence contradicting claims of a Hebrew origin of American Indians and offered new images of Lamanites that narrowed the geographical range of the Book of Mormon from a hemispheric view to more limited geographies in places like Central America. Recent development of DNA research into American Indian origins has undermined claims of Hebrew ancestry for American Indians in Central America and beyond. Some Mormon scholars are now claiming the Hebrews of the Book of Mormon left no genetic descendants while others are entertaining the possibility that the scripture may be inspired fiction.

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## Chapter 1: White and Delightful

I saw a striking contrast in the progress of the Indian people today as against that of only fifteen years ago. Truly the scales of darkness are falling from their eyes, and they are fast becoming a white and delightful people. .... In this picture of the twenty Lamanite missionaries, fifteen of the twenty were as light as *Anglos*, five were darker but equally delightful. The children in the home placement program in Utah are often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogans on the reservation.

At one meeting a father and mother and their sixteen-year-old daughter were present, the little member girl—sixteen—sitting between the dark father and mother, and it was evident she was several shades lighter than her parents—on the same reservation, in the same hogan, subject to the same sun and wind and weather. There was a doctor in Utah city who for two years had had an Indian boy in his home who stated that he was some shades lighter than his younger brother just coming into the program from the reservation. These young members of the Church are changing to whiteness and to delightfulness. One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated.

*Spencer W. Kimball*<sup>1</sup>

Spencer W. Kimball, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) from 1973 to 1985, is renowned throughout Mormonism and beyond as an advocate for Indian peoples and as the man who received a revelation from God on June 8, 1978 extending the Mormon priesthood to "all worthy male members of the Church," including people of African descent who had not been able to serve in the LDS Priesthood since the LDS presidency of Brigham Young.<sup>2</sup> He played a key role in the formation of official Church programs and educational opportunities at Brigham Young University that assisted thousands of American Indian children in their acquisition of education and prepared them for lives in a White dominated world. In the context of his advocacy on behalf of minorities in the LDS Church and his efforts to combat racism, his expectation

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "The Day of the Lamanite," *Improvement Era* (Dec. 1960), 922-923.

<sup>2</sup> Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration-2.

of the whitening of Indian children who had converted to the gospel and been raised in Mormon homes is striking and disconcerting. This dissertation examines the historical and cultural roots of such a belief and the variety of ways that Mormons, non-Indian and Indian, have used biological imagery to construct and adapt images of Native Americans.

Kimball's anticipation of the whitening of American Indian skin color is rooted in the Book of Mormon's portrayal of Indians as descendants of Lamanites from ancient America. The Book of Mormon, first published in 1830 by Joseph Smith Jr., brings together disparate strands of a colonial legacy that ties physical features of the human body and subsistence patterns to moral and social conditions. The Mormon scripture attributes the origins of the indigenous people of the Americas to three migrations from the ancient Near East. The first migration (Jaredites) came from the tower of Babel and included a flotilla of boats filled with plants, animals, and people to colonize unpopulated American continents after Noah's flood. The first population would violently self-destruct through wickedness and internecine warfare. The second (Lehite) and third (Mulekite) migrations consisted of Hebrews who fled the pending destruction of Jerusalem approximately six hundred years before the time of Christ. Shortly after their arrival they split into rival factions (Nephites and Lamanites), distinguished by religion, culture, and skin color.

An examination of the historical and ethnographic record leads to the conclusion that expectations of Lamanite progression toward whiteness have often served the social function of perpetuating and naturalizing the authority of white men over American Indians. The Book of Mormon's ambivalent designation of Lamanite draws upon nineteenth century conceptions of Indians as chosen Hebrews largely unaware of their

own history. The scripture's image of converted dark-skinned Lamanites turning white naturalizes racist and anti-Semitic sentiment from the nineteenth century. Models of Christian missionary work from the Mormon scripture present tactics of colonial evangelization as a desirable ideal, sanctioned by the word of God. These tactics include the wholesale abandonment of social, political, and economic structures of Lamanite culture as the dark-skinned people convert to Christianity. The scripture attributes a dark skin to a curse from God for wickedness and promises a lighter skin to those Lamanites and their descendants who convert to the Christian gospel and abandon the cultural traditions of their fathers.

The scriptural narrative attributes an ancient American holocaust to God's unleashing of bloodthirsty Lamanites upon the pre-Columbian nation of white Nephites. In this genocidal campaign the fair Nephite nation, which had abandoned a thousand year old history of Christian belief and practice, suffered humiliation, defeat, and death at the hands of aggressive and idolatrous ancestors of American Indians. They left behind a narrative that Joseph Smith, the founding Mormon prophet, claimed to translate by the power of God from a set of golden plates he said he found buried in a hillside near Palmyra, New York. Since 1830, Mormon missionaries have been presenting the Book of Mormon, the product of this miraculous translation, to American Indians as an account of their forefathers in ancient America.

While the Book of Mormon presents an idealized model for the cultural and physical assimilation of American Indians, Mormons have not generally succeeded in achieving such objectives. Native converts to the faith have creatively employed racist imagery from the Book of Mormon in self-affirming manners, even validating challenges

to the authority of white men in the gospel. Some Native people have found assimilation desirable and employed the Book of Mormon as a justification for seeking acceptance and incorporation into the larger white community. In the nineteenth century, Natives, Mormons and otherwise, willingly engaged in the trade of Native children, often resulting in their adoption into white Mormon homes. During the twentieth century, an LDS Church program continued this practice, providing a means for Native parents to place their own children in white Mormon homes to facilitate access to a better education. Others, while baptized Mormons, emerged as some of the most potent military foes of white Mormons in nineteenth century Utah and most articulate critics in the twentieth century. The variety of ways that Native people have employed and reshaped Lamanite images caution against simplistic expectations of submission to white Mormon interpretations of the scripture.

Beginning with Joseph Smith and followed by Brigham Young, Mormon leaders have shown the ability to reflect upon and reconsider their racist views and policies of extermination in the face of more practical experience. Smith began but never finished the process of editing the Book of Mormon's predictions that Lamanites would become white and delightful. Young dealt violently and brutally with early challenges to white emigration from the Indians of Utah but subsequently adopted a policy of feeding rather than fighting, even validating the original claims of Indians to their land. Mormon politicians played a key role in formulating the federal government's termination policies in the mid-twentieth century, but LDS lawyers such as Larry Echohawk (Pawnee) played an equally vital role in correcting the injustices of such policies. Mormon scholars, evaluating archaeological and biological data challenging traditional interpretations of the

Book of Mormon, have taken the lead in developing new more circumscribed definitions of Lamanite identity, but too often without engaging Native Mormons in the discussion.

The expansion of scientific knowledge during the past century is leading many Mormons to question traditional assumptions about the Book of Mormon. The biological and social sciences have changed modern human understandings of the natural world and discredited naïve linkages between biology and culture. The anecdotal claims of Kimball notwithstanding, Mormon views of American Indians have already begun a dramatic shift. Scholars such as Brent Lee Metcalfe and Dan Vogel believe Mormonism may be on the verge of a “Galileo Event” prompted by recent findings in genetics that have invalidated Mormon belief in a Hebrew ancestry for American Indians. Increasing awareness of developments in genetics fostered by growing biotechnology industry in Utah ensures that change will continue to characterize Mormon views of American Indians in the twenty-first century.

The historical foundations of Mormon beliefs about Indians rest in the experience of European colonial empires in the Americas. The Book of Mormon was part of a much larger colonial project to remake the American past and present cultures of the indigenous peoples in a manner more compatible with European Christian views of world history. American Indian existence posed fundamental questions for Christian theology as early as the sixteenth century. How could the Bible ignore two continents full of people? If all humans descended from Noah’s party and ultimately from Adam and Eve, then when and where did American Indians come from? Enlightenment skepticism in the eighteenth century, fueled in part by the American biblical lacunae, challenged

attributions of divine revelation to Christian scripture. Why would an all-powerful God reveal himself to only a select group of ancient peoples? The Book of Mormon attempted to resolve this theological dilemma by a demonstration of Christian revelation in America, one that seemed to confirm speculated ties between ancient Hebrews, Canaanites, and the American Indians. In so doing, the scripture gave Indians a place, albeit one of redeemable apostasy, in the Christian canon.

The Book of Mormon's pious defense of biblical traditions of human origins would face new hurdles with the subsequent development of Darwinian theories of evolution. Mormon scholars in the twentieth century have wrestled with ways to reconcile the biological sciences with scriptural tradition. The Book of Mormon takes the Genesis account of human origins for granted and defends it against challenges by enlightened skeptics. A variety of paths have characterized subsequent Mormon responses to evolutionary biology. These responses range from an outright rejection of scientific insight to a dramatic reformulation of the status and understanding of scripture in an age of science and enlightenment.

The Book of Mormon contains an internal model of the natural world, a time capsule capturing elements of the moral and physical universe of Jacksonian America, yet it poses serious difficulties for Mormons familiar with history, anthropology, and the biological sciences. The concept of a seminal seed that permeates the scriptural narrative reflects a patriarchal view of human procreation and lineage that is inconsistent with modern biogenetic science of reproduction. The linkage of skin color to morality in Mormon scripture justified historically racist practices of the LDS Church and threatens to undermine efforts in the last few decades to move beyond that legacy. Yet,

the biological and social sciences suggest that such a linkage between skin color and morality is unfounded. Likewise, the once popular belief that a white race built ancient American civilizations only to be destroyed by the barbarous ancestors of the American Indians fell by the wayside with the rise of empirically based modern archaeology. While most other American Christian denominations have abandoned the popular beliefs they once shared with Mormons, the LDS Church has a much more problematic relationship with nineteenth century notions of biology and anthropology. Because its founder incorporated popular images of American Indians in scripture, the very word of God, Mormonism cannot easily abandon such views without fundamentally shifting its understanding of history, scripture, and prophetic inspiration.

I write as a participant in and as an observer of a phenomenal transformation of Mormon scripture fueled, at least in part, by new insights from anthropology and biology. As a Mormon, I was raised with a view of ancient America characterized by struggles between a white civilization of Nephites and their nemesis, the wandering, ferocious, and dark-skinned Lamanites. I learned that both groups descended from the chosen seed of Abraham brought to America by the patriarch Lehi and his sons, including Nephi and Laman. I believed that white-skinned Nephites rode on horses and in chariots, raised crops like wheat and barley, and cared for oxen, ass, sheep, goats, and cattle. They founded beautiful cities, forged weapons of steel, wore silk, and built machines. God cursed their war mongering rivals, the Lamanites, with a dark skin and these people, hated by God, found refuge in the wilderness among the beasts, preying upon their civilized brethren in periodic wars that plagued ancient America for a millennium. The eventual collapse of the great Nephite and Jaredite civilizations served as a dire warning

for the future of the United States of America if we did not heed God's word, spoken through the mouths of his prophets and recorded in scripture. While my parents taught us that some of our ancestors were Lamanites, they pointed to Nephi and the Nephites as role models for more righteous behavior. Failure to comply, I had feared as a child, might result in a return to the cursed dark skin of Lamanite ancestors.<sup>3</sup>

My academic study of anthropology and history forever destroyed the romantic, racist, and apocalyptic views of ancient America from my childhood. I am not, however, the only Mormon to find my world-view shattered by encounters with the social and natural sciences. While many, perhaps most, Mormons maintain the naïve world-view that characterized my childhood, a growing number of academically trained scholars are leading a revolution in Mormon approaches to scripture. These scholars differ with each other on some fundamental principles like whether the Book of Mormon is an actual translation of an ancient American record or nineteenth-century pseudepigrapha (a modern text written in the name of an ancient author). Yet, they agree on other equally important fundamentals. The description of human origins from Genesis reflected in the Book of Mormon should not be taken literally on scientific or historic grounds. Humans first arrived in the Americas from Asia long before the migrations reported in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon, these scholars agree, does not accurately describe the variety of ancient peoples and cultures found throughout South, Central, and North America. The scholars have moved away from utilizing ethnocentric

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<sup>3</sup> My mother's and grandmother's assertions of Lamanite ancestry were based upon family legends of an Indian ancestor of an unidentified tribe. Genealogical efforts to verify this story have yet to yield definitive results. It is possible that this family legend is the Mormon equivalent of the more common legends of an Indian princess in the family tree. Regardless of whether or not the story reflects accurate history, it did help foster a strong personal attachment to the Book of Mormon as the record of my ancestors.

and racist views of Nephites in the Book of Mormon as models for behavior today. Some point to racism rather than dark skin as a curse. Patriarchal views of seed from scripture, many would acknowledge, reflect social and political agendas more accurately than a biological reality. Most scholars of the Book of Mormon agree that today's American Indians owe their origin primarily, if not exclusively, to Asian predecessors and not to the peoples of the Book of Mormon. The descriptions in the Book of Mormon admittedly do not characterize the actual natural world in ancient America. Most of the plants and animals named in the scripture do not accurately describe the flora and fauna of ancient America. These shifting views constitute nothing short of a revolution in Mormon scripture studies.

While I seek a balanced perspective I do not offer an objective observer's description of the changing face of Mormon scriptural interpretation. In fact, I am not convinced that a human can be a truly objective observer of cultural phenomenon, especially not when s/he is as deeply embedded within a cultural community as I find myself. As a participant in this debate I encourage the continuation of this scholarly effort to reevaluate the meaning of Mormon scripture. On the basis of evidence examined in subsequent chapters I favor the view of the Book of Mormon as nineteenth-century pseudepigrapha, as *American Apocrypha*.<sup>4</sup> While this allegorical view of scripture is not without its problems (for example, Smith presented the text as history, not allegory), it offers a transformative pathway for reconciling religious beliefs with the discoveries of the scientific community without wholly abandoning our cultural heritage. Viewing

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<sup>4</sup> This point of view is most clearly articulated in a recent anthology of essays, including one of mine, on the Book of Mormon. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002).

scripture as a story provides an avenue through which Mormons can recognize, historically situate, and ultimately move beyond a legacy of racism towards and intolerance of American Indian cultures. Yet, the debate in Mormon communities has suffered from a general lack of attention to the perspectives of Native Americans, Mormon or otherwise. While I cannot speak for Native peoples, I draw attention to many valuable yet often overlooked insights of Native American critics, converts, Church leaders, and dissidents as they apply to the Book of Mormon.

The title page of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon identifies Joseph Smith as its author and proprietor, acknowledging “if there be fault, it be the mistake of men.” Regardless of whether or not one agrees that Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon in the late 1820s, responsible and informed Mormons may soon find it necessary to relegate the following ideas from the Mormon scripture to the status of mistakes of men.

1) American Indians must turn to Mormon scripture to know their own history. 2) Genesis recounts the actual origins of humanity. 3) Lehi and his sons transmitted the seed of Abraham to the New World. 4) Dark skin is a curse from God for human wickedness. 5) Ancient Americans raised cattle, oxen, horse, sheep, goats, swine, etc. 6) Ancient Americans raised Old World domesticated grains like wheat and barley. 7) White Nephites are responsible for founding Ancient American civilizations. 8) Dark-skinned Lamanites are the principal ancestors of American Indians. 9) God will reward Indian conversion to Christianity with either purity or whiteness. Because the Book of Mormon acknowledges the possibility that it may contain errors, it provides the flexibility needed to identify and discard such mistakes of men. In fact, it appears that many Mormons

already have abandoned these views and are adopting perspectives more akin to those of Native traditions Mormons once sought to displace.

Tribal religions, as portrayed by Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) are not dependent upon a belief that a particular event took place in the past; yet they may provide clues to the natural history of the earth overlooked by scientific and religious communities. Deloria contends, "the western preoccupation with history and a chronological description of reality was not a dominant factor in any tribal conception of either time or history."<sup>5</sup> Most oral traditions are prefaced by "the way I heard it" or "it was a long time ago," indicating to Deloria that "the story itself is important, not its precise chronological location."<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, no tribe "asserted its history as having primacy over the accounts of any other tribe." Sharing stories "was regarded as a social event embodying civility" and "differing tribal accounts were given credence because it was not a matter of trying to establish power over others to claim absolute truth."<sup>7</sup> Western science, like JudeoChristian religious traditions, are similarly focused on historical claims, particularly those emanating from Mediterranean peoples rather than a more global perspective that would include oral traditions of indigenous peoples.

Deloria questions building faith in the evolving depictions of the past emerging from biological and anthropological sciences. He distinguishes between micro, meso, and macro levels of abstraction. He attributes the "most spectacular success of Western science" to the micro level citing the work done "at atomic and subatomic levels" and credits recent "work with DNA and RNA" with expanding "the scope of our knowledge

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<sup>5</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion, The Classic Work Updated* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994), 98.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

of life considerably."<sup>8</sup> At the macro level, particularly "examining volcanoes, planetary weather patterns, and continental plates," scientists are "restricted to observational status" and can manipulate few variables.<sup>9</sup> At the meso level, which he describes as "man-sized," the critical element is observation. "We can be both the subject and object of our experiments." The social and behavioral sciences "must necessarily be participatory even though we proclaim their objectivity."<sup>10</sup> It is the meso level that Deloria targets for the sharpest critique. "The meso level is filled with unfounded opinions, fantasies, and misconceptions because in the last analysis it is dependent on the cultural perspective of the scientist."<sup>11</sup> Deloria advocates a healthy skepticism towards scientific analysis, particularly that of the Native American past, and encourages more attention to Native oral traditions and an inquisitive approach more akin to that of tribal religion.

Deloria encourages scientists and theologians to take Indian traditions, especially those involving the natural history of particular places, more seriously.<sup>12</sup> Tribal traditions include a greater focus on the value of questions, rather than particular answers. "Tribal religions do not claim to have answers to the larger questions of human life. But they do know various ways of asking the questions and this is their greatest strength and why they will ultimately have great influence in people's lives."<sup>13</sup> Deloria's skepticism, emphasis on the value of sharing stories, and a de-emphasis on the particular historicity of sacred events provides a model for how Mormons might be able to reconcile the

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<sup>8</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2002), 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>12</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 230.

<sup>13</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. "Vision and Community," *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 116-117.

conflicting histories emerging from the Book of Mormon and the discipline of anthropology. Mormons, Native Americans, and scientists each have stories to share. Sharing of such stories, however, should come with a reciprocal obligation to listen with respect to the narratives of others. While the shared stories may be different each has the potential of evoking valuable and thought provoking questions.

## Chapter 2: Black and White Indians

The self-defining pairing of American truth with American freedom rests on the ability to wield power against Indians—social, military, economic, and political—while simultaneously drawing power from them. ... The dispossessing of Indians exists in tension with being aboriginally true. ... Intricate relations between destruction and creativity—for both Indian and non-Indian Americans—are themselves suspended in an uneasy alliance. And so while Indian people have lived out a collection of historical nightmares in the material world, they have also haunted a long night of American dreams.

*Phil Deloria (Sioux)*<sup>14</sup>

Spencer W. Kimball's image of the chameleon-like skin of Navajo children in Mormon foster homes derives from the visions, revelations, and translation of the faith's founding prophet, seer, and revelator Joseph Smith, Jr. Research by Mormon historians has revealed the extraordinarily deep entrenchment of the Smith family and his earliest converts in occult and magical traditions. The alchemical fluidity of skin color is illustrated in his visions of a brilliant manifestation of a formerly tawny occult figure. This familiar spirit draws the seer's attention to a set of gold plates that he will eventually acquire and translate into the Book of Mormon. In this new scripture the skin color of the characters transforms from light to dark as they degenerate from a civilized righteous people into a wandering, rebellious, and wicked people. When formerly rebellious characters adopt Christianity and change religious, political, and economic structures their skin color lightens.

The Book of Mormon narrative serves the social function of perpetuating the power and authority of white men. It sets out an idealized form of conversion in which assimilation to white Nephite culture is marked by the brightening of Lamanite bodies. Religious conversion is far more than acquisition of new beliefs but requires a dramatic

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<sup>14</sup> Phil Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 191.

cultural transformation of economic, political, and social structures. Writing and record keeping serve as one of the key cultural distinctions that separate the dark uncivilized people from the enlightened civilized ones. In his revelatory narratives the Mormon seer elevates the importance of faith in writing, as if the characters of his scriptures would not exist without an extraordinary trust in the written word. To validate this historical record Smith speaks, not as himself, but through the voice of a dead white Indian who returns from the grave with a history recorded on an elusive set of gold plates. Yet, even as Smith seeks to speak with an aboriginal voice he draws a portrait of a simplistic world of black and white that ultimately privileges his own society over that of the American Indians whose history he purports to tell.

### **Playing Indian**

Native American historian Phil Deloria links Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon with a long tradition of American whites "playing Indian." He traces this colonial tendency to act out political, social, and economic discontent through images of otherness from the disguised disruption of David Dunbar's attempt to enforce New Hampshire's Mast Tree law in 1730 to the Society of Indian Dead at Grateful Dead shows in the early 1990s. The Boston Tea Party in 1773 may be the among the most famous and Boy Scout rituals may be the most recognizable of the thousands of incidents in which whites take upon themselves a disguise of Indianness as they pursue a critique of their own society. The most notorious example of the tendency of Mormons to disguise their own violence under masks of Indianness climaxed on September 11, 1857 at Mountain Meadows in southern Utah when members of the Nauvoo militia dressed and painted as Paiutes

slaughtered a train of emigrants from Arkansas on their way to California. Playing Indian has long provided American whites with a means to deflect the blame for their atrocities and claim an aura of authenticity for their rituals.

The Mormon prophet acquired the authority of an aboriginal voice through his encounters with a familiar spirit in a formative dream on the evening of September 21, 1823 in Palmyra, New York. Smith prepared for this opportune evening for communication with the dead by preparing a lamén (magical parchment), perhaps under the tutorship of local necromancer Luman Walters. The lamén, preserved by the Smith family, contains a wealth of symbols drawn from popular occult manuals that indicate the specific date and link it to the young Smith through his astrological symbols. This Sunday evening was ruled astrologically by Jupiter, Smith's ruling planet, and characterized by a full moon, just before the autumn equinox. After work as a seer on a treasure quest earlier that evening Smith, with exact attention to instructions for magic invocation of spirits, began praying late Sunday night when the moon reached its maximum fullness "to commune with some kind of messenger." A spiritual treasure guardian variously identified as Nephi and Moroni appeared to Smith three times before sunrise, thus assuring him that his visions were more than ordinary dreams. This spirit, later identified as an "angel of the Lord," revealed the location of a buried treasure.<sup>15</sup>

The next morning Smith went alone to a hill in nearby Manchester identified by the familiar spirit as the location of the buried treasure. On a day that astrological guides identified as conducive to the location of treasures Smith found the gold plates by placing his brown treasure-seeking stone into a hat and placing his face into the hat to exclude the

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<sup>15</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, Revised and Enlarged* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 134, 139-140, 142-146, 199.

light. Upon locating a set of gold plates through the images he saw with the aid of the seer stone Smith was startled by something like a toad or a fiery salamander that may have transformed into the guardian Moroni. Frightened and ritually unprepared Smith was unable to obtain the plates that day and had to return exactly the same day each year for the next four years before he finally obtained the plates from which he would translate the Book of Mormon.<sup>16</sup>

Deloria compares Smith's production of the Book of Mormon to the similar subsequent aspirations of Lewis Henry Morgan, a founding father of American anthropology. In 1842 Morgan formed a literary fraternity, initially known as the Gordian Knot and later as the New Confederacy, whose ambitions included "writing of a native, American epic that would define national identity." The members of the New Confederacy "donned Indian clothing and performed ritual initiations in the New York woods" as they concocted a mythic past linking the Old World narratives of the Gordian Knot to the Six Nations Confederacy of the Iroquois. Comparing the two residents of western New York, Deloria observes, "Smith's Mormonism—and indeed the general ferment in American religious practice—suggests that Americans felt a lack of the social meanings Morgan sought to create in the New Confederacy."<sup>17</sup> Deloria's comparison invites a critical examination of the imagery of Indians in the production of Smith's American bible.

The emerging Mormon prophet, like the incipient anthropologist, donned an Indian disguise in the woods of western New York as he composed a mythic literary creation that linked Old and New Worlds. Smith's disguise appeared in the image of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 146-158.

<sup>17</sup> Deloria, 72, 219.

Moroni/Nephi, a familiar spirit giving voice to the young man's discontent. In 1838 Smith referred to Moroni as "the person who deposited the plates ... being dead, and raised again therefrom."<sup>18</sup> The prophet's father had earlier described this spirit as a "very large and tall man."<sup>19</sup> In 1839 Smith identified the messenger as Nephi and describes him as wearing a robe of "exquisite whiteness" and his whole person as likewise "glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning." Four years earlier Smith had described the angel's hands and feet as "naked pure and white."<sup>20</sup> This personage "said there was a book deposited written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang."<sup>21</sup> Through the medium of a seer stone Smith used the familiar spirit, perhaps subconsciously, to give voice to his desires and apprehensions in a narrative epic of the American past. In this act, Smith drew upon a century old cultural tradition of donning an indigenous disguise that provided him with a medium through which he could act out his social, economic, and religious discontent. His literary mask was ancient America and the tawny and fair characters of the Book of Mormon would act out his tormented visions.

### **A Human Prophet**

By its very nature the method of translation utilized by Joseph Smith introduces a human element into the process by which he produced the Book of Mormon. As a product of a "magic world view," Smith employed a series of seer stones in the

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., "Answers to Questions," *Elders' Journal* (Kirtland, Ohio) 1 (July 1838): 42-43 in Dan Vogel, ed. *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 52.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Smith, Sr., Interview with Fayette Lapham, 1830, in Vogel, *Mormon Documents*, 1:458.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., Recital to Robert Matthews, 9 November 1835, in Vogel, *Mormon Documents*, 1:44.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., "Joseph Smith History, 1839" in Vogel, *Mormon Documents*, 1:63-64.

production of his revelations and in the ‘translation’ of the Book of Mormon.<sup>22</sup> At least some of these seer stones were Indian artifacts (gorgets) believed to have supernatural powers.<sup>23</sup> According to multiple accounts by eye-witnesses, Smith placed a seer stone into a hat, stuck his face into the hat, and dictated the text he saw in a vision to a nearby scribe. The gold plates he claimed to possess actually played little role in the translation process and Smith’s concept of translation deviated significantly from the method of careful study of another language used by scholars.<sup>24</sup> Mormon psychiatrist Robert D. Anderson observed that “unrestrained free association,” “minimal noncondemning responses from his scribes,” and reduction of “outside stimuli by looking at his stone in a hat,” coincide with elements of modern intensive psychotherapy and thereby provide a valuable interpretive tool for understanding the author’s psychology.<sup>25</sup> Like the Mormon historian Fawn Brodie and psychiatrist William D. Morain, Anderson finds elements of Smith’s own autobiography woven into the narrative of the Book of Mormon.<sup>26</sup> Smith’s life experiences and his social environment provided the cultural capital from which he imaginatively constructed the text he identified as “the history of ancient America.”<sup>27</sup>

While the Mormon seer’s method fostered a human context for his visions, the cultural and psychological shaping of his mystical experiences was inevitable. Careful cross-cultural analyses of mystical encounters with divinity reveal that all mystics,

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<sup>22</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 247, 541.

<sup>24</sup> This process of translation has been the subject of intensive and voluminous inquiry by Mormon historians. An easily accessible reproduction of a collection of primary documents outlining this process and other events in the early church is available from Signature Books. See Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996, 1998, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Robert D. Anderson, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 171-172.

<sup>26</sup> Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Knopf, 1945). William D. Morain, *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Dissociated Mind* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Vogel, *Mormon Documents*, 1: 171.

prophets, seers, and revelators draw upon familiar cultural capital to construct images of unfamiliar divinity. Steven T. Katz, currently the Director of the Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies at Boston University, notes that Jewish mystics do not see Buddha, Christian seers do not experience Brahman, and Hindu mystics do not encounter Abraham.

We must recognize that a right understanding of mysticism is not just a question of studying the reports of the mystic after the experiential event but also of acknowledging that the experience itself, as well as the form in which it is reported, is shaped by concepts which the mystic brings to, and which shape, his experience.<sup>28</sup>

The pervasive influence of Joseph Smith's childhood experiences and cultural environment on his religious experiences is necessary, while perhaps not sufficient, for his human experience of divinity.

### **The Magic of Naming**

Smith's 1823 encounter with a familiar spirit is interesting not only as an example of what Deloria calls "New England's white Indians" but also because of Moroni's historic association with dark skin.<sup>29</sup> In European and American occult traditions the name Moroni and its various derivations was associated with magic incantation of spirits, salamanders, brass engravings, and dark skin. Smith's inclusion of a symbol of a salamander on his magical parchment draws explicitly upon this tradition. Similar associations between reptiles, fire, and spirits are found in the writings of the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg and sixteenth century alchemist

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<sup>28</sup> Steven T. Katz, "The 'Conservative' Character of Mystical Experience," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, edited by Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 11.

Paracelsus, both popular sources of ritual lore in nineteenth century New England perpetuated by the occult manuals Smith used to construct his lamens.<sup>30</sup> Early accounts of Moroni's visitation with Smith on the hill in Manchester likewise make references to the presence of frightening toad-like amphibians.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these associations the surname Moroni refers to a man "with a dark or swarthy complexion."<sup>32</sup> A prefiguring linkage between brass plates and Moroni-like familiar spirits is evident in eighteenth-century Rosicrucianism, A popular text reported that the number one "engraven in Brasse, ... bringeth a Spirit, in the shape of a black man standing, and cloathed in a white Garment, girdled about, of a great body."<sup>33</sup> In ceremonial magic Maron (a spelling similar to Maroni used by Joseph Smith in 1832) was a "holy name of conjuration according to the 'Key of Solomon'."<sup>34</sup> The traditional magical association of Moroni with dark skin contrasts with his exquisite whiteness in his appearance to Joseph Smith.

A passage in Revelations forecasting the gathering of kings for a great battle at Armageddon also makes a linkage between spirits and reptiles.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Rev. 16:13-14)

Ethan Smith, Congregationalist minister in Poultney, Vermont, refers to this plague of reptilian spirits as "three unclean spirits of devils, like frogs, go forth to the kings of the

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<sup>30</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 153. See also Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 24, 234, 243-44. John Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16, 93-97.

<sup>31</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 148-156.

<sup>32</sup> Eldson C. Smith, *New Dictionary of American Family Names* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 360 in Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 155.

<sup>33</sup> John Heydon, *The Holy Guide, Leading the Way to Unite Art and Nature* (London: T.M., 1662), 11 in Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 155.

<sup>34</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 155.

earth, and of all the world, to gather them to the great battle” in his 1825 edition of *View of the Hebrews*.<sup>35</sup>

Nephi, as a proper name, bears a resemblance to the Nephilim from Genesis 6, the sons of God who mated with daughters of men shortly before the flood. In nineteenth century biblical hermeneutics Nephilim were large (even giant in some accounts) warriors of old, tainted by the sin of racial intermarriage.<sup>36</sup> Quinn reports that the “Nephilim of Genesis were the offspring of divine salamanders, known as ‘Moron’ in (occult) books available at Palmyra.”<sup>37</sup> The traditional association of Moroni, Nephi, salamanders, and danger is not only rooted in European folk traditions but had a history of association by Europeans with Indians in the New World. In his early nineteenth century study of the New World Alexander von Humboldt claimed that some North American Indians used a term similar to Moroni, “Imoron,” to refer to a poisonous being.<sup>38</sup> In the European and American folk traditions in which Joseph Smith was culturally embedded, the terms Moroni and Nephi were closely associated with the magical powers of large, dark-skinned dead men. Yet, in his 1839 account of this vision, Smith claimed the spirit appeared as “exceedingly white ... like lightning.” This slippage between black and white Indians characterizes not only Smith’s magical encounters but also the narrative framework of the Book of Mormon.

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<sup>35</sup> Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 1825 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, edited with an introduction by Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1996), 26.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: the Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 199.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, During the Years 1799-1804*, trans. Helen Maria Williams, vol. 3. (London: Longman, 1818), 3:302 in Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 155-156.

The name of Laman, the son of Lehi and brother of Nephi, echoed modern magical traditions and their associations with ancient Israel. Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley claims that Laman appeared as a proper name in ancient Palestine and Arabia.<sup>39</sup> Acknowledging Nibley's research, Quinn finds much more recent predecessors in modern magic. He observed that one, out of several scribes, rendered the name as "lamen" in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon. This spelling of lamen is the same employed in the pre-1830 occult manuals of early America. The Smith family had at least three of these magical lamens, and one is clearly associated with the conjuration of Moroni on September 21, 1823. In addition to Book of Mormon names like Nephi, Moroni, and Laman; those of Lehi, Alma, Mormon, Bountiful, etc. also reflect early American magical traditions.

The scriptural text makes several explicit linkages to occult traditions that validate the seer's assumption of the voice of the dead. Nephi (1 Ne. 1:2) claims his record consists of the "learning of the Jews," a common reference to the Jewish Kabbalah, and "the language of the Egyptians," popularly associated with the origins of nineteenth century magical lore.<sup>40</sup> Drawing upon imagery of necromancy from Isaiah 29:4, the second book of Nephi (26:14-17) describes its own appearance as Lamanite speech coming "low out of the dust" with the voice of "one that hath a familiar spirit." The text evokes a magical context as it repeatedly employs the terms seal and sealed to refer to

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<sup>39</sup> Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1957), 251 in Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 200.

<sup>40</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 197-201. For a detailed chart of patterns in Book of Mormon names illustrating how dozens of additional names within the text were derived from the same roots and stems as many of these occult terms see Edward Ashment, "'A Record in the Language of My Father,': Evidence of Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in the Book of Mormon," *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 329-393.

being bound or charmed by the power of God, described cursed and slippery treasures sinking into the earth, and told of ancient seers who kept and translated records.<sup>41</sup>

Through the words of Nephi, Moroni, Mormon and other ancient white aboriginals Smith is able to speak to struggles between his self-conceptions and their antitheses.

### Colonial Anti-self

The colonizer reifies his myths about the savage, becomes subject to their power, and in so doing seeks salvation from the civilization that torments him as much as the savage on whom he has projected his anti-self.<sup>42</sup>

The Book of Mormon's images of black and white Indians evoke the magical power of what anthropologist Michael Taussig calls the colonist's "fetishized anti-selves made by civilizing histories."<sup>43</sup> Smith's frustration with the savagery of his own civilization is reversed and projected onto his images of an anti-self in an attempt to save his own society from self-destruction. This antagonist first appears in Nephi's struggles with his brother Laman and then is projected onto a cultural level in the conflicts between the Nephites and the Lamanites.

The Book of Mormon opens with a primordial tale of sibling rivalry that presages the division of ancient America into light and dark nations. Noel B. Reynolds, an LDS political scientist at Brigham Young University, has argued that the writings of Nephi "can be read as a political tract or a 'lineage history,' written to document the legitimacy

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<sup>41</sup> Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 195-196. For an informative discussion of the imagery of seers in the Book of Mormon and its association with Joseph Smith's cultural environment also see Susan Staker, "Secret Things, Hidden Things: The Seer Story in the Imaginative Economy of Joseph Smith," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, eds. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 235-274.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 211.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

of Nephi's rule and religious teachings."<sup>44</sup> Mormon psychiatrist Robert D. Anderson similarly finds a veiled autobiographical validation of Joseph Smith's religious calling in the narrative.<sup>45</sup> The incipient prophet, the fourth living child in his family, speaks through Nephi, the fourth son of Lehi. Nephi's father Lehi, not unlike the seer's father, was a visionary man who led his reluctant family through a series of precarious and improbable ventures in pursuit of a better life. Lehi gave up preaching to an unreceptive audience in ancient Jerusalem at about 600 B.C. and embarked with his family on a journey to a promised land that would isolate them from the historical traditions of religious leaders in Jerusalem. The experiences his family would undergo provide an underpinning of authority to both the ancient Nephites in the narrative and Smith in the nineteenth century.

Prompted by a dream, Lehi asked his four sons Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi to return to Jerusalem and acquire, from a man called Laban, a collection of brass plates that contained "the five books of Moses ... a record of the Jews (and) the prophecies of the holy prophets" (1 Ne. 5:11-13). Laman, the oldest son, first attempted but failed to acquire the plates from Laban. Under the initiative and leadership of Laman's younger brother Nephi, they made a second attempt to acquire the plates. This time they tried to purchase the plates with gold, silver, and other precious things that they had collected from their abandoned home. Laban, however, stole the items offered to him in exchange for the records. Instead of delivering the plates, Laban sent his guards to kill the four young men. The brothers escaped and began to quarrel until an angel interrupted them.

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<sup>44</sup> Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *Brigham Young University Studies* 27 (Fall 1987):15.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, *Inside the Mind*.

This angel rebuked Laman and Lemuel for striking Nephi during their quarrel and advised them that the Lord had chosen Nephi to rule over them because of their iniquities.

Following this angelic intervention, Nephi returned, alone, to the city and encountered the record keeper, Laban, in a drunken stupor on the ground. The spirit ordered Nephi to murder Laban. Initially reluctant to take the life of another human being, Nephi was reprimanded by the Spirit who informed him "the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle in unbelief" (1 Ne. 4:13). Nephi recalled that the Lord had previously told him that "Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise" and that the Law of Moses which they must obey "was engraved upon the plates of brass" (1 Ne. 4:14-16). Submitting to the request of the spirit, Nephi then decapitated Laban, disguised himself and his voice as that of Laban, and stole the brass plates and the sword with which he had killed the man. In this narrative, Nephi acquires authority, writing, and a sword through the same act of violence. The written word, of course, would become Smith's weapon of choice against American Indians as he asserted the authority to speak for ancient Americans. In Smith's eschatology the slaying of wicked Indians and theft of their land and artifacts would be part of the Lord's righteous purpose.

This narrative and others in the Book of Mormon provide readers with a glimpse into the spiritual anxieties of a young man living on land recently taken violently from its indigenous inhabitants. On the one hand, the text advocates a belief in an impartial God. Its Lord "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; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Ne. 26:33, see also Rom. 2:11, 1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:28).<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, it violently polarizes the world. Its God says “he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me” (2 Ne. 10:16). Given the tension between equality and violent polarization in the text, Smith must have struggled with the social inequalities in his world. He used artifacts of displaced Indians and conjured their dead as he attempted to resolve a dilemma of an impartial God who would permit such gross inequality. Yet, rather than confronting his own cultural role in the oppression of Indians he locates the source for social inequity in Indian iniquity. The text defines Indians (presumed to be Jews) who pursue their own cultural traditions as opposed to the Christian God, part of the “whore of all the earth” and destined to perish. Thus, Smith shifts the primordial blame for oppression away from both God and human perpetrators towards the victims of abuse.

The story of the justified murder of Laban presents Laman, the father of the dark-skinned Lamanites, as the subordinate brother of Nephi, the progenitor of the white-skinned Nephites. The account attributes to Nephi a divinely ordained status as a ruler over his brethren. As the eldest brother, Laman was entitled to the first opportunity to obtain the plates. His failure and the subsequent angelic intervention validated the right of Nephi and his civilized descendants to be both the record keepers and the divinely sanctioned rulers over the non-literate uncivilized Lamanites. It also validated the right of

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<sup>46</sup> The book anachronistically restates New Testament theology over 500 years before Christ.

Joseph Smith, as another fourth son of a visionary father, to assert himself as the spiritual leader of his family and the voice of ancient America arisen from the dust.

The implied presupposition in the Spirit's advice to Nephi is that belief could not exist independent of the written word. The Spirit told Nephi that without the plates his descendants would necessarily "dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Ne. 4:13). Without the reader's faith in the written word, the literary character Nephi himself does not exist. He is none other than a textual artifact, a human fabrication. Smith's own repressed creation returns as a narrator's unwavering faith in the primacy of writing.<sup>47</sup> In reality, it is Smith's fantasies and disguises that needed literary and corresponding social validation. As Anderson observes, Smith repeatedly compensated for "terrible real-life experience by displacing it with a conquering fantasy."<sup>48</sup> Just as Smith had disguised his voice as that of a dead white Indian, his literary protagonists also don disguises. Nephi, after decapitating the record keeper, "took the garment of Laban and put them upon my own body; yea, every whit, and I did gird on his armour about my loins" (1 Ne. 4:19). He returned to the treasury and assumed the voice of Laban as he raided his treasury. Anderson finds the roots of Smith's compensation through fantasy conquests in a brutal surgical experience in the boy's childhood. Smith not only used the Book of Mormon narrative to resolve his childhood and familial anxieties he projected them onto the larger social world as he tried to make religious sense out of colonial conflict. In the process Indians fall prey to Smith's psychological quest "for power over others."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of the persistence of the fetishization of writing in Mormon discourse see Thomas Murphy, "Laban's Ghost: On Writing and Transgression," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30 (Summer, 1997): 105-126.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Inside the Mind*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

As the spirit validated the authority of the written word, it conversely invalidated oral traditions. The spirit conversing with Nephi nullified all belief by members of unlettered cultures who necessarily “dwindle and perish in unbelief” (1 Ne. 4:13). Laman's failure to obtain the plates served as an explanation for the lack of writing and thereby belief among his descendants, the Lamanites. Furthermore, it placed the blame for this defect squarely on the shoulders of the proposed progenitor of the American Indians while simultaneously placing the responsibility for the remedy of this lack on the evangelizing and colonizing whites. The prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, extends this connection by representing Lamanities as inherently hostile to the sacred word, thus legitimating the miraculous preservation and transfer from ancient white Americans to modern white Americans. She reported that Moroni knew “that if the plates fell into the hands of the Lamanites that they would destroy them, for they sought to destroy all sacred writings therefore he hid them up in the earth, having obtained a promise of the Lord that they should come forth in his own due time unto the world.”<sup>50</sup> Implicit in this denial of belief independent of the book and the corresponding representation of Indian hostility to writing was the legitimization of the book itself. If belief could exist independent of the book then there would be no need for the Book of Mormon or for the Biblical Canon Smith sought to reaffirm. Presumed Indian hostility to writing meant that one could not turn to real living Indians for the truth. Instead the white Indians of Smith's dreams become the legitimate voice for ancient America.

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<sup>50</sup> “Lucy Smith to Solomon Mack, Jr., 6 January 1831,” in Vogel, *Mormon Documents*, vol. 1: 216.

### Alchemical Transformation

The contradictory images of black and white Indians resurface with remarkable fluidity throughout the Book of Mormon. Skin color appears as a biological marker that naturalizes and reifies cultural transformations. Nephi, narrator of the first part of the Book of Mormon, reported that after the party led by his brothers Laman and Lemuel separated themselves from his people in the promised land that they were "cursed" by God with a dark skin: "wherefore, as they (Lamanites) were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people, therefore the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them" (2 Ne. 5:21). Nephi cited the curse as an antecedent of other denigrating characteristics: "And because of their cursing which was upon them, they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey" (2 Ne. 5:24). According to Nephi's descendants Lamanites "loved murder, and would drink the blood of beasts" (Jarom 1:6) and were cut off from the presence of the Lord for not keeping his written commandments (Alma 9:14). The Nephites, although members of the House of Israel, maintained an anachronistic belief in Christ (4 Ne. 1:36), while the Lamanites as fallen Israelites destroyed the Christians who worshipped the "true and living God" (Alma 43:10). The Lamanites reportedly hated the people of God (Mos. 1:14, 11:17; Alma 43:11; 4 Ne. 1:20, 38) and were hated by God (Hel. 15:4). In such passages scattered through the text, the Book of Mormon divides ancient Americans into antagonistic nations of black and white Indians, signified by cultural and religious differences and marked by skin color.

The black Lamanites needed their white, Christian, civilized, counterpart, an image found in the representations of the Nephites. The Nephites built buildings and

temples, and industriously worked with wood, iron, copper, brass, steel, gold, and silver. They rode in chariots and built machines. They wore silks and fine linen and raised cattle, horse, oxen, sheep, swine, goats, flocks, fruit, wheat, barley, and corn; products which were subject to frequent raids by their less civilized, idle and lazy brethren (2 Ne. 5:15, 12:7; Jacob 1:16, 2:12; Jarom 1:8; Mos. 9:9; Alma 1:29, 11:7; Hel. 12:2; 3 Ne. 6:2). What these descriptions lack in accurate references to New World plants, animals, and technology is supplanted by the certainty with which they legitimized the civilizing mission of the colonists from the Old World by contrasting the Lamanites with their presumed civilized potential (the Nephites). Apparently Joseph Smith, like the Christian missionaries described by Tinker, could not fathom civilization existing without the plants, animals, religion, economy, and technology of the Old World.

This struggle between the prophet and his anti-self can be seen in a striking, yet self-affirming, reversal of the violence of colonial conditions in nineteenth century America. Smith presented the Lamanites, without exception, as the aggressors in the numerous wars that plagued the thousand-year (600 B.C. to 400 A.D.) coexistence of Lamanites and Nephites.<sup>51</sup> In response to Lamanite aggression, for example, the Nephites were compelled to push the Lamanites out of the lands of their inheritance (WoM 1:14; Alma 50:11; Morm. 2:27). Even in their offensive campaigns, the Nephites would inquire of the Lord "whither the armies ... should go to *defend* themselves against the Lamanites" (Alma 23:13, emphasis added). Unlike the Lamanites who loved murder (Jarom 1:6), the Nephites "did not delight in the shedding of blood" and were reluctantly compelled to

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<sup>51</sup>. See WoM 1:13; Mos. 9:14, 10:1, 11:16-17, 21:2; Alma 2:27, 3:20, 16:12, 18:7, 24:1-4, 20-21, 25:8-12; 27:1,12; 28:1; 35:12, 43:4-5, 24, 47:1; 48:1-3; 49:1, 21; 51:22, 57:9, 31, 58:6,18, 59:5, 60:17, 62:35, 63:14; Hel. 1:14, 4:8; Morm. 3:4, 4:10, 5:6, 8:2, 8:7.

contend with the Lamanites (Alma 48:21, 55:19).<sup>52</sup> In fact, the Nephites ironically insisted that they "would not shed the blood of the Lamanites if they would stay in their own land" (Alma 61:10). While the Lamanites were blood-thirsty aggressors, the white Nephites who went to war fought valiantly for their lives, wives, children, and land (Mos. 20:11; Alma 43:9,26, 30:47, 48:24; Morm. 2:23). The only time the narrators recognized the Lamanites as fighting to defend their rights, privileges of church and worship, freedom or liberty was after their temporary conversion and unification with the Nephites against a group known as the Gadianton Robbers. Yet this exception proves the rule. Thereafter those Lamanites who had fought for their rights converted to Christianity and became known as Nephites (3 Ne. 2:12-14). In this naïve portrayal of the intricacies of military and cultural conflict, the whites are always in the right and the swarthy Lamanites are always to blame.

Like white colonists more generally, the Nephites were constantly fearful of and threatened by the numerous hosts of Lamanites (Mos. 22:2; Alma 2:35, 43:51, 49:6; Hel. 4:19; Morm. 5:6). Nephites complained that the Lamanites were far too numerous to control (Hel. 4:19-20). Yet, like English and Americans of the colonial and antebellum eras they sought control through the use of alcohol, slavery, conversion and resettlement. The Nephite military resorted to pacifying the Lamanites with alcohol (Alma 55:9-16). Nephites enslaved Lamanites they captured and compelled them to bury the dead and build fortifications to defend the Nephites (Alma 53:1-5, 55:25). Yet, the narrator claims that those who joined the Nephites allegedly became "a free people" and began to farm

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<sup>52</sup>. Despite these claims some prophets from the Book of Mormon boasted of killing Lamanites with their own swords (Omni 1:10).

(Alma 62:27-28). When Nephites successfully converted Lamanites to the Christian gospel, the converts buried their weapons (not unlike "burying the hatchet") and settled into (praying) towns under the political control of Nephites. In order to become truly Christian, the converted Lamanites had to adopt industrious arts of civilization such as farming and mining. The converts not only adopted the religion, technology and lifestyle of the Nephites but also their skin color (Alma 23:7-18, 24:17-19; 3 Ne. 2:15). In return for abandoning their culture God removed the curse of a dark skin, turning them white and freeing them from future designation as Lamanites. This alchemical transformation naturalizes the tactics of Christian missionaries as it simultaneously realizes the nineteenth-century white fantasy of disappearing Indians.

While converted Lamanites and degenerate Nephites frequently crossed the boundaries between these divergent groups, one distinction remained formidable and persistent; namely access to the records previously stolen by Nephi from Laban (Mos. 1:5; Alma 3:11, 37:9). Smith blamed the iniquity of the Lamanites on ignorance and their adherence to the traditions of their forefathers (Alma 9:16, 17:19, 37:9, 60:32; Hel. 4:11-12). This ignorance was apparently so great that God did not permit the Lamanites to keep records for the fear that they would destroy them (Morm. 6:6). Smith even identified Nephite dissenters who left the communities of the record-keepers with the Lamanites and often blamed the dissenters (as the English blamed the French) for fueling Lamanite wickedness and desire for warfare (WoM 1:16; Alma 27:12, 31:3-4, 35:10-11, 43:4-8, 47:35-36, 64:13; Hel. 3:16, 4:3-8, 11:24). Nephite missionaries sought to restore the Lamanites to the "knowledge of the truth" (Hel. 15:12) while those Lamanites who did convert to the Christian gospel reportedly "grew in the knowledge of their God" (Hel.

6:34). While Nephites who "had altered and trampled under their feet the laws" became "wicked even like unto the Lamanites" (Hel. 4:22), the conversion of the Lamanites was itself predicated upon the records kept by the Nephites (Alma 37:9).

The miraculous preservation and restoration of these records provided the possibility that American Indians could one day accept their true history, convert to the Christian gospel, and once again become white. Nephi has a vision forecasting the separation and restoration of the seed of his brethren from the Gentile world. Nephi reports, "And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land" (1 Ne. 13:11). Nephi foresees the arrival of "many multitudes of other Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles, and were smitten" (1 Ne. 13:14). The text goes on to forecast the American Revolution, a confusion of churches, and a marvelous work producing another Bible from the words of his seed. Upon receipt of the Book of Mormon, the text predicts that the remnant seed of Lehi will rejoice. "For they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people" (2 Ne. 30: 6).<sup>53</sup> The scripture thus foretells a physical transformation of the skin color of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas.

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<sup>53</sup>. The 1981 English version of the Book of Mormon substitutes the word "pure" for "white" in 2 Ne. 30:6. The word "white" appeared in the original 1830 edition, the

The wars between Lamanites and Nephites as well as Nephite missionary excursions into Lamanite communities take up much of the narrative of the Book of Mormon. The narrative ends at about 400 A.D. with a massive genocidal campaign; once again, initiated by the Lamanites against the Nephites. Yet, in a warning to modern Americans God does not assist the Nephites this time around as they had become wicked and vain "like unto their brethren the Lamanites" (4 Ne. 1:43). All the people began to delight in the shedding of blood (Morm. 4:11). As the holders of the records, the sins of the Nephites were greater than that of the human sacrifice and genocide committed by the Lamanites. The Nephites had possession of the law and the responsibility for upholding it (Morm. 4:15). This higher standard of behavior serves as an ominous warning and a sharp critique of Smith's own civilization. In this narrative Indians play a centuries old role as the arbiters of justice in an internal critique of white society. In Smith's mind the Lamanites provide him with a disguise to realize a fantasy of conquest over the wickedness of his own generation.

### **The Jaredite Migration**

The Book of Ether, presented as an insertion by the narrator Moroni into the latter part of the Book of Mormon, reworked similar themes while resolving the widely debated problem of how plants and animals got to the New World after the flood. This account,

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second 1837 edition, but was changed by Joseph Smith in the 1840 edition. Nonetheless, all subsequent editions returned to the original wording until 1981. Similar references in 1 Ne. 2:23; 2 Ne. 5:21-24; Jacob 3:8; Alma 17:15; and 3 Ne. 2:15 have not even been removed. For further discussion see Douglas Campbell, "'White' or 'Pure': Five Vignettes," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29 (Winter, 1996): 119-135. Thomas Murphy, "Reinventing Mormonism: Guatemala as a Harbinger of the Future?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29 (Spring): 177-192.

reportedly translated by Moroni from an older set of plates, recounts an earlier migration originating from the tower of Babel. Through pleas of the brother of Jared (“a large and mighty man”), the Lord spared Jared, his brother, and other families from the confounding of tongues that plagued the dispersal of other humans at the tower and promised to lead them to “a land which is choice above all the earth” (Ether 1:33-38). The Lord commanded the brother of Jared “to gather thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also the seed of the earth of every kind”(Ether 1:41). Along with the families of Jared and their friends, the family of the brother of Jared descended to the valley of Nimrod “with their flocks which they had gathered together, male and female, of every kind. And they did also lay snares and catch fowls of the air; and they did also prepare a vessel, in which they did carry with them the fish of the waters.” They gathered honeybees; “they did carry with them swarms of bees, and all manner of that which was upon the face of the land, seeds of every kind” (Ether 2: 1-3). The migrations of Jared and his brothers provide an explanation for the return of flora and fauna to their promised land after its destruction during the flood of Noah.

This account claims an original settling of a promised land in an uninhabited quarter of the earth but predicts destruction of those who fail to follow the commandments. The Lord led the party of Jared into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where there never had man been ... they did travel in the wilderness, and did build barges, in which they did cross many waters, being directed continually by the hand of the Lord” (Ether 2: 5-6). He led the entourage of eight barges to a “land of promise” but warned that “whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them” (Ether 2:9, 3:1). In the land “that was

choice above all lands” the Jaredites prospered during times of righteousness and “built a great city by the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land.” “And they did preserve the land southward for a wilderness, to get game. And the whole face of the land northward was covered with inhabitants” (Ether 10: 20-21, 28). Jaredite industriousness included “work in all manner of ore ... gold and silver, and iron, and brass... and copper” that they dug out of the earth and “cast up into mighty heaps of earth” (Ether 10:23). They also had “silks and fine-twined linen” and made “all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, ... to thrash ... [and] with which they did work their beasts” (Ether 10:23-26). Yet, despite this prosperity much of the life of the Jaredites was characterized by wars, dissension, and wickedness.

The prophet Ether preached to the Jaredites and through his prophecies linked the people of Lehi and their descendants to the building of a New Jerusalem in the Americas. Ether foresaw “the days of Christ, and he spake of a New Jerusalem upon this land” (Ether 13:4). “He spake concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come.” He proclaimed that the Lord preserved “a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem” that would inherit this land and “build up a city unto the Lord like unto the Jerusalem of old” (Ether 13: 7-8). Despite Ether’s prophecies and his call to the people of Jared to believe in God they pursued iniquity, provoking “a great curse upon all the land” that caused tools and swords to disappear (Ether 14:1). The Jaredite society degenerated into warfare in which millions died in battles at the same hill that Mormon would later hide his records and that ultimately led to destruction of the nation. The prophet Ether buried his records of this civilization to be recovered and

translated by representatives of the immigrants from Jerusalem whose story makes up most of the Book of Mormon.

The Jaredite narrative probably served multiple purposes for Joseph Smith. It reenacted the violent conquests and record keeping of the Lehite civilization, validated a common nineteenth century belief that emigrants from the tower of Babel settled the Americas, and provided explanations for the origins of American flora and fauna in the aftermath of Noah's flood and the mounds that dotted the landscape of eastern North America. Perhaps, as Anderson has suggested, "Ether is a more extreme fantasy version of the Book of Mormon. Everything in the story is more extreme: the wars, miracles, evil intrigue, and ultimate destruction."<sup>54</sup> By conjuring voices from fantastic, brutal, and tragic ancient civilizations the Mormon seer offers a stark warning of potential doom for his present generation.

The roots of Spencer W. Kimball's claim that he had observed the whitening of American Indian converts to the LDS Church extend to a defining moment in Joseph Smith's dreams on the evening of September 21, 1823. Moroni, a tawny occult figure associated with brass plates, salamanders, and guardian spirits, appeared to the incipient prophet as a glorious figure, as bright as lightening. This transformation of the silent dark skinned dead into white Indians speaking from the grave enacted one of thousands of powerful performances over three centuries in which white Americans don an Indian disguise and employ that image in a critique of their own society. Through simplistic portrayals of white and black Indians Smith wrestled with his own counter images as he

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<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *Inside the Mind*, 208.

constructed a narrative establishing a connection between the Old and New Worlds. In this narrative he conflated social, political, economic, literary, religious, and biological traits as he attempted to transform his dark skinned other into a light skinned self. This transformation would be reenacted throughout the history of Mormon representations of American Indians.

Within a narrative of wish fulfillment in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith inverted and projected back into the ancient past contemporary conflicts between the American Indians and the European colonists. Smith drew upon his own childhood and familial experiences as he constructed a model of cultural conflict. Despite citing an impartial God and criticizing white Nephites, the Mormon seer constructed an elaborate system of divine justification for the aggressive and often forceful conversions, abusive treatment, and attempted extermination of the American Indians in the nineteenth century. He naturalized cultural changes as spirits and people slipped back and forth between a dyadic-world of black and white. The genocidal campaigns of the Jacksonian America became an inversion of a divinely ordained ancient feud between Joseph Smith and his anti-self. The Lamanites of Smith's era were only suffering the disastrous effects of what they had once done to the civilized whites, just as the Jews in the Old World had suffered for the murder of Christ. Yet, the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon enabled the prophet's anti-self to violently destroy a fantastic image of his own civilization.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, the narrative triumph of the seer's antagonist is strikingly appropriate, as only the anti-self could have produced a counterfeit Bible.

### Chapter 3: An "Old Slur"

The Mormons consider Indians to be the Lamanites of *The Book of Mormon*, Hebrews who traveled to North America over a 1,500-year period, but who had become "loathsome" and "full of mischief" and "idle" through their "abominations and loss of belief." They thus perpetuated the old slur that Native Americans were descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, a belief perpetuated by those who could not accept that indigenous people could develop any degree of "civilization" without fertilization from the Old World.

*Jace Weaver (Cherokee)*<sup>56</sup>

The Book of Mormon was not a novel culture-free revelation of the word of God to a farm boy in upper state New York in the late 1820s.<sup>57</sup> Instead, it is a creative work of human imagination that reflected and reshaped the biblical hermeneutics of Joseph Smith's nineteenth century cultural environment. Most specifically it drew upon and contributed to a long tradition of European and European American speculation about the origins, history, and biology of the people they called the American Indians. The textual remaking of the American past in the Book of Mormon exemplifies the efforts by European conquerors and colonists to "transform this 'New' world and its inhabitants, into a likeness of the old."<sup>58</sup> These efforts to remake America's past in an Old World image buttressed, legitimized, and rationalized the political and military conquests of indigenous peoples. The LDS scripture contains unmistakable evidence of a nineteenth century human element in its production. The human element was clearly rooted in the culture of European colonizers and their fantasies and nightmares of the people they called Indians.

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<sup>56</sup> Weaver, "Missions and Missionaries," 348.

<sup>57</sup> Anthropological inquiry is not suited to discerning the extent of divine involvement in the production of the Book of Mormon but it is well suited to identifying the human elements.

<sup>58</sup> Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 10.

Jace Weaver (Cherokee), an attorney and assistant professor in the Religious Studies Department and American Studies Program at Yale University, traces racism in Christian missions to the biblical hermeneutics of European colonizers. "From the outset of the invasion of the continent, the Bible was read in a manner oppressive of indigenous peoples and employed to justify conquest."<sup>59</sup> Challenged by the lack of references to continents beyond Africa, Asia, and Europe, many Europeans chose to reinterpret rather than accept the incompleteness of their sacred narrative. They cast Indians in familiar but inferior roles drawn from the peoples of the Bible, rejecting the unfamiliar narratives of the Indian's own history. Weaver's observation that "it is not enough for the colonizer to control the present and future of the colonized, he must rewrite the past as well" accurately describes the social function of the speculations on Indian origins the Book of Mormon joined in 1830.<sup>60</sup>

### **A Theological Crisis**

Mormon Historian Dan Vogel has traced the historical roots of the Book of Mormon's claims about American Indian origins from the nineteenth century myths of the ancient race of white Mound Builders back to the sixteenth century speculations on Indian origins. Vogel's intent is "to outline the broad contours of public discussion about the ancient inhabitants of America which had been taking place by 1830 when the Book of Mormon first appeared."<sup>61</sup> European encounters with Indians in the New World posed

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<sup>59</sup> Jace Weaver, "From I-Hermeneutics." 7.

<sup>60</sup> Jace Weaver, "Original Simplicities and Present Complexities: Reinold Niebuhr, Ethnocentrism, and the Myth of American Exceptionalism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (Summer, 1995): 245.

<sup>61</sup> Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 5.

a theological crisis that raged well into the middle part of the nineteenth century until it was superseded by the crisis of Darwinian evolution. Simply put, the problem was that the Biblical narrative was silent on two continents full of people. How could it possibly be a universal account of humanity and remain ignorant of the existence of the people in the Western hemisphere of the world? As we have already seen part of Smith's response was to blame this lacunae on American Indians and their hostility to sacred narratives, rather than locating the dilemma within the faults of his own tradition. The Book of Mormon's images of Lamanites are deeply rooted in this centuries old Christian debate over the origins of American Indians.

In his moral critique of European colonization French literary critic Tzvetan Todorov finds the cultural models of subsequent images of Indians prefigured in the actions and presumptions of Christopher Columbus during the first stages of the conquest of America. In 1492, Todorov observes, Spain "repudiates its interior Other by triumphing over the Moors and by forcing the Jews to leave its territory; and it discovers the exterior Other" in America. In his letters to Queen Isabella, Columbus repeatedly linked his voyage to this expulsion of Jews. "Thus, after having driven all the Jews out of your realms and dominions, Your Highness in this same month of January commanded me to set out with a sufficient armada to the said countries of India" (6/11/1492). Even before the mariner embarked on his famous voyage, he had already formed his expectations of who he might find. He selected as his interpreter Luis de Torres, a converted Jew who reportedly spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, and some Arabic.<sup>62</sup> Columbus' surviving copy of Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi* even includes extensive marginal notes

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<sup>62</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* Richard Howard, trans. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1984), 50.

on the two apocryphal books of *Esdras*, a principal source material on the lost tribes of Israel.<sup>63</sup> Todorov observes that Spanish expulsion and discovery were “directed in opposite, and complementary directions: one expels heterogeneity from the body of Spain, the other irremediably introduces it there.”<sup>64</sup> Columbus presumed that he had found a western route to the Indies and drew upon familiar images of difference between Jews and Christians as he sought to make sense out of the unfamiliarity of those he called Indians.

A theological crisis in Christian discourse grew when European explorers in the sixteenth century confirmed speculations of Columbus’ geographical error. In 1512 Pope Julius II had declared that despite speculations to the contrary Indians were indeed human descendents of Adam and Eve, via the Babylonians.<sup>65</sup> The Pope’s declaration hardly quelled debate as discoveries in the following years raised new questions. Spanish conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa reached the Pacific shore in 1513 and Portuguese explorer Ferdinand de Magellan’s voyage around the world in 1519-1522 confirmed the existence of a vast sea west of the Americas.<sup>66</sup> It became apparent that Columbus had not made a voyage to the Indies but instead had stumbled upon an enormous landmass apparently unknown to European geographers. Christian debates over the next several centuries focused on the sources of Indian origins, implications for scripture and belief, and the relationship of Indians to the gospel.

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<sup>63</sup> Ronald Sanders, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 77-79. A Jewish historian, Sanders (102), locates the roots of American racism in the dualistic image of Columbus as the Christ-bearer and the people in the New World who formed “the warlike multitude against him (as) the bearers of the mark ... the curse of Cain.”

<sup>64</sup> Todorov, *Conquest of America*, 50.

<sup>65</sup> Weaver, “From I-Hermeneutics,” 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Myth and Method in the Study of American Indians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

The ideas discussed in these debates prefigured many of the major claims about Indians that would later appear in the Book of Mormon. 1) Europeans repeatedly employed claims about Indian origins as tools to defend the Christian gospel against skepticism. 2) Linkages to various peoples of the Christian Old Testament tied Indians to foreign histories that legitimated the culture of the conquerors at the expense of indigenous culture. 3) The most popular idea by the nineteenth century was that Indians were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. 4) Another common proposition was that Indians had traveled to the Americas after a dispersal following the construction of the Tower of Babel, sometimes as descendants of Ham. This claim helped explain how plants and animals had colonized the Americas after a global flood. 5) Many authors attempted to account for variations in human skin color. Climatic and environmental explanations appear to have been quite popular. Some authors advocated the belief that God cursed Africans and in a few cases Indians (as descendants of Ham) with a life of servitude marked by their dark skin. 6) Ministers and explorers sought to explain the monumental evidence of complex societies in the Americas by attributing them to an ancient white civilization of mound builders, destroyed by barbarous invading ancestors of the American Indians. 6) Numerous clergymen and others found what they believed was evidence that Judaism and even Christianity had been preached in ancient America. Some people even linked that evangelization to the ancient visit of a white man, believed by Indians to be a God (usually associated with the Aztec God Quetzalcoatl). 7) Authors tied American Indians to the seed of Abraham and Jacob (envisioned in male terms) and

promised their restoration as part of Israel. They advocated Christian evangelization of Indians as a means of restoring them to their lost heritage.<sup>67</sup>

### *Indians and the Biblical Lacunae*

The account by French Calvinist missionary Jean de Léry, a member of the first Protestant mission to proselytize in the New World, exemplifies the close connection that developed between defending the faith and linking Indians to biblical narratives. Jean de Léry failed as a missionary to the Nambikwara in the Portuguese colony of Brazil in 1556 and returned to France and began to write his account in 1563 (published in 1578). As his narrative turns to the origins of American Indians he notes that atheists and Epicureans used the lack of biblical connections as reason to question the existence of God, but he prefers to speculate that Indians descended from Ham, the son of Noah, from whom they

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<sup>67</sup> The best overview of pre-1830 ideas about American Indians is available in Vogel, *Indian Origins*. Additional valuable summaries are available. Allen H. Godbey, *The Lost Tribes a Myth: Suggestions towards Rewriting Hebrew History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1930). Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964). Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians, European Concepts 1492-1729* (Austin: Institute for Latin American Studies, University of Texas Press, 1967). I am not proposing Joseph Smith read the numerous books and newspaper articles that provide a documentary record of these ideas, rather that the concepts represented in these sources were a common part of Smith's cultural environment. While the Book of Mormon does share much in common with the writings of Solomon Spalding and Ethan Smith, it appears to be an original production of the Mormon prophet. The peculiar weaving of disparate ideas into a narrative form and the numerous autobiographical elements identified by Fawn Brodie, Robert D. Anderson, and William D. Morain strongly indicate that the Mormon seer did not plagiarize from Spalding or E. Smith as some critics have contended. While Ethan Smith may have directly influenced the prophet, the most obvious inspiration was the King James Bible. Yet, Smith's interpretations of the Bible owe more to the racist imagery of colonial and antebellum biblical hermeneutics than they do to that of the biblical text itself.

inherited a curse of servitude, thus confirming his belief in the Almighty.<sup>68</sup> English historian Anthony Pagden observes that de Léry and other European authors failed in their efforts to understand Indians because their images of otherness ultimately revealed more about themselves than about those they represented.<sup>69</sup> This view is echoed by Phil Deloria, “it has become a truism that such images of good and bad Indians reveal more about the people who created them than they do about native people themselves.”<sup>70</sup> This application of a purportedly divine curse on others became a revealing and popular colonial motif for confirming one’s belief in the face of contradictory evidence, useful in the justification of African slavery and the subjugation of American Indians.

Various explanations for the origins of American Indians arose among European scholars, theologians, and laymen. Ideas ranged from assertions of an independent pre-Adamite creation, connections with the lost continent of Atlantis, descent from each of the three sons of Noah, and dispersion after the debacle at the tower of Babel. Various authors found Indian origins among Phoenicians, Carthagians, Tartars, Welsh, Mongolians, Siberians, Tyre, and other Old World peoples. The most popular explanation by the nineteenth century was the belief that Indians descended from the lost tribes of Israel.<sup>71</sup> With each of these alleged connections Europeans sought to make the unfamiliar Indians into a more familiar image consistent with models of human difference from classical or biblical sources. This controversy raged particularly fiercely in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in New England. Mormon historian Dan Vogel

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<sup>68</sup> Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America* Janet Whatley, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 150-151.

<sup>69</sup> Pagden, *European Encounters*, 186-187.

<sup>70</sup> Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 20.

<sup>71</sup> Robert E. Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 36.

and Lutheran minister Robert N. Hullinger have traced the continuation of this debate to the books, libraries, and newspapers of Joseph Smith's early cultural environment.<sup>72</sup>

By linking American Indians to the people of the Old World Christians hoped to quell the rising tide of skepticism that de L ry had noted as early as the sixteenth century. Debates over Indian origins kept the controversy alive well into the nineteenth century as advocates of the pre-Adamite theory or a separate creation drew charges of atheism from their pious critics.<sup>73</sup> By the late eighteenth century the Deist movement represented most widely by Thomas Paine's series of pamphlets on the *Age of Reason* (1794-1795) brought the issue of skepticism directly to Joseph Smith, Jr.'s community and family. Paine's pamphlets, which also received the unwarranted charge of atheism, defended the reasonableness of a belief in God but challenged the Bible as mythology and hearsay.<sup>74</sup> The Joseph Smith family, like many others, found themselves embroiled in this controversy. Asael Smith (grandfather of the Mormon prophet) confronted his son Joseph Smith Sr. with a copy of Paine's pamphlet when he heard that his son was attending Methodist services.<sup>75</sup> Local newspapers in Palmyra, nearby tract societies, and revivals in the 1820s kept the Christian and Deist debate alive during the young prophet's formative years.<sup>76</sup> Smith would answer the skeptics with the title page of the 1830 Book of Mormon that declared its purpose; "to shew unto the remnant of the House of Israel how great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile

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<sup>72</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*. Robert N. Hullinger, *Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1992).

<sup>73</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 38-39.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, Part I (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1957[1794]).

<sup>75</sup> Hullinger, *Joseph Smith's Response*, 35-36.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.”<sup>77</sup> This new scripture, Smith hoped, would quell the tide of skepticism by providing direct evidence of the biblical origins of Indians and their connection to the Christian God.

### *Hebrew Origins*

The claim of an Indian connection to the lost tribes of Israel makes its most direct influence on Joseph Smith’s cultural environment through the publications of Congregationalist minister Ethan Smith, who in turn was deeply indebted to a series of authors stretching back to the seventeenth century.<sup>78</sup> The first author to introduce English readers to the idea of an Israelite origin of American Indians was the English theologian Thomas Thorowgood. In *Jews in America* (London, 1650 & 1652) he repeats accounts of an alleged discovery of ten tribes in Peru, suggests that the Christian gospel was preached anciently in America, and emphasizes the millennial importance of Indian conversion to Christianity. Presbyterian clergyman Charles Beatty’s *Journal of Two Months Tour* (London, 1768; Edinburgh, 1798) also favored an Indian-Israelite connection and made comparisons between the Law of Moses and Indian customs. Congregationalist clergyman Samuel Sewall in *Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica* (Boston, 1697 & 1727) suggests an Israelite origin of Indians, proposed that a New Jerusalem would be

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, NY: E. B. Grandin, 1830).

<sup>78</sup> Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews: or the Tribes of Israel in America*. (Poultney, Vermont: Smith and Smith, 1825). James Adair, *Adair’s History of the American Indians* Samuel Cole Williams, ed. (Johnson City, Tennessee: Watauga Press, 1930[1775]). Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West; or A Humble Attempt To Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to the Return to their Beloved City, Jerusalem*. (Trenton, New Jersey: D. Fenton and S. Hutchinson & J. Dunham, 1816). Reprinted by Books for Libraries Press in Freeport, New York, 1970.

built in America, and indicates his belief that Indians were the “other sheep” Jesus indicated his intent to visit in John 10:16. John Eliot, Cotton Mather, William Penn, and Jonathan Edwards also joined the chorus advocating an Indian origin in ancient Israel. Ethan Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) would build upon the ideas of previous authors and exemplify the popularity of an Israelite origin in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>79</sup>

Nineteenth century speculations on Indian origins were deeply indebted to the Indian trader James Adair in the late eighteenth century. The well-educated James Adair had studied Hebrew and learned a number of tribal languages while living as a trader among Cherokee, Catawba, and Chickasaw for nearly forty years. Adair’s *History of the American Indians* (London, 1775) outlined a variety of parallels he saw between Indian and Hebrew customs and similarities he found between Hebrew and various corrupted terms in native languages.<sup>80</sup> The French Huguenot Elias Boudinot, president of the Continental Congress, member of the House of Representatives, and founding president of the American Bible Society, repeated and amplified Adair’s arguments in *A Star in the West* (Trenton, NJ, 1816). Boudinot expressed his objective to be a defense of the Indians and an attempt to save them from extinction. Boudinot reported “our southern Indians ... have it handed down from their ancestors, that the book which the white people have was

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<sup>79</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 107, 126, 128-129. Godbey, *Lost Tribes a Myth*, 2. Samuel Cole Williams, “Introduction: James Adair, the Man,” in *Adair’s History of the American Indians*, edited by Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, Tennessee: Watauga Press, 1930), xxix. Gershon Greenberg, *The Holy Land in American Religious Thought, 1620-1948* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 62.

<sup>80</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 1, edited by Allen Johnson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956[1928]), 33. Williams, “James Adair, the Man.” Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 105.

once theirs.”<sup>81</sup> Ethan Smith, a pastor in Hopkinton, New Hampshire and later a minister of the Congregational Church in Poultney, Vermont, wrote and edited several books, the best known of which was *View of the Hebrews* (Poultney, VT, 1823 & 1825). Smith summarizes the arguments of previous authors, includes apocalyptic interpretations of the prophecies of Isaiah, repeats stories of a lost Indian book of God, and integrates the theory of an Indian-Israelite origin with the myth of an ancient white race of mound builders.<sup>82</sup> The Book of Mormon’s proposition that Indians descended from ancient Israel drew upon a widespread tradition of theological speculation in colonial and antebellum America.

### *Curse of Canaan*

Colonial biblical hermeneutics provided not only the idea that American Indians were descended from lost Israelites but also the idea that a dark skin was a curse from God for sinfulness. While the association of a black skin with Noah’s curse of Canaan from Gen. 9 was widespread in colonial America, its earliest origins are a matter of considerable scholarly dispute.<sup>83</sup> The Genesis account does not make an explicit linkage between the curse of Ham, Canaan, or Cain and skin color, a fact noted by Protestant

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<sup>81</sup> Boudinot, *Star in the West*, 110-111. *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 2, edited by Allen Johnson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957[1929]), 477-478. Greenberg, *Holy Land*, 66-67. Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (New York: Penguin, 1984), 138-139.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, *View of the Hebrews*. Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 127. Greenberg, *Holy Land*, 67-70. Charles D. Tate, Jr. “Introduction,” in *View of the Hebrews: 1825 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, edited by Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1996), ix-xxvi.

<sup>83</sup> Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*. David H. Aaron, “Early Rabbinic Exegesis on Noah’s Son Ham and the So-Called ‘Hamitic Myth,’” *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 63 (Winter 1995): 721-759. Steven L. McKenzie, “Response: The Curse of Ham and David H. Aaron,” *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 65 (Spring 1997): 183-186.

abolitionists in the nineteenth century and LDS sociologist Armand Mauss in 1967.<sup>84</sup>

Yet, Stephen R. Haynes, Chair of Religious Studies at Rhodes College, notes that by the 1830s “Noah’s curse had become a stock weapon in the arsenal of slavery’s apologists, and references to Genesis 9 appeared prominently in their publications.”<sup>85</sup> Noah’s curse played a key role in racially charged biblical hermeneutics, reaching its most prominent position in antebellum America at precisely the time period that Smith published his scriptural narratives (Book of Mormon, Book of Abraham, and Book of Moses) in which curses and dark skin would play such a significant role. While the racism inherent in Smith’s portrayals of Indians and Africans was widespread in his time and place, these views were rooted more in biblical exegesis than in the scriptural narrative itself. Consequently, they would prove easier to abandon in mainstream Christianity after the Civil War (despite a mid-twentieth century revival in defense of segregation) than they would in Mormonism. By incorporating racist biblical exegesis into new productions of the word of God, Smith produced a nearly intractable dilemma that continues to plague Mormonism.<sup>86</sup>

The ninth and tenth chapters of Genesis, initially a model of the human geography of the ancient Near East, provided European colonists with a prototype of human genealogy and geography that they applied to the world they encountered as they

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<sup>84</sup> Armand Mauss, “Mormonism and the Negro: Faith Folklore, and Civil Rights,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (Winter 1967): 19-39, reprinted in *Neither White nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church*, Lester E. Bush and Armand L. Mauss, eds. (Midvale, UT: Signature, 1984), 14. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*.

<sup>85</sup> Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*, 8.

<sup>86</sup> For an example of the way this view continues to plague Mormonism see the cartoon in *The Daily of the University of Washington*, 25 Oct. 2001, 4. The cartoon depicts two white Mormons wearing capes, grimacing, with fists outstretched. The captions read “Knocking down heaven’s door,” “Attack of the Mormons!,” “God punished the sinners and gave them dark skin,” “Join us,” “From the depths of Utah!!!” Thanks to Ylva Hernlund for bringing this cartoon to my attention.

expanded their colonial empires. The authors of these two chapters of Genesis (known to scholars today as J & P), writing between the tenth and sixth centuries BCE, attributed the peopling of the whole earth to the three sons of Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. As knowledge of greater parts of the world increased and readers of the biblical narratives became less familiar with the specific peoples of the ancient Near East identified in the biblical text the attributions of origins to the three sons of Noah varied considerably. By the age of European exploration the most common assumptions were that Africans could trace their heritage to Ham, Asians could trace theirs to Shem, and Europeans to Japheth. American Indians, though, did not fit neatly into these diasporas. By the early nineteenth century Americans were consistently reading these chapters of Genesis as accounts of human racial origins, with racial distinctions sanctioned by God.<sup>87</sup> Yet, David H. Aaron, Assistant Professor of Religion at Wellesley College, reminds readers today, “It is extremely important to note that *racial characteristics, physical types, or the color of skin play absolutely no role in the identification of groups* [in Genesis 10].”<sup>88</sup>

Joseph Smith would take nineteenth century ideas that associated the curses of Cain and Canaan with dark skin and project them back into the ancient past, attributing the status of the word of God to folk interpretations of Genesis. In Gen. 4 Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, killed his brother Abel. In response the Lord cursed Cain to be a fugitive and a wanderer and placed a mark upon him. Haynes observes, “The suggestion that Cain’s mark was blackness was advanced in eighteenth century Europe and was popularized a century later in America by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*, 5-6.

<sup>88</sup> Aaron, “Early Rabbinic Exegesis,” 731. Emphasis in original.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

In Gen. 9:21-26 Ham, identified as the father of Canaan, saw his father drunk and naked. He reported this exposure to his brothers who responded by covering their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke he cursed Canaan to serve as a slave to his brothers and blessed Shem and Japheth. Noah's curse was one of slavery and had no direct association with skin color. The application of a dark skin as a curse on Laman's descendants in the Americas during the sixth century BCE appears to draw from an anachronistic reading of the biblical text that owes more to the racist biblical hermeneutics of nineteenth century American Christianity than to the scriptural narratives said to be contained on the brass plates stolen from Laban. The association of the curse of Canaan with Ham and with dark skin would first appear well after Lehi and his party reportedly left Jerusalem.

The biblical account of Noah's curse reflects the socio-political dynamics between ancient Israel and Canaan while subsequent interpretations would adapt this narrative for use in explaining new forms of social and political conflict. Not until the third and fourth centuries CE do the interpretations of the story begin to reflect a perennial curse on Hamites. While there is much debate over the extent to which early Judaic sources associated the curse with blackness, scholars on both sides of the debate attribute this association to developments well after Lehi reportedly left Jerusalem.<sup>90</sup> For example, Steven L. McKenzie of Rhodes College favors an early association in rabbinic literature, but clearly notes,

Because some of Ham's descendants, notably Cush, are black (see Gen. 10:6-14), the 'curse of Ham' has been interpreted as black (Negroid) skin color and features in order to legitimate slavery and oppression of people of African origin. This interpretation occurs first in the Talmud and has persisted in certain circles. It is

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 6-7, 24-27. Aaron, "Early Rabbinic Exegesis." McKenzie, "Response."

also reflected in the post-biblical Christian tradition of three Magi, one of whom is black, in parallel to Noah's three sons.<sup>91</sup>

Haynes dates these early linkages of Ham, sin, and African skin color in the Talmud and other sources of rabbinic and Christian literature to the second and third centuries CE, hundreds of years after the Lehite departure from Jerusalem.<sup>92</sup> The association of the curse of Ham with sin and skin color of American Indians would not occur until more than a millennium later. The appearance of a dark skin as a curse in the Book of Mormon is clearly anachronistic, reflective of a modern rather than ancient origin.<sup>93</sup>

Haynes describes the legend of Noah and his sons as “a meta-text in the European Middle Ages.” In these medieval interpretations the cultural ideas that inform the Book of Mormon take their shape.

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<sup>91</sup> McKenzie, “Response,” 184.

<sup>92</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 25.

<sup>93</sup> Juliann Reynolds responded to anti-Mormon critics Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson's *Mormonism 101* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000) by offering “an abbreviated tour of the Bible” in which she cited a series of passages (Daniel 12:10; Job 30:25, 30; Joel 2:6; Psalms 51:7) that “use black and white as symbolic references to good and evil.” See Juliann Reynolds, “Lamanites, the Seed of Cain, and Polygamy,” Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, <http://www.fair-lds.org> (retrieved electronically July 23, 2002). While I agree with her intent to critique evangelical Christians for ignoring the racist legacy of their own traditions while singling out Mormon racism, symbolic discussions of being purified and made white are a far cry from the explicit shifts in skin color described in the Book of Mormon. In the two passages she cites that might be pre-exilic, the association with skin color is weak and the reference to white and black clearly symbolic. The book of Joel may date to the eighth century BCE but the reference to blackness appears to refer to ‘gloom’ (as noted in footnotes of 1979 LDS Bible). Psalms are very difficult to date and many are probably pre-exilic yet the reference appears to be a symbolic allusion to the effects of washing. The passages in Job and Daniel with closer associations with skin most likely date to exilic and postexilic periods. Her association of evil and black skin in Job requires stringing passages from two disparate verses together, a tactic of McKeever's and Johnson's that she decries. A closer reading of the text does not warrant such association. The passage from Daniel 12:10 appears the closest in meaning to the ideas in the Book of Mormon. The passage refers to a time when “many shall be purified, and made white.” A similar reference appears in Daniel 11:35. The association still appears to be symbolic but even if it is not scholars date the Book of Daniel to the second century BCE, several centuries after the departure of the Lehite party. On the dating of biblical texts see the articles in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 207, 244, 283, 345.

It was relied upon to explain the provenance of servitude, the dispersion of human beings after the Flood, and the structure of medieval society. In fact, medieval exegetes did not so much interpret the story of Noah and his sons as mine it for clues to the origins of postdiluvian phenomena. John Cassian (360-435) claimed that Ham learned magic from the daughters of Cain, inscribing its secrets on plates that would survive the flood. Others linked Ham's descendants with Zoroastrianism (Gregory of Tours, 540-94), with the inhabitants of Sodom (Venerable Bede, ca. 642-735, following Genesis 10:19), with infidels (Rabanus Maurus, 776-856), and with unbelieving Jews (Augustine, Jerome, Rabanus, Bede, Hillary, et al.).<sup>94</sup>

The story of Noah and his sons provided a fertile ground of imagery for modeling the social world in medieval Europe. These interpretations prefigured key imagery from Mormon scripture through associations with magic, Cain, secret plates, sin, and unbelieving Jews.

Muslim theologians in the tenth century may have been the first to employ the biblical story of Ham in a religious justification of the enslavement of blacks. Historian Bernard Lewis explains the original logic for this new biblical interpretation:

In the biblical version (Genesis 9:1-27) the curse is servitude, not blackness, and it falls on Canaan, the youngest son of Ham, and not on his other sons, including Kush, later seen as ancestor of the blacks. The rationale of the story is obvious—the slaves of the Israelites were their near kinsmen the Canaanites, and a religious (i.e. ideological) justification was required for their enslavement, hence the story of the curse of Canaan. The slaves of the Arabs were not Canaanites but blacks—so the curse was transferred to them, and blackness added to servitude as part of the hereditary burden.<sup>95</sup>

When Europeans began enslaving Indians and Africans during the colonization of the New World, they would employ similar interpretations.

Relationships between Noah and his sons became a key component in Protestant interpretations of the curse. Reformer Martin Luther uses the story to advocate a model

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>95</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 55.

for relations between parents and children. Luther praised the respect that Shem and Japeth showed for their father. He condemned Ham, attributing laughter to him, noting that his mockery of Noah “points to a heart that despises not only its parent but also the commands of God.” Luther accuses Ham of harboring the “the bitter hatred of Satan.” In response to Ham’s contempt for his father, God “hates him with the utmost hatred.”<sup>96</sup> The Mormon association of the curse with parent child relations, sibling rivalry, mockery, a despising heart, and hatred are prefigured in prominent Protestant biblical hermeneutics.

The Christian racialization of the curse of Ham coincides with the European explorations of the fifteenth century. Earlier commentators had associated the curse with geography and physical features but the concept of distinctive races of humanity took form during European encounters with human diversity during colonization. Writing in the mid-fifteenth century Portuguese scholar Gomes Eanes de Azurara attributed the servitude of non-Muslim “Moors” to the curse, “which, after the Deluge, Noah laid upon his son Cain [*sic*], cursing him in this way:--that his race should be subject to all other races of the world. And from this race these blacks are descended.”<sup>97</sup> After his sea voyage in 1577 Englishman George Best found in Blacks a “natural infection” rooted in Ham’s disobedience and the curse upon his son that “all his posterity after him should be so black and loathsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the world.”<sup>98</sup> The subsequent popularity of this view in the early United States is exemplified by Frederick Dalcho’s 1823 publication, *Practical Considerations Founded on the Scriptures Relative to the Slave Population of South-Carolina*. He speculates, “that the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>98</sup> Sanders, *Lost Tribes*, 223-224. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*, 36.

negroes, the descendants of Ham, lost their freedom through the abominable wickedness of their progenitor. ... Canaan's whole race ... were peculiarly wicked, and obnoxious to the wrath of God."<sup>99</sup> Racialization of the legend laid the intellectual foundation for "racist-driven genocides ... compulsively steeped in ancient mythic notions of bloodlines and national origin."<sup>100</sup>

A biblical dictionary by Augustin Calmet (1682-1757), first published in France in 1722 and in its seventh American edition by 1832, claimed that Ham's name meant "burnt, swarthy, or black," thereby perpetuating the idea of Ham's ridicule of his father, and linking Ham with blackness and slavery.<sup>101</sup> A Bible commentary by Matthew Henry (1662-1714), an English theologian with immense popularity in America, and another by Adam Clarke (published between 1817 and 1825) emphasized Ham's mockery of his father Noah as cause for the curse. Curses and dark skin were well established in colonial traditions as a leitmotif for linking familial and racial conflict; thus, the application of this hermeneutic to American Indians is not surprising.

### *The Serviceable Indian*

Europeans and American colonists debated the legend of Noah's applicability to questions of Indian origins, skin color, and suitability for servitude for three centuries prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon. The French Calvinist de Léry in his mid-sixteenth century defense of his faith was only one of many to apply the curse of Ham to American Indians. Mark Lescarbot's *Nova Francia* considers the possibility but doubts

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<sup>99</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 71.

<sup>100</sup> William F.S. Miles, "Hamites and Hebrews: Problems in 'Judaizing' the Rwandan Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 2 (March, 2000): 113. Cited in Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 172.

<sup>101</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 38.

that Indians descended from and inherited the curse of Canaan. His 1609 English translator Pierre Erondelle, though, supported the Canaanite origin, a view emphasized in his more derogatory portrait of Indians.<sup>102</sup> Sir George Peckham had prepared the English for such a view when he claimed in 1583 (reprinted in 1589) the same prerogative for the English that the Israelites had enjoyed in Canaan. Alfred A. Cave, historian from the University of Toledo, summarizes Peckham's viewpoint.

The invasion of Canaan by the Hosts of Israel, the extermination of Canaanite resisters, and the subsequent use of those who submitted as "drudges to hewe wood and carie water" for God's Elect, in Peckham's mind, afforded ample precedent for the English successors to God's favor in their dealings with the "heathens" and "idolaters" who dwelt in the New World Canaan. ... The Indians, he argued, would benefit greatly from colonization. Not only would they learn English "arts and sciences" and thereby raise their standard of living, but under Christian tutelage they would be led "from superstitious idolatrie to sincere Christianity, from the divell to Christ, from hell to heaven."<sup>103</sup>

For Peckham, the exchange of the gospel for the servitude of Indians was a fair trade.

English elite expected Indians to find liberation through subjugation to Christians. Richard Eden, a royal official and graduate of Cambridge, used his 1555 translation of Peter Martyr's *De Novo Orbe* as an opportunity to comment on the legality of colonial conquest in the Indies. Drawing from Ginés de Sepúlveda he portrayed Indians as unfit for freedom and represented their subjugation to the Spanish crown and Catholic Church as justifiable and beneficial. He defended forced labor, contending that as "bondsmen" to

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<sup>102</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 119.

<sup>103</sup> Alfred E. Cave, "Canaanites in a Promised Land: The American Indian and the Providential Theory of Empire," *American Indian Quarterly* 12 (Fall 1988): 282.

their Christian overseers, the Indians enjoyed a freedom unavailable in their natural state.<sup>104</sup>

Early English colonists in Virginia often envisioned Indians as cursed Canaanites in a promised land. Anglican divine, Robert Gray, employed Joshua 17's discussion of the expulsion of Canaanites from the hill country, in his widely circulated sermon tract *A Good Speed to Virginia* (1609) to claim that God had offered Virginia to the English as their Canaan. Reverend William Symonds, in another 1609 sermon, advocated similar views. He declared the New World as God's gift of a promised land and advocated the biblical conquest of Canaan as a model for English treatment of their Indian foes. Robert Johnson, an investor in the Jamestown enterprise, joined this chorus in 1609 declaring Indians "a wild and savage people." Ignorant of actual Indian culture, he claimed that Indians failed to heed God's command to cultivate the soil and "like beasts in the forest ... range and wander up and downe the countrey, without any law or government." Johnson incorporated the natives of Virginia into the biblical epic as those elements of "the race and progeny of Noah" cast out "like unprofitable seed upon the dust of the earth" bearing the Almighty's "heavie curse and punishment." He represented the English as liberators carrying out God's will to "remove that heavie yoke of bondage" from savages who would accept the Christian gospel. William Strachey, Secretary of the Virginia colony, elaborated upon this view in 1612 in his *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*. Alfred Cave summarizes Strachey's perspective.

He traced the beginnings of Indian degradation and redemption to the sin of Ham, who according to the Book of Genesis, had provoked the wrath of the Lord by exposing and mocking the nakedness of his drunken father, Noah. Driven into

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<sup>104</sup> Cave, "Canaanites in a Promised Land," 279.

exile and condemned to wander the earth under God's curse, Ham taught his children to worship devils. In consequence the Indian descendants of Ham were "so grosse and barbarous" that they resembled "the brute beasts," although closer scrutiny revealed that they still retained some faint remnants of "the impression of the divine nature." God, Strachey declared, had summoned the English to Virginia to "informe them of the true God, and the waie to their salvation." In order to carry out that divinely appointed task, the colonists must replace the degenerate Indian religion with the English church and state. Strachey believed the chief obstacle to the reduction of the Virginia Indians to "civilitie" was the Indian priesthood. He falsely accused the medicine men of persuading their misguided followers to sacrifice their children to the devil, and described them as hard core opponents of English rule. Furthermore, Strachey called for the extermination of Indian religious leaders.<sup>105</sup>

In Strachey's view the curse warranted the destruction of Indian leaders and their cultural traditions.

Other commentators advocated a more wholesale extermination of Indians in an English America. William Symonds contended that the Almighty "putteth away all the ungodly of the earth like drosse. . . . It is God's ordinance to bring a curse upon them and to kill them as the children of Israel did Balaam." Robert Gray advocated an initial effort to convert Indians yet Indians who failed to embrace English civilization and Christianity fared a deathly fate. Drawing upon scriptural precept, Gray encouraged the English to execute God's wrath upon the Indians, as the Israelites had done to the Canaanites. He reminded the English that Saul lost his kingdom and posterity because he spared the idolatrous Amelichite king Agog. Colonists in Virginia must not make the same mistake. They should destroy the "Idolaters whom God hateth."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Cave, "Canaanites in a Promised Land," 283-285. Strachey's *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, while written in 1612, was not published until 1849. It is still relevant to this discussion as an example of English cultural perceptions of the Indians. I am not arguing that Joseph Smith read Strachey or any of the other authors addressed, only that these authors represent the cultural milieu that preceded the publication of the Book of Mormon. See also Weaver, "Original Simplicities," 235-236.

<sup>106</sup> Cave, "Canaanites in a Promised Land," 286.

Similar views were debated for over two centuries throughout New England and into Europe. Preaching to the Virginia Company in 1610 Puritan divine William Crashaw noted that while God commanded the Israelites to kill “the cursed Canaanites, we have no such commaundement touching the Virginians.” Rather than destroying idolaters, Crashaw advocated saving Indian souls.<sup>107</sup> In London John White contended in 1630 that Indians descended from Ham, but not his son Canaan and thereby were exempted from the curse.<sup>108</sup> John Winthrop records the difficulties faced by the courts of Connecticut and Massachusetts as they tried to contain those who “would have the Indians rooted out, as being of the cursed race of Ham.”<sup>109</sup> In *The Serviceable Man* (Boston, 1690) Cotton Matther advocated the idea of an ancient Indian migration to the New World as Canaanites after their expulsion by Joshua as a means of justifying their status as inheritors of the curse of Gen. 9:27 and thus New England’s “serviceable man.”<sup>110</sup> In Samuel Sewall’s Boston publications of 1697, 1710, and 1727 he argues against Indian descent from Canaan, favoring an Israelite origin instead. He suggests that the New Jerusalem would be in America, that the “other sheep” mentioned in John 10:16 were American Indians, and rejects the idea that the curse of Gen. 9:27 legitimated Puritan subjugation of Indians.<sup>111</sup> In an address to the Connecticut General Assembly in

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 286-287. Despite such calls for evangelization, the colonists in New England made little effort to convert Indians.

<sup>108</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 130.

<sup>109</sup> John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, edited by Richard S. Dunn, et al. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 341. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed. *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, Vol. 1, 1628-1641* (Boston: William White, 1853), 305. Sanders, *Lost Tribes*, 413 claims that Winthrop’s view “is a rare instance of that notion of a racial tint being applied to the Indian.” Yet, he overlooked its use among French Calvinists and more broadly among Puritans. Cave’s and Vogel’s subsequent research has demonstrated that an application to Indians in New England was more common than Sanders recognized.

<sup>110</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 121-122.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 126.

1783 Ezra Stiles, the seventh president of Yale University propounded the idea that Indians were “Canaanites of the expulsion of Joshua.”<sup>112</sup> In William Bartram’s *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida . . .*, etc. (published in London in 1766 but reprinted in Philadelphia in 1791 and in London and Dublin 1792-1794) the author speculated that the Indian mounds he encountered might have served a religious purpose comparable to the high places of the Canaanites.<sup>113</sup>

New England debates over the possibility of Canaanite origins of Indians are echoed in Joseph Smith’s association of subjugated Lamanites with a curse of a dark skin. The Book of Mormon identifies Lehi, patriarchal founder of subsequent populations, as a descendant of Joseph, the son of Jacob who had been sold into Egypt (1 Ne 5: 14). It reports the Lord’s promise of the preservation of the seed of Joseph and their restoration to the knowledge of the Lord (2 Ne 3:16; 3 Ne 5: 23). Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, purportedly translated from an Egyptian papyrus in 1842, would subsequently link all Egyptians (including Asenath, Joseph’s mother) to the curse of Ham (Abraham 1: 21-24). In fact, the central premise of the Book of Mormon, itself, is its prophesied role to facilitate the return of the descendants of Joseph to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the removal of the curse upon the Lamanites. Smith moderated the Canaanite connection by acceptance of the more popular alternative viewpoint of an Israelite origin but maintains a divinely ordained status for the subordination of Indians to white rule and a corresponding advocacy of the replacement of their culture with that of Christian conquerors.

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 26.

<sup>113</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 34-35, 40. Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 107.

When European explorers and colonists encountered unfamiliar people they called Indians, they sought to make sense out of the differences through reference to the familiarity of their own cultural traditions. Europeans tended to neglect Native stories of origin as they sought to fit Indians into their own narratives and own conceptions of themselves. Models of otherness from biblical traditions became the tools for understanding and representing the difference Europeans recognized between themselves and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Catholics and Protestants imagined Indians as various characters from biblical traditions: lost tribes of Israel, Canaanites, children of Ham, etc. Each of these images of otherness also included an inherent self-reference that elevated the status of white Christians above that of the people they portrayed. Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon drew from these disparate images to weave a composite narrative that assigned to the indigenous Americans a bit of each of the common nineteenth century versions of otherness. The Lamanites of the Book of Mormon would thus appear as fallen Israelites who bore the curse of Canaan.

## Chapter 4: Black and White Seed

We need to be more aware of the way ideas such as those in the conquest narratives [of the Old Testament] have made their way into Americans' consciousness and ideology. And only when we understand this process can those of us who have suffered from it know how to fight back. Many Puritan preachers were fond of referring to Native Americans as Amelkites and Canaanites—in other words, people who, if they would not be converted, were worthy of annihilation. By examining such instances in theological and political writings, in sermons, and elsewhere, we can understand how America's self-image as a "chosen people" has provided a rhetoric to mystify domination.

*Robert Warrior (Osage)*<sup>114</sup>

Joseph Smith's scriptural productions (Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, and Book of Abraham) were more than a reworking of mainstream Christian theories of cursed Canaanites in a promised land and lost tribes of Israel in America. The Mormon seer would draw upon folk magical legends of two seeds of Adam and Cain to draw a racialized portrait of Africans and American Indians. From speculative archaeology of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Smith would draw the plot of the Book of Mormon's contest of white and dark nations of mound builders. The biblical narrative itself would serve as fodder for an assumption of patrilineal authority embodied in a seminal seed. Each of these images of otherness was likewise an image of self that served the social and political function of elevating the status and authority of white men relative to that of Africans, Native Americans, and women. By portraying people in stark black and white categories these images proved to be more of a denial of self than an accurate representation of others.

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<sup>114</sup> Robert Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today," in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, edited by James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 99.

## Ham and the Seed of Cain

The Christian father Clement (ca. 150-215 CE) appears to be the source for the widespread medieval idea that Ham was the first magician. Medieval legends linked Ham's acquisition of magic to his sexual relations with the daughters of Cain, perpetuating the magical arts beyond the flood through inscription on plates.<sup>115</sup> European colonists seeking a justification in the eighteenth century for slavery in Brazil, Jamaica, South Carolina, and elsewhere attributed the mark of Cain's curse to the dark skin of both American Indians and Africans and distinguished between occultism of Ham and Adam.<sup>116</sup> A critical discussion of this justification of slavery by Elihu Coleman was reprinted in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1825[1733] as *Testimony Against that Anti-Christian Practice of Making Slaves of Men, Wherein it is Shewed to be Contrary to the Dispensation of the Law and Time of the Gospel, and Very Opposite to Grace and Nature*. Coleman registers his disagreement with folk interpretations linking Cain's mark and Canaan's servitude to black skin.

But some may object, as I myself have heard them, that there was a mark set upon Cain, and they do believe that these negroes are the posterity of Cain, because of their hair, and their being so black, differing from all others, and that Canaan was to be a servant of servants to his brethren, whom they take to be of the same lineage.<sup>117</sup>

Masonic mythology contained variations of legends distinguishing between two seeds of Adam through his sons Seth and Cain, more explicitly linking the curses of Cain and Ham.

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<sup>115</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 29-32.

<sup>116</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 15, 257-258. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 170-171, 236, 459-460. Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 142.

<sup>117</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 258.

In an 1823 version of this Masonic tale, published in London, Noah's son Ham became the new progenitor of a spurious Cainite Masonry after the flood. Enoch preserved the traditions of pure Masonry by burying them in an engraved text in an arched vault, awaiting subsequent discovery by Solomon. The spurious tradition reportedly survived in pagan mysteries while Masonic orders laid claim to the original pure mystery.<sup>118</sup> In his 1825 *View of the Hebrews* Ethan Smith claims Indians have a traditional notion of the "the death of Abel, by the murderous hand of Cain" and a "corrupt succession of the high priesthood in ancient Israel," possibly implying a linkage to Masonic mythology.<sup>119</sup> The best evidence for Smith's familiarity with this mythology, though, comes from his other scriptural productions.

Joseph Smith's revised translation of the Bible and his translation of Egyptian papyri would each give a version of this legend the stamp of scripture. Smith began a revision of the Bible in 1830 shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon. Part of this revision appears as the Book of Moses in the LDS canon. In this scriptural narrative the Lord identifies Cain as "the father of lies" and a lover of Satan, curses him, and the earth, places a mark upon him, and shut him off from the divine presence (Moses 5:18-56). This revision of the Bible places Enoch and the sons of Adam in opposition to a cursed antediluvian Canaan and the seed of Cain. In a vision the Lord showed Enoch the people of Canaan dwelling in tents, divided amongst themselves, in a cursed, hot, and barren land where "a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people." On the other hand, the Lord showed Enoch the blessed city of Zion, believers in a pre-advent Christianity who were "taken up into heaven" to be

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<sup>118</sup> Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 165.

<sup>119</sup> Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 88.

preserved from the flood. The residents of Zion “were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them” (Moses 7:6-22).

In the Book of Abraham that Smith claimed to translate from Egyptian papyri in 1842 he portrays Egyptians as descendants of Ham, “of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.” He attributes the discovery and founding of Egypt to Egyptus, a daughter of Ham, from whom “sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.” Noah had blessed the first Pharaoh (son of Egyptus) “with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood ... being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of the Priesthood” (Abraham 1:21-27). Jehovah promised Abraham that:

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. (Abraham 2:11)

As the keeper of “the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood” Smith’s Abraham claimed a knowledge of the creation of the world and another pre-advent belief in the Christian gospel (Abraham 1:31; 2-4). Smith’s later scriptural productions show continued development and reworking of the biblical narratives that had helped give form to the representations of sin, skin, and seed in the Book of Mormon.

*Red Devils and White Gods*

Calling American Indians Israelites was far from a complement coming from Christians with a long history of hatred and animosity toward Jews in Europe. The association of Indians with the lost tribes of Israel aligned American Indians with Christian Europe's historically satanic other. The maligned and demonized Jew became the Christian model for the unfamiliar Indian. Elaine Pagels, Professor of Religion at Princeton University, has traced the origins of the Christian concept of Satan and a corresponding tendency to demonize Jews in the early Jesus movement.

In the Hebrew Bible, as in mainstream Judaism to this day, Satan never appears as Western Christendom has come to know him, as the leader of an "evil empire," an army of hostile spirits who make war on God and humankind alike. As he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God's obedient servants—a messenger, or *angel*, a word that translates the Hebrew term for messenger into Greek. In Hebrew, the angels were often called "sons of God," and were envisioned as the hierarchical ranks of a great army, or the staff of a royal court. In biblical sources the Hebrew term the *satan* describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character.<sup>120</sup>

The early Jesus movement and other first-century Jewish sectarian movements like the Essenes the *satan* takes on new characteristics and a much more prominent role, eventually serving as a tool for the demonization of enemies.

Like all humans Hebrews distinguished between themselves and others. The people of Israel distinguished themselves from others that they often represented "as inferior, morally depraved, even potentially accursed."<sup>121</sup> The Christian tradition, though, takes this more common human tendency to dehumanize enemies and intensifies it; "the use of Satan to represent one's enemies lends to conflict a specific kind of moral and

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<sup>120</sup> Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), 39. In this block quote I did not include the Hebrew and Greek terms present in the original and I combined the latter half of one paragraph with the first two sentences of the following paragraph.

<sup>121</sup> Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 36.

religious interpretation, in which ‘we’ are God’s people and ‘they’ are God’s enemies, and ours as well.”<sup>122</sup> In this moral universe Satan came to represent conflict between various Jewish groups (the early Jesus movement being one of them). “Satan is not the distant enemy but the intimate enemy—one’s trusted colleague, close associate, brother.”<sup>123</sup> The social consequence of Christian demonization of their Israelite siblings, is a history of remarkable openness to Gentiles but markedly hostile and “negative view of Israel, or, more precisely, many—perhaps a majority—of Israel’s people.”<sup>124</sup>

This demonization of Israel appears to be rooted in the social and political context faced by the authors of the gospels of the New Testament. The author of the gospel of Mark, the oldest of those appearing in the New Testament, recorded his narrative around 70 C.E. Writing during or immediately after a conflict with the Romans, this author's account portrays evidence of its status as "wartime literature."<sup>125</sup> Because of this political context, he was careful to present his narrative in a manner that minimized conflict with the Romans and exaggerated internal conflict with other Jews. As time passed and tensions between the larger body of Jews and the Jesus movement which had begun admitting non-Jews increased, the authors of subsequent New Testament gospels perpetuated and extended the biases of the author of Mark and began presenting Jesus' life as a struggle between forces of good and evil. Eventually that evil is embodied in the actions of Jews that the authors of the gospels made responsible for the death of Jesus. This demonization of Jews modeled in the gospels of the New Testament became the predominant motif for subsequent Christian conflict with pagans, heretics, Muslims, and

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., xix.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 8.

American Indians. It is also adopted anachronistically by Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon.

Fernando Cervantes, lecturer in Hispanic and Latin-American studies at the University of Bristol, has traced the dynamic deployment and evolution of the Christian devil in New Spain from the initial conquest through the Enlightenment. Cervantes finds more than coincidence between the European encounter with otherness and a corresponding shift in European thought that would give birth to the Enlightenment. Early in the conquest themes of “primeval innocence and nobility of the natives” competed with an “insistence on their bestiality and the demonic character of their culture and religion.”<sup>126</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, however, the negative demonic view had triumphed. In this perspective Indians appeared as demonic and idolatrous, active agents involved in the worship of Satan, determined opponents of God. By the late seventeenth century “the Indians of New Spain seem to have been incorporated into the renewed anti-Semitism that had begun to sweep through European thought.”<sup>127</sup> Indian willingness to incorporate Christian elements into their worship was met with the “exclusivist claims of the Christian faith” and hostile attempts to eradicate indigenous worship.<sup>128</sup> The God of Christianity was unlike those of previous alien deities that Mesoamericans had regularly incorporated into their pantheon.

The European notions of good and evil, personified in the concepts of god and devil, implied a degree of benevolence and malevolence that was totally alien to the Mesoamerican deities. The notion of a totally good god was an absurdity in Mesoamerican thought. Such a being would have lacked the essential power to disrupt in order to create. Likewise, an evil devil would have lacked the power to create that would enable it to disrupt. Moreover, a god who threatened to take his

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<sup>126</sup> Cervantes, *Devil in the New World*, 8.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

place not just as a further god in the native pantheon but as the *only* god, to the exclusion of all others, was an explosive liability which put the whole cosmic order in extreme peril.<sup>129</sup>

In this context many Natives took the Christian insistence that native deities were devils as an endorsement of the power of their older gods. The ideal of a dichotomous cosmos often met practical restraints as Indians modeled Christian saints after pre-Columbian deities and resorted to diabolism to tap into the power of ancient gods.

The wholesale destruction of Native Mesoamerican historical records remains a tragic consequence of Christian exclusivity. Fray Diego de Landa, Bishop of Yucatán, is representative of the brutal attempts to eradicate Native religiosity, defined as devil-worship, and replace it with narratives rooted in the sacred history of Christianity. In an *Auto de fé* in July 1562 at Maní the bishop destroyed 5,000 idols and twenty-seven hieroglyphic rolls. He reported that “we found a great number of books in these letters, and since they contained nothing but superstitions and falsehoods of the devil we burned them all, which they took most grievously, and which gave them great pain.”<sup>130</sup> The Christian invaders of the Maya world “established a monopoly on virtually all forms of visible public expression, whether in drama, architecture, sculpture, painting, or writing.”<sup>131</sup> In the highlands of Guatemala they even attempted to ban the wearing of Mayan styles of clothing once they recognized that textile designs contained complex messages. Christian missionaries destroyed hundreds of books by the end of the seventeenth century in Yucatán and the beginning of the eighteenth century in the

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Friar Diego de Landa, *Yucatan Before and After the Conquest*, translated with notes by William Gates (New York: Dover Publications, 1978[1566]), iii, 82. See also Murphy, “Laban’s Ghost,” 118.

<sup>131</sup> Dennis Tedlock, “Preface,” in *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, Rev. Ed., translated by Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 23-25.

highlands. Today, only four Mayan books are known to have survived to the present.<sup>132</sup>

Not satisfied with the destruction of Native art, science, and history de Landa rewrote it.

After the debacle at Maní the offending Fray was summoned to Spain to answer charges, of which he was exonerated. There he rewrote Mayan history, speculating, “all the inhabitants of the Indies must be of Jewish descent.”<sup>133</sup>

Mestizos, people of mixed Indian and Spanish ancestry, in New Spain resisted the Spanish demonization of the Indian past. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega interpreted the indigenous past as “an enlightened period inspired and guided by the basic tenets of natural law.”<sup>134</sup> Garcilaso reconstructed the “Inca world as a utopia of enlightened pagans” and both authors claimed that Indians “had discovered the one true God long before the arrival of the Spaniards.” Ixtlilxóchitl, Cervantes observes, “asserted that Mesoamericans had been taught the tenets of civilized morality by Quetzalcoatl-Huemac, taking care to place his alleged ‘mission’ firmly in the first century as a clear hint that Quetzalcoatl might have been St. Thomas the Apostle.”<sup>135</sup> Unlike Spanish authors of New Spain prior to the eighteenth century, these views of the past presented by Mestizo authors deviated from the trend to demonize the American Indian past.<sup>136</sup>

The publication of Francisco Javier Clavigero’s *Historia Antigua de México* in 1780—1781 marked a watershed in the historiography of the American Indian past. Clavigero “adopted an unmistakably secular historical approach” that exorcised the devil

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> De Landa, *Yucatan Before and After*, 8.

<sup>134</sup> Cervantes, *Devil in the New World.*, 75.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 76.

<sup>136</sup> In a tragic twist of irony, Mormon attempts to legitimate the Book of Mormon by reference to the chronicles of Ixtlilxóchitl subject the Indian past to the demonization that the author resisted.

from portraits of the pre-Columbian past.<sup>137</sup> He discarded supernatural agents as explanations for human actions. He rejected both Satanic intervention and an ancient visit of St. Thomas as sources of indigenous religious practices.<sup>138</sup> Instead of being dominated by universal human values, his approach was characterized by attention to human differences in cultural context. This was most evident in his naturalistic treatment of religion. Cervantes characterizes his view, “Religion, in other words, does not, indeed cannot, have a supernatural origin. Its characteristics do not derive from the object of worship, be it divine or diabolic, but from the human perception of that object, a perception which is itself a strictly natural activity.”<sup>139</sup> Clavigero’s *Historia Antigua*, “unquestionably the most popular and influential account of ancient Mexico since Acosta’s *Historia natural and moral*,” was translated by Charles Cullen and published in Philadelphia in 1817.<sup>140</sup> Yet, despite the availability of this more tolerant and compassionate view, the demonization of Indians and Jews would continue to dominate the literature on lost tribes in New England.

In his *View of the Hebrews* the Congregationalist minister Ethan Smith demonizes Jews and Indians and attributes an ancient golden age to Moses. Smith proclaimed, for example, “Jesus Christ *came* in awful judgment upon the infidel Jews, and vindicated his cause against his persecutors and murderers.”<sup>141</sup> He attributed “infidelity, malice, hypocrisy, and persecution ... [and] unprecedented atrociousness” to the “rulers and

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<sup>137</sup> Cervantes, *Devil in the New World*, 150.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 151. Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 110.

<sup>139</sup> Cervantes, *Devil in the New World*, 151-152.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 149. It was also published in English in London in 1787 & 1807, Philadelphia in 1804, and Richmond, Virginia in 1806. See Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 110.

<sup>141</sup> Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 1825 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, edited with an introduction by Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1996), 2.

people” of Jerusalem.<sup>142</sup> Smith turns to Moses rather than St. Thomas as a biblical origin for Quetzalcoatl. He claims that Quetzalcoatl, “a white and bearded man” and “a type of Christ” introduced penance, casting of metals, fasting, regulations of the calendar, teachings of peace, and the sacrifice of first fruits of harvest. The events in pagan mythology, he reasons, are confused and blended with fable but nonetheless founded on ancient revelation.<sup>143</sup> Despite this visitation of Moses Smith classifies Indians with Jews as “rejectors of Christ” and finds confirmation for his own beliefs in the savage state of Indians.

It becomes us to be deeply affected with the excommunication of the ancient people of God. In the temporary rejection of those two branches of the Hebrew nation, the truth is solemnly enforced, that the God of Zion is a God of government; and that he will be known by the judgments that he executeth. The casting out of the ten tribes for their impious idolatries, is full of instruction. The wonders God had done for them, and all their privileges in the land of promise, could not save, when they rejected the stated place of his worship, and united in the abominations of the open enemies of God. They should be excommunicated from the covenant, hurled from the promised land, and abandoned to a state of savage wretchedness, for two and a half millenaries. Their sin in those dark ages of the old dispensation was no trifle. Its consequence is held up as an awful warning to the world. It impresses the following language; "Know thou and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord." To that event people under evangelical privileges ought to turn their eye, and take the solemn warning. The God of Abraham is a God of judgment; while blessed are all they that put their trust in him.<sup>144</sup>

The literature on the lost tribes of Israel, here represented by Ethan Smith, rejected contemporary efforts to forge a more humanitarian and culturally relative view of the Indian past for one that demonized Indians and Jews while triumphantly validating Christian claims to truth.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 197.

*Black and White Jews*

Ethan Smith scoured the writings of his predecessors for every example of a trait that he might link, however loosely, to the biblical Israelites. Among those traits was the reported Indian belief that they are blessed and others are cursed. Drawing from James Adair, Smith claims “the Indians are intoxicated with religious pride, and call all other people the accursed people; and have time out of mind been accustomed to hold them in great contempt.”<sup>145</sup> He quotes from Adair.

They used to call us in their war orations, *the accursed people*.—But they flatter themselves with the name of *beloved people*; because their supposed ancestors, as they affirm, were under the immediate government of Deity, who was present with them in a very peculiar manner, and directed them by prophets, while the rest of the world were aliens and outlaws to the covenant. ... It is their opinion of the theocracy, that God chose them out of all the rest of mankind as his peculiar and beloved people; which alike animates both the white Jew and the red American with that steady hatred against all the world except themselves; and renders them (in their opinion) hated and despised by all.<sup>146</sup>

For Adair and Smith, Indians referring to whites as accursed served to validate their belief that the Indians were lost Israelites.

Joseph Smith’s cultural environment included legends of Indian belief in covenanted, cursed, and blessed people and stories of black and white Jews. In *The History of the Jews* (London, 1818) Hannah Adams mentions black Jews in Cochin, East Indies and their reported possession of brass plates.<sup>147</sup> In the appendix of the second edition of *View of the Hebrews* Ethan Smith discusses the presence of the same black and white Jews in Cochin, East Indies as well as black, white, and other complexions of Jews in Madras, East Indies. Ethan Smith claims “Indians in other regions have brought down

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>147</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 106.

a tradition that their former ancestors, away in a distant region from which they came were *white*.”<sup>148</sup> But unlike Joseph Smith, the Congregationalist minister does not attribute differences in skin color to morality. Instead he draws upon the more common view that Jewish skin color, like that of American Indians, is a product of the physical and cultural environment.

Their being blacker than modern Jews in Europe, may be accounted for upon the same principles, of different climates and habits of living, which have given to the American natives a darker skin than to the Jews of Europe, or than their ancestors possessed.<sup>149</sup>

Joseph Smith’s portrayal of white Nephites turning into Lamanites cursed with a skin of blackness looks all the more problematic when contrasted with the climatic and environmental explanations for differences in skin color favored by his predecessors and contemporaries like Ethan Smith, James Adair, Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix, and Matthew Hale.<sup>150</sup> The Mormon prophet’s biological imagery draws from the Christian justifications of slavery to use morality rather than climate and the environment to explain physical differences in skin color.

### *Seed of Abraham*

The Biblical motif of the seed of Abraham that permeates the Book of Mormon contains implicit assumptions about biology rooted in the patriarchal authority of ancient Israel. The biblical idea that men plant a procreative seed in the fertile soil of a woman’s womb naturalizes a patriarchal theory of procreation. Carol Delaney, an anthropologist

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<sup>148</sup> Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 157.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 212-214.

<sup>150</sup> Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 1. For a summary of the views of each of the other authors, see Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 110, 112, 114.

from Stanford University, critically examines the gendered assumptions underlying this concept of seed in her book *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of a Biblical Myth*.

Rather than reflecting natural facts, the meanings of father and mother, paternity and maternity emerge relative to a *theory* of procreation. In this theory, the male is construed as the creative one: he is the one who “begets” and by means of his “seed” imparts the life-giving essence that defines a child. The female role is to nurture the seed-child implanted in her and to give birth.

Delaney observes that this monogenetic model assumes incorrectly that the “*principle* of creation comes from only one source. The life-giving abilities attributed to men allied them with God, and women became associated with what was created by God, namely the Earth.” This theory invests male authority with sacred power and minimizes the creative contributions of women.<sup>151</sup>

The most direct source for this folk model in Joseph Smith’s cultural environment was clearly the *King James Bible*. Unlike the images of skin color and race that are rooted more in a history of biblical hermeneutics the implicit assumptions of a male generative power of seed comes directly from the biblical narratives. Beginning with Genesis the Hebrew Bible is preoccupied with the fate of Abraham’s posterity, imagined as *his* seed and portrayed in almost exclusively male terms. Just as Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph transmitted the seed of their paternal predecessor Abraham, so too does Lehi carry the seed of Joseph to a promised land. Nephi and *his brethren* continue to transmit the seed of their father Lehi. The Book of Mormon extends its promises to the seed of Lehi, Nephi, Laman, Joseph, Jacob and Abraham but never to the seed of Sariah, the unnamed wives of Nephi and Laman, Asenath, Rachel, or Sara. This bias can be plainly seen in the biblical description of the births of Manasseh and Ephraim. “And unto Joseph were born

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<sup>151</sup> Carol Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: Social Legacy of a Biblical Myth* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1998), 18.

two sons ... which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him”

(Gen. 41:50). The transmission of the Book of Mormon’s curse likewise followed the seed of men.

And the skins of the Lamanties were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men.

And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea, upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women.

And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.

And it came to pass that whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed. (Alma 3:6-9)

In both the biblical and Book of Mormon narrative women bore the seed of men. In the Book of Mormon the curse is placed on and transmitted by the men, their sons, and the sons of Ishmaelitish women.<sup>152</sup>

Ethan Smith’s *View of Hebrews* also draws from biblical narratives to imagine the fate of American Indians as that of the seed of Abraham, under a new Christian covenant. Anticipating the recovery of “the two branches of Israel,” Smith preaches,

It is upon this entail, that God thus engages to bring them in under his new covenant, or the Christian dispensation; that their children shall be as aforesaid, and their congregations established before him; and “that all who see them shall acknowledge they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed” [Isa 61:9]; “that they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them “ [Isa 65:23]. It will then be understood, that though blindness in part had happened to Israel, it was that the gentiles might take their place, and only till the fulness of the gentiles be come in; and then all Israel shall be saved.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Part of this bias may be rooted in the way that “men” in English is occasionally used to refer to both men and women. That women might also contribute to the transmission of the curse is apparent if Asenath serves as a link between the curse of Ham and the Lamanite descendants of Joseph in the Book of Mormon.

<sup>153</sup> Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 198.

The Congregationalist minister envisions the gathering of Indians as Israel in terms that favor assumed prerogatives of white Christian men, while demeaning, denouncing, and/or ignoring the rights and contributions of Jews, Indians, and women.

### *White Mound Builders*

Ethan and Joseph Smith tapped into an increasingly popular myth of an ancient race of white mound builders in their portrayals of Indians as lost Israelites. Early Spanish and English explorers readily recognized that contemporary Indians along the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys built raised earthen platforms for temples, ruler's homes, defensive fortifications, etc. By the late eighteenth century, however, Indian depopulation from disease and warfare combined with white fantasies and ignorance of Indian communities to fuel a popular myth of an ancient race of white mound builders that would dominate discussions of American archaeology until the late nineteenth century. This myth provided the intellectual fodder for the speculative polemics of Unitarian Thaddeus Harris, Congregationalist Ethan Smith and the romantic fictions of Calvinist Solomon Spalding and Mormon Joseph Smith.<sup>154</sup>

Benjamin Smith Barton of Philadelphia advanced the idea of an ancient white race of mound builders in the latter part of the eighteenth century. His first publication on the subject appeared in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1787 where Barton was studying medicine. Barton discounted the idea that Indians of Ohio could have built the mounds that dotted the landscape. He proposed pre-Columbian Danish immigrant as the architects noting that Viking lords had been buried in mounds like those of Ohio. After building

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<sup>154</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*.

these mounds the Danes had migrated south to Mexico, where they were known as Toltecs and their first king was the white bearded Quetzalcoatl. In 1798 he published *New Views of the Origins of the Tribes and Nations of America* in Philadelphia. While the mound builders and Toltecs were not the primary subject matter of this book he still passed along a legend of a mysterious white race living in the Tennessee Valley prior to the arrival of the Cherokee.<sup>155</sup>

The turn of the century marked a flurry of speculation on ancient civilizations of mound builders that reached directly into Palmyra, New York in the 1820s. In 1796, Francis Baily, an English astronomer, incorrectly claimed that contemporary Indians had no traditions relating to the mounds and concluded they must have been “built by a race of people more enlightened than the present Indians, and at some period of time very far distant.”<sup>156</sup> In the sixth volume of the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia, 1803) Right Reverend James Madison, Episcopal Bishop of Virginia, rejected the idea that lost-races built the mounds in favor of their construction by contemporary Indians. Yet, this view would lose steam relative to the more popular idea advocated by Unitarian minister, Reverend Thaddeus M. Harris from Massachusetts. His 1805 *Journal of a Tour in the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains* concluded that the mounds were too elaborate for mere savage Indians. He argued that a higher race, identical to the Toltecs of Mexico, had built them.<sup>157</sup> Madison and Harris came to represent two schools of thought on the subject, but that of Harris would dwarf Madison’s view for most of the nineteenth century. Between these publications and 1830,

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 30-33.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 48-49. Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 115.

such debates drew the attention of numerous authors, including but not limited to H. M. Brackenridge, DeWitt Clinton, David Cusick, John Duncan, Andrew Ellicott, Timothy Flint, Edwin James, James McCulloh, Thomas Nutall, John Ranking, Robert Southey, Solomon Spalding, and John Yates. The debate was likewise covered in more than a dozen articles in the Joseph Smith family's local newspapers: *Palmyra Register*, *Palmyra Herald*, *Wayne Sentinel* and, *Western Farmer*.<sup>158</sup>

In the 1820s an association of the mound builders with ancient Israelites also gained momentum. Caleb Atwater, a postal worker and archaeologist in Ohio, in *Archaeologia Americana* (Worcester, MA, 1820) discussed similarities between Biblical “high places” and the mounds, rejected Indians as mound builders, and suggested the mound builders were culturally akin to Israelites. Atwater's speculations about iron rust residue and a possible part of a scabbard would also be widely misrepresented as steel swords and cast-iron implements in the mounds.<sup>159</sup> The poet Sarah Josepha Hale spun a romance in *The Genius of Oblivion; and Other Original Poems* (Concord, NH, 1823) in which she depicts mound builder origins via “ship from Tyre, a hundred miles from Jerusalem, during the siege of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia, 585-73 BC.” In her narrative she assumes that a non-Indian race of mound builders had metallurgy and the knowledge of making steel.<sup>160</sup> The most explicit weaving of the myth of the mound builders and Israelite origins of Indians prior to the Book of Mormon came in Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*. He includes detailed descriptions of the mounds and

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<sup>158</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 103-144. Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 25-96.

<sup>159</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 52-53, 64-68. Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 133.

<sup>160</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 114-115.

fortifications with a special focus on their alleged metallurgy, a lost book of God, white Indians, and outlines his own theory of the mound builders,

Some of the people of Israel who came into this western continent maintained some degree of civilization for a long time; but that the better part of the outcast tribes of Israel here finally became extinct, at least in North America, under the rage of their more savage brethren. ... No supposable origin assigned to the American natives could so well account for what we find of the *American high places*, as the supposition of their descent from ancient Israel.<sup>161</sup>

The Book of Mormon and *View of the Hebrews* share a basic outline of a migration from ancient Israel to America, a division into rival savage and civilized groups, ancient white Indians, use of metals, possession of a sacred book, construction of high places and military fortifications, and ultimate destruction of the civilization.

#### *A Progressive Joseph Smith?*

When I began this investigation I had hoped and expected to find that while Joseph Smith was a product of his time and place that he held a progressive view of American Indians relative to that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Sadly, I must report the opposite to be true. The Mormon prophet's portrayal of American Indians as Israelites was commonplace in the eighteenth and nineteenth century but more informed predecessors and contemporaries raised substantive objections to this idea.<sup>162</sup> Even authors like Ethan Smith that demonized Indians as lost tribes and credited Indian cultural achievements to an ancient race of white mound builders attributed changes in skin color to climatic and environmental factors. While many whites since the time of the Puritans viewed Indians as cursed Canaanites, this idea was more likely to be denounced

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<sup>161</sup> Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 84, 96, 143-154, 157, 171-172.

<sup>162</sup> For a more thorough list of people who doubted, challenged, and rejected the idea that Indians descended from lost Israelites see Vogel, *Indian Origins*, 103-144.

in print than advocated. Even though the theory of an ancient white race of mound builders displayed remarkable popularity in the nineteenth century abundant evidence from earlier authors and a few contemporary ones correctly attributed the earth works to the ancestors of contemporary Indians. While many authors racialized the curse of Ham as applied to Africans, only a small minority of writers also racialized the curse of Cain or applied either to Indians. While the Book of Mormon paradoxically claims all are equal to God, Smith's demonization of American Indians as cursed Israelites with a skin of blackness and ascriptions of indigenous cultural accomplishments to an ancient white race represents the more virulent and racist trends of nineteenth century Euroamerican biblical hermeneutics and archaeological speculation.

In her critical examination of *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* Regina M. Schwartz, professor of English and religion at Northwestern University, recognized the intimate linkage between images of corporate bodies and the violence often visited upon those bodies. Yet, she reminded us,

Whatever communities are, they are not a body, and imagining corporate identity as corporeal—as defined by blood and by seed—has served racial, ethnic, and religious hatred all too well throughout history.<sup>163</sup>

Indeed, the racial and religious myths that made their way into the Book of Mormon reflect the violence of their own time and place. In *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* Robert Silverberg captures this dilemma in Joseph Smith's generation.

Some deep national need was fulfilled by the myth of the Mound Builders, and debunkers were unpopular. The dream of a lost prehistoric race in the American heartland was profoundly satisfying; and if the vanished ones had been giants, or

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<sup>163</sup> Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 97.

white men, or Israelites, or Danes, or Toltecs, or giant white Jewish Toltec Vikings, so much the better. The people of the United States were then engaged in an undeclared war against the Indians who blocked their path to expansion, transporting, imprisoning, or simply massacring them; and as this century-long campaign of genocide proceeded, it may have been expedient to conjure up a previous race whom the Indians had displaced in the same way. Conscience might ache a bit over the uprooting of the Indians, but not if it could be shown that the Indians, far from being long-established settlers in the land, were themselves mere intruders who had wantonly shattered the glorious Mound Builder civilization of old. What had been a simple war of conquest against the Indians now could be construed as a war of vengeance on behalf of that great and martyred culture.<sup>164</sup>

A tolerant and sympathetic view of the Indian past might be more honest but it could not salve the wounds that Americans inflicted upon their own conscience as they sought the destruction and replacement of the indigenous people not only through warfare and destruction but by discrediting indigenous cultural accomplishments.

Thomas Paine, writing in 1794, represents a much better example of an enlightened point of view than I have found in Joseph Smith.

If we are to suppose a miracle to be something so entirely out of the course of what is called nature, that she must go out of that course to accomplish it, and we see an account given of such a miracle by the person who said he saw it, it raises a question in the mind very easily decided, which is, -- Is it more probable that nature should go out of her course, or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course; but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is, therefore, at least millions to one, that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.<sup>165</sup>

Faced with the accusation that Mormons are telling lies about American Indians a Mormon anthropologist, like me, faces a thorny dilemma. Faith in Joseph Smith's production of the Book of Mormon demands a belief in a miraculous encounter between a man and his daemons that produced a set of elusive gold plates recording an unlikely history of ancient America that bears a remarkable similarity to the wishes and

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<sup>164</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 57-58.

<sup>165</sup> Paine, *Age of Reason*, 55.

aspirations of three centuries of Christian fantasies and mythologies. Can we confront the deception in our own traditions and still be Mormon? The answer to that question must await the demise of the myth of mound builders and the emergence of Book of Mormon studies in the twentieth century. Throughout the nineteenth century the Book of Mormon would serve colonists in Utah engaged in their own campaign to destroy the people or displace the indigenous cultures of the Great Basin.

## Chapter 5: The Book and the Land

One of the major problems of the Indian people is the missionary. It has been said of the missionaries that when they arrived they had only the Book and we had the land; now we have the Book and they have the land. An old Indian once told me that when the missionaries arrived they fell on their knees and prayed. Then they got up, fell on the Indians, and preyed.

*Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux)*<sup>166</sup>

Presenting the truth is necessary to dispel the myriad myths surrounding Utah history. One of the most obvious but prevailing myths is that “no one” (or no people of importance) lived in this area prior to Mormon settlement. Knowledge of pre-Mormon human presence in this area must hereafter be vital to any endeavor of educational enlightenment and postures of advanced learning by our citizenry. Furthermore, the belief must be eliminated from our consciousness that Utah’s American Indians were treated better than “other Indians” outside our state boundaries. In its place must be found the facts, suggesting that the treatment of the American Indian in the state of Utah was rarely different from what occurred in surrounding states. In some cases, treatment of the Indians was better; but, in the case of the Bear River Massacre, for example, treatment was even more harsh and severe than what was experienced by Indians residing in other states.

*Forrest Cuch (Ute)*<sup>167</sup>

Mormon concepts of Lamanite identity have been dynamic and fluid, rather than static and unchanging. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the early applications of the ethnonym Lamanite, the cultural associations connected with it, and the parameters of its use in nineteenth century Mormonism. Mormon images of Lamanites during the first generation of the LDS Church leadership fluctuated according to the quality of their interactions with indigenous people. Latter-day Saints liberally and consistently applied the term Lamanite to American Indians throughout North and South America. Mormon constructions of Lamanite identity anticipated the disappearance and absorption of Indians into Mormon communities. Mormons actively sought conversions from among

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<sup>166</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 101.

<sup>167</sup> Forrest Cuch, “Introduction,” *A History of Utah’s American Indians*, edited by Forrest Cuch (Salt Lake City: Utah State Division of Indian Affairs / Utah State Division of History, 2000), xii.

Indians, conflated religious conversion with cultural transformation, sought the whitening of Lamanites through intermarriage and adoption, claimed a divine right to indigenous land without remuneration, fought with Indians who resisted such claims, pursued military alliances with Indians during conflicts with the U.S. government, and offered Indians a “true” history in the Book of Mormon. Yet, actions aimed at turning Indians into white and delightful Mormons met violent resistance. When such efforts were actually successful, though, they facilitated the emergence of a Lamanite identity rather than its prophesied disintegration.

### **Revelatory Images of Lamanites**

The early historical use of the label Lamanite reproduces the problems associated with the European misnomer Indian. When Columbus applied the term Indian to the indigenous people of the Western hemisphere in 1492 he conflated a diverse group of disparate peoples with a wide variety of different cultures into one amalgam. The people that Europeans would label Indian had no prior self-conception as a distinct population. Historically speaking, there were no American Indians prior to 1492. The idea of an Indian emerged in European consciousness, only later to be adopted and used by the people so labeled.<sup>168</sup> Likewise, there were no Lamanites, Lemuelites, or Ishmaelites in the historical record prior to July 1828 when Joseph Smith consulted his seer stone and received a revelation promising to bring the knowledge of the Nephite record (his gold plates) to Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites as a means of facilitating their

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<sup>168</sup> Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*. Todorov, *Conquest of America*. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *Mexico Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* Philip A. Dennis, trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

acquisition of a knowledge of their purported fathers and their glorification through Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, my work shall go forth and accomplish my purposes, for as the knowledge of a Savior has come into the world, even so shall the knowledge of my people, the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites, which dwindled in unbelief, because of the iniquities of their fathers, who have been suffered to destroy their brethren, because of their iniquities, and their abominations: and for this purpose are these plates preserved which contain these records, that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; and that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name; and that through their repentance they might be saved: Amen.<sup>169</sup>

The knowledge that the Mormon seer hoped to bring to the Lamanites derived from his revelations facilitated by the use of seer stones and magical lamens. The glorification of Lamanites, as envisioned in the Book of Mormon passages Smith subsequently “translated,” involved the Christianization, assimilation, and whitening of the Lamanites. From its inception in the revelations of the Mormon prophet, the status of a Lamanite was something to be saved from, not aspired towards.

Employing the voice of a familiar spirit Joseph Smith spoke *for* ancient America as he spoke *to* the indigenous peoples of contemporary America. During the summer of 1828 the prophet revealed that the Nephites preserved their record of the Christian gospel so that it “might come unto their brethren the Lamanites, and also, all that had become Lamanites because of their dissensions.” Through the medium of his seer stone Smith learned of an ancient Nephite blessing on the land.

Now this is not all, their faith in their prayers were, that this gospel should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land;

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<sup>169</sup> H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 24-25. An edited version of this revelation appears in the LDS Canon as D&C 3:16-20.

and thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel, in this land, might have eternal life; yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people, that may be.<sup>170</sup>

At Kirtland, Ohio in March 1831 Smith revealed, “Before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness; and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose.”<sup>171</sup> In 1833 he identified the Book of Mormon as “a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians” in a letter to a newspaper editor, N.C. Saxton.<sup>172</sup> In an 1835 conversation about his visions with Robert Mathews, another religious eccentric from New York who claimed to be “Joshua the Jewish Minister,” Smith reported that the angel from his 1823 visions told him “the Indians were the literal descendants of Abraham.”<sup>173</sup> Throughout his life Smith made clear and direct associations between Lamanites and the living American Indians with whom he and other Mormons interacted.

In September 1830, the same year he published the Book of Mormon, Smith dispatched a mission to Missouri, a place he identified as among or bordering the Lamanites.<sup>174</sup> Through revelation he instructed Oliver Cowdery to “go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them, and cause my church to be established among them.”<sup>175</sup> Peter Whitmer, Jr., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson followed Smith’s instructions to

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<sup>170</sup> Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 40. Compare D&C 10:48-51.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 129. Compare D&C 49: 24.

<sup>172</sup> Joseph Smith to N.C. Saxton, 4 Jan. 1833, in Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 273; quoted by Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Editors’ Introduction,” *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), vii.

<sup>173</sup> Joseph Smith Recital to Robert Mathews, 9 November 1835, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:44. See also Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3-6.

<sup>174</sup> Dean C. Jessee, ed. *The Papers of Joseph Smith. Vol. 1. Autobiographical and Historical Writings*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 325. For a discussion of whether or not the earliest reference was to the borders or among the Lamanites see Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 85.

<sup>175</sup> Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 84. Compare D&C 28:8.

accompany Cowdery on his mission to the Lamanites. The missionaries visited the Cattaraugus near Buffalo, New York and the Delaware west of Missouri. Lacking credentials, though, they were unable to complete their mission despite prophetic assurances that “nothing shall prevail” against the missionaries. After the disappointment of this first mission to the Lamanites subsequent publications of this revelation after 1835 qualified the prophet’s predicted establishment of the church among the Lamanites.

And now, behold I say unto you, that you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and *inasmuch as they receive thy teachings, thou shalt* cause my church to be established among them.<sup>176</sup>

Smith’s initial optimism about an enthusiastic reception of his gospel among Lamanites soon gave way to a more seasoned outlook that explained the failure of the mission as a byproduct of conflicts with Indian agents, competing denominational missions, and the receptiveness of Lamanites.

Religious conversion was not the only means Mormons sought for the transformation of Indians. In July 1831, after the arrival of the Mormon prophet and other leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, they initiated new plans to proselytize among the Indians west of the Missouri river. Seven Elders (Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, W.W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Joseph Coe, Ziba Peterson, and Joshua Lewis) gathered in prayer July 17, 1831 to inquire who among them “should preach the first sermon to the remnants of the Lamanites and Nephites, and the people of that Section, that should assemble that day in the Indian country, to hear the gospel, and the revelations according to the Book of Mormon.” According to W. W. Phelps’ account recorded thirty years later,

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 84-85. Italics indicate the 1835 alterations of the text.

the revelation the Mormon prophet received in response encouraged Mormon missionaries to marry Indian women.

For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white and delightsome and Just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.<sup>177</sup>

Ezra Booth, writing only four months after the reception of the revelation, reported a different purpose for the intermarriage.

In addition to this, and to co-operate with it, it has been made known by revelation, that it will be pleasing to the Lord, should they form a matrimonial alliance with the natives and by this means the Elders, who comply with the thing so pleasing to the Lord, and for which the Lord has promised to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the agent.<sup>178</sup>

In 1861 Phelps reported that he had privately inquired of the prophet, three years after the fact, “how ‘we,’ that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives from the ‘natives’ — as we were all married men?” The prophet replied “In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Katurah [Keturah]; and Jacob took Rachel Bilhah and Zilpah: by revelation — the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation.”<sup>179</sup> While Booth’s account validates Phelps’ claim that the prophet promoted marriage with the Indians, the primary reason was apparently practical, facilitating access to Indians independent of the agent. The justifications of polygamy and intermarrying to turn Indians white and delightsome may have been retrospective interpretations added by Phelps in 1861, when such practices were more commonly established among Mormons.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 374-75.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. See also David J. Whittaker, “Mormons and Native Americans: A Historical and Biographic Introduction,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Winter 1985): 35. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 12-13. Twentieth century

*Second Thoughts?*

Joseph Smith's fluid concept of revelation is evident in his handling and editing of the Book of Mormon manuscripts and subsequent editions. Before and after printing the prophet made various doctrinal and grammatical corrections to the printer's manuscript. Prior to the publication of the second edition the seer began, but apparently did not finish, a substantial revision of the doctrine as well as the grammar in the scripture. He modernized language by changing "which" to "who" 707 times and replacing "saith" and "sayeth" with "said" 229 times.<sup>181</sup> His revisions also reflected his evolving concepts of God. Beginning with 1 Nephi he "made some efforts to remove the overlap and blending of the roles of God the Father, the God of humankind, and his Son, Jesus Christ, who atoned for humankind's sins."<sup>182</sup> For example, 1 Ne. 11:19 in the 1830 edition reads "the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of God," while the 1837 edition reads "the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of *the Son of God*."<sup>183</sup> Smith apparently did not complete these changes. Beyond 1 Nephi the Book of Mormon Christology continues to conflate the Father and Son as one. While incomplete, the prophet's willingness to update scripture according to his evolving use of language and understanding of deity reflects an acknowledgment of a human role in the process of revelation.

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reflections by a descendant of Penina Cotten, one of the many nineteenth century polygamous Indian wives, are available in a Sunstone presentation. Thomas W. Murphy, Kerrie S. Murphy, and Cyd Crue, "Native Americans and the Book of Mormon," panel discussion, Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium, August 1998.

<sup>181</sup> Douglas Campbell, "'White' or 'Pure'," 124.

<sup>182</sup> Melodie Moench Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 107.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

Revisions to the 1840 edition of the Book of Mormon suggest that the Mormon seer may have been reconsidering his theology of curses and skin color amidst lively debates on the abolition of slavery. Published in October 1840 in Cincinnati, Ohio the third edition changed a key phrase in 2 Nephi 30:6.<sup>184</sup> The first edition had predicted that when the remnant of Lehi's seed receive the gospel and a restoration of the knowledge of their fathers, "then shall they rejoice: for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people."<sup>185</sup> The third edition, instead, predicted that before many generations pass away "they shall be a *pure* and delightsome people."<sup>186</sup> Similar passages, however, were not changed. Meanwhile, the Quorum of the Twelve in England, unaware of the publication of a third edition in America, reprinted the 1837 edition in January 1841. Three subsequent editions after Smith's death (1852, 1879, and 1920) mostly followed the 1841 English edition rather than the 1840 American edition, maintaining the original prediction of "white and delightsome." In 1981, amidst charges of racism, the LDS First Presidency restored the 1840 revision of "pure and delightsome" but did not alter other passages indicating a transformation of skin color upon religious conversion.<sup>187</sup> Between 1841 and 1981 the prophet's apparent shift of thought appears to have had little impact

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<sup>184</sup> Astute observers will note that the 1840 title page lists Nauvoo, IL as the location of publication and Cincinnati, OH as the location of stereotyping (a type of printing first employed around 1799). The first impression of the stereotype plates took place in Cincinnati (despite indication of Nauvoo on the title page). A second (1841) and probably third (1842) impression took place in Nauvoo, but all three impressions list a publication of 1840 in Nauvoo). See Larry W. Draper, "Book of Mormon Editions," in *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon*, edited by M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. Coutts (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002): 39-44.

<sup>185</sup> Joseph Smith, *Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, NY: E. B. Grandin, 1830), 117.

<sup>186</sup> Joseph Smith, *Book of Mormon*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Nauvoo, IL: Robinson and Smith, 1840), 115. Emphasis added.

<sup>187</sup> Campbell, "'White' or 'Pure,'" 119-120. See also Draper, "Book of Mormon Editions," 43.

on Mormon interpretations of scripture. Without changes to other passages in the text and the restoration of the original terms “white and delightsome” in 1841, Latter-day Saints would continue to anticipate a whitening of Lamanite converts for more than a century and a half.<sup>188</sup>

### **A Voice of Assimilation from the Dust**

Smith’s tendency to blame Indians for their own problems and offer cultural assimilation as a solution is evident in his advice to Keokuk, leader of the Sac and Fox. Mormon historian Lawrence Coates reports that when Keokuk and other leaders consulted Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois in August 1841 “for advice dealing with the white men who were taking their lands, killing their game, and slaughtering their women and children,” Smith turned to the Book of Mormon.<sup>189</sup> He quoted passages explaining how Indians had once been prosperous but through their failure to keep the commandments of God they had lost that prosperity. He offered the promise that Indians would once again return to righteousness, assist the Mormons in building a temple in Zion, and herald the Second Coming of Christ. Before this utopia could come to pass, however, Smith advised Keokuk that Indians “must cease killing each other and warring with other tribes; also to keep the peace with the whites.”<sup>190</sup> As Coates has noted, Smith’s vision for the future of the Sac and Fox was not appealing to Keokuk who preferred to “preserve an ancient life cycle of hunting game and growing corn, squash, and beans.”<sup>191</sup> Smith, while reportedly sympathetic to the plight of the Sac and Fox, was advocating the same message of

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<sup>188</sup> For similar passage see 1 Ne. 2:23; 2 Ne. 5:21-24; Jacob 3:8; Alma 17:15; and 3 Ne. 2:15.

<sup>189</sup> Lawrence Coates, “Refugees Meet: Mormons and Indians in Iowa,” *BYU Studies* 21 (Fall 1981): 495.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

cultural assimilation as other whites; only he claimed to speak with the authority of a voice from the dust.

Smith's ambivalent sympathy, identification of American Indians as Lamanites, and his expectations of Indian submission and acculturation set the tone for subsequent LDS leaders. Brigham Young, the second President of the LDS Church, led the Saints out of Nauvoo, Illinois after the death of Smith and into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Along the migration route he negotiated mutually agreeable arrangements for Mormon passage and trade with Potawatomi and Omaha. He discouraged reprisals from Mormons for Indian thefts; pointing to cultural differences to minimize their significance.<sup>192</sup> He advised against becoming too friendly with Indians, urging kind but not equal treatment. Young did not view Indians as having a prior claim on land Mormons would settle, ignored protestations to the contrary, discouraged payment for land, and insisted that "the land belongs to our Father in Heaven, and we calculate to plow and plant it and no man will have power to sell his inheritance for he cannot remove it; it belongs to the Lord."<sup>193</sup> Young identified the Lamanites as the fathers of "the present aborigines of our country" and equated them with devils "who stir up the wicked on the earth to purify the saints." While portraying them as part of the chosen House of Israel he also emphasized their degradation, referring to them as "miserable," "degraded," "ungovernable," "ignorant, [and] bloodthirsty."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 210-212.

<sup>193</sup> *William Clayton's Journal* (Salt Lake City, 1921), 327-330, 335, cited in Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 212.

<sup>194</sup> George D. Watt, et al., eds. *Journal of Discourses*. 26 vols. (Liverpool: F.D. Richards et al., 1854-56), 1:107, 1:169-171, 2:179-180, 4:346, 11:262, 13:170-178; 13:262, Infobases, *Collector's Library*, CD-ROM, 1998. See also Thomas W. Murphy, "From Racist Stereotype to Ethnic Identity: Instrumental Uses of Mormon Racial Doctrine," *Ethnohistory* 46 (Summer 1999): 451-480.

While the first few years in the Salt Lake Valley saw little conflict, Young's Indian policies varied significantly over time. Early in 1850, unaware that an emerging dispute with Utes at Fort Utah was instigated by the Mormon murder of a Native named Old Bishop, Young ordered the Nauvoo Legion to exterminate all "hostile" Indians but to preserve women, children and those desiring peace. Conflict at Fort Utah would include the "bloodiest week of Indian killing in Utah history" followed by the grisly decapitation of approximately forty to fifty dead Indians to be sent by Dr. James Blake, a non-Mormon army surgeon, to a medical institution in Washington. Captives inside the fort later reported that Mormons held up the heads of their relatives "as a warning to other Indians."<sup>195</sup> By mid-1851 Young moved away from an extermination policy as he recognized that "it is cheaper by far, yes by hundreds and thousands of dollars cheaper to pay such losses, than raise an expedition ... to fight Indians."<sup>196</sup> Young had contemplated removal and assimilation as an alternative policy near the end of 1850 when he enlisted John M. Bernhisel, Utah's delegate to Congress, to encourage the government to resettle Indians from Utah Territory elsewhere and teach them agriculture, science, and religion.<sup>197</sup> The Walker War in the summer of 1853 witnessed temporary armed conflict to be followed by a policy of patience and forbearance. By 1866, in the midst of Utah's Black Hawk War, Young would reconsider his earlier view, welcome the return of Indians to live among Mormons, and acknowledge the validity of their right to occupy the land where they lived, hunted, and buried their fathers and mothers. He did not,

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<sup>195</sup> John Alton Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 56-57.

<sup>196</sup> Brigham Young to Lorin Farr, 11 July 1851, Brigham Young Collection, microfilm reel 31, box 12, folder 15 cited in Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 214.

<sup>197</sup> Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 214.

however, advocate Mormon departure from Indian land. Rather he encouraged Mormons to stay, raise enough grain to feed the Indians and to treat them kindly.<sup>198</sup>

Brigham Young's desire and efforts to civilize as well as Christianize the Indians echoed the policies of other Christian missionaries. In 1854 Young urged the Mormon residents of Fillmore to "exert a salutary and benign influence upon the Natives who surround you, and overcome the savage propensity of their at present degraded natures. You will then be able to control them for good."<sup>199</sup> As part of Mormon evangelization Young advocated teaching Indians to farm, live in houses, read and write, work for their own subsistence, and pay for goods received yet consistently claimed the best land for Mormon settlement.<sup>200</sup> Young sometimes advocated force to achieve these goals. In 1854 he encouraged Mormons in the Ogden area to distribute recalcitrant Indians among Mormon families, force them to work, but pay them a reasonable wage in food and clothing. Upon hearing reports of lewd dancing two years later, Young advised Dimick Huntington to whip Gosiute Indians who engaged in such conduct.<sup>201</sup> While Young approved of corporal punishment for Indians he discouraged such practices among white Mormons.<sup>202</sup>

Young believed that Lamanites were cursed with a dark skin for their wickedness and believed that conversion to Christianity would lead to the removal of their curse. He directed a messenger in 1853 to tell the powerful Ute leader Wakara that if he and "the

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid. See also Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*.

<sup>199</sup> Brigham Young to the Presidents, Bishop, and brethren at Fillmore City, 13 March 1854, Letterbook 1:465-66 in Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 220.

<sup>200</sup> Clifford Duncan, "The Northern Utes of Utah," *A History of Utah's American Indians*, edited by Forrest S. Cuch (Salt Lake City: Utah State Division of Indian Affairs / Utah State Division of History, 2000), 189.

<sup>201</sup> Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 221-222.

<sup>202</sup> Leonard Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 205.

Utahs will do right the time will come when they will become a ‘white and delightsome people,’ but if they continue to sell their children into slavery, and rob other Indians of their children ... they will continue to decrease until they become extinct, until there is no man of them.”<sup>203</sup> In a general epistle to the saints in 1856 Young equated Christianity with skin color when he referred to “the fair-skinned Christian, and the dark-skinned savage.”<sup>204</sup> Young carefully noted, however, that while God cursed Indians and Africans with a dark skin, they remained children of God. Their skin of blackness was a “consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood and the law of God.”<sup>205</sup> The Church President explained “When the Lord has a people, he makes covenants with them and gives unto them promises: then, if they transgress his law, change his ordinances, and break the covenants he has made with them, he will put a mark upon them.”<sup>206</sup> Nonetheless, Young expressed confidence that Lamanites would once again become as “white and delightsome” as their father Lehi had been when he left Jerusalem.<sup>207</sup>

Brigham Young encouraged a variety of means of facilitating the acculturation and whitening of American Indians. He approved of missionary marriages with Indian women, especially the daughters of leading warriors and chiefs, but did not offer his approval of reciprocal exchanges requested by chiefs Wakara and Arapeen.<sup>208</sup> Previously, though, Young had sealed Mary Gont, “a white woman,” to Lewis Dana, “a Lamanite ...

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<sup>203</sup> Brigham Young to Isaac Morley, 7 May 1853. Quoted in Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War*, 66.

<sup>204</sup> Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*. John A. Widstoe, comp. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 422.

<sup>205</sup> Watt, *Journal of Discourses*, 11:272.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:337.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:359-60, 7:337.

<sup>208</sup> Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 221.

being the first Lamanite having a wife sealed to him under the New and Everlasting Covenant for time and all eternity” in Nauvoo in October 1845.<sup>209</sup> Responding to the already existing Great Basin slave trade in Indian women and children, Young encouraged Mormons to “buy up the Lamanite children as fast as they could, and educate them, and teach them the Gospel, ... and said that the Lord could not have devised a better plan than to have put us where we were in order to accomplish this thing.”<sup>210</sup> Unable to stop the slave trade, Young envisioned Mormon intentions as a purchase into freedom rather than slavery. While he did not offer his white children to Indians for adoption or intermarriage, Young did offer Sally, an Indian girl raised in his family, as a wife to the Pahvant chief Kanosh.<sup>211</sup> Leonard Arrington, former Director of the History Division of the LDS Church, reported that “some of the known fifty to sixty Indian children raised in Mormon homes became acculturated to white Mormon ways and intermarried into the society, while others died or never were comfortable in either white or Indian society.”<sup>212</sup> Raising Indian children in Mormon homes and intermarriage by Mormon polygamous patriarchs may have succeeded in “whitening” descendants but it also has posed perplexing identity questions that have persisted through several generations of descendants of these individuals.<sup>213</sup>

Perhaps as an expression of their own latent anxiety over the displacement of Indian children from their homes, Utah Mormon pioneer celebrations by the end of the

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<sup>209</sup> Heber Kimball Journal in Helen Whitney, WE 11 (1883);, p. 185 in Infobases, *Collector's Library*, CD-ROM, 1998.

<sup>210</sup> Brigham Young Manuscript History, 12 May 1851, p.46, cited in Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 221.

<sup>211</sup> Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 87.

<sup>212</sup> Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 221. See also Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* 2d. Ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 151.

<sup>213</sup> Murphy, et al. “Native Americans and the Book of Mormon.” Thomas W. Murphy and Simon G. Southerton, “Genetic Research a ‘Galileo Event’ for Mormons,” *Anthropology News* 44.2 (February): 20.

century were commonly highlighted by faux Indian attacks and abductions of parade participants. Indian impersonators and occasionally actual Native Americans would stage raids that were made to seem real to Mormon children but recognized by most adults as a “sham in good fun.” Captives would eventually be released, sometimes after negotiations with a Brigham Young impersonator.<sup>214</sup> In these activities Mormons participated in the longstanding American traditions of playing Indian that may have had the social benefit of allaying subconscious anxieties about colonialism.

### **Battle-ax of the Lord**

Mormon experience differed most dramatically from that of most other Christian denominations through the military alliances that Mormon leaders sought with local Indians, viewed as “the battle-ax of the Lord.” While speculations in Eastern presses hyped rumors of Mormon alliances with Indians, especially regarding the Ghost Dances of 1870 and 1890, the Mountain Meadows Massacre on September 11, 1857 stands out as the clearest and most tragic example of such ties.<sup>215</sup> Faced with news of the murder of beloved LDS Apostle Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas and the dispatch of an army by President James Buchanan to subdue the Mormons, Brigham Young met with Paiute Indians leaders from southern Utah assembled by Jacob Hamblin, the famed Mormon missionary to the Lamanites. During this hour meeting with Kanosh of Corn Creek, Ammon from Beaver Creek (Ute), Youngwuds of Harmony, and Paiute ‘head chief’ Tutsegabit the LDS President Young laid out a plan to stop overland emigration through

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<sup>214</sup> Eric A. Eliason, “Mormon Pioneer Nostalgia,” *Journal of Mormon History* 28 (Fall 2002), 152-153.

<sup>215</sup> Lawrence G. Coates, “The Mormons and the Ghost Dance,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Winter 1985): 89-110.

southern Utah as a show of Mormon power. While most records of this meeting were destroyed in a cover-up after the massacre, the diary of Young's brother-in-law Dimick Huntington, lay largely unnoticed in the LDS archives from 1859 until recently examined by Mormon historian Will Bagley. Huntington, the interpreter at the meeting, recorded that Brigham Young gave the cattle of the emigrants on the southern road to the Indians in return for their alliance with the Mormons against the Americans.<sup>216</sup> On the basis of this and other evidence, Bagley concluded that Brigham Young ordered the massacre of the wagon train by Mormon militia and Indian allies, probably as revenge for the murder of Parley P. Pratt.<sup>217</sup>

On September 7, 1857 Mormon militiamen dressed as Indians, perhaps with a few Paiute allies rallied by John D. Lee, assaulted the Fancher wagon train from Arkansas that reportedly included people linked to the murder of Pratt. The emigrants circled their wagons and offered a spirited resistance. After a four day struggle Mormons tricked the emigrants into disarming and leaving their wagon stronghold under armed protection of the Mormon militia. Upon a signal the armed Mormon guards executed the men they had promised protection. With the aid of young Mormons dressed as Indians and a few remaining Indian allies the guards killed the women, children, and wounded men. A Mormon cover-up subsequently attempted to shift the blame for this massacre of approximately 140 persons to their Indian allies. Eventually they pinned the blame on Indians and a Mormon scapegoat, John D. Lee, who was executed on March 21, 1877 for

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<sup>216</sup> D. B. Huntington, Journal, 1857-1859, 13-14; cited in Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 114.

<sup>217</sup> Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*. Juanita Brooks from a previous generation of Mormon historians had already implicated Brigham Young in the cover-up following the massacre. See Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, New Edition, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

the murders.<sup>218</sup> Yet, many Paiute leaders continue to claim “Indians did not participate in the initial attack on the wagon train nor in the subsequent murder of its inhabitants.”<sup>219</sup>

The historical importance of a military alliance between Mormons and Paiutes, if it existed, has been significantly undercut by systematic efforts by Mormons, some continuing to this day, to blame their primary role in the atrocities on their Indian associates.<sup>220</sup>

### *Mormon Indians*

Conflict between whites and Indians in Utah Territory often occurred within the Mormon denomination. After the brutal conquest at Fort Utah in 1850, hundreds of Northern Utes submitted to baptism into the LDS Church. Wakara and Arapeen were baptized within weeks of the fight and Wakara sought ordination to the LDS priesthood to facilitate spreading the Mormon gospel. Wakara along with Sowiette and Arapeen were ordained Elders in the Melchizedek Priesthood by 1851. Antonga Black Hawk, who had probably spent part of his childhood in Mormon homes in Salt Lake City, was likely baptized and then appointed chief over other Utes by the Mormons after the Fort Utah conflict. The intentions of Ute converts and understanding of the LDS gospel remain unclear but they probably saw baptism as an expression of “friendship” and conciliation

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<sup>218</sup> Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 4-5, 123-151, 315.

<sup>219</sup> Gary Tom and Ronald Holt, “The Paiute Tribe of Utah,” in *A History of Utah's American Indians*, edited by Forrest Cuch (Salt Lake City: Utah State Division of Indian Affairs / Utah State Division of History, 2000), 131.

<sup>220</sup> For one of many examples of continued shifting of at least some of the primary blame to Indians see Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 193. Alexander’s acknowledgement of the Mormon role still points to Indians as the initiators of the attack: “Although Indians had initiated the encounter with the Fancher party, the massacre was planned and executed by the local militia operating in collaboration with the Indians and with the approval of local church authorities.”

but clearly did not abandon subsequent practice of their own religious traditions. Despite their membership in the LDS Church, Wakara, Sowiette, Arapeen, and Black Hawk would later take leading roles in the conflicts with other Mormons known as Walker and Black Hawk Wars. Likewise, Utes in 1852 would complain “bitterly of the treatment they had received from the Mormon settlers, from the time they first entered the Territory up to the present.”<sup>221</sup> Despite large numbers of baptisms among the Northern Utes, Mormon evangelization and acculturation was most effective among the less powerful Piedes and Paiutes of southern Utah.

A few of the Piedes and Paiutes not only converted to Mormonism, they worked on Mormon farms and farmed with seeds provided by Mormons while Mormons raised and adopted many of their children.<sup>222</sup> The flexibility of the Paiute converts facilitated their survival under harsh conditions of disease and starvation that followed the Mormon incursions into their territory. Between 1851 and 1858 Mormons took the best land and sources of water for themselves and let their livestock run free and consume the seeds upon which the Paiute diet depended. Employment on Mormon farms, facilitated by religious conversion, contributed to survival and helped to shield Paiutes from attacks by wagon trains and rival tribes. Historians Gary Tom (Paiute) and Ronald Holt summarize the ambivalence of Paiutes regarding Mormon settlements and their consequences.

The Paiutes viewed the Mormon settlements with mixed feelings. The Mormon presence provided some protection from the depredations of the wagon trains and the slave raiding of the Utes, Navajos, and Mexicans. But the Paiutes would have been less accommodating if they had understood the sheer magnitude and devastating consequences of Mormon settlement. ... (T)he worst period for the Paiutes in southern Utah and Nevada was the decade or so following Mormon settlement. During those years the Mormon settlers themselves suffered from

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<sup>221</sup> Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 61-62, 64.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

epidemics of diseases such as cholera, scarlet fever, whooping cough, measles, mumps, tuberculosis, and malaria. Since Paiutes were frequently living near the settlements, they soon contracted these diseases but had less immunity to them. Some Paiute groups during this time experienced more than a 90 percent drop in population.<sup>223</sup>

With the best farmlands and water sources under Mormon control, religious conversion and absorption into a foreign social and economic system provided a means of survival; yet, “despite their theological status in Mormonism as a chosen people, they came to be considered no more than a nuisance that Mormons felt compelled occasionally to feed.”<sup>224</sup>

As Indians sought to adapt to Mormon presence in the Great Basin, Mormons had problems of their own with the federal government that would help set the stage for a twentieth century shift in Mormon attention to the Native peoples south of the United States and its territories. Increased attention to the prosecution of Mormons for polygamy after the Civil War prompted Brigham Young to seek possible places of refuge outside the United States. Aware of Mexico’s reforms and new constitutional liberties initiated by Benito Juárez, Young called Daniel W. Jones, Henry Brizzee, and others in June 1874 to undertake a mission to Mexico. Young instructed Jones and Brizzee “that there were millions of descendants of Nephi in the land, and that we were under obligation to visit them.”<sup>225</sup> Jones and the other missionaries en route to Mexico introduced the Book of Mormon to the Pimas and Maricopas they encountered on the way. The interpreter, according to Jones, “explained with much clearness the gospel of repentance to these

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<sup>223</sup> Tom and Holt, “The Paiutes,” 131.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>225</sup> Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians: A True yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author’s Experiences among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 220. F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1987), 15.

people. A good spirit prevailed and the Indians manifested a desire to be instructed, acknowledged their degraded condition, and said they wished the Mormons would come to their country to live and teach them.”<sup>226</sup> While Jones reported that the missionaries received new light from the Natives of Mexico and credited them with greater spirit and faith than among Latter-day Saints, he concluded that only by colonizing northern Mexico could the Mormons anticipate success in this area.<sup>227</sup> The early missions in Mexico and colonization in the northern states of Sonora and Chihuahua late in the nineteenth century would set the stage for remarkable Mormon growth in Latin America nearly a century later.

Reflecting on Young’s policies in the mid-1980s, former LDS Church Historian Leonard Arrington made the following conclusions.

Brigham’s Indian policy did not encompass respect or recognition for the values and outlook of their culture; he cannot fairly be portrayed as enlightened in a sense that would satisfy the militant Native Americans of today. Nonetheless, viewed in the nineteenth century context, when ruthless exploitation and genocide were all too common, Brigham displayed moderation and a willingness to share.<sup>228</sup>

In this respect, the less militant actions of Brigham Young in the latter part of his life were mostly in line with those of the Christian missionaries described by Tinker.

Europe’s conquest of the Americas was fought on two separate but symbiotically related fronts. One front was relatively open and explicit; it involved the political and military strategy that drove Indian peoples from their land to make room for the more “civilized” conqueror and worked to deprive Indian peoples of any continuing self-governance or self-determination. The second front, which was just as decisive in the conquest if more subtle and less explicitly apparent, was the religious strategy pursued by missionaries of all denominations. ... In the end, the conquest is not the conquest of a people by another people, but the systemic conquest of us all. In this conquest, as in the European conquest of Indian

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<sup>226</sup> Jones, *Forty Years*, 248.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 261, 282.

<sup>228</sup> Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 222.

peoples, theology becomes a crucial ingredient, and the missionaries become an important strategic phalanx.<sup>229</sup>

For most of his career Young sought the replacement of Indian culture not the physical destruction of Indian people. Yet, Young's policy of moderation was never completely free of the military and political component of conquest. In fact, many Mormon leaders remembered as missionaries to the Indians were also combatants and military leaders in conflicts with the same Indians they would later or had previously converted. Likewise, Mormon Indians fought against white Latter-day Saints, allied themselves with federal troops during the 1857-1858 Utah War, and even assisted federal judges in catching Saints charged with polygamy, treason, murder, and other crimes.<sup>230</sup> Colonial conquest in Utah may have been more intimate and complex than subjugation elsewhere but it was still quite successful in depriving Indians of their land and forcing their assimilation into new modes of life. Throughout such interactions the Book of Mormon served a key social function of providing a scriptural validation of Mormon colonization of Indian lands and peoples.

### **Mormon Acculturation**

LDS Church Presidents John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff continued to view and treat Indians as Lamanites well after Brigham Young's death on August 23, 1877 but gave Indians much less attention than their predecessors. Under the tenure of Taylor (1877-1887) and Woodruff (1887-1898) the LDS Church underwent tremendous challenges and turmoil as the United States vigorously pursued an end to peculiar

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<sup>229</sup> Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 120.

<sup>230</sup> Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 75.

Mormon marriage practices and the LDS theocratic hold on the people of the territory of Utah. While each man served as President of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time of his predecessor's death, the ascension to the Presidency of the LDS Church was neither automatic nor immediate and met temporary resistance within leading bodies of the church before finally becoming official.<sup>231</sup> Disputes over the estate of Brigham Young, for example, fired tensions within the church's leading families. Pursuit by U.S. Marshals and federal judges sent high-ranking Church leaders into hiding and threatened church property. In fact, Pres. Taylor was in hiding on the Underground when he died on 25 July 1887. With internal power struggles and political woes plaguing church leadership, rising numbers of non-Mormons in Utah diminished the secular political power of the Mormon People's Party. By 1890, facing the likely judicial confiscation of the church's temples, Woodruff and the Quorum of the Twelve capitulated to federal pressure and issued an official declaration agreeing to submit to the laws of the U.S. and encourage members of the church to do likewise.<sup>232</sup>

In his actions and his beliefs Wilford Woodruff displayed the Mormon tendency to view Indians as chosen people with a promising future caught in a present state of degradation. In his journal Woodruff recorded a speech by Brigham Young on 28 July 1847 in which Young encouraged the Saints to build alliances "with every tribe of Indians throughout America," and "take their squaws," educate and teach them the Mormon "gospel of their forefathers & raise children by them" in an effort to fulfill the

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<sup>231</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 41-42, 45-48.

<sup>232</sup> Alexander, *Things in Heaven*, 261-268.

prophecy that they will become “A white & delightsome people.”<sup>233</sup> Woodruff, who had participated in and recorded the Ute displacement by Mormons, preached in 1863 that “the remnant of the Lamanites who were cursed below all humanity that we are acquainted with—who have been filled with the spirit of bloodshed which they have inherited from their fathers—they will embrace the Gospel in the due time of the Lord.”<sup>234</sup> Following instructions from President Young, Woodruff raised two Indian or “Lamanite” boys that he renamed Moroni and Nephi. His diary entry of March 21, 1857 reports the purchase of one of the boys from another Mormon (not from Spanish or Indian traders).

I bought an Indian boy of Brother Willis this morning abot (sic) 6 years old. His Indian name was Saroquetes. We call him Nephi. He appears like a smart active good boy. I paid \$40 for him. I am in hopes to Educate him & prepare his mind that He may some day be useful in preaching to his tribe of the Piedes.<sup>235</sup>

He later reported that the boys were “vary (sic) uncertain help” and “made me a great deal of trouble.”<sup>236</sup> Woodruff apparently saw his efforts as a Mormon duty, as indicated in a sermon in 1882. “Here are the Lamanites, thousands and thousands of them surround us. They look to us for the Gospel of Christ. It is our duty to go to them and organize them, and preach to them the words of life and salvation.”<sup>237</sup>

Woodruff often found Israelite degradation and the curse upon the Lamanites of this continent as useful tools for warning white Mormons of their potential fall. In 1855

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<sup>233</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, 9 vols. Edited by Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983-85), 3:240-242. Quoted in Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth*, 143.

<sup>234</sup> Watt, *Journal of Discourses*, 10:220. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth*, 180.

<sup>235</sup> Susan Staker, ed. *Waiting for World's End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1993), 193. See page 172 for note about the baptism of his “lamanite Boy called Moroni.”

<sup>236</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, 9 vols. Edited by Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983-85), 6: 436-437. Quoted in Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 87.

<sup>237</sup> Watt, *Journal of Discourses*, 23: 330.

he warned that the sorrow of “old grey-headed Israelites” resulted from their rejection of the Messiah and broken covenants with God. He credited the “misery and wretchedness” of cursed Lamanites “brought down so low” despite being “of the seed of Israel” to “the chastening rod of the Almighty” resting upon them and their fathers.<sup>238</sup> In 1855 Woodruff warned Mormons, “I will tell you, if we had been of the house of Israel and forsaken our God as much as we have, and despised his ordinances and trampled them under our feet, we would have been cursed like these Lamanites.”<sup>239</sup> In an 1869 sermon he identified the Book of Mormon as “a record of the descendants of the House of Israel who dwelt on this continent anciently.”<sup>240</sup> He reminded listeners in 1881, “The Lamanites, now a down-trodden people, are a remnant of the house of Israel. The curse of God has followed them as it has done the Jews, though the Jews have not been darkened in their skin as have the Lamanites.”<sup>241</sup> The potential curse of a dark skin served as a provocative threat that Woodruff could employ to chastise recalcitrant Mormons.

Despite increasing political struggles in Utah and a decreasing emphasis on evangelization LDS missionaries succeeded in baptizing most of the three hundred members of the Catawba nation in York County, South Carolina, the only significantly successful conversions of tribal communities in the eastern United States.<sup>242</sup> Within the first year after two Mormon elders first contacted the Catawba in 1883, over twenty were baptized. Sunday School meetings quickly prompted threats and violence from local whites. In response, the Catawba turned to clandestine meetings and despite reports in

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 2: 198.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 9: 227-228.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 13: 320.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 22: 174-175.

<sup>242</sup> Arrington and Bitton, *Mormon Experience*, 157.

1896 that “neither a church nor a school” was present on the reservation, over 75% of the Catawba had converted secretly to Mormonism.<sup>243</sup> By the 1920s nearly all the Catawba were Mormon.<sup>244</sup> Intermarriage with whites (usually poor) was “already well established by 1900” but intermarriage with blacks, reportedly disdained by Catawba, was not permitted.<sup>245</sup> Anthropologist George Hicks reports the influence of the Book of Mormon on racial concepts.

The promise of a transformation from Indian to Caucasian was already gradually being fulfilled by 1900 and, even in 1963, many Catawba tended to interpret this as a result of spiritual good behavior rather than the influence of heredity and intermarriage with whites.<sup>246</sup>

While the Catawba appear to have internalized aspects of Mormon racism, the support and encouragement for education they received from their interactions with Mormons contrasted sharply with their treatment at the hands of their white neighbors in South Carolina who denied them access to local schools.<sup>247</sup>

Eastern hostility toward Mormons contributed to widely publicized allegations by U.S. General Nelson Miles and Ethnologist James Mooney of Mormon instigation of and participation in the Ghost Dance ceremonies, eventually leading to the notorious massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in December 1890. Investigations by Mormon historians in the twentieth century, however, have challenged such allegations. Lawrence G. Coates has concluded, “Mormon links [to the Ghost Dance] were

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<sup>243</sup> George L. Hicks, “Separate But Similar: Adaptation by Two American Indian Groups,” in *Ethnic Encounters: Identities and Contexts*, edited by George L. Hicks and Philip E. Leis (North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, 1977), 63-83.

<sup>244</sup> Thomas J. Blumer, “Catawba,” in *Native American in the Twentieth Century: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Mary B. Davis (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994), 91-93.

<sup>245</sup> Hicks, “Separate But Similar,” 65.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

peripheral, not central.”<sup>248</sup> General Miles built his claims of a military alliance on hearsay and Mooney’s speculation that the Ghost Dance shirt was modeled after LDS temple garments is debatable. Although both Mormon temple robes and the ghost dance shirts were treated as protective garments, Indians who had been through Mormon temple ceremonies were “unlikely candidates to share information with those men who dominated the leadership of the medicine dance and created the Ghost Shirts.”<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, many Mormon Indians do not appear to have participated in the Ghost Dance and Wilford Woodruff actively worked to suppress its spread to Utes in 1889.<sup>250</sup>

### **Orson Pratt’s Book of Mormon Geography**

Orson Pratt was one of nineteenth century Mormonism’s most devoted defenders of the Book of Mormon and the author of the only geography of the Book of Mormon ever incorporated into the canonical scripture by the LDS Church. Pratt, one of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve, published numerous pamphlets and periodicals. He was excommunicated in 1842 after he refused to sustain Joseph Smith. Smith had attempted to teach polygamy to Pratt’s wife Sarah while Orson was away on a mission. Smith defamed Sarah with salacious rumors after she refused to keep quiet about the controversial doctrine. A conciliatory sharing of a letter inviting him to join John Bennett in a plot against the LDS Church led to Pratt’s reinstatement early in 1843. Pratt remained loyal to the church and became one of its most prominent spokespersons despite a long dispute with Brigham Young over the President’s controversial concepts of

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<sup>248</sup> Coates, “Mormons and the Ghost Dance.” See also Arrington and Bitton, *Mormon Experience*, 158.

<sup>249</sup> Coates, “Mormons and the Ghost Dance,” 99.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

God. Pratt's outspokenness, though, did lead to an extraordinary number of mission calls that kept him at a distance from centers of power in the church.<sup>251</sup> Shortly before Young's death, Pratt received an assignment to help prepare the newest editions of Mormon scripture. His contributions to the 1879 edition to the Book of Mormon included a series of explicit geographic designations for locations of Book of Mormon cities and landmarks.<sup>252</sup>

Pratt had formulated the outlines for his canonical geography in earlier speeches and writings. Like his contemporaries he read the Book of Mormon as a history of the entire Western hemisphere comparable to the popular myth of the mound builders. In an 1868 discourse he claimed the Jaredites "collected seeds and grain of every kind, and animals of almost every description" and embarked on the Pacific Ocean from "the eastern borders of China or somewhere in that region." They landed "just below the Gulf of California, on the western coast. They inhabited North America, and spread forth on this Continent." The Jaredites, "spread over all the face of North America," faced their "greatest and last struggles ... in the State of New York, near where the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were found." He placed the arrival of the Nephite colony "on the coast of Chili" and the Mulekites "a few hundred miles north of the Isthmus on the western coast."

Shortly after the Nephite colony was brought by the power of God, and landed on the western coast of South America, in the country we call Chili, there was a great division among them. The righteous were threatened by the wicked who sought to destroy them. The Lord warned Nephi, their leader, to flee from among the Lamanites, to depart for the safety of himself and his family and those that believed in the revelations of God. Nephi and the righteous separated themselves

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<sup>251</sup> "Publisher's Preface" in Orson Pratt, *The Essential Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991) in Smith Research Associates, *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM*, 1998.

<sup>252</sup> David Whittaker, "Forward," in *Essential Orson Pratt*.

from the Lamanites and traveled about eighteen hundred miles north until they came to the head waters of what we term the Amazon river. There Nephi located his little colony in the country supposed to be Ecuador, a very high region, many large and elevated mountains being in that region.<sup>253</sup>

In 1871 he placed the Lamanites in the “southern portion of South America.” In the last two centuries of the Book of Mormon the “apostatized” Lamanites drove all the wicked Nephites “out of South America and followed them with their armies up into the north country, and finally overpowered them. They were gathered together south of the great lakes in the country which we term New York.”<sup>254</sup> He described the survivors of the great battle in New York as “the various tribes of Lamanites that are scattered over this vast continent.”<sup>255</sup> He identified the narrow neck of land as the Isthmus of Panama, the land southward as South America, the land northward as everything north of Panama, the Sidon River as Magdalena River in Colombia, and the Waters of Ripliancum as Lake Ontario.<sup>256</sup> Pratt’s hemispheric and canonical geography of the Book of Mormon formalized the common sense interpretations of nineteenth century Mormons.

### Death by Writing

When the Mormons first settled in a purportedly neutral area along the Salt Lake between the Northern Utes and Shoshonis in 1846, Ute religious beliefs prompted some suspicion of Mormon intentions that now look quite prophetic in retrospect. Utes

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<sup>253</sup> Watts, *Journal of Discourses*, 12: 342.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: 10-11.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 300.

<sup>256</sup> John Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 141-142. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 106. For a detailed listing of Pratt’s geographic references deleted from the scriptural footnotes by the Talmage Committee in the 1911 edition of the Book of Mormon see V. Mack Sumner, “An Exploration of the Footnotes in the 1911 Edition, used by the Talmage Committee,” August 1967 (copy in author’s possession).

recognized a mystical, even deadly, charm in writings and drawings. Utes reported their fear that Mormons “caused Indian deaths simply by writing their names on paper.”<sup>257</sup> Encounters between indigenous people without writing and Christianizing colonizers have frequently generated such accusations throughout colonial history.<sup>258</sup> Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss has suggested that Native attributions of a mystical power to writing perceptively evoke the sociological power of writing to increase “the authority and prestige of one individual--or function--at the expense of others.”<sup>259</sup> The Ute leader Wakara appears to have recognized the social power of writing when he constructed a “letter” to Brigham Young by mimicking the pen strokes of English writing.<sup>260</sup> As colonial histories construct order out of disorder, observes anthropologist Michael Taussig, they function in a manner analogous to sorcery.<sup>261</sup> The Book of Mormon, an occult document, attempts to tame the chaotic challenge American Indian existence posed for Christian world-views rooted in a biblical tradition. It assigns the name Lamanite and an Israelite heritage to the indigenous peoples of the Americas through a common cultural practice that legitimizes Christian triumphalism over a dark-

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<sup>257</sup> Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 95.

<sup>258</sup> See de Léry, *History of a Voyage*, 134-135.

<sup>259</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, translated by John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Penguin, 1973), 296-298. See also Murphy, “Laban’s Ghost.”

<sup>260</sup> “Wakara to Brigham Young, 1851,” LDS Church Archives, <sup>1</sup>CR1234/1, Box 74, folder 44 (Reel 86). The clerk’s description of this letter follows. “Markings on two sheets imitating English handwriting. The title or salutation is underlined; the body of the letter has two words per line. Walker may have examined English writing closely, because the markings are not scribbles nor stray marks – my eye tries to turn them into Roman letters. Lines of writing are fairly straight across the page, and nearly parallel to each other. One sheet is folded into an envelope, and the markings on the outside are “rotated” to run the way an address would go. Perpendicular to the “address” are lines that mimic the notations made by clerks when papers are filed: the first line is underlined, and the characters of the next few lines are very much smaller than the rest of the writing. The pen is held firmly to the paper as though the writer were confident of his writing; there is no trembling, no trailing off at the end of a mark, no stopping and starting the way semi-literate people do when the pen is unfamiliar to them. I do think it is pen rather than pencil, but it might be a very hard, very dark pencil.” A special thank you to Will Bagley for bringing this letter to my attention.

<sup>261</sup> Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism*, 366-392. See also Thomas W. Murphy, “Other Mormon Histories: Lamanite Subjectivity in Mexico,” *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Fall 2000): 179-214.

skinned Jewish other. With this name comes a new history, one that defames the narratives already claimed by Utes. Mormons identification of Utes and other indigenous peoples as Lamanites may have allegorically invoked a deadly charm that contributed to the devastation of Indian communities, thousands of Indian deaths, and enhanced authoritative claims that Mormons possess the true American Indian history.

The first generation of Mormon leaders dominated the discussions of Lamanite identity. They viewed virtually all American Indians in North and South America as Lamanites, although most of the direct references to Lamanites applied to the Indians with whom Mormon interacted. They read the Book of Mormon as *the* history of ancient America and taught Indians to see it as a substitute for their own traditions. They advocated a colonial version of the gospel that mandated cultural adaptations by indigenous converts. Native converts were expected to become sedentary, adopt farming (many already did some degree of farming and herding), abandon previous religious attachments, and make peace with whites. As Mormons invaded indigenous lands the Book of Mormon's images of Lamanites became ideological weapons of war. Mormon application of the name Lamanite did indeed, as the Utes feared, bring about the death of numerous Indians.

While Mormons baptized large numbers of Indians in Utah, the Indians viewed the ritual through their own cultural traditions of inclusive religious practice and for the most part did not become exclusively Mormon in their religious practice. Mormon Indians and those they led in raids on Mormon livestock became the most potent military foes of white Mormons. While evangelization had rather limited effects Mormons found

their greatest success in whitening the culture and biology of American Indians through intermarriage and adoption. Mormon evangelization was intent on turning Lamanites white and delightful. In this respect Mormons imagined Lamanite identity as something to overcome, not adopt. Yet, ironically adopted children, offspring of interethnic marriages, and to a limited extent evangelized Indians came to see themselves and their ancestors as Lamanites. Thus, Mormons and their Native converts created rather than eliminated Lamanites.

Orson Pratt's canonical geography of the Book of Mormon laid the groundwork for the twentieth century debates over Book of Mormon historicity. It begins a shift that will become increasingly apparent in the next century. Discussions of Lamanite identity become more textually based, less directly concerned about interactions with American Indians, and increasingly the domain of scholars rather than general authorities of the church. While scholars in the twentieth century would advocate newer and more restricted models for Book of Mormon geography, most Mormons today still appear to read the scripture with the same general geographic outlines common in the nineteenth century. To see the narrow neck of land as Panama and North and South America as the lands northward and southward appears little more than the application of common sense. Yet, advances in the archaeological and biological sciences will demonstrate the impossibility of such a model and Pratt's geographical footnotes will be dropped from subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon after 1920. While Indian Mormons will wrestle with their own concepts of Lamanite identity, these discussions occur largely independent of the revolutionary scholarship on the Book of Mormon. Mormon Indian assertions of Lamanite status and expectation of the fulfillment of Book of Mormon

promises to the seed of Lehi will meet with increasing suspicion, outright contempt from church leaders, and even excommunication. Likewise, Mormon scholars who propose a nineteenth century origin of the Book of Mormon will find themselves the target of church disciplinary actions and occasionally excommunication.

## Chapter 6: "We are Still Here!"

I think it is important to note the most important legacy of the Utah American Indians: Despite widespread attempts at genocide and full-scale extermination campaigns against us by the dominant culture, "we continue to exist." We continue to live as a people with a distinct and beautiful culture, worldview, and way of life. "We are still here! And we do not plan on leaving ... not real soon anyway."

*Forrest Cuch (Ute)*<sup>262</sup>

Twentieth and early twenty-first century images of Lamanites appeared amidst the transformation of Mormonism from the status of a maligned minority to that of a model religious minority with significant political power. At mid-century the Church formalized the century old practice of raising Indian children in Mormon homes, creating the institution of the Mormon Indian Student Placement Program that would place over 70,000 Lamanite children in urban white Mormon homes during the latter half of the century. Within that institution and beyond Mormon Indians maintained a variety of voices that are the central focus of this chapter.

Native institutions in the United States would feel the impact of growing Mormon political power in the mid-twentieth century. In the post-war era, Mormon legislators such as Senator Arthur Watkins of Utah helped shape federal governmental policy towards Indians, emerging as a key formulator of a policy known as Termination. Federal legislation aimed at terminating tribal political institutions exemplified the expectation of cultural transformation outlined in the Book of Mormon. In an effort to provide local examples to facilitate the adoption of this new policy elsewhere, Watkins helped target early termination legislation disproportionately towards Utah and predominantly Mormon Indians such as the mixed-blood Utes, Pauties, and Catawba. Mormon legislative roles in

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<sup>262</sup> Cuch, "Introduction," xx.

the formulation of such a policy make it very clear that the Book of Mormon is not simply an idle story of origins with no effect on the lives of ordinary Indians, Mormon or not. Efforts at termination proved devastating for all parties involved and would be abandoned by the federal government; yet, the potential revival of such policies remains a threat to the long-term viability of tribal political and cultural institutions. Nonetheless, Indian activists found in Termination an evil against which to direct a myriad of voices for self-determination and civil rights.

Despite aggressive attempts to exterminate tribal cultural institutions and assimilate American Indians into Mormon culture, the Indians of Utah and others under Mormon influence survived, but not to speak with a singular voice. The Book of Mormon represents Lamanites as the colonial “other,” the passive objects of Mormon scripture. Yet, when self-identified Lamanites forged their own stories they emerged as active complex subjects, not the passive others of scripture. Some Indian Mormons objected to the label of Lamanite while others embraced it. Native Mormons and Hispanics did not always welcome civil rights activists who came to Utah to protest racism in this predominantly Mormon state; yet, many worked quietly for change within the state and its dominant religious institution. Native Mormon families seeking a bridge to the dominant culture voluntarily participated in the Mormon Indian Student Placement Program, sending their children to live with urban white Mormon families and to be educated in Mormon institutions like Brigham Young University. A few of these Lamanites emerged as church leaders and at least one openly challenged other general authorities when self-affirming interpretations of the Book of Mormon failed to yield expected promises. Such challenges led to the excommunication of a dynamic Navajo

educator, George P. Lee, depriving the upper leadership of the church of its first Native American general authority.

### **Mormon Indian Student Placement Program**

A romantic and widely accepted story has emerged in the field of Mormon Studies to describe the origins of the Mormon Indian Placement Program. As told in 1985 from oral histories by J. Neil Birch, an LDS social worker from Sandy, Utah, “The Beginnings of Indian Placement” rest with a young Navajo girl Helen John who, in the spirit of nineteenth century Navajo headman Manuelito, quested after the “ladder” of education. At the age of seventeen, after an argument with her father Willie John over her desire to attend school, Helen ran off and took shelter from the sun on the porch of Amy Avery’s farmhouse. Amy overheard Helen’s sobbing and invited her in to tell about her problem. Amy invited Helen to pray but Helen despaired because the Navajo had reportedly lost their God a long time ago. Amy offered a prayer on Helen’s behalf.

Dear Heavenly Father, this here Lamanite girl is kneeling here with me to ask a special blessing. She has been told by her father that she can’t go to school because one of her many brothers and sisters needs to take a turn. Now, dear Father, please smile down on this girl, one of your Lamanite daughters. Open up the way that the desires of her heart will be fulfilled. In the blessed name of Jesus Christ, Amen.<sup>263</sup>

A budding relationship between Helen John and Amy Avery developed over the next year through invitations to visit her home, reading lessons with a friend, missionary lessons, and letter writing. In October 1947 Helen John returned to the Avery home and asked to pitch a tent in the backyard while she attended school in Richfield, Utah. Hoping

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<sup>263</sup> J. Neil Birch, “Helen John: The Beginnings of Indian Placement,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon History* 18 (Winter 1985), 119-121.

to facilitate this request without subjecting Helen to life in a tent, Avery sought the assistance of Golden Buchanan, the stake coordinator of Lamanite affairs. Buchanan turned to Elder Spencer W. Kimball for advice. Kimball challenged Golden and Thelma Buchanan to take Helen into their home, not as a servant or a guest but as if she were their own daughter. Initially reluctant, the Buchanans consented and began to make arrangements with other families for relatives of Helen John to stay in the area as well and attend school. Helen gained an education, joined the Church, served a mission, and married in the Salt Lake City temple to another former missionary, Kenneth Woolsey Hall.<sup>264</sup>

The story is heartwarming and affirming to Navajo aspirations for education and Mormon desires to convert and assimilate their Lamanite brothers and sisters. In this story, and in many of the lives of Navajo and other Indians to be affected by the program, boarding in white LDS homes provided an alternative to government boarding schools and a bridge into the dominant culture. Selectively grounding the beginning of the Mormon Indian Placement Program in the experiences of Helen John in the 1940s, though, neglects the much older Mormon practice of buying, selling, and adopting of Indian children that began a century earlier. Nonetheless, in 1954 the program became an official Church institution and would remain so for more than four decades. Between 1954 and 1996 more than 70,000 Native American children lived for at least part of the year with white Mormon families. During this time participation was strictly voluntary, limited to Indians who had converted to Mormonism and spoke some English, and

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 119-129.

subject to the approval of the biological parents. The Mormon foster family was responsible, without reimbursement, for the cost of food, shelter, clothing, education, etc.

Mormon paternalism, though, met with sharp criticism from some quarters. Johnny Benally, a placement Navajo who grew up with a Mormon family, noted in 1979, “An Indian Mormon is a contradiction in terms. I guess it describes me though.” Benally continued to practice Mormonism, but reflected critically on his experience and its implications for the reservation community.

I am successful, but I’ll never be White; yet I don’t have a sense of being Navajo. The sense of loss won’t destroy me and I will do well within the White man’s society. But I could never go back and live on the reservation. The only thing I know about Indians I learned from books. ... If the Mormons haven’t created the cultural clash there [on the Navajo reservation], they sure as hell have aggravated it.<sup>265</sup>

Mabel Yazzie, another placement Navajo and a Mormon, added, “Placement has made me lose touch with my culture. I respect it, but I don’t really feel it is mine.” Dr. Jane Van Deusen, a pediatrician from Tuba City, Arizona, explained, “They don’t know whether they are Anglo or Indian. Time after time I have referred children to psychologists for emotional and psychological disorders, and time after time it is discovered they are from LDS placement, and that’s where the problems started.”<sup>266</sup>

Despite the criticism, a special exemption for the Mormon Indian Student Placement Program secured Mormon legislative support for the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978, an act making similar foster arrangements for non-Mormon families illegal. By the 1990s, amidst charges of cultural genocide and continued criticism from detractors and

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<sup>265</sup> Beth Wood, “The Mormons and Indian Child Placement: Is Native Culture Being Destroyed?” *Wassaja* March 1979, 7-8.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

supporters alike, the Church scaled the project back to only 450 participants in 1990, 50 in 1996, and today only a handful in the process of completing their course of study remain in the program.<sup>267</sup>

The Placement Program was one of many twentieth century initiatives directed at Indians and led by the LDS Church. LDS sociologist Armand Mauss observes, “The rise and decline of these programs follow a track that corresponds closely with the waxing and waning of [Spencer W.] Kimball’s own career as apostle and president.”<sup>268</sup> Kimball became an apostle in 1943 and was promptly placed in charge of Indian affairs for the Church. In addition to his efforts with the Placement Program, he also took a leading role in the development of the Indian Seminary Program begun in the 1950s to provide supplemental religious education to Indians at federal boarding schools and the Brigham Young University Indian Programs that would help give BYU the largest Indian enrollments of any university in the United States during the 1970s. Tens of thousands of Indians traveled through one or more of these programs and attained invaluable skills for navigating in the dominant white culture; yet, by the 1980s the Church had begun shifting its investments elsewhere and by the end of the century nearly all such programs had come to an end. Mauss attempted to answer the challenging question, “Why did the church ‘pull the plug’ on such a seemingly successful and comprehensive enterprise enterprise?”

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid.; Robert McPherson, “Conclusion: Contemporary Status of Utah’s Indians,” in Cuch, *Utah’s Indians*, 327; Joann Sebastian Morris, “Churches and Education,” in Mary B. Davis, ed. *Native America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 115; Armand Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 86-88.

<sup>268</sup> Mauss, *Abraham’s Children*, 82.

The answer seems to hinge on the definition of *success*. The education and assimilation of thousands of Indian youth during one entire generation would be considered success by most government officials and educators and was so considered by the LDS professional social workers, faculty, and staff of BYU, who administered these programs. However, the church is not in the business of education and assimilation for its own sake. It is the business of “making Mormons”—or, in church terms, saving souls and bringing them to Christ. For the church and its leaders, therefore, success is not achieved without sustained growth in church membership *and retention*. In these terms, the outcome must have seemed disappointing to late-twentieth-century church leaders, as it had seemed to their predecessors a century earlier.<sup>269</sup>

In the larger perspective, Mauss concludes, the programs “produced ambiguous cost-benefit ratios in both spiritual and material terms.”<sup>270</sup> Few Indian graduates made a long-term commitment to the LDS Church, despite the secular benefits of their education in white society.

George P. Lee, Navajo, was one of many Native American Mormons who benefited from his experiences in the Placement Program and at BYU. Lee was one of the first group students in the program after it became an official program sponsored by the Church in 1954. Three decades later he recalled:

Looking back, I am amazed I had such an opportunity. There I was, a little, skinny, ragged Navajo boy, fresh off the reservation, immersed in Indian traditions and superstitions, and coming from circumstances that demanded a constant struggle to survive.

Subconsciously, I was still aware that I was an Indian and that I still had an Indian family back home on the reservation. I often took time to think about my natural family, especially on the rare occasions when I received a letter from them.

It did not take me long to learn that the more I thought about the reservation, the more lonely and homesick I became. I then made up my mind that I was going to take the best of what was offered, that I was going to keep my mind on activities with my foster family.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>271</sup> George P. Lee, *Silent Courage: An Indian Story* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 134.

Lee attributed his ability to adapt to his Navajo heritage and dedicated himself to success under new circumstances. He graduated from junior high and high school in Orem, Utah, served a mission back to the Navajo, and then graduated from Brigham Young University. He went on to earn a master's from Utah State University and a doctorate in education from BYU, the first granted to a Native American candidate, and to become the first Native American general authority in the LDS Church. His gratitude for this opportunity was expressed in his testimony of the Book of Mormon.

I consider the Book of Mormon to be a sacred record of the forefathers of the Native Americans. It identifies who the true Israelites are upon this continent. It prophesies of the day when the Indian and the native Islanders will rise above poverty, illiteracy, and obscurity. It contains a most glorious message.<sup>272</sup>

As the preeminent star of the various Mormon Indian programs Lee would find their demise following the death of Kimball in 1985 severely disappointing. Expressing his frustration would ultimately lead to his excommunication on 1 September 1989 for “apostasy” and “other conduct unbecoming a member of the church.” Lee spelled out his objections in a 23 page handwritten letter he read to church leaders at his church disciplinary council. Quoting passages from the Book of Mormon to validate his position (1 Ne. 13:34 & 3 Ne. 16: 10-11), Lee criticized church leaders for setting themselves “up as a literal seed of Israel” and “displacing the true seed of Israel.” He continued, “According to the Lord Jesus’ definition the ‘remnants of the House of Israel’ means Lamanites or children of Lehi not all members of the church.”

You have taught that the Book of Mormon is not written to the Lamanites but to the Gentiles in our day. You have come very close to denying the Book of Mormon is about Lamanites. You have cut out Indian or Lamanite programs and are attempting to cut them out of the Book of Mormon. You are trying to discredit

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 345.

or downplay the role of Lamanites in these last days and downplay their role and importance in the building of the New Jerusalem.

You are teaching members to teach from the Book of Mormon and at the same time downplay their role in the Book of Mormon. You are teaching that today's Lamanites are descendents of wicked evil Lamanites in the Book of Mormon. The truth is the Lamanites today are descendents of both Nephites and Lamanites— Therefore they carry the blood of Mormon, Moroni, Nephi, Lehi and other great Book of Mormon prophets in their veins today.

You are loving the Indians and other Lamanites at a distance and have no sense of responsibility to them because you displaced them and set yourself up as Ephraim more superior to the Lamanites, and thus you are telling the Lamanites that you are No. 1 and they are second class. You are trying to take their place in their divine roles and assignments. ...

You are slowly causing a silent spiritual slaughter of the Indians and other Lamanites.

While physical extermination may have been one of Federal government's policies long ago but your current scriptural and spiritual extermination of Indians and other Lamanites is the greater sin and great shall be your condemnation for this.

You are still harboring hostility and ill feelings towards Indians and other Lamanites even after the Lord's commandments to gather them and be nursing fathers and mothers to them. In short, you are betraying and turning your backs on the very people on whom your own salvation hangs. I cannot be a party to this kind of teaching which runs counter to the Lord's instructions in the scriptures.<sup>273</sup>

George P. Lee saw the cost-benefit analyses that apparently led to the demise of the church's Indian programs following Kimball's death as a betrayal of the theology and teachings of the Book of Mormon. Lee's charge that church leaders were Gentiles was no more welcomed in the 1980s than Margarito Bautista's similar deployment of the Book of Mormon imagery was in Mexico in the 1930s (see chapter seven).

### **Termination And Mormon Political Power**

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<sup>273</sup> Photocopy of original letters in possession of the author.

As Mormon missionaries sought to transform Indian cultures at the grassroots, Mormon lawmakers joined in efforts to legislate the termination of tribal political and legal authority. Dwight Eisenhower succeeded Harry Truman as President of the United States in 1953 and along with conservative reformers now in control of congress for the first time since the 1920s sought to “liberate” Indians from reservations, tribal institutions, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. House Concurrent Resolution 108, passed August 1, 1953, withdrew the commitment of the federal government to Indian people, stating in part, “It is the policy of Congress, as rapidly as possible to make Indians within the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, to end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all the rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship.”<sup>274</sup> Utah Senator Arthur V. Watkins, head of the Senate subcommittee on Indian affairs, emerged as a “vigorous proponent of the termination movement” and called the new policies “the Indian freedom program.” Between 1954 and 1962 Congress passed and the federal government implemented a series of legislative acts that cut sixty-one tribes and native communities off from federal services and protections and relocated many Indians in urban metropolises.<sup>275</sup> Utah tribes, as well as the predominantly Mormon Catawba nation, would find themselves among the first targets of termination. The Northwestern Band of Shoshone at Washakie, Utah and the Skull Valley Goshutes vigorously and successfully opposed termination but mixed-blood

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<sup>274</sup> Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 67; Kenneth R. Philp, ed. *Indian Self-Rule* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1986), 129.

<sup>275</sup> Mankiller, *Mankiller*, 67-68.

Uintah-Ouray Utes, several Paiute bands, and the Catawba would not prove so fortunate.<sup>276</sup>

Due to his prominent position and role in the formulation of Indian policy, Senator Watkins was able to target the Utah's mixed-blood Uintah-Ouray Utes for termination. Watkins made payment of a \$32 million dollar settlement with the Utes contingent upon their acceptance of termination. He would place similar conditions on the Menominee tribe of Wisconsin, but the Ute in his home state provided him with a potential model for the implementation of the new termination policy. Despite Indian protests to the contrary, Watkins told Congress the Utes had requested termination and on August 24, 1954 the Ute Termination Act passed. The act set in motion provisions to terminate Utes who did not "possess one-half degree of Ute Indian blood and a total of Indian blood in excess of one-half." By requiring more than half Indian blood for Ute status, Watkins advocated a model that could help realize his goal of the disappearance of Indians as a people because every marriage with a non-Indian would result in the end of Indian status.<sup>277</sup> Parker M. Nielson, a Salt Lake City attorney for mixed-blood Utes, accused Watkins of using his "control over Indian affairs to implement Mormon doctrine."

A familiar tenet of Mormonism was that if the Indians would accept the Mormon religion, "many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightful people." Indeed, Mormons claimed a special license to interfere with and change Indians' lives—to "convert" them, as they put it.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Mae Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," in Cuch, *Utah's Indians*, 72. Thomas Alexander, "Native Americans in Post-War Utah," retrieved electronically April 12, 2003 from <http://historytogo.utah.gov/>.

<sup>277</sup> Parker M. Nielson, *The Dispossessed: The Cultural Genocide of the Mixed-blood Utes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 52-53, 65-66.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

Despite lacking readiness for termination as determined by House Concurrent Resolution 108 other measures, Paiute bands of southern Utah would also find themselves under the gun of Senator Watkins. Exact reasons for the inclusion of the Paiutes remain unclear but scholars such as Mary Jacobs and Gary Orfield provide evidence that Watkins played a key role. Jacobs suspects that he included the Paiutes and other small groups from his own state because of his strong support of termination, “his own convictions and for encouragement to other legislators to terminate Indians in their own states.”<sup>279</sup> Orfield documented Watkins’s domination of the subcommittee hearings that forced termination on the Paiutes. He observed, “only Watkins of the five Senate members was present for more than one hearing.”<sup>280</sup> Rushed through Congress, Public Law 762, setting in motion the termination of the Paiutes, was signed into law by President Eisenhower on September 1, 1954.<sup>281</sup>

After the completion of termination on February 21, 1957 Paiutes lost eligibility for services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Paiute historian Gary Tom and anthropologist Ronald Holt summarized the impact on the tribe.

The period between 1957 and 1975 was characterized by general neglect on the part of the state of Utah for any but the most basic needs of the Paiutes. This was a time of growing hopelessness and social and economic decline for the majority of the Paiute people. By all accounts, increased mortality rates, unemployment, and alcoholism were rampant among the Paiutes during this period. The bad economic times shattered families, and children were often raised by relatives or by whites.<sup>282</sup>

Under these conditions, many families may have seen participation in the Mormon Indian Student Placement Program as a viable strategy of survival. The Paiutes, more than most

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<sup>279</sup> Tom and Holt, “The Paiutes,” 148.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

other tribes, had turned to white Mormon families for assistance in raising their children since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Mormon support, however, would also prove crucial in undoing the effects of termination. By 1973 Paiute bands were circulating petitions calling for the restoration of tribal status. In 1975 the Paiute Tribal Corporation approached an LDS attorney Larry Echohawk (Pawnee) to begin the legal process towards restoration of federal recognition. Bruce Parry, director of Utah State Indian Affairs, and Mary Ellen Sloan, a Salt Lake City attorney with Echohawk's firm, encouraged "latent Mormon support and sympathy for the Paiutes" in their grassroots efforts to rally support for restoration. Their efforts managed to achieve the acquiescence of newly elected Utah Senator Orrin Hatch and on April 3, 1980 President Jimmy Carter signed the restoration legislation Public Law 96-227.<sup>283</sup>

Larry Echohawk, Pawnee and LDS attorney for the Paiute, points to the lingering effects of the policy of termination. Affected tribes "were almost completely decimated economically" and people maintain "bitter feelings toward the government." He describes the policy as an "abysmal failure" and warns that efforts "to dismantle tribal government and Indian rights" began much earlier than the 1940s and continue beyond the 1960s.<sup>284</sup>

The Catawba nation of Rock Hill, South Carolina, the only Eastern tribe to convert in significant numbers to Mormonism, also ended up on the termination chopping block. The Catawba had only begun a federal trust relationship in 1942. Enacted

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 157-159.

<sup>284</sup> Larry Echohawk, "The Legacy of the Termination Era," in *Indian Self-Rule*, edited by Kenneth R. Philp (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1995), 175-177.

September 21, 1959, the Catawba Indian Tribe Division of Assets Act set in motion steps toward the termination of federal services in 1962. On the basis of visits in the early 1960s anthropologists George L. Hicks and Charles M. Hudson both reported that an embrace of Mormon beliefs assisted the Catawba in their adoption of dominant culture. Hicks pointed to the Book of Mormon's predictions of Lamanites becoming "white and delightsome" as a supernatural explanation for cultural transformation.

Mormonism provided a supernatural basis for explaining the relation of Catawba to whites and Negroes. The promise of a transformation from Indian to Caucasian was already gradually being fulfilled by 1900 and, even in 1963, many Catawba tended to interpret this as a result of spiritual good behavior rather than the influence of heredity and intermarriage with whites.<sup>285</sup>

Writing in the late 1970s, Hudson had similar observations from his fieldwork.

When I did field work with the Catawbas in the early 1960s, they were not much interested in preserving an Indian identity. It seemed to me, in fact, that they were ill at ease with it. But with the Red Power Movement and Indian activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this changed to some degree. Some of the Catawbas became interested in such organizations as the Coalition of Eastern Native Americans, and there has been some discussion about the possibility of reestablishing ties with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Some of the women have continued making and selling pottery, and during a period of heightened white interest in Indians, they began producing more pottery than in the past. Some of the potters began traveling and staging exhibitions in various places. But with all of this, there are few Catawbas who are actively maintaining an Indian identity.<sup>286</sup>

While anthropologists pointed to a waning interest in Indian identity, a 1985 special issue of the LDS magazine *Young Women New Era* surveyed the conversion of the Catawba and declared, "This small offshoot of Israel grew into an unshakable outpost of

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<sup>285</sup> Hicks, "Separate but Similar," 67.

<sup>286</sup> Charles M. Hudson, "The Catawba Indians of South Carolina: A Question of Ethnic Survival," in Walter L. Williams, ed. *Southeastern Indians Since the Removal Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 119-120.

Zion.”<sup>287</sup> Renewed interest in an Indian identity, though, did grow. In 1990 the tribe’s Cultural Preservation Program sponsored a Catawba Festival and tribal members engaged in an ongoing effort to revive the Catawba (Siouan) language.<sup>288</sup> After a lengthy court battle the Catawba regained federal recognition in November 1993 with the South Carolina Lands Settlement Act.<sup>289</sup>

While their association with Mormonism appears to have led to a disproportionate targeting for termination, Northwestern Shoshone, Skull Valley Goshutes, mixed-blood Utes, Pauites, and Catawba proved resilient against legal assaults on their political and cultural institutions. Mormons, Indian and non-Indian, played key roles in both severing and restoring federal recognition. It is thus not likely that Mormon values determined the actions to be taken, but there can be little doubt that Indians and Mormons alike often viewed these efforts in relationship to predictions in the Book of Mormon that Lamanites would eventually become “white and delightsome.”

### **Lamanite Subjectivity**

Book of Mormon scholarship (see chapter eight) has largely ignored the views of Native Americans, Mormon or otherwise. The experiences of Helen John, and George P. Lee illustrate the complexity of Native American reflections upon and uses of the Book of Mormon. That complication of their understanding is echoed in a myriad of Lamanite

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<sup>287</sup> “Young Women Values,” *Young Women New Era* (Nov. 1985), 27, retrieved electronically April 12, 2003 from <http://library.lds.org>.

<sup>288</sup> Blumer, “Catawba,” 93.

<sup>289</sup> Lee Sultzman, “Catawba History,” retrieved electronically April 12, 2003 from <http://www.dickshovel.com/Catawba.html>. “A brief history of the Catawba,” retrieved electronically April 12, 2003 from <http://www.chesterchamber.com/>. Catawba Cultural Preservation Project, retrieved electronically April 12, 2003 from <http://www.ccppcrafts.com/>.

voices that illustrate with passion the engaged way that many Native American Mormons throughout the twentieth century have learned to read the Book of Mormon.

Ak'é nídzin (the One Who Greet with Deep Respect) was known to the predominantly Mormon people of Blanding, Utah as Navajo Oshley, “an example of the best from the Indians’ world in the white man’s eyes.” Interviewed in 1978 while approximately eighty-to-ninety, Oshley “had superficially accepted the outer trappings of the white man’s world” but had remained, less obviously, rooted in his experiences as a member of the second most prominent Navajo clan—Tódích’í’níi (Bitter Water People).<sup>290</sup> Baptized into the LDS Church on 23 September 1960, Oshley embraced Mormonism but never abandoned many traditional Navajo beliefs such as “the existence of the gods and their involvement in his daily activities, the power of witchcraft as a force to be reckoned with, and the central importance of his family.” Oshley believed Mormonism tied “in with the stories of the old folk.”<sup>291</sup> While acknowledging the suspicion of other Indians, he explained his participation in Mormon Christianity.

Some people do not like the Christian beliefs. I go to church with them, and they tell me about it and explain the things pretty well. What I have observed about the Christians is that they are well-behaved and speak good words. Their prayers are true, too. The Christian people are helpful. When they see you need help, they help you, and with this, life is a little better. They taught us a way of life, and what they say tells of a good way to live. I wondered where they came from to be so nice and kind with their help and words. They gave us food. I just wondered how they could be so wonderful—I am talking about the people in Blanding. They are the Christian Mormons.<sup>292</sup>

Helen Sekaquaptewa, from the Hopi village of Oraibi in northeastern Arizona, told her story to Louise Udall, a sister in the LDS Relief Society, during the 1960s. Helen

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<sup>290</sup> Robert S. McPherson, ed. *The Journey of Navajo Oshley* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2000), 3, 9, 26.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-204.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, *Journey*, 122.

converted to the LDS Church following the baptism of her son Wayne. “I went to attend Allison’s graduation from high school in May, 1953. While there, I told the Bishop I wanted to be baptized by my son Wayne, which event transpired on May 3, 1953.” She recollected that decision fondly.

I have no doubt I did right. I have never been sorry. It has made a better woman of me, and I have surely been happy in my church. I have had great satisfaction working in the church, even though it seemed like everything was against me at times.<sup>293</sup>

While Sekaquaptewa rejected the ritual part of the Hopi religion as “crude,” she validated the way her parents brought her up as “good” and turned to Hopi ceremonies and traditions to validate her decision to convert to Mormonism. She claimed, “One Hopi ceremony re-enacts the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel.” As a woman she was unable to participate in this ceremony but had listened from a distance: “You never heard anything more confusing; all talking at the top of their voices; none speaking their own tongue, but rather making a babble of sound, yelling loudly. Certainly a dramatic reproduction of the Tower of Babel.”

Sekaquaptewa reported that her father’s teachings prepared her for acceptance of the Book of Mormon. She shared these recollections of her father’s teachings with Louise Udall.

The white man has kept a written record of the history of the people from the beginning, while the Hopis have passed their history from one generation to another by word of mouth. With the telling over the years, some of it has been omitted or misunderstood, and changes have been made. The written record is more accurate and true. There will come a time when the written record will be brought to the Hopis by the white man. There will be many religions taught. You will need to be wise to recognize and choose the right church. It will teach you to be humble and will not try to force you into it. When that time comes we should

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<sup>293</sup> Helen Sekaquaptewa, *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa as told to Louise Udall* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969), 242.

all forsake our native religion and join this true church. There will come a time when all the people of the earth will belong to the one true church, and we will all speak the same language and be as one people.<sup>294</sup>

While Sekaquaptewa acknowledged, “the Traditionals would now deny that this is what their fathers used to teach,” she claimed that reading the Bible and the Book of Mormon had helped her family “to understand Hopi traditions, and the Hopi traditions help us to understand these books of scripture.”<sup>295</sup>

Pershlie Tewawina, Hopi from Phoenix, Arizona living in a Mormon placement home in Culver City, California, won a speech contest at the 1971 All-Lamanite Youth Conference in Salt Lake City. The assigned theme of the contest was “A Lamanite: Who Am I?” She spoke of several names: Pershlie, Tewawina, Indian, and Lamanite and their meanings to her.

But Lamanite is the name I love most. It creates no image; I am grouped in a whole, along with other nations of similar lineage, yet I am singled out as an individual. Now I create my own image. As a Lamanite I am who I make myself to be, and because I live in two worlds, my struggle for identity becomes harder. I want to be known as a Lamanite and to better my ways, but I don’t want to lose my Indian heritage. Some Indian people call me a coconut or an apple, which means to be white on the inside but brown or red on the outside. They say that I want to be white. What do they mean by white? A color, a culture, a better way of life? My skin remains dark, and to better one’s life is not white—it’s progress.

According to Darwin’s theory of evolution, only the superior survive. I think of the superior being as the one who has the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . You and I have a responsibility to save our respective nations from being consumed by crime and racial tension. But I as a Lamanite have a greater responsibility. Not only must I strive in behalf of my country, but I must also strive for the redemption of Israel and for my Lamanite people.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>296</sup> “People and Places,” *New Era*, Aug. 1971, 46. Retrieved electronically from <http://library.lds.org/>, 21 February 2003.

Larry J. Echohawk, Pawnee and the first Native American admitted to the Utah Bar Association, commented fondly but ambiguously about the Book of Mormon and Lamanite identity in 1975. He reported that as a boy growing up in Farmington, New Mexico he was “ashamed to be an Indian.” But, the Book of Mormon, he said, taught him a lot about being an Indian. “For an Indian looking for pride, the Book of Mormon was a wonderful experience. . . . It was really an uplift to me.” Echohawk objected to one thing he did not understand, “It says we’ll be a white and delightsome people someday. I like the color I am. In fact, I don’t know any Indian who wants to change.” People in the Church, he reported, still “react to those old stereotypes.” In his case, a bishop in California was reluctant to give him responsibility in the local ward, “until he found out I was a lawyer.” Echohawk attributed his success to the miraculous assistance of the Lord and expressed his belief of a promising future for Lamanites.

I know he’s concerned about me. He’s blessed me with a fantastic wife and four beautiful children. He hears every prayer. The gospel is going to be restored to the Lamanites—to my family and friends. We’re not going to be a mediocre people. We’re going to be leaders in the Church and the nation. I know it’s going to happen. I can see it beginning now.<sup>297</sup>

Albert H. Harris, born on the Northern Ute Reservation in 1920 of mixed Northern Ute and white heritage, held many church positions, including serving as a branch president of the Fort Klamath Branch of the Klamath Falls Oregon Stake. His son, Lacey A. Harris recalled his father’s protest in a 1985 article published in *Dialogue*.

“Lamanite! I am not a Lamanite. They are wicked people. I am not a wicked person.”<sup>298</sup>

Lacey followed his father’s example rejecting the Lamanite label; “I knew I was an

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<sup>297</sup> Larry Echohawk, “Someone’s Concerned About Me,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1975, 29. Retrieved electronically from <http://library.lds.org/>, 21 February 2003.

<sup>298</sup> Lacey A. Harris, “To Be Native American—and Mormon,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Winter 1985), 143.

Indian but I didn't know how that fit into the Mormon system of anglos and Lamanites. The more I grew to understand my Indianness, the less I understood how I fit into the Church."<sup>299</sup> Harris's story drew a critical response from Arturo De Hoyos of Provo, Utah. "I am a Lamanite. I have never resented, nor do I now resent, the term. Those who do resent the label seem to be so few that nobody else should give it a second thought." He declares that the most important meaning of the term Lamanite "is that it identifies me as one for whom the most perfect book in the world was written." De Hoyos also rejected pleas for cultural pluralism noting, "No two social systems that come together ever enjoy equal social power. Eventually one is always rejected or absorbed by the other. Pluralism appears to be a cruel myth."<sup>300</sup>

Established in the 1880s by the LDS Church as a place to teach farming and industrial practice to Indians, the Washakie settlement in northern Utah served as a home to the Northwestern Shoshone for eighty years. After World War II the population at Washakie had declined. The LDS Church decided to close the farm and sell the land and during the summer of 1960 it's local representatives burned the remaining dilapidated homes, much to consternation of Shoshones who still maintained temporary residence in those homes. Leona Peyope Hasuse's testimony about the burning recorded in June 1974 captured the dilemma such actions posed for Mormon Indians.

We went back to Bannock Creek, Idaho, as there was nothing left for us at Washakie. On the Reservation we are not allowed to hunt or fish. We are considered as Mormon outsiders. We are like visitors. I would like to say that although the church has done me wrong, I do not hold a grudge against them. I still believe in all the teachings of the church. I still have my faith and it has not been broken. One day at Fast Meeting while I was bearing my testimony, I told of my home being burned down and of not hating the church for what they have

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>300</sup> Arturo De Hoyos, "I Am a Lamanite ...," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Fall 1986), 16.

done to me. After church one of the white members asked me why I didn't give up my membership in the Mormon church and go elsewhere. I told this lady I was raised in the Mormon church and have lived its laws and rules all my life and was not going to give it up just for this. My faith is strong. I am not angry at the church. I am only hurt very deeply.<sup>301</sup>

Alice Pubigee also tells of the pain and her continued allegiance to the LDS

Church.

When I saw everything was burned, I said to my husband, "I wonder who ordered this done." I looked around and when I saw our car sitting there all black I started to cry. Although my home may have looked like a shack to some people, it was my home. It was the place we remembered and always returned to. Many of our things were still there. Being Indians, we did a lot of farm labor. We left in the spring to thin beets and other things. When things quieted down we always came home. So you can see we were gone almost half of the year. We always knew where home was. It was at Washakie. . . . No longer can we come to Washakie, but every time we pass through we cry and feel bad. This was our hometown. We had things here but they are all gone now. Since our home was on church land maybe they felt they had a right to burn it down. We still feel bad. We are living at Bannock Creek, Idaho, and are going to church there. We still believe in the church but it hurts when we remember what they did to us. We are not angry at the church. We still pray and pay our tithing.<sup>302</sup>

The following November the Church of Jesus Christ sold the Washakie farm to the Peterson brothers of Roy, Utah to become a private cattle ranch. In return for the losses experienced by the Northwestern Shoshone the Church donated 184 acres in the vicinity of Washakie to the tribe as trust land and engaged in various "private negotiations." Nonetheless, many Northwestern Shoshone feel the LDS Church "defaulted on a promise that Washakie and the use of the farm would be there for the Shoshone in perpetuity."<sup>303</sup> Clem Bear Chief (Siksika), director of welfare for the Siksika Nation in Gleichen, Alberta, Canada, found in Mormonism an escape from alcoholism

<sup>301</sup> Mae Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," in Cuch, *Utah's Indians*, 60-61.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 58, 67. Dan Egan, "Shoshoni Hoping to Re-Establish Tribal Homeland in Northern Utah," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 31 October 1999.

and suicidal feelings. He found his dreams and visions validated by Mormon missionaries and accepted baptism on August 16, 1975. The following year he and his wife visited the temple in Salt Lake City where they were sealed together for time and eternity. The former missionaries who had converted them took them to the Church Office Building. There Brother Boyd K. Packer introduced them to the current prophet of the Church, Spencer W. Kimball. In a 1992 account he recalled the event.

My immediate thought was. This humble, ordinary looking man is the prophet? You've got to be kidding. Where is his scepter? His cloak of authority?

He hugged each of us and shook our hands. He had us sit down, asked me to push my chair a little closer to him, and looked me directly in the eyes. Then he said something to us that I had never heard from any leader of any church or organization. He said, "Brother Bear Chief, I want you to know that I love the Indian people." This one sentence gave me more spiritual peace than any other words of comfort that I had ever been offered. ... I felt as if I had found a long-lost father who had greeted me with open arms and would remain with me forever. I knew then that he had to be a prophet of God.

God, through his missionaries, plucked us from the ashes of a miserable existence and led us to one of joy, peace, and happiness. Although we still suffer many afflictions as a result of the environment in which we live, we praise our God for finding us and bringing us to the new life we now enjoy.<sup>304</sup>

Jeffrey Barehand, enrolled in the Gila River Indian Community and half Navajo, takes pride in his Lamanite heritage. Being called a Lamanite in 2002 bolsters "a feeling of importance" while he is among Mormons. "To actually be an integral part of the Mormon belief strengthens the resolve of hope for my own people that we may one day reap the blessings, as promised, by the Book of Mormon." When asked about his responses to Book of Mormon passages about dark skin and curses he replied.

To fixate on that alone is not congruous with other gospel principles that teach that God is no respecter of persons and other attributes of goodness, equality,

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<sup>304</sup> Clem Bear Chief, "Plucked from the Ashes," in James Treat, ed. *Native and Christian* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 231.

fairness, justice and love. I was never taught that to be made white is a skin color, but to be "white" is moreover a state of being, an empowerment of godliness, like the white light of the sun. How would you describe light, or the glory of god? In terms of color, white is the best representation of that. It has also come to symbolize purity, another godly attribute. Even white people are not white. They come in all shades. Does this mean that we will all be albino? Besides, I don't put too much emphasis on cosmetics. But don't get me wrong I love my Indian skin.

Barehand is comfortable as both a Mormon and an Indian.

I tend to separate culture and religion. Culture is a social outcome. Religion is a personal belief, despite its often social setting. I believe that American Indian culture is the responsibility of every individual Native to come to terms with and incorporate in their modern lives and pass on to successive generations. Native culture is not so all engrossing that it does not meld with other beliefs and cannot easily be shared. It is possible to live in both worlds without sacrificing one or the other.<sup>305</sup>

The new boundaries that recent advocates of a limited geography of the Book of Mormon (see chapter eight) have drawn around Lamanite identity have met critique from some of those who grew up being labeled Lamanite. Jacqui Garcia, Mexican heritage and writing in 1997, objected to "this seemingly new trend ... to pretend that the Church never said people like me are Lamanites." She grew up hearing that Native Americans, Mexicans (presumably because of mixed heritage), and South Pacific Islanders were all Lamanite. Students she taught at Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Lame Deer, Montana, likewise heard Mormons refer to them as Lamanites. Today, Garcia is much more suspect of Mormon beliefs about her, her relatives, and her ancestors.

It was certainly a ploy to encourage conversion of Native Americans (that and the promise of being able to go to regional sports tournaments, and have "White" educational opportunities through the Indian Placement Program). ... Personally,

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<sup>305</sup> Jeff Barehand to Thomas Murphy, "Not about anthropology, surprise, surprise," electronic mail, 10 December 2002. Passages edited for spelling. Barehand was one of several Native American Mormons who initiated correspondence with me after reading in the news about efforts to excommunicate me for my scholarship.

I think that the Church, as a whole, has been racist from the get-go, and that that racism has colored definitions of Lamanites and descendants of Cain that can't be justified with scripture, even the Church's "own" scriptures.<sup>306</sup>

Langdon Greene, a Mormon of Cherokee descent, strongly objects in 2003 to the Book of Mormon and its portrayal of American Indians. First, he takes issue with the Book of Mormon's historical claims: "it is historically false and we're told to believe in it literally. A Mormon doesn't also have to be Indian to be offended when (s)he discovered (s)he's been SUCKERED into believing that something is from God when it was fabricated up by a megalomaniac con artist." Second, he takes offense at the paternalism.

Second, is the paternalistic condescending attitude that Mormons use with Indians, regarding "We know who you are and where you came from and the history of your ancestors better than you do." That's Henry Dawes or the "Great White Father in Washington" all over again, treating us like we're imbeciles or little children. It's insulting to our intelligence, and to our own myths. Even if we know that our creation myths are not factually accurate, we don't appreciate some non-Indian coming in and saying they even get to replace our myths with theirs.

He directs his third concern to the question of curses and skin color.

Third, is the skin-color curse thing. I don't mean to imply that it is less significant than the first two, because it is insidious and cruel. But as a mixed-blood with the whole range of skin colors within my generation (siblings and cousins), it's had far less of a direct impact on my life personally. It is IMMENSELY offensive, but it doesn't take an Indian to see how offensive it is (you would hope).

Greene expresses a deep discomfort with the stereotype of warlike, savage Lamanites and its application to living American Indians.

What really sets me off more than the racism of the [Book of Mormon] is the notion of the surviving Indians (Lamanites) being a warlike, bloodthirsty, and savage people. What, like medieval Europe was NOT? However, this very common FALSE stereotype held by the *yonega* (anglos) is not limited to Mormons by any stretch. The difference is that Mormons reified this common cultural prejudice, elevating it from folk ignorance & misperception to the status

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<sup>306</sup> Jacqui Garcia to Thomas Murphy, "Nephites and Lamanites," electronic mail, 4 April 1997. Garcia responded to a query about Native perspectives on the Book of Mormon I had sent to email distributions lists (LDS-Net and Mormon-L).

of divinely revealed fact. Being descended from one of the most socially advanced and peaceful ethnic groups found ANYWHERE in the world in the past 500 years (pardon me, my ethnocentrism is showing!), I take GREAT offense at being mischaracterized as the barbaric, as the savage, when I think historical fact puts my people clearly on the OTHER side of that coin relative to Anglo-Germanic / Iberian societies.

Finally, he finds the Book of Mormon prophecies about Columbus to be devastating to the spirituality of Native people.

Many or perhaps even most historians are (finally) now reaching the level of intellectual honesty to present the unfiltered facts of Columbus, the man and his journey. A tyrant whose men detested him, who disobeyed direct Church orders against enslaving Indians, who encouraged and gave his men free rein to commit unspeakable atrocities, rape, torture, and murder. The facts of his journals and those of men who sailed with him are indisputable on the facts that even by the standards of HIS time, Columbus was a despicable, evil, savage, godless murderer. And the Book of Mormon deifies him as being a holy man, led by the Holy Spirit!

Some might argue that Columbus is just one man removed from us by 500 years, and therefore inconsequential to how Indians are treated by non-Indians today.

But I do not think you can understate the gravity and importance - for good or ill - of symbols, and the power of symbolism. To celebrate Columbus -- or Stalin or Genghis Khan or Milosevic or Pol Pot or Hitler or Idi Amin -- is a GROSS offense to humanity. To say that such barbarity and EVIL - Columbus deserves no better descriptor than evil - was orchestrated by God is, well, I have no word for such a belief, but "spiritually nauseating" is my best attempt to apply semantics to it.<sup>307</sup>

The impact of Mormon beliefs on the lives of people of indigenous heritage is not limited to those who are members of the Church or self-identify as Lamanites. Two participants in a Salt Lake City vigil on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2002 protesting the LDS Church's aborted attempt to excommunicate me for my scholarship exemplify the social impact of Book of Mormon imagery. Lorraine Martinez Cook (mixed heritage of Mexican, Apache,

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<sup>307</sup> Langdon Greene to Thomas Murphy, "Book of Mormon," electronic mail, 24 February 2003. Langdon Greene is a pseudonym adopted by the author. Passages edited for spelling. Greene is another Native American Mormon who contacted me after reading news stories about church disciplinary action against my scholarship.

and Yaqui) shared the tragic story of her newborn granddaughter. Cook has reasonable suspicions that an LDS bishop pressured the birth mother toward adoption, and LDS Family Services persuaded the birth mother to subvert the paternal rights of Cook's non-Mormon and dark-skinned son. Prejudicial comments from the birth mother led Cook to investigate Mormon views on indigenous people by reading selections from the Book of Mormon in her hotel room. Stunned by the blatant prejudice in the text she joined the vigil she had heard about on television and shared the riveting and tragic story of her lost granddaughter she now calls Baby Autumn. Also present at the same vigil was Kristy Sumner, a direct descendant of Penina Schropshire Cotton, one of the Native American children adopted by Mormons prior to the evacuation of Nauvoo, IL in 1846. The combined protest of these two individuals illustrates the far-reaching impact of Book of Mormon stories.<sup>308</sup>

### *Indian on Mormon Terms?*

Anthropologist Mark P. Leone suggests that Native American Mormons accept an inferior status in the LDS Church. He contended in 1979 that belief in the Book of Mormon not only “rationalizes present attitudes and practices toward Indians[,] ... it actively reproduces and extends them.”<sup>309</sup> Pointing to assumptions of Indian inferiority in the Book of Mormon, Leone observed, “Mormons perpetuate this inferior relationship in their very efforts to overcome it.” He then concludes, “converted Indians thus

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<sup>308</sup> Murphy and Southerton, “Genetic Research,” 20.

<sup>309</sup> Mark P. Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 203.

automatically maintain their sense of inferiority because they see themselves in Book of Mormon terms and, as Mormons, remain Indian on Mormon terms.”<sup>310</sup>

This image of acquiescent Indians stands in stark contrast to Leone’s analysis of Mormon people more generally. Mormonism, Leone observes, exhibits “a conceptual diffuseness that permits self-transformation and redefinition.” Mormonism contains its own duality: “It is hierarchical, authoritarian, and fundamentalist, but it is also individualistic, democratic and loose-constructionist.”<sup>311</sup> A closer look at twentieth century Native American Mormon experience, summarized in this and the subsequent chapter, illustrates that Mormon Indians do not automatically accept an inferior status. Indeed, the Book of Mormon does rationalize policies of assimilation and Mormon social workers, educators, and legislators have employed the power of the institutional Church and the United States federal government in the pursuit of such goals. Many Mormon Indians have utilized Church and federal programs to facilitate aspirations to bridge cultural gaps; yet, other Mormon Indians have resiliently maintained cultural ties despite significant transformations and some have even explicitly resisted threats to their cultural institutions coming from Mormonism.

Despite heavy investment beginning in mid-century in the Mormon Indian Student Placement Program and Indian education initiatives at BYU, it was clear by the 1980s that the LDS Church had failed to achieve the level of allegiance and retention of Native North Americans it sought. Despite a dramatic and indelible impact on tens of thousands of Mormon and Indian families, these Church policies proved no more successful than the federal policies of termination. This failure contrasted in the latter

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 6-8.

decades of the twentieth century with remarkable proselytizing success in Latin America. By the end of 2001, the LDS Church claimed a total membership of over eleven million with more than four million members in Latin America.<sup>312</sup> Latin Americans of mixed and indigenous descent, in greater numbers than among North American Indians, have embraced the LDS Church and risen to positions of local leadership. This surge in Latin American membership has coincided with the shifting foundations of Book of Mormon Studies that suggest a limited geographic setting for the Book of Mormon in Central America.

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<sup>312</sup> John L. Hart, ed. *2003 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2002), 6, 155-157.

## Chapter 7: Other Mormon Histories

I am a Nahua, I have always been and I will not stop being so because anthropologists determine that I am not.

*Agrícola Lozano Herrera (Nahua)*<sup>313</sup>

Agrícola Lozano Herrera, president of the LDS temple in Mexico City from 1993 to 1997, earned a national reputation among scholars of Mexican religion for his public affirmations of both an indigenous Nahua and Mormon identity. At an academic conference on new religions in the mid-1990s he strongly objected to the critiques of Marxist anthropologists who asserted that Mexico's new sects (non-Catholic religions) eroded indigenous culture. Mexican anthropologist Carlos Garma Navarro, a specialist on religious minorities in Mexico, claims that Lozano is the only leader of a non-Catholic religion in Mexico whom he has ever heard publicly proclaim an Indian identity.<sup>314</sup>

Lozano challenges ethnic categories constructed by anthropologists while he draws scholarly disdain for his approach to history. Mexican Mormon author and museum director, Raymundo Gómez González, reported an encounter in the national archives with a prominent Mexican scholar who ridiculed Lozano's *Historia del Mormonismo en México* for not constituting real history because it wove Mormon doctrine into the telling of a Mexican narrative.<sup>315</sup> Lozano was not the first Nahua Mormon to provoke controversy by weaving his religion into a retelling of Mexican history. Rather, he followed a path previously forged by Margarito Bautista Valencía, a

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<sup>313</sup> Patricia Fortuny Loret de Mola, "On the Road to Damascus: Analysis of Conversion," 1997, 222, photocopy of manuscript in my possession. See also Murphy, "Other Mormon Histories," 179.

<sup>314</sup> Personal communication, November 1997.

<sup>315</sup> Personal communication, July 1997.

prominent figure in a dispute over local leadership that split Mexican Latter-day Saints into opposing camps in the mid-1930s.<sup>316</sup> Nahua Mormons like Lozano and Bautista exemplify the complexity of Lamanite subjectivity.

Lozano's defense of his seemingly contradictory identities illustrates a fundamental difficulty with George Tinker's charge that Christian missionaries of all denominations engaged in cultural genocide against the people to whom they preached. Tinker (Osage/Cherokee), an Associate Professor of Cross-Cultural Ministries at Iliff School of Theology and Pastor of Living Waters Episcopal/Lutheran Ministry in Denver, challenged denominational histories that celebrate the role of Christian missionaries in the evangelization of American Indians. Instead of portraying these missionaries as heroes, Tinker contends "Christian missionaries—of all denominations working among American Indian nations—were partners in genocide." Despite naïveté and the best of intentions these "missionaries were guilty of complicity in the destruction of Indian cultures and tribal social structures—complicity in the devastating impoverishment and death of the people to whom they preached."<sup>317</sup>

In *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* Tinker examines the confusion of culture and gospel in the ministries of four prominent Christian missionaries. John Eliot, Pierre-Jean De Smet, Junípero Serra, and Henry Benjamin Whipple each represent key figures in Protestant and Catholic traditions from the seventeenth through the latter half of the nineteenth century. Each heroic missionary "implicitly blurred any distinction between the gospel of salvation and their own culture."

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<sup>316</sup> Agrícola Lozano Herrera, *Historia del Mormonismo en Mexico* (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Zarahemla, 1983).

<sup>317</sup> George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 4.

This confusion “invariably resulted in the missionary’s culture, values, and social and political structures ... being imposed on tribal peoples, all in the name of the gospel.”

While Tinker focuses on four individuals he applies his thesis much more broadly. He points to Brigham Young’s appointment as Indian agent in the Utah territory as an exemplary illustration of the political aspects of cultural genocide.<sup>318</sup>

Jace Weaver (Cherokee) criticized Tinker for “an unintended and unfortunate consequence.” Weaver continued.

By concentrating exclusively on the four non-Natives of his case study, Natives are erased from the picture. In the process Native agency is destroyed and Native subjectivity is damaged. The missionaries are portrayed as the only actors in the story. Indians are passive recipients, merely acted upon.<sup>319</sup>

While the model of conversion presented in the Book of Mormon does reflect the worst abuses of nineteenth Christian missions and Mormons did seek to realize this model in missionary work and even in federal legislation, Native converts to Mormonism actively engaged in both facilitating and resisting the transformation of their own cultures. An examination of Mormon images of Lamanites must devote considerable attention to the ways that Native American Mormons have imagined and reconstructed this identity.

### **Lamanite Subjectivity in Mexico**

Native Americans, Mormon or otherwise, have not sat idly by while Mormon prophets, missionaries, and scholars pontificated about Lamanite origins, geography, and destiny. As noted in chapter four, nineteenth century American Indian Mormons like Wakara, Sowiette, Arapeen, and Black Hawk became the most potent military foes facing

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 4, 7.

<sup>319</sup> Jace Weaver, “From I-Hermetics,” 5.

white Mormons during conflicts in Utah territory. Mormon Paiutes sought agricultural knowledge from their new neighbors and permitted their children to be raised in white Mormon homes in efforts to survive the onslaught of disease, war, and starvation that accompanied the arrival of the new settlers. Mormon Catawba intermarried with whites as they sought to achieve the Book of Mormon's promise of becoming "white and delightsome." The Lamanites of the twentieth century likewise participated actively in self-definitions of their origins, duties, and destiny, often in ways that were at odds with other Mormons and the institutional Church (see previous chapter). The current chapter examines the various ways that two prominent Mormons in Mexico have constructed their own Lamanite self-conceptions.

The second half of the twentieth century heralded dramatic growth in the number of Lamanite converts to Mormonism, primarily in Latin America. As of December 31, 2001 the LDS Church claimed a total membership of 11,394,522 and a missionary force of 60,850. The bulk of the church growth in the latter part of the twentieth century has been concentrated in Latin America where the LDS Church claims 4,046,828 members.

<sup>320</sup> A significant percentage, if not a majority, of Latin American Mormons have some indigenous ancestry and consequently Mormons have a tendency of indiscriminately labeling all Latin Americans Lamanites.<sup>321</sup> Many Mormons in Mexico, with a membership of 918,975, proudly proclaim a Lamanite identity.<sup>322</sup> Despite extensive efforts like the Indian Student Placement Program and Indian programs and scholarships at BYU aimed at recruiting and retaining U.S. Lamanites, Latin American Mormons

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<sup>320</sup> Hart, *2003 Church Almanac*, 6, 155-157.

<sup>321</sup> Murphy, "Reinventing Mormonism," 186.

<sup>322</sup> Hart, *Church Almanac*, 369. Thomas W. Murphy, "From Racist Stereotype," and "Other Mormon Histories."

dwarf the number of Latter-day Saints among North American Indians, estimated at 60,000 in 1980. Perhaps reflecting such disparate growth, the LDS Church had abandoned or scaled back its many mid-century initiatives among American Indians in the U.S. to concentrate on Latin America.<sup>323</sup>

Despite dramatic growth in the twentieth century, the formulation of Lamanite identity in Latin America and among American Indians and Hispanics in the United States, Native voices remains marginalized in Book of Mormon scholarship. Both John Sorenson's *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* and Terryl L. Givens' *By The Hand of Mormon* devote considerable attention to questions of the identity of Lamanites but fail to consider models and views of self-identified Lamanites like the Nahua Mormons Margarito Bautista and Agricol Lozano. Likewise Book of Mormon scholars remain largely unaware of or choose to ignore objections of prominent Native scholars like George Tinker, Phil Deloria, and Jace Weaver to Mormon evangelization and depictions of Indians as Lamanites. Undermined by scientific investigation, questioned by LDS scholars, and contested by other Indians, Lamanite subjectivity is as fascinating as it is complex.

The multifaceted identities and polemical writings of Bautista and Lozano challenge not only static representations of Indians in Mexican historical and anthropological discourse but also disrupt the dichotomy usually drawn between traditional and New Mormon History. Mormon historian, D. Michael Quinn places New Mormon History within a larger movement among American historians to examine the experiences of "common people" and reverse the lack of attention to women, children,

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<sup>323</sup> Armand Mauss, "Mormonism's Worldwide Aspirations and its Changing Conceptions of Race and Lineage," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 34 (Fall/Winter 2001), 127.

families, and ethnic minorities while maintaining rigorous academic standards. New Mormon History, Quinn contends, “includes all of the ingredients of ‘new history’ in America at large but has one crucial addition: the effort to avoid using history as a religious battering ram.” Consequently, he dates the beginning of the New Mormon History from the publication of Juanita Brooks’s *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* by Stanford University Press in 1950.<sup>324</sup>

While Quinn, a preeminent author of New Mormon History, has Mexican heritage, not all Native Mormon historians have had the benefit of his professional training. Neither Bautista, an agricultural laborer, nor Lozano, a lawyer, met basic academic standards in their use of historical evidence. Each author employs religious symbols and theologies in provocative and polemical manners. Yet, both authors represent viewpoints of the “common people” and ethnic minorities in Mexico and the LDS Church. Their publications appeared in Spanish and have obtained very little circulation among New Mormon historians, let alone Book of Mormon Studies.<sup>325</sup> Both authors selectively use elements of Mormon theology to critique academic representations of Mexican history and anthropology. Most importantly, they draw selectively from Mexican and Mormon pasts to domesticate Mormon theology and history, centering Mormonism’s past, present, and future in Mexico--*not* in the United

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<sup>324</sup> D. Michael Quinn, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The New Mormon History*, edited by D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1992), vii-viii.

<sup>325</sup> For example, both Bautista’s and Lozano’s works are missing from the monumental bibliography of almost 15,000 entries: James D. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, *Studies in Mormon History, 1830-1997: An Indexed Bibliography, with A Topical Guide to Published Social Science Literature on the Mormons* by Armand L. Mauss and Dynette Ivie Reynolds (Urbana: University of Illinois Press in cooperation with the Smith Institute for LDS History, Brigham Young University, 2000). Other foreign language publications are included, for example, Massimo Introvigne’s *Les Mormons* (Turnhout, Belgium: Collection Fils d’Abraham, 1991), also its Italian translation (224).

States. Consequently, they challenge Mormon history's "centrifugal" and "unanimity" biases.<sup>326</sup>

Unsettling the ground between traditional and New Mormon History, the writings of Bautista and Lozano expose a paradox in the current trends of Mormon Studies. One reason for giving greater attention to common people, women, and ethnic minorities in new history is to try to undue the abuses of America's colonial past. Historians rewrite American history in order to include those groups that previous generations of scholars chose to ignore or whose contributions to a multicultural society they minimized or misrepresented.<sup>327</sup> A central problem for such revisionist history is that history, itself, has been one of the most important technological tools of domination employed by powerful elite. Academic training and standards serve to keep this power in the hands of a privileged few and to minimize the validity of alternative voices.<sup>328</sup> To classify amateur histories by Indians from Mexico as New Mormon History would debase the criteria that distinguish this genre.<sup>329</sup> Yet, to deny them inclusion is to perpetuate the colonial legacy of the suppression of indigenous voices in Mormon historiography.

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<sup>326</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," in Quinn, *New Mormon History*, 1-11.

<sup>327</sup> For a synthesis of this trend in the history of the American West see Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of my Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

<sup>328</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, translated by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

<sup>329</sup> The criteria to which I refer are the seven virtues of New Mormon History described by Quinn, "Editor's Introduction," viii. "In her landmark study Brooks avoided seven deadly sins of traditional Mormon history. She did not shrink from analyzing a controversial topic. She did not conceal sensitive or contradictory evidence. She did not hesitate to follow the evidence to 'revisionist' interpretations that ran counter to 'traditional' assumptions. She did not use her evidence to insult the religious beliefs of Mormons. She did not disappoint the scholarly expectations of academics. She did not cater to public relations preferences. Finally she did not use an 'academic' work to proselytize for religious conversion or defection."

*Margarito Bautista and The Third Convention*

Margarito Bautista Valencia was born 10 June 1878 in San Miguel Atlautla, a Nahua pueblo approximately two kilometers southeast of Ozumba in the state of Mexico. Ozumba sits at the base of Mexico's famous volcano Popocatepetl along the southeast margins of the central valley of Mexico. While Bautista's parents were native speakers of Nahua, he grew up in an era of dramatic change for the peasants of San Miguel. Prominent among the transitions was the replacement of Nahua with Spanish as the first language for most children of subsequent generations. The railroad, another key catalyst for change, reached nearby Ozumba in 1882, bringing new types of labor, new commodities, and, most significantly for Bautista, missionaries.<sup>330</sup>

Unlike most of the Natives Mormon missionaries approached in the nineteenth century United States and its territories, most of the indigenous people in Mexico were already at least nominally Catholic. After Benito Juárez, the Zapotec president of the republic of Mexico, began in the mid-nineteenth century to curb the powers of Catholicism by severing the ties between church and state, Protestant missionaries had found a particularly fertile region for evangelization in the Chalco-Amecameca-Ozumba region of the state of Mexico. Anti-clericalism, resistance movements, and radical liberalism characterized this region for several decades leading up to the expansion of the railroad and textile industries. Plotino C. Rhodakanaty, an influential socialist, anarchist,

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<sup>330</sup> Juan Dominguez Balderas, interviewed by Thomas W. Murphy, 15 August 1996, Colonia Alzate, Ozumba, México, audiocassette; Carlos Hector Gonzalez, *Monografía Municipio de Ozumba* (Toluca, México: Gobierno del Estado de México, 1973), 17. See also Rosalía Vidal Zepeda, *Estudio Geográfico del Municipio de Ozumba y de la Villa de Ozumba de Alzate Estado de México* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1976), 12; and Sandra Kuntz Ficker, "Ferrocarriles y Mercado: Tarifas, Precios y Tráfico Ferroviario en el Porfiriato," in *Ferrocarriles y Vida Económica en México (1850-1950)*, edited by Sandra Kuntz Ficker and Paolo Riguzzi (Zinacantepec, Estado de México: El Colegio Mexiquense: Universidad Metropolitana Xochimilco: Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México, 1996), 99-165.

and Protestant activist and publisher (as well as the first LDS convert in central Mexico in 1879), played a key intellectual role in linking anti-Catholic agrarian rebellions to the spread of Protestantism in the region. Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Latter-day Saints found significant indigenous demand for religious needs, left largely unmet by centuries of monopolistic Catholic control.<sup>331</sup>

At the age of twenty-two Margarito Bautista began investigating “spiritual things” through discussions with pastors and missionaries of various denominations. Bautista found the message of the Methodist minister most appealing, but after four months of serious discussion he declined a paid position as a Methodist preacher, citing his lack of belief. During this time, Ammon M. Tenney, the Mormon mission president, visited Bautista. Tenney was rebuilding ties with convert families whom LDS missionaries had abandoned when they were recalled to the U.S. in 1888. Bautista, seriously ill, accepted Tenney’s offer to administer to him. After the blessing, Bautista reported nearly two decades later, “I felt as if I were in a new world.” After much study, prayer and discussions with Tenney, Bautista took a harrowing journey on foot to Cuernavaca, eighty miles from his home, to participate in a conference over which Tenney presided. Arriving shortly before the conference, he encountered Tenney reading a letter to fellow members that Bautista had written. Impressed by the teachings of the gospel and

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<sup>331</sup> Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Los Disidentes: Sociedades Protestantes y revolución en México, 1872-1911* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1989), 65-69. Jean-Pierre Bastian, “Las sociedades protestantes y la oposición a Porfirio Díaz, 1877-1911,” in *Iglesia y Religiosidad*, edited by Alicia Hernández Chávez and Manuel Miño Grijalva (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1992), 172-215. Jean-Pierre Bastian, “Heterodoxia religiosa y cambio social. El impacto regional de las sociedades religiosas no católicas en México,” in *La Política y el Cielo: movimientos religiosos en el México contemporáneo*, edited by Rodolfo Moran Quiroz (Guadalajara, Jalisco: Editorial Universidad de Guadalajara, 1990), 23-42. Raymundo Gómez González and Sergio Pagaza Castillo, *El Águila Mormón o El Anarquista Cristiano: Plotino Constantino Rhodakanaty, Primer miembro de la Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de los Últimos Días en México* (México, D.F.: Museo de Historia del Mormonismo en México, A.C., 1997).

fellowship of other members, Bautista accepted baptism and the Aaronic Priesthood from Pedro Prios, a local elder.<sup>332</sup>

In 1920, Margarito Bautista published the story of his conversion in the *Improvement Era*. The heading to the article identified him as “M. Bautista, a Descendant of Father Lehi.” Through this expression of kinship with Lehi, Bautista claimed authority as a member of the chosen House of Israel. He identified his conversion with a restoration of an ancient religion of his forefathers, claimed a kinship with peoples of the Book of Mormon, and found solace in future glory despite present suffering. Bautista wrote:

As a literal descendant of our Father Lehi, I feel in my soul that the gospel which was once known among my people but taken away on account of transgression, has been restored again to mankind. I feel that the Book of Mormon is one of the most glorious books on earth, because from that holy book, I have become acquainted with my ancestry, the dealings of the Lord with them, and the glorious promises to them in the near future, although, because of transgression, we have suffered the wrath of the Almighty for centuries until the present day. The nations of the world should profit from our experiences.<sup>333</sup>

Two years after his conversion, Bautista moved to Chihuahua where he worked as an agricultural laborer. In 1913 he left the Mormon colonies in northern Mexico to join Anglo LDS colonists fleeing the Mexican revolution. In the colonies Bautista had learned English and developed a strong interest in Mormon theology. After the Mormon “exodus” he moved to Utah where he continued work as an agricultural laborer and volunteered as an ordinance worker in the LDS temple in Salt Lake City. Bautista

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<sup>332</sup> Margarito Bautista, “A Faith Promoting Experience,” *Improvement Era* 23 (Sept. 1920): 978-984. J. Dominguez B., interview. Bautista’s encounter with Tenney probably occurred during the mission president’s visit with Simon Páez in San Miguel Atlautla. Abel Páez, of whose relationship to Simon I am unsure, was a nephew of Bautista’s. For more information on Tenney’s mission see Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 78-79.

<sup>333</sup> Bautista, “Faith Promoting,” 983-984.

expanded his knowledge of LDS theology as a Sunday School teacher in the Spanish-American branch of the church in Salt Lake City.<sup>334</sup>

Bautista's fervent nationalism and love of Mormon theology merged in his monumental effort to write a theological treatise. Rey Pratt, a former mission president in Mexico, encouraged Bautista to write a book integrating the Old Testament and Book of Mormon with Mexican history. Bautista labored for several years on this project, continuing after Pratt's death in 1931. When he proudly presented his book to Mormon authorities in 1934, they were both surprised and unimpressed. Harold Pratt (Rey Pratt's brother) reviewed the book. Pratt recommended that the Church not publish the book because of its polemical tone, its use of apocryphal literature, and its mapping of Book of Mormon locations onto the American continent in ways that he thought were inconsistent with church doctrine. Deeply disappointed, Bautista returned to Mexico hoping to find a more receptive audience there.<sup>335</sup>

### *The First Two Conventions*

When Bautista returned to Mexico in the mid-1930s he encountered heightened tensions within the LDS Church, fueled in part by recent attempts of Plutarco Elías Calles' administration to enforce anticlerical reforms under Mexico's Constitution of 1917. Among other initiatives, the government expelled all foreign clerics and closed all

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<sup>334</sup> Margarito Bautista, *La Evolucion de Mexico: Sus Verdaderos Progenitores y su Origen, El Destino de America y Europa* (Mexico, D.F.: Apolonio B. Arzate, 1935); David Dominguez Balderas, interview, August 14, 1996 in Colonia Industrial, Ozumba, Mexico; Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 122.

<sup>335</sup> Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 122-123. Tullis claims on the basis of an interview between Gordon Irving and Julio García Velázquez that Bautista returned to Mexico between April and June 1934. Juan Dominguez Balderas told me in August 1996 that Bautista did not return until 1935. I am not sure which account is accurate.

private religious schools, provoking a response from rural Catholics that has become known as the Cristero rebellion.<sup>336</sup> Although the regulations were directed towards the Catholic Church they had a dramatic impact on Mormonism in 1926, temporarily closing church schools in Chihuahua and resulting in an exodus of U.S. Mormon missionaries from Central and northern Mexico.<sup>337</sup>

After Rey Pratt died on 14 April 1931, Antoine R. Ivins was appointed to replace him. Ivins devoted little time or attention to the Mexican portion of his mission, focusing the attention of Mexican Mormons on the problems created by this weak leadership. Mexican Mormons met in late 1931 or early 1932 to discuss the problems created by Ivins's absence from Mexico, lack of missionaries in Mexico, and the shortage of church literature in Spanish. This group, later called the First Convention, wrote a letter expressing their concerns to authorities in Salt Lake City and requesting the appointment of a leader who was a Mexican citizen and could legally function in Mexico. Neither Ivins nor any other authorities responded to the letter.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State, 1926-1929* (Cambridge: Books on Demand Series, Cambridge Latin American Studies, 1976).

<sup>337</sup> Clark V. Johnson, "Mormon Education in Mexico: The Rise of the *Sociedad Educativa y Cultural*," Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1977, 45. Lozano, *Historia del Mormonismo*, 54. Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 111.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, 109-117. The best source on the Third Convention is Tullis's *Mormons in Mexico* but even Tullis acknowledges that his data are partial and incomplete. The new Spanish/English edition of Tullis's includes notes by the translators that correct some errors. F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture, Los Mormones en México: La Dinámica de la Fe y la Cultura*, translated by the Museum of Mormon History in Mexico, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997). One should also consult Lozano, *Historia del Mormonismo*, 61-94 and Steven L. Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration* (Los Angeles: Restoration Research, 1990), 138-139. All three of these sources are incomplete, especially in their failure to acknowledge the continuation of independent branches of Mormonism in Mexico after the partial reunification in 1946. For limited attempts to correct this oversight see Fernando R. Gómez Páez, "The States of México and Morelos: Their Contribution During the Re-Opening Period of Missionary Work, 1901-1903," "Margarito Bautista Valencia," "Francisco Narciso Sandoval: Lamanite Missionary," "The Third Convention," Provo, UT: Museo de Historia del Mormonism en México, no date; Thomas W. Murphy, "'Stronger Than Ever': Remnants of the Third Convention," *Journal of Latter Day Saint History* 10 (1998): 1, 8-11; Thomas W. Murphy, "Fifty Years of United Order in Mexico," *Sunstone* 20 (October 1997): 69; and Thomas W. Murphy, Reviews of F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The*

The lack of a response led Mexicans to assemble a Second Convention in 1932 and prepare a petition to send to Salt Lake City. They renewed their request for a mission president of their own nationality. This time they got the leaders' attention but hardly the response they wanted. Anthony W. Ivins and Apostle Melvin J. Ballard traveled to Mexico City to meet with the Latter-day Saints involved with the two conventions. Ivins reprimanded the assertiveness, the extra-official meetings, and petitions. Church government, he explained, operated from top down, not from the bottom up.<sup>339</sup>

#### *Bautista's Book*

Meanwhile, Margarito Bautista found an LDS printer willing to publish his manuscript, *La Evolucion de Mexico: Sus Verdaderos Progenitores y su Origen, El Destino de America y Europa*. He needed money to support the cost of printing and Mexican Mormons from the state of Puebla and people like Bernabé Parra, a counselor in the district presidency, helped finance the publication. Bautista dedicated the work to the heroes of the Mexican revolution and found among Latter-day Saints an audience ripe for his message. His book circulated quickly and widely among Mexican Mormons. One

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*Dynamics of Faith and Culture, Los Mormones en México: La Dinámica de la Fe y la Cultura*. Translation by The Museum of Mormon History in Mexico. 2d Ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997. Fernando R. Gómez Páez, "The States of México and Morelos: Their Contribution During the Re-Opening Period of Missionary Work, 1901-1903," "Margarito Bautista Valencia," "Francisco Narciso Sandoval: Lamanite Missionary," "The Third Convention," Provo, UT: Museo de Historia del Mormonism en México, no date; *Journal of Mormon History* 28.1 (Spring): 280-289. Clearly, a definitive history of the Third Convention has yet to be written.

<sup>339</sup> Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 117-118.

missionary claimed that Mexican Mormons soon preferred to quote from Bautista's book rather than the Book of Mormon.<sup>340</sup>

In his book Bautista offered Mexicans secrets of their past he claimed were indiscernible to those he called skeptical Mexican intellectuals. Historians and archaeologists sought the truth of the past but failed to find it, he contended, because they dismissed legends and scriptures. Intellectuals only offered mysteries and confusion. In contrast, Bautista offered a secure knowledge of the past, the present, and future of Mexico. Using the Book of Mormon as a bridge, Bautista integrated Mexican history into that of the Old Testament. As Mexico was emerging from a tumultuous period of revolution and civil war, Bautista provided a framework within which Mexicans could explain their recent upheavals and bask in the glow of a glorious past while preparing for an even greater future. Bautista explained the recent difficulties of "aborigines" as an act of providence. The same providence, however, promised Mexicans a future leading role in the world.

Drawing from the Book of Mormon, Bautista saw the world as divided between Hebrews and Gentiles.<sup>341</sup> He identified the aborigines of the Americas as Hebrews, a chosen people or promised seed. He called the "white bearded men" of Europe Gentiles. Although Anglo-Americans in the United States liked to think of themselves as part of the promised seed, Bautista cast them as members of Gentile nations and a scourge to the Lamanites. He stigmatized the lineage of Euroamericans and Spanish whom he classified together as Gentiles. Mexicans, on the other hand, could claim primordial descent from

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>341</sup> He referred to the Hebrews by a series of terms, the sons of Jacob, the sons of Joseph, the sons of Judah, and the sons of Lehi.

Abraham and thereby a special status as literal, rather than adopted, children of the promised seed.

In Bautista's reading of the Book of Mormon, North and South America collectively, not just the United States, constituted the promised land. He identified its inhabitants with various Book of Mormon groups, for example, choosing the Nephite label for his own ancestors, the Nahua, as well as the Toltecs to whom the Nahua traced their claims of political legitimacy.<sup>342</sup> He identified the Chichimecas and Aztecs, relatively recent migrants to the valley of Mexico from the north, as Lamanites.<sup>343</sup> According to Bautista, Lehi's family landed in South America and slowly the people migrated towards the north, until they occupied most of Central America as well as northern South America. In the final destruction of the Nephites, Bautista contended that the Nephites were driven to the north and that the last great battle took place in what is now upper New York. The Lamanites returned to the south as the various waves of Chichimecas. The few Nephites who survived the great genocide became the ancestors of the indigenous peoples of North America and the Pacific Islands.

Bautista assigned *Lamanite* to Mexicans of indigenous ancestry (i.e. Mestizos and Indians). Bautista believed that Mexicans as Lamanites were related through kinship to all the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Pacific Islands.<sup>344</sup> Although Anglo-

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<sup>342</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 24, 37. For a discussion of the role of Toltec ancestry in Nahua claims of political legitimacy see David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>343</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 25. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, translated by Lysander Kemp, Yara Miles, and Rachel Phillips Belash (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 89 defines Chichimeca as "a generic term, without national distinctions, that was applied to the (northern) barbarians by the inhabitants of the Central Plateau." Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *Mexico Profundo*, 76, noted that "the term *chichimeca* was undeniably pejorative. Nevertheless, even in this case, the fact that the Aztecs themselves were of nomadic origin made it difficult to conceptualize the *chichimeca* as naturally inferior."

<sup>344</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 504-538.

American Mormons frequently used *Lamanite* to refer to the same groups of people, Bautista's writings were some of the earliest publications that clearly expressed a Lamanite self-identification. Although originally used in the Book of Mormon and by Anglo-American Mormons as a term of opprobrium, *Lamanite* status to Bautista entitled him to a proud Hebraic lineage. In Bautista's world-view, Lamanites were not the scourge that plagues God's chosen people, rather the Christian nations of Europe were the scourge that haunted the Lamanites, the promised seed.<sup>345</sup>

The Book of Mormon Nephites claimed that a dark skin was a curse from God. Bautista accepted that position but reminded Mexicans that Lamanites who converted to Christianity became white again.<sup>346</sup> From conversion accounts, he reported, we have "authentic testimony for us that when we have the truth, that Lamanite blood, or that of the Aztecs, demonstrates the power and frightening ability that by good fortune or nature accompanies it."<sup>347</sup> Mexican destiny, as Bautista understood it, transcended skin color. Bautista cited Book of Mormon passages to the effect that the Lamanites will once again become a "white and delightsome people."<sup>348</sup> The Christianity, however, which would save the Lamanites was not that offered by the Spanish conquistadors.

According to Bautista, Jesus Christ brought primitive Christianity to the Americas after his resurrection in Jerusalem: "The owner of the vineyard came here because the

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>346</sup> Members of *El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud*, the organization founded by Margarito Bautista after his expulsion from the Third Convention, still maintain the belief that the Lamanites who adopt the gospel will eventually become white. On 14 Aug. 1996 David Dominguez Balderas told me that his father was "*más blanco que tú, Tomas*." His brother, Juan Dominguez Balderas, confirmed for me on 16 Aug. 1996 that they believed that their skin color would literally change to white someday but that we cannot know when that will occur because the Lord's sense of time is not the same as ours.

<sup>347</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 89. This and other translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>348</sup> 2 Ne. 30:3-6.

people are from the main branch of the natural olive tree.”<sup>349</sup> One could see in the legends of the Aztecs and Mayas, he claimed, stories about a divine figure called Quetzalcoatl, Kukulcán, or Gucumatz; all of which translate to Plumed Serpent.<sup>350</sup> While some referred to the legends of the Aztecs as fairy tales, Bautista found truth in them. Regarding Quetzalcoatl, he proclaimed: “that personage considered like a divinity, like a true God, was authentic, and was really a God, and naturally his prophecies will be strictly fulfilled.”<sup>351</sup> That is, Quetzalcoatl’s prophesied return that led Moctezuma to mistake Hernando Cortez for Quetzalcoatl would be literally fulfilled.<sup>352</sup> In this interpretation, Aztecs predicted the same return that Christians heralded as a second coming. For Bautista, Quetzalcoatl was none other than Jesus Christ.<sup>353</sup>

Bautista distinguished between modern European Christianity and original Christianity that he claimed existed both in ancient America and in the Old World during the apostolic era of the New Testament. Bautista described European Christianity as a poor copy of original Christianity. The result, which depended upon mutilated scriptures, was one of the most abominable churches on the earth.<sup>354</sup> He claimed, “modern Christianity cannot cultivate a noble spirit.”<sup>355</sup> Bautista denounced anyone who thought that the Gentiles could civilize the covenant people as “deprived of logic or having a head

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<sup>349</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 20.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>352</sup> See Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, translated into English by Lysander Kemp, translated into Spanish by Angel Maria Garibay K. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962); Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*, translated by J.M. Cohen (New York: Penguin, 1963); Hernando Cortés, *Five Letters of Cortés to the Emperor*, translated by J. Bayard Morris (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969).

<sup>353</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 31-36. Juan Dominguez Balderas confirmed for me on 15 Aug. 1996 that members of *El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud* continue to believe that Quetzalcoatl was “unequivocally” Jesus Christ.

<sup>354</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 140-141, 380.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

of tin.”<sup>356</sup> He concluded that while “ancient Christianity was invigorating and refining among our ancestors,” many Indians under Spanish domination “preferred death over modern Christianity.”<sup>357</sup>

In Bautista’s narrative, ancient America had thrived. Archaeological discoveries, he claimed, “testify of the glorious splendor that once existed among the aborigines.”<sup>358</sup> Drawing from the Book of Mormon he reported that Christ/Quetzalcoatl’s appearance in ancient America initiated an era in which all things were owned in common and when Lamanites and Nephites were united as one. Bautista described that period as “the supreme perfection that humanity is able to obtain.”<sup>359</sup> The golden age terminated after two centuries.

According to Bautista, Quetzalcoatl’s prophecy of the fall of the Aztec empire, substantiated by similar predictions in the Book of Mormon, spelled doom for Mexican forebears. “Our ancestors,” Bautista told the Mexicans “transgressed the laws of God and fell from the splendid level at which they lived” during the reign of Quetzalcoatl.<sup>360</sup> “Our forefathers for many generations lived in the light, like fish in fountains of water; however, voluntarily they rebelled and turned to idolatry, drowning in iniquity, developing the repugnant practice of human sacrifice.”<sup>361</sup> Bautista told his Mexican readers, “The conquest, then, was not accomplished by *San Hipólito* or the *Virgen de Covadonga*, nor much less by the bravery and valor of our conquerors. It was only

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 504.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 42.

decreed and formulated by the seers of the past.”<sup>362</sup> This fatalism was similar to that described by Mexican author Octavio Paz, winner of the 1990 Nobel Prize for Literature: “No other people have felt so completely helpless as the Aztec nation felt at the appearance of omens, prophecies and warnings that announced its fall.”<sup>363</sup>

Bautista told Mexicans that their ancestors transgressed and fell to “savagery.” They broke their covenants and lost their rights. The Gentiles stole their birthright; but, he warned, the principles and decrees by which the Aztecs were judged were still valid.<sup>364</sup> Mexicans were not the only ones who had been conquered and humiliated.<sup>365</sup> The Book of Mormon decreed that God dealt a punishment equally or more severe to the white Nephites when they transgressed against God. The fall of the chosen seed, Bautista observed, made possible the rise of the Gentile nations. While the supremacy of the Gentiles deprived the Semitic nations of their rights, lands, and heredity, Bautista reminded the Mexicans that the Americas rightfully belonged to Joseph and his posterity, i.e. the Lamanites.<sup>366</sup> Just as Quetzalcoatl and Book of Mormon prophets predicted the fall of the Aztecs, so, too, they prophesied the rise of the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon.<sup>367</sup> In order to restore peace, he observed, the Gentiles cannot share the prize they have captured but must return land, liberty and rights to the promised seed.<sup>368</sup>

Bautista drew a portrait of the US that was only partially sympathetic. Based upon the Book of Mormon’s predictions of the rise of a powerful Gentile nation in the

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>363</sup> Paz, *Labyrinth of Solitude*, 93.

<sup>364</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 43.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 189-192.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 87. Octavio Paz noted a similar cyclical conception of time with Mexican fatalism in his classic work *Labyrinth of Solitude*, 93-94.

<sup>368</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 191.

Americas, Bautista saw America's dominant role as foreordained. He noted that just as some of the Spanish decried the abuses of the Indians, so, too, some Gentiles would come to complete a special mission on this continent as a powerful nation in which the Book of Mormon would be recovered and translated.<sup>369</sup> He warned that this ascendancy was temporary. To support such a claim he cited passages from the Book of Mormon that foretell the failure of this Gentile mission and the future ascendancy of the house of Israel:

And that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret combinations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel from among them. ... And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fullness of my gospel.<sup>370</sup>

Foreign capitalists, speculators, and landowners from the US drew Bautista's strongest criticism. He decried foreign capitalists for taking precious metals from Mexico for their own private gain and denounced the land speculator as the "most lethal gangrene to prey upon the human body."<sup>371</sup> He recalled the pitiful wages he received as an agricultural laborer in the American colonies during the *Porfiriato*, Mexico's so-called "era of peace" under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. He highlighted the hypocrisy in the cry of land owners that any grain not shipped to the coast was wasted, a complaint that

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 207-208.

<sup>370</sup> 3 Ne. 16:10, 12. Rather than retranslating this portion, I use the English version. Juan Dominguez Balderas (the former personal secretary of Margarito Bautista) told me during an interview on August 16, 1996 that Bautista was fond of pointing out that in the translation of the Book of Mormon into Spanish the verb for sin (*pecar*) is in subjunctive form suggesting doubt rather than in the affirmative "shall sin" as in English.

<sup>371</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 74, 105.

irritated and demeaned the very laborers who harvested the crops.<sup>372</sup> A father, Bautista reported, had to sell his soul to feed his family.<sup>373</sup>

Using Book of Mormon theology, Bautista expressed strong support for agrarian reform. He displayed no sympathy for those Americans or others who lost land to redistribution measures.

The fulfillment of the mission of the 'white men' was completed to the letter of the law. The posterity of said people for generations propounded the same principles and system established for the exploitation of the people. They continued in their apogee until the moment of the trembling that commenced in the memorable year of 1810 and assumed once again the same work in the glorious year of 1910. All those that were or were not the direct posterity of said conquerors, but through some other means were made owners of those vast properties and perpetuated precisely the same horrible system, they are just as responsible for the same crime.

Undoubtedly, in the moment of restoration, the consequences will be just as painful as they were the first time.<sup>374</sup>

Bautista used the generally anti-capitalist themes of the Book of Mormon to harshly censure the practices of Spanish colonialists, the Mexicans who inherited their wealth, and the Anglo-Americans who moved into Mexico under the Porfiriato to take their place.<sup>375</sup>

Bautista's treatise emphasized a central theme of restoration. Lamanite and thereby indigenous "sovereignty in its entirety will be restored" he confidently proclaimed.<sup>376</sup> Lamanite redemption in its fullness and splendor was coming in the near future. "Mexico," Bautista triumphantly avowed, "will be the principal place and

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>375</sup> For a superb yet cynical and pessimistic portrait of the transference of exploitative power in Latin America from the Spanish crown to the British empire and then to the US see Tulio Halperin Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, edited and translated by John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>376</sup> Bautista, *La Evolucion*, 41.

Mexicans the principal people playing the most important role in these the last days.”<sup>377</sup> He charged Mexico with finding and gathering the remnants of Israel.<sup>378</sup> America’s aborigines, he reported, would build the Holy City, a New Jerusalem, in America.<sup>379</sup> The House of Israel would succeed the “bearded white men.”<sup>380</sup> “The time of the Gentiles,” he warned, “is over; that is to say their commission expired. Do not doubt any longer, we have to banish that repugnant scourge.”<sup>381</sup>

Bautista found a hero of Biblical stature in Benito Juárez, a Zapotec Indian from Oaxaca who rose to national prominence and eventually the presidency in Mexico’s liberal revolt of 1854. He likened Juárez to Moses; as Moses led the children of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, Juárez freed Mexicans from the “diabolic” control of Catholicism by loosening the ties between church and state through *La Reforma*. “Juárez was not only a great Legislator or the real Protector of that which was GIVEN directly from heaven. He gave to man, to know FREE WILL. This precious gift makes a man, MAN.”<sup>382</sup> Furthermore, he likened Juárez to King Mosiah, the “Great Reformer” in the Book of Mormon. In his comparisons of Juárez and Mosiah, Bautista found analogues for the liberal program of *La Reforma* in the Book of Mormon much as Anglo-Americans had found analogues for democracy and republican constitutions.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 41. Bautista’s use of America should be read in the inclusive continental sense not in the national sense of the United States of America.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 55. Emphases are in the original.

<sup>383</sup> Bautista did not reconcile his praise of Juárez’s anticlerical policies with Juárez’s procapitalist policies. Bautista directed his critiques of capitalism towards Porfirio Diaz’s policies.

Bautista declared that the Mexican revolution was the beginning of Lamanite vindication.<sup>384</sup> Europeans, Bautista stated,

did not know that this land was given indefinitely to the sons of Joseph, he who came from Egypt, represented by Lehi, the grand Patriarch of the Americas. For everyone that claimed to be worthy of the commission received by the ‘bearded white men,’ this mission was only a temporary one. It was divine judgment against us for our sins.<sup>385</sup>

Bautista predicted that “Mexico and the rest of the world will look with amazement at the rebirth of another Hidalgo, another Morelos, another Matamoros, etc., etc., to defend us with the same valor and boldness, not from material slavery but from a spiritual one.”<sup>386</sup>

The conquest of Mexico was a great iniquity for which the perpetrators would be punished, a castigation that was decreed in heaven.<sup>387</sup> Bautista lamented that the price the Gentiles must pay would be a heavy one:

Woe to you, Christianity and your sister civilization of our ‘era of peace’! Woe to all of those that have the same greedy desires in our day, because you and your children will reap the same sooner or later. Your misery will be double and your humiliation will be more bitter than the worst bile.<sup>388</sup>

### *The Third Convention*

Mexican Mormons who read Bautista’s book were enthralled. The book fit well with post-revolutionary Mexican nationalism, wrapping Mexican nationalism under a new Lamanite identity. The emphasis on Book of Mormon promises for Lamanites legitimated a nationalistic pride that had already begun to compete with the similar pride that U.S. Mormons held for their country. Coincidentally, the book’s popularity coincided with the LDS Church’s decision in April of 1936 to divide the Spanish-

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 106.

American mission into a Mexican and a Spanish-American mission. Mexicans Mormons, who had twice requested a Mexican mission president, hoped that their desire would now be granted.<sup>389</sup>

They were sorely disappointed when the First Presidency named Harold W. Pratt, the same person who had reviewed Bautista's manuscript so disparagingly, as the new mission president. Central Mexican Mormons did not consider Harold Pratt, a native of the Mormon colonies in Chihuahua and a Mexican citizen, to be culturally Mexican or a Lamanite. Nor did Pratt pursue a conciliatory policy.

Despite Bautista's overwhelming endorsement of the Mormon gospel, the new mission president continued to find his book's pro-Mexican sentiments and harsh criticisms of the US unpalatable. Fearing that it might drive a wedge between Mexican and Anglo-American Mormons, Pratt publicly denounced the book and discouraged Mormons from buying it or quoting from it.<sup>390</sup> Facing a substantial loss of money because they had funded the cost of printing, Mexican Mormons found an additional reason for despair.

Rumors of another convention began to circulate soon after news of Harold W. Pratt's appointment reached Mexico City. Fearing further castigation, some Mexicans like Isaías Juárez discouraged another meeting and published a circular advising against participation in the convention. Nonetheless, approximately 120 Mexican Mormons convened against the will of the church. This time the *convencionistas* petitioned explicitly for a Mexican mission president "*de raza y sangre*." (of race and blood),<sup>391</sup> and

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<sup>389</sup> Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 127.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-127.

<sup>391</sup> Lozano, *Historia*, 64-69; Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 138-39.

named Abel Páez, Bautista's nephew as a possible candidate who they thought would meet the needs of both the church and the Mexican membership. (Bautista had been offered the candidacy but had declined it.) When Páez met with Pratt prior to submitting the third petition, Pratt consoled Páez and some of the other *convencionistas* by promising them that he would allow *convencionistas* to accompany him to Salt Lake City to present their petition to church leaders, possibly at the approaching October general conference.<sup>392</sup>

The promised trip never materialized. Pratt delivered the petition by himself. By November 1936, the First Presidency replied formally to the demands of the *convencionistas*. The First Presidency's reply, written by former US ambassador to Mexico J. Reuben Clark, was harsh. Clark declared the *convencionistas* out of order once again, reminded them that church leaders are not to represent their flocks to higher level authorities, told them that all missions were supervised by men from the bosom of the Church, and claimed that Mexicans already held a number of positions. In particular, he objected to the importance they placed on having leadership from the house of Israel. He claimed that Book of Mormon promises to the sons of Joseph applied to North American Mormons as well as Mexicans.<sup>393</sup> There was no reconciliation. By May 1937, Margarito Bautista found himself among the leaders of the Third Convention excommunicated for rebellion, insubordination, and apostasy.<sup>394</sup>

Approximately eight hundred Mexican Mormons—about one-third of the Mexican converts in 1936—followed Bautista and his nephew Abel Páez into a separate

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<sup>392</sup> Margarito Bautista, "*Wilt Thou Restore the Kingdom ... to Israel?*" (Ozumba, Mexico: Colonia Industrial Mexicana, 1952), 206-211; Lozano, *Historia*, 67-71; Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 139-141.

<sup>393</sup> Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 143.

<sup>394</sup> Bautista, "*Wilt Thou*", 205-211; Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 142-146.

Mexican church known as the Third Convention. As BYU political scientist F. LaMond Tullis tells the story, Bautista soon stirred up doctrinal division in the newly formed Third Convention by advocating a restoration of polygamy and the United Order (a socialist economic system practiced by some early Mormon communities). The convention expelled Bautista who returned to Ozumba, Mexico, establishing his own “New Jerusalem” and keeping “in touch with other Mormon fundamentalist and apostate groups.” Meanwhile, the Third Convention grew and operated independently of but parallel to the LDS Church from April of 1936 until May 1946 when a reconciliation negotiated by the new mission president Arwell L. Pierce and presided over by LDS prophet George Albert Smith brought approximately twelve hundred *convencionistas* back into the LDS fold. Bautista, one of the “few malcontents,” Tullis reports, “remained in Ozumba, appearing only occasionally to hurl epithets--”Gentiles! Sons of Egyptians! Fathers of obscurantism!”<sup>395</sup> With that characterization, Bautista disappears from Tullis’s account.

In his history of the Third Convention compiled from fragments in the LDS Church archives and oral histories collected in Mexico, Tullis weaves a narrative of rupture and healing. In this New Mormon History church leaders struggle to come to terms with their newly emerging status as an international religion. Most of the demands of the Mexicans appear as legitimate but premature because the LDS Church in the late twentieth century provides for local leadership, translation of doctrinal materials, in some cases access to schools, and increasingly access to temples. The errors appear as individual failings, eventually reconciled by a Prophet of God. Tullis marginalizes the

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<sup>395</sup> Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico*, 147-159.

critique of protagonists like Margarito Bautista and minimizes their long-term impact. Expelled from the Third Convention and portrayed as a name caller, Bautista is objectified as a fading peripheral sore loser. Absent, altogether, is Lorenzo Cuautli who led a congregation of *convencionistas* in San Gabriel Ometoxtla that also refused to reconcile with the LDS Church and, after a brief alliance with Bautista, created an independent organization, *La Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de la Plenitud de los Tiempos*, which had approximately 300 members in 1997.<sup>396</sup>

Juan Dominguez Balderas, former personal secretary to Bautista, told me a different story in 1996. He confirmed that by the end of 1937, the Third Convention had expelled Bautista for proposing a restoration of polygamy and the United Order but added more details. Bautista spent the next fourteen months living with Pilar Paéz, another Third Convention excommunicant, in Mexico City where he wrote a novel, *El Origen de Alma*. Subsequently, he returned to Ozumba but maintained contact with other *convencionistas*. After most of the *convencionistas* had reunited with the LDS Church, a group of fifty-nine Mormons under the direction of Margarito Bautista, Lorenzo Cuautli, Leonardo Belmont, Francisco Sandoval and Candido de la Cruz founded Colonia Industrial in the *municipio* of Ozumba and began gathering there in January 1947. The majority of the founding members of the community, including Lorenzo Cuautli, left the community after difficulty finding employment. Those who stayed faced numerous challenges but succeeded in building a small but thriving community that survived

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<sup>396</sup> Murphy, "Fifty Years." Murphy, "Stronger than Ever." Raymundo Gomez Gonzalez, interview in Mexico City, 14 Jan. 1997. Perhaps, the absence of Cuautli was an oversight on Tullis' part but clearly he had evidence available to him that Cuautli had refused to reconcile along with his fellow *convencionistas*. See Lozano, *Historia*, 81. Tullis may also have accepted Lozano's claims that Bautista's colony was a shame and embarrassment that never prospered and had almost disappeared (in 1983). See Lozano, *Historia*, 88-89.

Bautista's death on 4 August 1961 and has continued to expand under the legal name of *El Reino de Dios en su Plenitud*. In 1996, they claimed approximately nine hundred members, seven hundred of them in Colonia Industrial. Colonia Industrial is an elegant community with numerous homes, clean streets, a temple or endowment house, communally managed agricultural land, and a new large meetinghouse still under construction. Juan Dominguez's son Abel Dominguez Hernandez told me that the followers of Bautista were "stronger than ever."<sup>397</sup>

### **Agrícola Lozano Herrera**

Another image of Margarito Bautista Valencia appears in Agrícola Lozano Herrera's *Historia del Mormonismo en México* (1983). Agrícola Lozano Herrera was born in 1926 in Tula, Mexico to Agrícola Lozano Bravo and Josefina Herrera de Lozano, both converts to the LDS Church. Lozano's life-long service in the Church has included the distinction of being the first Lamanite to be named stake president when he accepted that position in Mexico City in 1967. He has also served as president of the Argentina Bahía Blanca mission, Mexico City temple president, regional representative, high council, branch president, and elder's quorum president. Despite not finishing grade school until age sixteen, Lozano went on to earn a law degree from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Following work as an attorney for some of Mexico's most prominent unions, he began working primarily for the LDS Church. In 1993 he played a key role in gaining

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<sup>397</sup> J. Dominguez B., interview, 15 Aug. 1996. D. Dominguez B., interview, 14 Aug. 1996. Abel Dominguez Hernandez, interview, 15 Aug. 1996. Vidal, *Estudio Geografico*, 34. Margarito Bautista Valencia, et al. untitled (first line reads "*El día 11 de Noviembre de año de 1946, en Asamblea General, en la casa del compañero Casildo Santamaria ...*"), photocopy in my possession, courtesy of Juan Dominguez Balderas, 15 August 1996. This four page typescript confirming the agreement to found Colonia Industrial is signed by thirty-five people and dated 10 Oct. 1952.

formal registration with the Mexican government for the LDS Church. In 1997, LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley singled out Agrícola Lozano for his contributions to the Church in Mexico and publicly proclaimed, “He is my friend.” Lozano died in Mexico City 29 July 1999, age seventy-two.<sup>398</sup>

In Lozano’s writings Bautista plays a key but negative role. He casts Bautista after the model of Laman, the father of the Lamanites and Lehi’s eldest son who squandered his heritage and potential for a shameful path of poverty and wickedness. In this portrait, Bautista and his followers sowed confusion and iniquity among the Mexican saints, who because of their Lamanite heritage were particularly vulnerable to such temptations. Lozano employs Bautista as a protagonist whose great potential is dwarfed by the depth of his fall. “This apostate,” Lozano reports, “was a man of great intelligence, of vast knowledge of doctrine and theology, a man of powerful words and an attractive personality.” Lozano laments that in the end Bautista “did more evil than good when he could have been such a giant.”<sup>399</sup> By recounting Bautista’s gifts and his weaknesses,

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<sup>398</sup> Erin K. Moreno, “Mexico City Temple Leader Devoted Lifetime to Church,” *Church News*, Oct. 23, 1993, 1; on Infobases, *Collectors Library*, 1998. “Church Welcomes Mexican Legislators,” *Church News*, May 15, 1993, 5; on Infobases, *Collectors Library*, CD-ROM, 1998; “Mexico Formally Registers Church,” *Church News*, July 17, 1993, 3, *ibid.*; “New Temple Presidents,” *Church News*, June 26, 1993, 5, *ibid.*; John L. Hart, “Mexico Milestone: 100th Stake Created,” *Church News*, July 1, 1989, 3, *ibid.*; John L. Hart, “Put Arms Around Converts, Prophet Urges,” *Church News*, Nov. 15, 1997, *ibid.*; John L. Hart, “Early Church Leader in Mexico is ‘Humble, Spiritual Man’,” *Church News*, Aug. 12, 1995, 5, *ibid.*; John L. Hart, *1997-1998 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1996), 355-357; “Death,” *Church News*, 14 August 1999, 13; and Abraham Menes, “An LDS Pioneer Died Yesterday,” <http://www.ldsgems.com/archive/news/articles/990730.mexico>. For discussions of the Salinas reforms that allowed for legal recognition of churches in Mexico see Anthony Gill; “The Politics of Religious Regulation in Mexico: Preliminary Observations,” Paper presented at the 1995 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C. See also “Bienes, Voto y Acceso a la Educación para las Iglesias,” *Epoca*, 27 (9 Diciembre, 1991), 9; Victor Manuel Juarez, “El Estado Debe Permanecer Laico y la Iglesia Católica Apolitica,” *Epoca*, 27 (9 Diciembre, 1991), 10-11, “Ni Estado Sacristán, ni Iglesia Partidista,” *Epoca*, 27 (9 Diciembre, 1991), 15-16.

<sup>399</sup> Lozano, *Historia*, 81-84, 89-90.

Lozano can warn Mexican Lamanites that each of them carries this dangerous propensity for both good and evil in their own bloodlines.

Despite his exemplary church service and his negative portrayal of Bautista, Lozano's account cannot easily be classified as traditional Mormon history. Lozano contends that it was in Mexico, "where the history of the Church must have been made yesterday, is being made today, and will be made tomorrow."<sup>400</sup> Lozano proudly identifies himself and Mexicans as Lamanites. Addressing his account specifically to Lamanites, he emphasizes their promised destiny, including prosperity and leadership in the Church but warns that rebellion, nonconformity, unhealthy and destructive criticism, and opposition to authority is deep-rooted among the Saints in Mexico.<sup>401</sup> Mexicans, or more specifically Lamanites, take the central role in this account even though Lozano frequently casts them in self-denigrating terms drawn from the Book of Mormon.

To establish a pivotal role for Mexico, Lozano claimed that the events described in the Book of Mormon took place in ancient Mexico. He called Mexico City "the city of the Messiah and navel of the world," he likened the cultures from the Book of Mormon to the civilizations of Toltecs, Mayas, Mixtec-Zapotecs, and Aztecs.<sup>402</sup> He adopted *Lamanite* or "sons of Laman" to refer to Mexicans and claimed kinship with Indians of North and South America and "the Lamanites of the Pacific Islands." Lozano used the 18th century Dominican Friar Gregorio García's thesis that Mexicans descended from the

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 48, 98-99.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 4.

lost tribes of Israel to argue that the word *México* derived from the Hebrew term for Messiah, making Mexico City, “the City of Jesus Christ, not of Huitzilpochtli.”<sup>403</sup>

Lozano placed Mormonism within the larger framework of Mexican history while simultaneously giving a Mormon twist to Mexican history. Lozano allied Mormonism with the anticlerical reforms of Benito Juárez and the classic liberal tradition.<sup>404</sup> He decried the “diabolic alliance between church and state” which blinded Mexicans with “fanatical” Catholicism.<sup>405</sup> In this account, the arrival of Mormonism in Mexico initiated an “Era of the Lamanites” or a “Day of the Indians” in which Mexicans would rise once again to lead this religion restored from the fountains of ancient Mexico.<sup>406</sup> Lozano, though, also found the roots of Mexican rebellion and opposition to authority in their Lamanite heritage.<sup>407</sup> Unlike Bautista, Lozano did not call Europeans and Euroamericans Gentiles and he avoided any strident attacks on capitalism. Nonetheless, his assertions of a Lamanite identity and a central role in the Church for Mexicans share an affinity with those of Bautista.

In contrast to Bautista, however, Lozano portrays his Lamanite heritage in primarily negative terms that he contrasts with a liberating potential of the gospel. He credits “Brother Ephraim” with bringing good news to the “Lamanite seed ... the descendants of Father Lehi ... who were kept under false and diabolic beliefs.”<sup>408</sup> He equated Catholicism with “fanaticism,” “apostate doctrines,” “the whore of the

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<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 4. Huitzilpochtli is the Aztec God of war.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 20, 58-60.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 8.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, 29, 48.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Churches.”<sup>409</sup> He attributed local opposition to Mormon missionaries to “satanic rage,” “satanic fury,” and a sign of “Middle Age” mentality.<sup>410</sup> He criticized Mexicans for their impunctuality, informality, improvisation, rebelliousness, and opposition to authority.<sup>411</sup> While he acknowledged that one can find these types of spirits anywhere in the world, he claimed that they are more common among “the sons of Laman.”<sup>412</sup> Citing historian Dale F. Beecher, “a distinguished historian from the University of Utah,” as an authority, Lozano claimed that Mexican Mormons fell dramatically into apostasy following the abandonment of the first mission in 1888 as a result of their peculiar psychology when deprived of paternalistic leaders to direct them and in whom they might confide.<sup>413</sup> In his preface to the account of the Third Convention Lozano laments, “Laman in Mexico had not yet moved away from many of his dark traditions.”<sup>414</sup> He describes the Third Convention’s letter to the First Presidency as expressing a “spirit of audacity, ingenuity, passion, and maybe ignorance of the significance of what they were doing.”<sup>415</sup> Judging Mexicans by standards for contributions set in the United States, Lozano repeatedly expresses his frustration that Mexican tithes are thin, inconsistent, and insufficient to support the Church.<sup>416</sup>

While Bautista portrayed Euroamericans in primarily unsavory terms such as Gentiles, Lozano lavished praise on North American missionaries and Mormon colonists in northern Mexico. Lozano reminded his Mexican readers of the “sacrifices and

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<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 223.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 210, 214, 216.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-100.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 61, 101, 125, 223.

deprivations of [the first] North American missionaries when in our Mexico there were no paved roads, there were no homes like those of today, [and] no food like we eat today.”<sup>417</sup> He devoted an entire chapter to remembering the missionaries who lost their lives to illness and conflict in Mexico.<sup>418</sup> He saw significance in the observation that the first LDS missionaries to Mexico City, Father Lehi, Quetzalcóatl, and Hernando Cortez all arrived “by sea and from the east.”<sup>419</sup> He cited authorities such as LDS Apostle Moses Thatcher to contend that the arrival of the Spanish signified the fall of the Indian, while the arrival of the LDS missionaries signified their liberation.<sup>420</sup> Not only missionaries but Anglo-Mormon colonists in northern Mexico also drew praise from Lozano who credited them with being “messengers in the service of truth and light come to rescue the scattered seed of Jacob.”<sup>421</sup>

Lozano’s portrayals of the Church policies are not always salutary. He blames Mexican anarchy in the use of classroom manuals on the lack of novel materials from increasingly centralized Church publications. Likewise, he laments the disappointingly thin character of recent issues of the periodical *Liahona*.<sup>422</sup> He expresses his disappointment at the closure of primary and secondary church schools in Mexico in 1981 while criticizing those members who opposed the move and complained against the First Presidency.<sup>423</sup> In one instance, he recorded the surprise of the Saints in Mexico when they encountered a brother “of Anglo-Saxon origin” who spoke clearly and frankly.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 104, 172.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

Lozano outlined in detail the difficulty of translating the design and proportions of the Mexico City temple from English to Spanish language, measurements and symbols. He recorded the disappointing decision of Church leaders to reject Mexican offers to donate labor to the construction of the temple.<sup>425</sup> Overall, he acknowledged that the tremendous growth of the LDS Church in Mexico had created difficulties such as the need to learn and assimilate a novel ecclesiastical administration, the need to avoid bringing worldly habits into religious administration, and the necessity of calling new members without much experience to positions of authority.<sup>426</sup>

Lozano praises Mexicans who have embraced the gospel and non-Mormons who facilitated its growth. He associates the arrival of the gospel with indigenous movement away from ancestral poverty to industriousness, self-sufficiency, and independence.<sup>427</sup> Because of the Church, he contends, “the Mexican Mormon far more than respects Institutions, he honors them, he has conviction and faith in them.”<sup>428</sup> Intriguingly, Lozano devotes a portion of one chapter to mini-biographies of non-LDS Mexicans who have been instrumental in the spread of the gospel, including prominent Mexicans revolutionaries Francisco Madero and Pancho Villa and Mexican Presidents Lazaro Cardenas, Manuel Avilo Camacho, and Adolfo Lopez Mateos. Lozano repeats several rumors suggesting that former Mexican President Lopez Mateos may have been a Mormon, although inactive at the time of his Presidency.<sup>429</sup> In his praise, Lozano welcomes the cultural transformations facilitated by the Mormon gospel.

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 140-149.

### On Subjects and Objects

Bautista's domestication of Mormon theology and his deployment of a Lamanite identity provoked hostility from Church leaders but that of Lozano fifty years later did not. Neither book attacked the LDS Church or its doctrines, but the two accounts have striking differences. While Bautista accepts the concept that a dark skin was a curse from God, his portrayal of Lamanites primarily emphasizes their superiority rather than their inferiority. Lozano, on the other hand, avoids discussions of skin color while internalizing the negative characterizations that the Book of Mormon and Anglo-Mormons projected onto those they called Lamanites.

Bautista's writings threatened power relations within the LDS Church because the other not only became a self, but because the original *subject* also became a stigmatized *object*. The Lamanite author objectified Euroamericans as Gentiles in much the same way that the gaze of Nephite authors had objectified the Lamanites. By including Mormons of European descent among the Gentiles Bautista's reversal of the gaze threatened the social and racial hierarchy in the church in much the same way that Samuel the Lamanite's discourse challenged Nephite elites.<sup>430</sup> Harold W. Pratt, as mission president, attempted to reassert dominance by censorship and eventually excommunication. Ideologically, Church leaders such as J. Reuben Clark sought to undermine the connection between the Book of Mormon and the new Lamanite subjectivity by adopting terminology from the Doctrine and Covenants through which they could deny the alterity of Lamanite and Gentile. By claiming that there was no difference between the Lamanites and themselves

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<sup>430</sup> See Hel. 13-16.

in God's eyes, Church leaders could protect their own privileged positions of power while undermining the assertions made by Bautista and the Third Convention.<sup>431</sup>

While Lozano did not stigmatize Anglo-Americans in the same manner as Bautista, he moved them from the position of subjects of their own accounts to romanticized objects of his account. Although he did not shy away from all criticism, most of his remarks about North Americans avoided linking shortcomings to racial or cultural origins. Instead, he offered romantic portraits of North American missionaries that failed to capture the complexity of their experience. Lozano internalized negative characterizations of Lamanites and used this imagery to warn Mexicans to avoid strident challenges to the Church hierarchy. Nonetheless, he maintains a central role for Lamanites as the primary protagonists in his account and claims a pivotal role for Mexicans in the past, present, and future history of the Church.

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<sup>431</sup> Murphy, "Racist Stereotype."

## Chapter 8: Shifting Foundations

In light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by a work as Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon.

*Brigham H. Roberts*<sup>432</sup>

Over the past century Mormon scholars have struggled with the evidence of modern human construction in the text that faithful Latter-day Saints often treat as if it had spilled from the mouth of God untainted by human culture. The story of Book of Mormon origins uncovered by Latter-day Saint scholars is far more complex than a simple statement of faith in divine origins. Similarities to occult imagery and Christian missions to Indians are not the only sources that situate the Book of Mormon’s construction squarely in the nineteenth century. This chapter examines the debates that Terryl Givens, LDS Professor of English at the University of Richmond, characterizes as the furious “Book of Mormon wars ... taking place *within* the Mormon scholarly community.”<sup>433</sup> Givens’ metaphor of war captures the periodic divisiveness of these debates but not the revolutionary reformation of the traditional views advocated by scholars on both sides of the conflict. The views of defenders of the Book of Mormon historicity would be scarcely recognizable to nineteenth century Mormons. Today, even mainstream Mormons often find the apologetic claims of scholars associated with the

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<sup>432</sup> Brigham H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 2d. ed. Brigham D. Madsen, ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1992), 250.

<sup>433</sup> Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 175. See also Thomas W. Murphy, Review of Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; *Journal of Mormon History* 28.2 (Fall 2002): 192-198.

Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) surprising and unconventional.<sup>434</sup>

Most Mormons, including prominent leaders such as LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley, continue to view the Book of Mormon as *the history* of ancient America and consider American Indians generally to be the descendants of Book of Mormon peoples.<sup>435</sup> Scholars, on the other hand, are much more likely to doubt the historical claims of LDS scripture. Views of the Book of Mormon as inspired frontier fiction, an occult document, or a modern interpretation of an ancient source are becoming more common. Even scholarly defenders of Book of Mormon historicity are increasingly inclined to view the scripture as *a lineage history* of a small family of emigrants from the ancient Near East to a restricted location in Central America. They point to the *Popol Vuh*, a sixteenth century Quiché Mayan sacred narrative, as a model for this refashioned view of the Book of Mormon. In order to squeeze the Book of Mormon into this new framework, though, they must set aside or reinterpret geographic references in the text, turn directional references sideways, transform Old World flora and fauna into misnamed species from the New World, ignore descriptions of pastoral cultures in the scripture,

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<sup>434</sup> This claim is based upon my own personal observation of LDS congregations and people in the Midwest, Intermountain West, and Far West United States. I have found similar attitudes in Mexico, Guatemala, and Saudi Arabia (U.S. armed forces). One can validate my conclusions by observing the surprise of LDS newcomers when they first encounter this material on various LDS related Internet discussion groups like LDS-Net, Mormon-L, Eyring-L, and Zion's Lighthouse Message Board. The unconventional nature of Book of Mormon scholarship can be observed by the paucity of such discussion in official church manuals, magazines, and conference addresses. See also John Sorenson's discussion of frustrated attempts from 1975 to 1983 to publish his research in *Ensign*. John Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), *xiii*. A carefully selected summary of his research finally did appear, indicating that changes in perspectives over the pulpit may yet be coming. John Sorenson, "Digging into the Book of Mormon: Our Changing Understanding of Ancient America and its Scripture," *Ensign* (Sept. 1984), 27. Lawrence Wright, a reporter for the *New Yorker*, calls the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies "a controversial organization even among Mormons." See Lawrence Wright, "Lives of the Saints," *New Yorker* January 21, 2002, 52.

<sup>435</sup> Dan Egan, "BYU Gene Data May Shed Light On Origin of Book of Mormon's Lamanites," *The Salt Lake Tribune* 30 November 2000.

dismiss prophetic claims of the text, discount some of Joseph Smith's revelations from God, and abandon two centuries of interpretations by inspired leaders. Given the contortions Mormon scholars must resort to in defense of the text, it is no wonder that many Mormons find such claims nearly as shocking as the scientific evidence undermining the text.

Mormon scholars, trained at BYU and at secular universities, confront the accumulation of scientific evidence undermining the historical claims of the Book of Mormon and much of the Bible. Early in the twentieth century general authorities included a fair number of scholars in their ranks. By the late twentieth century few Mormon scholars have a voice in the governance of the LDS Church and many find that their attempts to reconcile Mormon historical claims with knowledge derived from social and natural sciences bring disciplinary action from leaders more interested in obedience and church growth than in a spirited quest for truth. Despite the stifling atmosphere facing Mormon scholars many have forged valiantly ahead, challenging even the most basic assumptions that Mormons bring to their scriptural study. They have struggled with the implications of the rise of Darwinian evolution, the collapse of the Mound Builder myth, the accumulation of archaeological, linguistic, and biological evidence pointing to an Asian origin of Americans Indians, and the translation of Mayan hieroglyphs telling quite a different story than appears in the Book of Mormon.

### **Darwinian Revolution**

The 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* would make its impact on Mormon thought primarily in the early twentieth century. Brigham H.

Roberts (1857-1933) played a central role in the Mormon discussions of evolution and its relationship to Mormon theology. Roberts, a member of the First Council of the Seventy, was both a scholar and a general authority in the second generation of LDS leadership. Elected to the U.S. Congress in the new state of Utah, he was denied his seat in the House of Representatives in 1898 because of his polygamous marriages. Though less innovative than previous Mormon leaders, Roberts and other scholarly inclined general authorities like James E. Talmage and John A. Widstoe helped to formalize and systematize Latter-day Saint theology during a crucial time in American religious history marked by the rise of Darwinism, humanism, and the sciences more generally. Roberts made a valiant attempt to balance Mormon scriptural literalism with the increasing evidence of the antiquity of the earth and proto-human fossils as he advanced the idea of pre-Adamite existence on earth. Robert's attempt to balance Mormon theology with new insights in history and the biological sciences is emblematic of his insistence on reasoned argument, empirical evidence, and attention to historical context.<sup>436</sup> Talmage and Roberts, though, were more optimistic and welcoming of scientific inquiry than many of their contemporaries or subsequent generations of LDS leadership.

The LDS Church issued its first official statement on evolution in November 1909, the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* and the centennial of Darwin's birth. Often interpreted as anti-evolution this statement reasserted God's creation of man in his own image, distinguishes between spiritual and temporal birth, and identifies the ideas "that Adam was not the first man upon this earth, and that

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<sup>436</sup> Sterling H. McMurrin, "B. H. Roberts: Historian and Theologian," Foreward to *The Autobiography of B. H. Roberts*, edited by Gary J. Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), vii – xvii. Arrington and Bitton, *Mormon Experience*, 184, 245.

the original human being was a development from the lower orders of animal creation” as “the theories of men.” The statement claims that God alone can reveal the true origin of Adam’s race, and reasserts the Mormon belief that man can eventually evolve into a God.<sup>437</sup> A clarification issued the following year validated scriptural claims but noted several possibilities, including theistic evolution, for the manner that mortal bodies of Adam and Eve came into existence.

Whether the mortal bodies of man evolved in natural processes to present perfection, through the direction and power of God; whether the first parents of our generations, Adam and Eve, were transplanted from another sphere, with immortal tabernacles, which became corrupted through sin and the partaking of natural foods, in the process of time; whether they were born here in mortality, as other mortals have been, are questions not fully answered in the revealed word of God.<sup>438</sup>

In 1925, at the height of the Scopes Monkey Trial, the First Presidency reiterated its earlier 1909 statement but removed the passages that “had been construed by some as implicit anti-evolution sentiments.”<sup>439</sup>

While Brigham H. Roberts’s pro-evolution stance helped moderate official statements, it came under attack in 1930 when Joseph Fielding Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve publicly expressed his disbelief in pre-Adamites. Smith advocated a young earth, an immortal creation of Adam, and a lack of death prior to the fall. Roberts responded by requesting a clarification from the First Presidency. After intense discussion the First Presidency reiterated, “Adam is the primal parent of our race,” and

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<sup>437</sup> Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, “The Origin of Man,” reprinted in Trent D. Stephens and D. Jeffrey Meldrum, *Evolution and Mormonism: A Quest for Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 209-210.

<sup>438</sup> Stephens and Meldrum, *Evolution and Mormonism*, 216.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

issued instructions that would begin to push the discussion of science and religion away from general authorities and towards the scholarly community.

Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave geology, biology, archeology and anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church.<sup>440</sup>

The second generation of church leadership began to recognize, as leaders of most successful new religious movements do, that it is in their best interest to specialize in religious matters and leave secular questions, especially ones generating tension and conflict, to other specialists. The stabilization of the LDS Church after the abandonment of high-tension practices like polygamy and theocracy, further characterized by a relatively neutral position on evolution, followed a well-worn path of successful religious movements seeking reduced tension with the surrounding society.<sup>441</sup>

Mormon discussions of evolution have not typically involved its implications for the Book of Mormon. Evolutionary explanations of human origins are now widely embraced by LDS scholars and even a few leaders like President David O. McKay and First Presidency counselor Hugh B. Brown in the mid twentieth century. More recently, Apostles Mark E. Peterson and Bruce R. McConkie and church presidents Harold B. Lee and Ezra Taft Benson have taken personal public stands against evolution and the dangers of science. Yet, even with a growing movement toward Protestant Fundamentalism in the latter part of the twentieth century, the LDS First Presidency has

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>441</sup> Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 270.

not taken a definitive stand for or against evolution.<sup>442</sup> As a defense of the validity of scriptural history, though, the Book of Mormon presumes and defends the Genesis account of human origins.<sup>443</sup> Speculations about American Indians as descendants of ancient Israel had functioned for centuries as a means of defending the Biblical account against those who pointed to its ignorance of the Americas as evidence of inaccuracy and incompleteness. Acceptance of anthropological models of human evolution and migration removes the need for explaining Indian origins in biblical terms. Yet many Mormon scholars, in the latter part of the twentieth century discussed below, reject the historical validity of Genesis but continue to insist upon the historicity of the Book of Mormon's account of Indian origins.<sup>444</sup>

### **Collapse of the Mound Builder Myth**

At the time of its publication the Book of Mormon's claims about ancient America resonated with popular Euro-American beliefs in an ancient white race of Mound Builders slaughtered by the ancestors of the American Indians. Popular versions of the Mound Builder myth held that the fortifications and mounds found throughout the Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast United States had been built by an ancient white race of civilized, industrious, and metalworking people who had migrated away from warring

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<sup>442</sup> Thomas W. Murphy, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, edited by Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002). David H. Bailey, "Science and Mormonism: Past, Present, Future," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29 (Spring 1996): 80-96. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>443</sup> 1 Ne. 5: 11; 2 Ne. 2: 19, 2: 25, 9: 21; Mosiah 3: 11, 16, 19, 26.

<sup>444</sup> The rejection of the historicity of Genesis and insistence upon Book of Mormon historicity is characteristic of scholars at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. They typically accept early dates of human entry into the New World, thus contradicting literal readings of Genesis, yet they insist that the Book of Mormon is ancient account by a small group of people concentrated in Central America.

parties in the south. This ancient civilization eventually succumbed to the ravages of a barbaric race that annihilated their lighter skinned rivals in ferocious battles that produced the war dead whose numerous jumble of bones could be found in the mounds. This myth helped to soothe the consciences of white Jacksonian Americans engaged in their own genocidal campaigns against the Indians, who they believed had destroyed the ancient white race of Mound Builders.<sup>445</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, though, this myth had collapsed under the weight of scientific scrutiny and compelling evidence linking living American Indians to the cultures of the Mound Builders. The collapse of the myth would send reverberations through the Mormon scholarly community that have yet to subside.

In the decade before Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon and for two decades afterward the myth of the Mound Builders had reigned supreme. While the rise of the myth in the first place depended on the necessity of ignoring a couple of centuries of historical evidence of mound construction by contemporary Indians, the origin of the Mound Builders would develop into a full blown debate in the middle to latter part of the nineteenth century. Dr. Samuel G. Morton, father of physical anthropology, used precise measurements to examine the skulls of Indians and Mound Builders to classify Mound Builders and Indians as members of the same race. Henry R. Schoolcraft, a geologist, ethnographer, and former Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the state of Michigan, embraced the idea that the ancestors of the North American Indians had constructed the mounds. Yet, Josiah Priest, Samuel Haven, and William Pidgeon defended and perpetuated the popular myth. Pidgeon's best selling *Traditions of the De-coo-dah and*

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<sup>445</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*. Vogel, *Indian Origins*.

*Antiquarian Researches* appealed primarily to the public when it was published initially in 1858. After Hubert Howe Bancroft incorporated parts of Pidgeon's work into *Native Races of the Pacific States* in 1875, T. H. Lewis began to investigate the claims by visiting the alleged hieroglyphic mounds described by Pidgeon. After his visits to the various mounds failed to support the descriptions in Pidgeon's account, Lewis concluded, "The ancient history in the volume is of no more account than that of the Lost Tribes in the Book of Mormon."<sup>446</sup> John D. Baldwin's 1872 *Ancient America, in Notes on American Archaeology* supported the idea of that Mound Builders were ancient but "unquestionably American aborigines, and not immigrants from another continent." He dismissed the theory of Lost Tribes of Israel building the mounds as "unwarranted ... absurd ... [and] a lunatic fantasy."<sup>447</sup>

The rise of a scientific archaeology spelled the doom of the romantic self-serving vision of Mound Builders in popular lore. Evidence rather than scripture increasingly became the measure of truth in the post-biblical era of pre-history fostered by Darwin's "Bible-subverting theory of evolution."<sup>448</sup> John Wesley Powell, born in 1834 in Mount Morris (near Palmyra), New York, was the son of a Welsh Wesleyan preacher who had worked hard to keep his parishioners from joining the new Mormon faith. Initially supportive of the Mound Builder myth, Powell's prestigious careers as a Civil War hero, Western explorer, eminent geologist, and pioneering ethnographer landed him in the directorship of the Smithsonian's new Bureau of Ethnology in 1881 where he began questioning "an extra-limital origin through lost tribes for the arts discovered in the

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<sup>446</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 97-151. Quote from p. 151.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

mounds of North America.”<sup>449</sup> He published reports debunking a variety of fraudulent finds purported as evidence for the Mound Builders: Kinderhook Plates, David Wyrick’s Moses inscriptions, the tablet from Grave Creek Mound, and the Davenport elephant pipes and tablets. Nonetheless, he hired Cyrus Thomas, “a pronounced believer in existence of a race of Mound Builders, distinct from the American Indians,” to head a congressionally mandated investigation of the mounds.<sup>450</sup>

While Thomas busily worked on compiling his report Frederic Ward Putnam, Curator of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, dealt with the repeated claims of swords of iron or steel in the mounds in an 1883 publication by tracing them to their original source whose far more circumscribed observations did not support the exaggerated extrapolations added by subsequent authors. Examination of items of plated metal uncovered by earlier excavators and similar ones more recently discovered demonstrated that hammering, not smelting, was the technique employed in their construction.<sup>451</sup> Subsequently, claims of the coexistence of mammoths and mastodons with Mound Builders came under the sharp scrutiny of the Smithsonian Institute’s Ales Hrdlicka. While Hrdlicka’s dogged insistence on a recent origin of American Indians would not stand up to subsequent research, he debunked claims of the domestication and coexistence of mammoths and mastodons with the peoples of the mound building cultures. The disproof of the claims of steel swords, popular in Joseph Smith’s time and place and incorporated in the Book of Mormon narrative, as well as the dismantling of claims of Mound Builder interaction with mammoths and mastodons,

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 166-172. For a discussion of John Wesley Powell’s interactions with John D. Lee along the Colorado River see Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 272, 277-278.

<sup>450</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 173, 184-189.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 200-202.

represented as elephants and perhaps cureloms and cummons in the Book of Mormon, would plague Mormon scholars throughout the twentieth century.

Cyrus Thomas' massive *Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology* in 1894 reversed his earlier support for the Mound Builder myth and dismantled the fanciful scenario of a lost race of white Mound Builders. Today, Thomas's "final report is generally recognized as marking the beginning of modern archaeology in the Americas."<sup>452</sup> His research was problem oriented (answering the congressionally mandated question of "were the mounds built by Indians?"), contained a research design to examine, describe, and excavate "the full range of known variation of form and mode of construction" over a wide geographic area, and was empirically grounded with field assistants in more than 140 counties and investigations of more than 2,000 mounds.<sup>453</sup> His historical survey revived long overlooked accounts of continued Indian construction of mounds after interactions with Europeans; including ones as recent as the 1830 burials of war dead by the Iowas following the Black Hawk war. Even Black Hawk, himself, was buried in a mound resembling those of his ancestors, an event well covered in the press, yet overlooked by those who preferred the romance of the Mound Builder myth.<sup>454</sup> Thomas concludes, "The remains of the mound section are due to the ancestors of the Indians of that section, especially as they are the only pre-Columbian inhabitants of that region of which we have any knowledge."<sup>455</sup> Archaeological investigations based upon emerging scientific methodology left the Book of Mormon

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<sup>452</sup> Bruce D. Smith, "Introduction to the 1985 Edition," in Cyrus Thomas, *Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985[1894]), 5.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 10, 14.

<sup>454</sup> Thomas, *Report on the Mound Explorations*, 111-112.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 730.

without any empirical basis in ancient America, a status that would perplex generations of Mormon scholars who remain unable to muster any convincing evidence to the contrary.

### *Anthropological Critique*

Archaeologists were not the only anthropologists to direct criticism toward Mormon scripture. Perry Benjamin Pierce published a scathing ethnographic critique of the Book of Mormon in the first volume of the new series of the *American Anthropologist*. In 1861 Pierce had visited Palmyra, New York where Joseph Smith had first published the book three decades earlier. There he found not only several residents with unsavory memories of the Smith family but he observed that “a more than accidental trace of the vernacular of the backwoods of western New York is found on every page of the work.” Pierce pointed to Mormon claims of an unerring translation made possible through the miraculous aid of an Urim and Thummim and contrasted those with three thousand editorial changes Mormons made to subsequent editions of the book. Pierce derides the Mormon God who “has been made to masquerade as an idiot.” In conclusion, he points to the text’s condemnation of polygamy and contends that there is “nothing immoral in the book.”

It is, on the contrary, only grotesque. It is a melange of plagiarisms from the Old and New Testaments, without order or regularity, easily traced, and intermingled with watery parodies of nothing in particular, signifying nothing. But, in this monstrosity born of deceit and bred in falsehood, obliged to defend itself and its origin with inventions claiming miraculous interpositions of divine power, its adherents have discovered a most dangerous weapon against the moral world in this doctrine of “a continuing revelation.” A hierarchy of subtle brains equipped with the wealth of the entire community, reinforced with a million dupes, willing to accept with unquestioning obedience any dispensation formulated in the terms

of “Thus saith the Lord,” is a portentous danger-sign to enlightened civilization. This is the menace to the world from Mormonism.<sup>456</sup>

The emerging discipline of anthropology posed a considerable challenge to the Book of Mormon. As Mormon scholars would subsequently study these new fields, they faced perplexing questions.

### A Devil’s Advocate

The first significant wrestling with the findings of the new archaeology by Mormon scholars would come from Brigham H. Roberts, the foremost scholar of the faith. In addition to his attempts to reconcile Mormon theological and historical claims with post-Darwinian biological sciences, Roberts had emerged as a great defender of the Book of Mormon’s history with a series of editorials in LDS periodicals, public lectures, and his three volume *New Witnesses for God* in 1909. Among other claims he pointed to similarities between the Mayan *Popol Vuh* and the Book of Mormon as evidence for the latter’s antiquity. “Making allowances for the imperfections of oral traditions, and confusion likely to occur in them,” Roberts found analogues for Nephite migration, tower of Babel, confusion of tongues, and migration and dispersal of Jaredites.<sup>457</sup> He had claimed a common origin for Genesis and the Popol Vuh’s account of creation and identified Gucumatz, the Plumed Serpent also known as Kukulcan and Quetzalcoatl, as “the Hebrew Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Perry Benjamin Pierce, “The Origin of the “Book of Mormon,” *American Anthropologist* 1 (1899): 675-694.

<sup>457</sup> B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God* (Sale Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), v2: 420-427.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, v2: 425-426, v3: 28.

A key component of Robert's defense of the Book of Mormon was the development of a new theory of Joseph Smith's method that could account for the sacred text's verbal limitations and biblical quotations, an issue raised not only by Pierce but much closer to home in an anonymous editorial in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The translation process, Roberts initially contended in 1903, "caused the Prophet the utmost exertion, mental and spiritual, of which he was capable, and while he obtained the facts and ideas from the Nephite characters, he was left to express those ideas in such language as he was master of." This method "was faulty, hence here and there [are] verbal defects in the English translation of the Nephite record." Furthermore, when he encountered passages that were similar to those in the Bible, he freely "adopted so much of that translation as expressed the truths common to both records."<sup>459</sup> While widely recognized as the chief defender of the Book of Mormon, Roberts welcomed challenges in a 1911 address on the Book of Mormon and higher criticism.

The Book of Mormon must submit to every test, literary criticism with the rest. Indeed, it must submit to every analysis and examination. It must submit to historical tests, to tests of archeological research and also to higher criticism.<sup>460</sup>

About a decade later, claiming the status of a devil's advocate, he would begin to subject the text to such criticisms.

By the 1920s Roberts had begun to reevaluate his previous defensive position as he entertained the possibility that Joseph Smith drew his narrative framework and many ideas from Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, first published in Poultney, Vermont in 1823 and again in 1825. Roberts' doubts were prompted, at least in part, by a letter in

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<sup>459</sup> B. H. Roberts, "Attack on the Book of Mormon" (1903), L.D.S. Church Archives, quoted in Brigham D. Madsen, "Introduction," B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon* 2d ed., edited by Brigham D. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 8.

<sup>460</sup> B. H. Roberts, "Higher Criticism and the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* 14 (June 1911): 667.

August 1921 from a non-Mormon inquiring about how so many diverse languages could exist among American Indians if they all descended from Hebrew speaking peoples of the Book of Mormon and why the scripture made references to horses, steel, cimeters, and silk when such things were absent from the archaeological record. In response to the questions raised by this letter Roberts formulated his concerns about Indian origins and archaeology in 141-page “Book of Mormon Difficulties.” In addition to linguistic diversity unexplainable by the Book of Mormon and a lack of a connection between Old and New World languages, the difficulties identified by Roberts include the anachronistic presence of “domestic animals—horses, asses, oxen, cows, sheep, swine,; iron and steel; swords and scimeters; silk, wheat, barley, and wheel vehicles,” let alone the evidence for an Asian origin of American Indians and cultures. He presented these problems to members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles in a series of meetings in January of 1922 asking for their help in resolving the dilemma. Disappointed with the results of the meetings, Roberts began investigating possible sources of environmental influence on the founding prophet in early nineteenth century New England.<sup>461</sup>

In his 291-page “Book of Mormon Study” (1922) and more concisely in a third document called “A Parallel” (1927) Roberts entertained the possibility that Joseph Smith was the author of the Book of Mormon while drawing a structural outline and some subject matter from Ethan Smith’s *A View of Hebrews*. George D. Smith, LDS founder of

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6, 158-160. B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life, An Elementary Treatise on Theology: The Masterwork of B. H. Roberts*, edited by Stan Larson (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994).

<sup>461</sup> Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. See also George D. Smith, “B. H. Roberts: Book of Mormon Apologist and Skeptic,” in Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, eds. *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 123-155.

Signature Books, recently summarized the first part of Roberts' study with the following list.

1. Both books maintain that American Indians descended from Hebrew tribes; Ethan Smith wrote that they descended from the Lost Ten Tribes, whereas Joseph Smith limited American Indian ancestry to two Hebrew families, headed by Lehi and Ishmael.
2. Both open with references to the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. Both tell of inspired prophets among ancient Americans.
4. Both quote extensively and nearly exclusively from Isaiah.
5. Both describe ancient Americans as a highly civilized people.
6. Both announce the mission of the American nation in the last days to gather these remnants of the House of Israel and bring them to Christianity, thereby hastening the advent of the Millennium predicted in the Bible.
7. Both mention the "stick of Joseph" and the "stick of Ephraim," which Ethan Smith used to symbolize the Jews and the lost tribes; Joseph Smith advertised the Book of Mormon as "the stick of Joseph taken from the hand of Ephraim."
8. Both refer to the ancient Urim and Thummim, which Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon.
9. Both Smiths referred to Quetzalcoatl, the legendary, white bearded Aztec god. Ethan Smith described him as "a type of Christ," but Joseph Smith saw in the legend evidence that Christ himself had come to the New World.<sup>462</sup>

Roberts wondered how such a long string of parallels could appear in both texts, each of which also integrated the theory of the lost tribes with that of the lost race of Mound Builders.

In lengthy quotations from W. H. Holmes of the Smithsonian Institute, Roberts brought the news of the dismantling of the Mound Builder myth to the attention of Mormon scholars and leadership. Holmes refers to the disappearance of a race of Mound Builders as "among the fallacies which early took hold of the popular mind." Holmes observes, "This idea had held with great tenacity notwithstanding the facts that many articles of European provenance (origin) are found in the mounds as original inclusions, indicating continuance of construction into post-Columbian times." The vast body of

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<sup>462</sup> Smith, "B. H. Roberts," 135.

information collected by researchers in the latter half of the nineteenth century fostered a “gradual change [that] took place in the views of students regarding the mound builders, and at the close of century there was practical unanimity in the view that the builders of the great earthworks were the ancestors of the Indian tribes found in possession of the general region.”<sup>463</sup>

Holding to the expectation of his predecessors and contemporaries that the Book of Mormon included *the history* of ancient America, Roberts found little encouragement in the archaeological record. The Book of Mormon, he observed, poses stiff requirements.

What is required is that evidence shall be produced that will give us an *empty America 3,000 years B.C.*, into which a colony from the Euphrates valley (supposedly) may come and there establish a race and an empire with an iron and steel culture; with highly developed language of that period; then, after an existence of about sixteen or eighteen hundred years, shall pass away, become extinct in fact, as a race and a nation; this about 600 B.C., *leaving the Americas again without human inhabitants.*

Then into these second time empty American continents—empty of human population—we want evidence of the coming of two small colonies about 600 B.C., which shall be the ancestors of all native American races as we know them; possessing as did the former race—domestic animals, the horse, the ass and cow; with an iron and steel culture; and a highly developed written literature, the national Hebrew literature in fact.<sup>464</sup>

Roberts asks, “Can we successfully overturn the evidences presented by archeologists for the great antiquity of man in America, and his continuous occupancy of it, and the fact of his stone age culture, not an iron and steel culture?” He reports, disappointedly, “The

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<sup>463</sup> Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 131-132. See also pages 77-78.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

recent accepted authoritative writers leave us, so far as I can at present see, no ground of appeal or defense.”<sup>465</sup>

Roberts also pointed to a wealth of logical inconsistencies in the text to suggest that the Mormon prophet was the author of the Book of Mormon. Lack of historical consistency and perspective, incredulous miracles, repetitious plots, impossibly long journeys in short periods of time, rapid construction of cities, temple construction with inadequate labor, and an “amateurish notion” of war in which the wicked consistently get punished and the righteous win point, sorrowfully for Roberts, to youthful naïveté and “Joseph Smith as their creator.”<sup>466</sup>

Roberts’ manuscripts circulated privately during the remainder his lifetime but his continued public affirmations of faith have turned his actual beliefs into a matter of considerable scholarly dispute. In a conference address in April 1923, for example, he asserted “The Book of Mormon [is] the word of God to the ancient inhabitants of this land of America.” Defenders of his public testimony insist that in his private writings he was only role-playing. Regardless of Roberts’ personal beliefs the provocative questions he raised but could not answer have yet to be adequately addressed by Mormon defenders of Book of Mormon historicity.<sup>467</sup> The issues identified by Roberts continue to provide overwhelming evidence that the Book of Mormon is a product of nineteenth century New England and that Joseph Smith is its author. The fact that Roberts presented these problems to other general authorities in written and oral form demonstrates that the leadership of the LDS Church, at least in the 1920s, cannot claim a lack of awareness of

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<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>466</sup> Smith, “B. H. Roberts,” 135-136. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 271.

<sup>467</sup> Smith, “B. H. Roberts,” 137.

evidence for Joseph Smith's role in the production of the Book of Mormon. The publication of these documents by the University of Illinois Press in 1985 will, as we shall see, fuel considerable debate within the Mormon scholarly community.

### **A Limited Geography**

Scholars wrestling with the same inconsistencies between time of travel and distances traveled that Roberts had identified would eventually abandon a hemispheric geography of the Book of Mormon. As the archaeological debunking of the myths of the prehistoric peoples in the present-day United States became better known Mormon scholars began turning to the lesser-known regions of Central America to locate the Book of Mormon. John L. Sorenson, emeritus professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University, has credited Louis E. Hills, a scholar with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints writing between 1917 and 1924, with a series of innovative interpretations of the Book of Mormon that would become increasingly common in Book of Mormon geography.

(1) the first regionally limited model, (2) that the lands where Book of Mormon events took place comprised exclusively Mesoamerica, (3) that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was the narrow neck, (4) that the Usumacinta was the Sidon, and (5) the first comprehensive attempt to utilize scholarly literature (on the native chronicles or traditions) to settle Book of Mormon questions.<sup>468</sup>

Hills also was among the first to insist “that we must work out the locations of the geography of the Book from the record itself, and then find if the ruins fit in the locations, which can best be done by the aid of the spirit of discernment.”<sup>469</sup> The

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<sup>468</sup> Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 32-33.

<sup>469</sup> L. E. Hills, *A Short Work on the Geography of Mexico and Central America from 2234 B.C. to 421 A. D.* (Independence, MO: L. E. Hills, 1917), 32.

inconsistencies between times and distance of travel, scholars would increasingly conclude, could be partially ameliorated by locating the Book of Mormon within a smaller geographic area. Yet, even a more limited geography like that of Hills would still require that a Nephite could travel up to 188 miles in a day and half.<sup>470</sup>

Like Roberts, Hills also turned to the Popol Vuh, a Quiché Maya narrative abridged and translated by Hubert Howe Bancroft, as a source for collaborating and interpreting the Book of Mormon. Modern knowledge of the Popol Vuh derives from an apparent alphabetic recording of the performance of a hieroglyphic text, of the same name, by Maya nobles between 1554 and 1558 in the town of Quiché northwest of today's Guatemala City in the highlands of Guatemala. Francisco Ximenénez, a Catholic parish priest in neighboring Chichicastenango, made the only extant copy of the Quiché text between 1701 and 1703 alongside which he included a Spanish translation. Carl Scherzer, an Austrian physician, found the manuscript in 1854 resting in the library at the University of San Carlos where it had been since the closing of Guatemalan monasteries in 1830s. He published Ximenénez' Spanish translation in Vienna in 1857. After 1854 Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, a French priest and advocate of an American Indian origin in Atlantis, slipped the manuscript out of the country. Bourbourg published a French and Quiché version of the manuscript in Paris in 1861, to much acclaim. Bancroft constructed his English abridgment and translation from the Spanish and French editions by Scherzer and Bourbourg.<sup>471</sup> While Bancroft had cautiously noted that because

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>471</sup> Dennis Tedlock, "Introduction," in *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, translated by Dennis Tedlock, revised and expanded (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 25-27. Denise Low, "A Comparison of English Translations of a Mayan Text, the *POPOL VUH*," *Studies in American Indian Literature* 4 (Summer/Fall 1992), 13-34. Hubert Howe

of its post-conquest production “a tinge of biblical expression has, consciously or unconsciously to the Quiché who wrote, influenced the form of the narrative,”<sup>472</sup> Hills, lacking such caution, found much in this text as well as Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s depictions of the Nahuatl past to validate the Book of Mormon narrative.

The methodology employed by Hills began with the presumption of the validity of the Book of Mormon’s history and reshaped the indigenous and mestizo histories to fit the Mormon view of the past. He claimed, “Indian traditions and legends, handed down for about 2,000 years, would probably become distorted.”<sup>473</sup> Consequently he “condensed many quotations for the sake of brevity, and to better gather out facts from the mass of fables, thus getting a clearer view of the true history by brushing away the cobwebs and dust of fiction, which have been accumulating for many centuries.”<sup>474</sup> This methodology resulted in some wild distortions of indigenous history that few, if any, scholars would accept today. He claimed the “traditional history of Mexico and Central America tells of three colonies who came to the country from across the sea.”<sup>475</sup> He conflates the Jaredites, as descendants of Ham, with the Quinames of Ixtlilxóchitl’s narrative, the Nephites and Lamanites, as Israelites, with the Nahuas and the Maya. Limited knowledge of the Mesoamerican past and incomplete and inaccurate summaries of the Popol Vuh allowed him to posit the ruins of Copan, Honduras, purportedly containing a temple “like the temple of Solomon,” as the legendary cities of Tulan and Aztlan, locate Xibalba (actually

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Bancroft, *The Native Races, Vol. III. Myths and Languages* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), 42-44, n. 1. On Bourbourg’s support of the Atlantis theory see Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 156-157.

<sup>472</sup> Bancroft, *Native Races*, 3: 43, n. 1.

<sup>473</sup> Hills, *A Short Work*, 6.

<sup>474</sup> Louis E. Hills, *Historical Data from Ancient Records and Ruins of Mexico and Central America* (Independence, MO: Louis E. Hills, 1919), 1.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

the Quiché land of the dead) in El Salvador, conflate the Olmecs and Xicalancas with Nahuas, distinguish the Quiché from the Maya, conflate Quetzalcoatl and Gucumatz with the resurrected Christ, and claim that an ancient rivalry between the Nahuas and Mayas led to a line of fortifications in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In his retelling the Nahuas are driven northward from the Isthmus to Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico where the Maya defeated them in 387 A.D.<sup>476</sup> By careful selection of facts from post-conquest narratives that also attempted to make sense of indigenous history in light of Christian evangelism, removal of all contradictory elements as “cobwebs and dusts of fiction,” and filling in blanks with the narrative of the Book of Mormon Hills masterfully reshaped the ancient history of Mesoamerica to conform to his predetermined model of truth.

### *Rampant Confusion*

Since the collapse of the myth of the mound builders Mormon scholars have struggled in vain for a geographic model of the Book of Mormon that would be convincing to other Mormons, let alone non-Mormon scholars. After a 1992 survey of models of Book of Mormon geography showed sharp deviations and lack of consensus ever since Hills first proposed his model in 1917, Sorenson expressed his frustration with rampant confusion in the twentieth century.

What we see in our survey of these models which stretch over more than a century and a half is that superficial study has been the norm, while confusion has been rampant for at least the latter half of the period by reason of the multiplicity of discordant maps. It is true that for the last seventy-five years the old hemispheric model has tended to fall into disfavor, Tehuantepec as the narrow neck has become the common view, and the notion of sweeping geological changes at the time of the crucifixion of the Savior is now less often mentioned.

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 8, 15-35.

Yet all sorts of variants continue to crop up or reappear. Large land masses are still thought to heave out of the sea, the Magdalena River in Colombia is still argued as the Sidon, and several types of “necks” are yet proposed. There is no indication that by simply waiting for more books or papers to appear somehow consensus will emerge. Without major changes in approach, nothing like that promises to come about.<sup>477</sup>

Stan Larson, curator at the University of Utah library, also captured the confusion in 1996 by listing twelve different locations that Mormons have posited for the “narrow neck of land” described in the Book of Mormon.

1. The Isthmus of Panama.
2. The Isthmus of Tehuán-tepec.
3. A coastal corridor (not an isthmus) along the Pacific coast of Chiapas in southeastern Mexico.
4. The southern part of the peninsula of Yucatán.
5. The strip of land at Laguna de Términos in the southwest part of the Yucatán Peninsula.
6. The isthmus from southeast Yucatán at Lago de Izabal southwest to the Pacific.
7. The Bay of Honduras.
8. Between Golfo Dulce and the Bay of Honduras.
9. Costa Rica.
10. The Golfo de Guayaquil in Ecuador.
11. The peninsula of Florida.
12. Between southwestern Lake Ontario and northeastern Lake Erie.<sup>478</sup>

The confusion that has characterized twentieth century Book of Mormon scholarship is evident in the struggles of Thomas Stuart Ferguson and the New World Archaeological Foundation (NAAF) he founded in 1952 to search for archaeological evidence of the Book of Mormon in Mesoamerica.

Ferguson, like Roberts, has become a controversial person in the history of Book of Mormon studies. Born in Pocatello, Idaho on 21 May 1915, Ferguson studied political science and law at the University of California at Berkeley where fellow LDS student M.

<sup>477</sup> Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 34-35.

<sup>478</sup> Stan Larson, *Quest for the Gold Plates: Thomas Stuart Ferguson's Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Freethinker Press in association with Smith Research Associates, 1996), 8.

Wells Jakeman sparked his interest in anthropological studies of Mesoamerica. Ferguson gained fame in Mormon circles as the author of *One Fold and One Shepherd* and co-author with Milton R. Hunter of *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* and as a fireside lecturer on archaeology and the Book of Mormon.<sup>479</sup> Eminent archaeologist Alfred V. Kidder, formerly of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., encouraged Ferguson but insisted upon a strict separation between archaeological reports of findings and Mormon interpretations of the data. Ferguson served as the NWAFA president, Kidder and Milton R. Hunter, First Quorum of the Seventy in the LDS Church, served as vice-presidents. An advisory committee of archaeologists included Kidder; Pedro Armillas, Mexico City College; Gordon F. Ekholm, American Museum of Natural History; Gordon R. Willey, Harvard University; and M. Wells Jakeman, Brigham Young University. Large donations of funds to NWAFA from the LDS Church facilitated ambitious excavations in Mesoamerica but the research failed to locate compelling evidence for the Book of Mormon. The discovery and new translations of the Joseph Smith Papyri in 1967 from which he had allegedly translated the Book of Abraham served as the catalyst for Ferguson's personal disillusionment. Nonetheless, a book entitled *The Messiah in Ancient America*, co-authored by Mormon anthropologist Bruce W. Warren and published four years after Ferguson's death in 1983, presents him as stalwart defender of the faith while private letters written to friends and other inquirers tell the story of a closet doubter who lost his faith in the Book of Mormon.<sup>480</sup>

The spring 1966 discovery of fragments of Joseph Smith's Egyptian papyri in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art sent reverberations through the rampant

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<sup>479</sup> Larson, *Quest for the Gold Plates*, 1-3.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-6. 41-120.

confusion already plaguing Book of Mormon studies. Aziz S. Atiya, a non-Mormon professor of Arabic Studies at the University of Utah, came across these papyri from which Joseph Smith had claimed to translate the Book of Abraham. The donation, a year and a half later, of the fragments to the LDS Church provided an opportunity for an independent test of whether or not, in the words of Ferguson, “Joseph Smith was fabricating, lying, and conjuring up ‘scripture’ for the Church.”<sup>481</sup> Rather than authenticating the Mormon prophet’s ability to translate ancient texts, the inspection of the newly found papyri by Egyptologists found no resemblance to the account in the Book of Abraham. Instead, the papyri contained ordinary Egyptian funerary documents known as “the breathing permit of Hôr.”<sup>482</sup> Ferguson was “very upset by the discovery that it was only a [copy of the] *Book of the Dead*.” Writing to a non-Mormon friend he explained, “The Egyptian papyri showed that Joseph Smith could not read Egyptian and simply faked it.”<sup>483</sup> While for decades he had held out the hope that he would finally find archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon, the discovery of the papyri pulled the rug out from under his hope for validating Joseph Smith’s scriptural productions. Subsequently, he came to view the Book of Mormon as “fictional” and concluded, “what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book.”<sup>484</sup> Nonetheless, he maintained his membership in the LDS Church noting, “Mormonism, although from the mind of a

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 91. Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri* Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 31-36.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid. See also Robert K. Ritner, “The ‘Breathing Permit of Hôr’ Thirty-four Years Later,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33 (Winter 2000): 97-119. Edward W. Ashment, “Joseph Smith’s Identification of ‘Abraham’ in Papyrus JS1, the ‘Breathing Permit of Hôr,’” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33 (Winter 2000): 121-126.

<sup>483</sup> Larson, *Quest for the Gold Plates*, 118.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 137.

twenty-five-year-old frontiersman, is probably the best brand of religion on the market today.”<sup>485</sup>

*Book of Mormon Archaeological Tests*

Late in 1974 Ferguson was invited to participate in a written symposium on the Book of Mormon. David A. Palmer, an LDS chemical engineer, hoped to generate some consensus on Book of Mormon geography through the circulation of papers by V. Garth Norman, NWAFA archaeologist, and John Sorenson, BYU anthropologist. Each author proposed a geographic hypothesis to be critiqued by other Mormon scholars. Palmer invited Ferguson to join other LDS scholars in responding, via writing, to the propositions of Norman and Sorenson. In his twenty-nine-page analysis Ferguson outlined critical difficulties he identified in Book of Mormon archaeology in four areas: “the Plant-Life Test, the Animal-Life Test, the Metallurgy Test, and the Script Test.”<sup>486</sup> Stan Larson has summarized and reapplied each of Ferguson’s tests at the end of the twentieth century.

Ferguson expected any legitimate Book of Mormon geography to provide evidence of wheat, barley, figs, and grapes, plant-life mentioned in the text. He found Sorenson’s proposed geography lacking in each of these cases. Ferguson’s conclusions are complemented by a similar assessment of Mormon anthropologist John A. Price from York University, also from 1974.

No Native Americans made grape wine or wheat bread. Instead native plants ... were domesticated: corn, beans, squashes, potatoes, tomatoes, manioc, ... The Jaredites and Nephites are portrayed as having had plow agriculture of wheat and

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<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 175-177.

barley..., but nothing remotely resembling this kind of culture has ever been found, either archaeologically or ethnographically, in the aboriginal New World. ... This was not plow agriculture; the animal-drawn plow was absent in the pre-Columbian world. It was hand agriculture of corn or manioc or potatoes, not wheat or barley.<sup>487</sup>

Ferguson may have expected too much as the Book of Mormon's references to figs and grapes are biblical quotations. Domesticated barley has since been found in Arizona, Illinois, and Oklahoma but it is a New World rather than Old World strain and is not found in the limited Central American setting where he located Book of Mormon events. Wild figs have been found at the archaeological site of Don Martín in Chiapas. Nonetheless, Larson concludes, "The lack of evidence for the existence of wheat in the New World remains a major difficulty in verifying the antiquity of the Book of Mormon."<sup>488</sup>

The Book of Mormon continues to fair even worse on Ferguson's animal-life test. Any viable geography must be complemented with evidence for animals described in the scripture: ass, bull, calf, cattle, cow, goat, horse, ox, sheep, sow (swine), and elephant. Once again, Ferguson found Sorenson's and Norman's geographies inadequate on each of these accounts.

Evidence of the foregoing animals has not appeared in any form—ceramic representations, bones or skeletal remains, mural art, sculptured art, or any other form. However, in the regions proposed by Norman and Sorenson, evidence has been found in several forms of the presence in Book of Mormon times of other animals—deers, jaguars, dogs, turkeys, etc. The zero score presents a problem that will not go away with the ignoring of it. Non-LDS scholars of first magnitude, some who want to be our friends, think we have real trouble here. That evidence of the ancient existence of these animals is not elusive is found in the fact that proof of their existence in the ancient old-world is abundant. The

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 181. See also John A. Price, "The Book of Mormon vs Anthropological Prehistory," *Indian Historian* 7 (Summer 1974), 35-40.

<sup>488</sup> Larson, *Quest for the Gold Plates*, 179-181.

absence of such evidence in the area proposed for our consideration in this symposium is distressing and significant, in my view.<sup>489</sup>

While there is ample evidence of the existence of horses in America during the Pleistocene, none of these extinct horses appear to have survived into the times of the Book of Mormon narratives, let alone were domesticated by ancient Americans. Rather it was a common assumption “in early nineteenth century America that horses—as well as asses, oxen, cows, sheep, goats, and swine—were native to America, though serious scholars were aware that these animals had been imported by the Europeans.” Larson concludes, “The absence of support for the animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon—at the same time as there exists clear evidence of what the Mesoamerican animals actually were—constitutes a serious obstacle to verifying the historicity of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>490</sup>

Ferguson’s metallurgy test reflects the difficulty facing the Book of Mormon ever since the dismantling of the supposed evidence of metallurgy among the Mound Builders in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Ferguson dismissed the geographic settings proposed by his colleagues because they failed to supply evidence of the Book of Mormon’s references to “bellows, brass, breastplates, chains, copper, engravings, gold, hilts, iron, ore, plowshares, silver, steel, and swords.”<sup>491</sup>

Metallurgy does not appear in the region under discussion until about the ninth century A.D. None of the foregoing technical demands are met by the archaeology of the region proposed as Book of Mormon lands and places. I regard this as a major weakness in the armor of our proponents and friends. . . . I doubt that the proponents will be very convincing if they contend that evidence of metallurgy is difficult to find and a rarity in archaeology. Where mining was practiced—as in the Old Testament world—mountains of ore and tailings have

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 182, 246.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 195.

been found. Artifacts of metal have been found. Art portrays the existence of metallurgical products. Again, the score is zero.<sup>492</sup>

Evidence of pre-Columbian metalworking, shaping metals like gold, silver, and copper by cold hammering, is present in Peru by about 1000 BC for gold and silver and by 500 AD for copper but not in Mesoamerica until the ninth century AD. Evidence for pre-Columbian iron metallurgy, which requires temperatures of 700° to 800°, is absent from the entire New World. Larson concludes, “The absence of Mesoamerican copper/bronze/brass metallurgy during Book of Mormon times and the complete absence of Mesoamerican iron metallurgy during any pre-Columbian time period constitute a major problem for the historicity of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>493</sup>

Ferguson considered his script test to be definitive, the most exacting and precise test that a viable Book of Mormon geography must pass. Based upon the Book of Mormon’s claims, he expected evidence of cuneiform from the Jaredites and Egyptian and Hebrew scripts from the Nephites but found the proposed geographies wanting. Ferguson had previously accepted a cylinder seal found at Tlatilco, Mexico as containing a Hebrew inscription of the name Hiram. Despite a purported translation by diffusionist scholar Barry Fell, the claim did not stand up to scholarly scrutiny and by 1982 Ferguson was convinced there was no evidence of Hebrew scripts from pre-Columbian America. The best evidence they could muster was “a three-inch cylinder seal, found at Chiapa de Corzo, state of Chiapas, Mexico, by the New World Archaeological Foundation.” Although the inscription had been identified as Egyptian by the famed biblical archaeologist William Albright, other leading scholars seriously questioned this

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 195, 257.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 197, 199, 204.

identification.<sup>494</sup> Despite tremendous advancements made in the decipherment of Mayan hieroglyphics in the latter part of the twentieth century, no personal or place names from the Book of Mormon have been found let alone compelling evidence of Hebrew, Sumerian/Akkadian, or Egyptian languages or scripts in the New World. Larson concludes, “Especially now that the Mayan writing system can be understood to a great degree, this lack of confirmation has become a serious problem for the Book of Mormon.”<sup>495</sup>

The two geographies proposed by Norman and Sorenson overwhelmingly failed to pass the tests posed by Ferguson. While Norman did not publish his geographical model, Sorenson attempted to publish his proposal as a series of articles in the *Ensign*, the LDS Church’s preeminent magazine. Initially unable to reach a compromise on how to “phrase the material in terms acceptable for publication in the *Ensign*,” Sorenson turned to other venues for publication. In the mean time interested Latter-day Saints had circulated approximately 1,200 - 1,500 copies of his earlier unpublished manuscript. While admitting that many questions remained and that he was not satisfied with the results, he revised the manuscript and published it as *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* in 1985.<sup>496</sup>

### **Interpretive Plausibility**

Sorenson abandoned the scientific tests that had proved so disappointing to B. H. Roberts and Thomas Stuart Ferguson and turned instead to interpretive social science to

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 204-206.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., 178. Sorenson, *Ancient American*, xiii-xx. Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 29-30.

propose a “plausible” model for the Book of Mormon in a limited region in Central America. In *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon* Sorenson dismisses scientific approaches, making it very clear that his “intention is not to put the Book of Mormon ‘on trial’ in some make-believe scientific dock.” He rejects the methods of his predecessors like Roberts and Ferguson that subjected the book to scientific tests.

Well then, do I present a “hypothesis” to be “scientifically tested”? The whole idea is rather out-of-date. Scientists never did that sort of thing in the cool, “objective” way many laymen have been led to suppose, except perhaps for minor, uninteresting problems. Nobody ever examines “all” the evidence on any issue, for there is too much to discover or manage. In any case the investigator’s own feelings and presuppositions, certainly on a matter like this, enter into phrasing the issues, so ultimately objectivity is all but impossible.<sup>497</sup>

Sorenson took the difficulty that all scientists face as they aim for objectivity as a license for his own subjectivity. He recently explained his approach to Hampton Sides, a reporter for *Doubletake*.

I’ve never asked the question, ‘*Did* the events in the Book of Mormon happen?’ I was born and raised in the church, and so for me this is beyond doubt. The question I’ve asked in over fifty years of scholarship is, ‘*How* did they happen?’ Where did these people live, what were they like, what did they eat? I am very interested in establishing the Book’s historicity. This is supposed to be the authentic record of a dead people. It won’t suffice to say that Joseph Smith merely wrote it to impart a few spiritual truths. If it were conclusively demonstrated that Smith simply made it up, I don’t know whether the church could survive.<sup>498</sup>

Rather than confronting and working to minimize the difficulties inherent in scientific quests for truth, Sorenson uses the limitations of science to dismiss its methodology. He began his quest for establishing the historicity of the Book with the unassailable tautological presumption of the text’s historical truth.

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<sup>497</sup> Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, xviii-xix.

<sup>498</sup> Hampton Sides, “This is Not the Place,” *Doubletake* (Spring 1999), 50. Emphasis in the original.

Sorenson rejects the hemispheric models of previous commentators, church leaders, and most Mormons and portrays the Book of Mormon as a lineage history of a small group of people located in a selected region of Central America around the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

All this information boils down to the fact that the Book of Mormon is a partial record of events, emphasizing what happened to one group of people, put in their own ethnocentric terms, in the midst of other peoples each with their own version of events.<sup>499</sup>

He points to the Popol Vuh as a model for this interpretation of the Book of Mormon.

In this way, it is much like other records from the ancient past. The Israelites from Joseph loomed large in their own account, which reached us through Moses, but in Egyptian records, Israel is apparently not so much as mentioned. Similarly the *Popol Vuh*, a lineage document from highland Guatemala, describes Nahuatl-speaking groups who entered the land around the thirteenth century and subdued the numerically superior Mayan locals. The native inhabitants are all but ignored in the account.<sup>500</sup>

Sorenson interprets the gold plates as “a form of Mesoamerican codex” and the Book of Mormon as “a translation of the history of a long-lived lineage that originated in Bible lands out of Israelite roots.”<sup>501</sup>

Sorenson creatively reinvents the Book of Mormon. Rejecting the hemispheric model of Orson Pratt, he locates the events of the Book of Mormon in a limited region centered near the isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico. He sets aside or reinterprets geographic references in the text, turns directional references sideways, transforms Old World flora and fauna into misnamed species from the New World, ignores the descriptions of pastoral cultures in the scripture, neglects prophetic claims of

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<sup>499</sup> Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 55.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 58, 61.

the scripture that place descendants of Lehi amidst historical events in the United States, dismisses Joseph Smith's knowledge of the Book of Mormon as geographically invalid, and abandons two centuries of interpretations by church leaders that most Mormons consider to be inspired by God. Despite these deficiencies Sorenson's geographic model has emerged as the dominant paradigm in the apologetic research coming from FAIR and FARMS.

Sorenson's efforts to situate the events of the Book of Mormon in a limited Tehuantepec region of Central America, however, fail by even his own interpretive standards. In his geographic source book he claims, "Any discussion of the geography must be exhaustive; selective citation of the scriptures treating lands, elevations, etc., will not do, for each clue ultimately should fit with every other."<sup>502</sup> Yet, elsewhere in the same book he admits parenthetically that his model cannot adequately account for geographic statements in the book of Ether, the account of the Jaredite migration and civilization in the Book of Mormon.

The Jaredite record is impossible to deal with except where it connects with the Nephite account; thus I ignore those geographical statements and hints in the book of Ether which I cannot connect to Mormon's account.<sup>503</sup>

Passages "omitted" by Sorenson pose devastating problems for his model. For example, the Lord's commandment to the party of Jared and his brother that they "gather thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind ... [and] go forth into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where never had man been" undermines Sorenson's claim that the peoples of the Book of Mormon were only a small group in a land already occupied by immigrants from Asia with primarily

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<sup>502</sup> Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 216.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. See also p. 307.

indigenous plants and animals.<sup>504</sup> Likewise, while he acknowledges that Ether 13: 2 can be interpreted to refer to the whole continent, he fails to note the verse's apparent reference to the Jaredite settlement of the land, after Noah's flood, "after the waters had receded from off the face of this land it became a land choice above all other lands." Like Hill before him, Sorenson also has to assume that the Hill Cumorah described in the Book of Mormon is not the same one where Joseph Smith found the gold plates.<sup>505</sup> He must reject the bulk of the plants and animals named in the Book of Mormon as byproducts of misnomers applied by colonizing Nephites and Jaredites and assume that ancient Mesoamerican linguistic terms for metallic substances implies metallurgy.<sup>506</sup> In Sorenson's hands, the Book of Mormon is a malleable document that he strains unsuccessfully to squeeze into a plausible account that is compatible with the contradictory evidence emerging from anthropological research.

Even when discussing passages elsewhere in the scripture Sorenson often has to omit or reinterpret contradictory parts from the verses themselves. For example, in discussing the four seas of Helaman 3:8 he fails to acknowledge the reference to covering the face of the whole earth.

And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.

In another example, his geographic model is plagued by the fact that the directional references of north, south, east, and west in the Book of Mormon do not accurately fit his proposed locations. To make his model fit he must shift Nephite direction terms "by 45

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<sup>504</sup> See Ether 1: 41, 2: 5.

<sup>505</sup> Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 44-45.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-299.

degrees or more.” He justifies his claim of a different directional framework through references to an outdated translation of the Popol Vuh by Adrián Recinos, Delia Goetz, and Sylvanus Morley in which they conflate references to Mexican brothers “in the east” with the northern location of lowlands of the Yucatán peninsula.<sup>507</sup> In a more recent translation of the Popol Vuh directly from Quiché to English rather than via Spanish to English, Dennis Tedlock draws upon other Mayan narratives and inscriptions at Copán to suggest, more practically, that the eastern city of the Quiché and Cakchiquel narratives is either Kaminaljuyú, the eastern outpost of the Mexican empire centered in Teotihuacan, or Copán, whose leaders claimed descent from the royal line of Teotihuacan. Both Copán and Kaminaljuyú lie to the east of the Quiché highlands, with Kaminaljuyú a little more to the southeast.<sup>508</sup> No such distortion of directional references to the rising sun in highland Mayan narratives is needed with the increased knowledge now available from translations of hieroglyphic inscriptions at Copán; yet, it remains a necessary precondition of Sorenson’s geography.

Sorenson represents his model as being the most consistent with the Book of Mormon text; yet, as we have seen it depends heavily upon a selective and misrepresentative reading of the text. While Sorenson’s approach may help to soothe the fears of Mormons who share his testimony in the truth of the Book of Mormon it fails quite miserably to propose a plausible model that meets his own standards, let alone the expectations of those who believe a truthful text should be able to pass even the most basic scientific tests. Deanne Matheny, an LDS archaeologist and a former part-time

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<sup>507</sup> Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 39-41. Delia Goetz and Sylvanus G. Morley, English translators from the Spanish translation of Adrián Recinos, *Popol Vuh: Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 68-69, 207.

<sup>508</sup> Tedlock, “Introduction,” 22, 45-47.

faculty member at Brigham Young University, critiqued Sorenson's limited Tehuantepec geography and found it wanting. She found "issues of directionality" to be the "most fundamental geographical problem" with his model. She points to evidence collected by Barbara Tedlock that Quiché terms for east mean "at the rising sun" and west "at the setting of the sun" as well as similar evidence from the common Israelite directional system.<sup>509</sup> She finds his efforts to circumvent the problems associated with the lack of evidence for metallurgy and Old World flora and fauna to be inadequate. She employs archaeological reports to evaluate his claim that Zarahemla (a Nephite capital city) is the site of Santa Rosa in Chiapas. Santa Rosa lacks evidence of metallurgy, carved monuments or other forms of early writing, Old World plants and animals, walls and fortifications like those described in the text, evidence of destruction by fire at the time of Jesus' death, a large population center, or a role as a significant trading center.<sup>510</sup> She finds "one of the greatest challenges that Sorenson must meet is his placement of Jaredites with their highly advanced culture in Mesoamerica at about 3000 BC." Not only does Sorenson fail to present evidence of metallurgy and Old World flora and fauna but the archaeological evidence in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec at about 3000 BC "consist[s] of a few small horticultural villages and groups of Archaic hunters and gatherers" not the vast civilization of Jaredites described in the Book of Mormon.<sup>511</sup> Sorenson's method, she concludes, "is a bits-and-pieces approach involving a large area and all time periods rather than the specific area and time he has selected, failing to take into account the

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<sup>509</sup> Deanne G. Matheny, "Does the Shoe Fit? A Critique of the Limited Tehuantepec Geography," in Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 277.

<sup>510</sup> Matheny, "Does the Shoe Fit?," 312-317.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 317-319.

specific cultural processes and developments in that area.”<sup>512</sup> Sorenson has to reject scientific methodology because his model could never stand up to rigorous evaluation and hypothesis testing.

### *American Apocrypha*

A growing group of Mormon scholars have been much more willing to accept and openly discuss the overwhelming scientific evidence against the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Deanne Matheny’s critique of Sorenson’s model is an illustrative example from an anthology edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe advocating the application of critical approaches from historical, literary, and biblical studies. Metcalfe’s *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* published in 1993 includes essays by a number of LDS scholars who raise questions about historical anachronisms in the Book of Mormon like anti-Universalist rhetoric, modern sacramental language, pre-advent Christianity, and translation errors from the King James Bible.<sup>513</sup>

Three years earlier an anthology edited by Dan Vogel, *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* had collected a number of articles by LDS and RLDS scholars primarily from the sixties, seventies, and eighties that openly considered the human elements in the construction of Mormon scripture.<sup>514</sup> Dan Vogel had previously examined the relationship between the Book of Mormon and nineteenth century views of Lost

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 322. Sorenson attempted to refute Matheny’s critique but lacking any evidence for his defense, his response comes across as arrogant and belittling of his colleague in which he mostly repeated his same old arguments. For example, he projects his own inadequacy onto her when he claims, “I find her piece weak in scholarship and faulty in logic.” See John L. Sorenson, “Viva Zapato! Hurray for the Shoe!,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6 (1994): 297-361.

<sup>513</sup> Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).

<sup>514</sup> Dan Vogel, ed. *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).

Tribes and Mound Builders in *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*.<sup>515</sup> Late in the nineties RLDS psychiatrist William D. Morain and LDS psychiatrist Robert D. Anderson examined repetitive patterns of behavior and fantasies in Joseph Smith's life and the narrative of the Book of Mormon, providing psychoanalytical insights pointing to Smith as the author.<sup>516</sup> Mormon historian, LaMar Peterson, confronts the multitude of historical problems facing the LDS scripture in *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*.<sup>517</sup> Mormon scholars have taken the lead in critical evaluations of the human elements of their own scriptures.

After the turn of the new millennium Vogel and Metcalfe joined together to edit *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*. Mormon authors in this anthology examine genetic evidence pointing to a northeast Asian origin of American Indians, misrepresentations of Hebrew in the scripture, the methods of translation and dictation employed by the prophet, historical evidence that witnesses to the gold plates presented their claims as products of visions, Smith's autobiographical modeling of himself and the scripture's prophets as a Moses-like characters, and anachronistic use of anti-Masonic rhetoric. A non-Mormon author points to fictive pseudepigraphy in the Bible as a validation for viewing the Book of Mormon as inspired fiction. This book captures the growing willingness of Mormon scholars to treat the Book of Mormon as nineteenth century fiction while allowing the possibility that it might also be inspired.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> Vogel, *Indian Origins*.

<sup>516</sup> Morain, *Sword of Laban*. Anderson, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith*.

<sup>517</sup> LaMar Peterson, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry* (Salt Lake City: Freethinker Press, 1998).

<sup>518</sup> Vogel and Metcalfe, *American Apocrypha*.

### Resurrecting the Mound Builders

Mormon connections to the mound builder mythology have been undergoing a revival as challenge to both FARMS and critical methodology. Wayne May, a convert and Elder in the LDS Church in Menomomie, Wisconsin, began publication of *Ancient American* in 1993. His web site describes the magazine as “a bimonthly, semi-color, popular science magazine --- the most unique of its kind, because it is the only publication to describe with dramatic photographs and exciting reports true accounts of overseas visitors to America hundreds ... even thousands of years before Columbus!”<sup>519</sup> In 2002 he released a new book, with co-author Edwin G. Goble, a computer programmer from Riverton Utah, entitled *This Land: Zarahemla and the Nephite Nation* published by the Ancient American Archaeology Foundation (AAAF). The authors encourage Mormon scholars to reconsider a North American geographic setting for the Book of Mormon, reject the idea of two Cumorahs, and directly challenge the “extremely flawed methodology” at FARMS that led them to “dogmatically reject the Michigan Relics.” They advocate a careful examination of controversial artifacts reportedly found in Michigan from 1858 to 1920 rather than relying solely “on the claims, allegations and hearsay of the people that dismissed the tablets in the first place almost 100 years ago.”<sup>520</sup>

May and Goble accept the argument that the Book of Mormon events took place in a limited geographic region but disagree with Mormon “Mesoamericanists” over the geographic location of Book of Mormon lands. They prefer a return of attention to the Great Lakes region of the Upper Midwest of the present United States. Along with

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<sup>519</sup> See [www.ancientamerican.com](http://www.ancientamerican.com).

<sup>520</sup> Edwin G. Goble and Wayne May, *This Land: Zarahemla and the Nephite Nation, Only One Cumorah!* (Colfax, Wisconsin: Ancient American Archaeology Foundation, 2002), 47-48.

Delbert Curtis and Duane Aston they identify the Niagara Peninsula as the narrow neck between the land northward and southward.<sup>521</sup> They identify all the Great Lakes as the West Sea and the Atlantic Ocean as the East Sea and drawing upon reported statements of Joseph Smith locate Manti in Randolph County, Missouri. Relying upon Doctrine and Covenants 125:3 they locate Zarahemla in Lee County, Iowa.<sup>522</sup> Most importantly their model maintains the traditional location of Cumorah at the hill near Palmyra, New York where Joseph Smith claimed to have found the gold plates and various apostles reported on visions of more plates and treasures by the prophet and Oliver Cowdery.<sup>523</sup> Despite a rejection of the hemispheric views of early Mormons, the strength of their model lies in its consistency with many of the statements of early Church leaders, amply provided in the text. Unlike the Mesoamerican models they do not require the demotion of Joseph Smith's July 17, 1831 revelation in Jackson, County identifying local Indians as Lamanites and Nephites nor the dismissal of a letter written "by the commandment of God" in which the Mormon prophet identified a skeleton excavated from a mound near Griggsville, Illinois as Zeph, a white Lamanite.<sup>524</sup> Similarly their model is more consistent with the descriptions of fortifications and military strategy and prophecies of the Book of Mormon, letters of Joseph Smith, and statements in the Doctrine and Covenants identifying North American Indians as Lamanites. If one measures the validity of their Book of Mormon geography by the statements of early church leaders, revelations of Joseph Smith, and descriptions of earthworks and cities and

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., 50-57.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 54.

prophecies in the Book of Mormon, then the amateurs Goble and May have soundly trumped the work of professionals at FARMS.

If one measures the validity of their geography by clarity or the internal geography of the Book of Mormon then FARMS appears to have the upper hand. Like Sorenson's model their map requires a directional shift. For Goble and May Nephite North becomes what we would call Northeast; yet, unlike Sorenson they do not even attempt to offer a plausible justification for this distortion.<sup>525</sup> Their quotes from the Book of Mormon often contradict statements made elsewhere in the book while some geographic statements are inconsistent with each other. For example, their placement of the "area of Bountiful" in Virginia on their map contradicts a quote from Alma 63:5 placing Bountiful near Desolation.<sup>526</sup> Elsewhere they allege that Toronto translates as Bountiful but conclude, again contrary to their map, "that Bountiful was in the region of New York."<sup>527</sup> If one accepts their geography then Hagoth (the Book of Mormon character that Mormon legends link to the origins of Pacific Islanders) "launched from Lake Ontario, and went northward, up the St. Lawrence. Then he went out to the Atlantic, and then down, around the tip of Africa, and then kept going eastward 'an exceedingly great distance'." Lest anyone doubt this route to Polynesia the authors reassert, "This is no mistake."<sup>528</sup> The authors need to iron out their own inconsistencies and contradictions before they will be able to convince any critically thinking Mormon of their model.

If support from scientific evidence is the measure of quality then May and Goble fail even more miserably than FARMS. Goble and May fail to acknowledge, let alone

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 75, 79.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 82, 84.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 84.

explain, the absence of wheat and the production of wine in the Great Lakes region. Furthermore, they overlook the absence of the horse, cattle, oxen, sheep, and goats from their proposed setting. In a failing comparable to Sorenson's supposed linguistic evidence for metallurgy in ancient Central America, they consider the availability of mineral ores, some "smelted by mother nature," sufficient evidence for Nephite and Jaredite metallurgy.<sup>529</sup> They claim "descendants of Book of Mormon peoples are still among us today, among the natives who speak the languages of the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and other language families of the area."<sup>530</sup> Despite citing specialists who warn against confusing the cultural designations of Adena and Hopewell with populations rather than artifacts, the authors make precisely that error when they identify Jaredites as Adena and Nephites as Hopewell and claim that "sometime between 400 AD and 500 AD the Hopewell were no more."<sup>531</sup> It appears that the authors simply lack the knowledge or the critical thinking skills necessary to adequately weigh the physical evidence for or against their proposed model. Yet, they do have one advantage over FARMS. When they draw from Sorenson's research to point to a New World variation of barley, they can locate its existence in Illinois (143) while such evidence is lacking for his limited geography in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

The authors' use of Indian legends as evidence varies from uninformed to deceptive. They claim, via Elder Richard Felt in 1963, that a Brother Art Wakolee (Sac and Fox) had joined the church because his grandfather had told him years ago that

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 99, 114, 120, 137, 140, 143.

“those sent to teach the truth would always go forth by twos.”<sup>532</sup> The authors are apparently unaware that John (Jack) Koshiway, a former member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who founded the Oto Church of the Firstborn in 1918, introduced this belief to the rapidly growing Peyote religions that evangelized throughout Indian country with “pairs of young adherents sent out Mormon fashion.”<sup>533</sup> Goble and May employ quotes from John Heckewelder recollections of Delaware legends as evidence for their claim that the Tallegewi (apparently in addition to the Hopewell) were Nephites and Algonquian and Iroquoians were Lamanites.<sup>534</sup> They claim that Heckewelder’s research was completed “in the latter part of the eighteenth century ... but it remained unpublished for many decades” leaving the impression that it was published after the Book of Mormon.<sup>535</sup> In actuality, Heckewelder published his account in the first volume of the *Transactions of the Historical & Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* in 1819, a fact clearly acknowledged in their source.<sup>536</sup>

Goble and May’s misrepresentation of their sources includes quotes cited within their own book. For one of many examples, they quote William Warren’s recounting of Ojibwa legends in 1885 as additional evidence that the Allegewi (now called Mun-dua) are the Nephites. According to their source the Ojibwa fought and conquered the Mun-dua, “a wicked people.”

This small remnant of once a powerful tribe were the next year attacked by an Ojibwa war-party, taken captive, and incorporated in this tribe. Individuals are

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<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>533</sup> James Slotkin, *The Peyote Religion: A Study in Indian-White Relations* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956), 46-47. See also Thomas W. Murphy, “Word of Wisdom and Peyote: The Diversity of Interpretations,” *The Sacred Record* 15 (March 1994), 5.

<sup>534</sup> Goble and May, *This Land*, 92-96.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>536</sup> Silverberg, *Mound Builders*, 54.

pointed out to this day who are of Mun-dua descent, and who are members of the respected family whose totem is the Marten.<sup>537</sup>

Despite recounting this narrative that clearly attests to survivors of the conflict, Goble and May claim, on the same page, “It is clear ... that the Ojibwa and their allies *annihilated them completely*, and the Great Spirit allowed it because of their wickedness. This most certainly parallels the account in Mormon Chapters 1-6” (emphasis added). In a similar vein, the authors and their source (Father James Savage, collector of many of the Michigan relics) stretch the meaning of their quotes to signify something far grander than the evidence warrants. They cite Father Savage’s evidence that the fathers of the Attiwanderons “utterly exterminated a great white people.”

Chief Shop-na-gun, an aged Indian residing at Grayling, Michigan, tells with apparent pride how his fathers killed off white men, way back, took much cattle and land.<sup>538</sup>

If claims by Indians in the nineteenth century that their fathers had killed whites and taken their cattle and land, even way back, constitutes valid evidence of utter extermination comparable to the Book of Mormon then we would have a plethora of evidence for the Book of Mormon in virtually every region of the New World.

The bulk of the evidence that the authors present for their geographic model consists of disputed artifacts from Michigan that came to light between 1879 and 1920 and others discovered by Russell Burrows in a cave in Olney, Illinois. These tablets, which the authors admit most scholars dismiss as frauds, depict biblical stories and apparent conflicts between whites and Indians. They plead with the scientific community and members of the LDS Church (which has one of the largest collections of these

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<sup>537</sup> Goble and May, *This Land*, 105.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

artifacts) to “stop dismissing them out of hand and perform real analysis on them.”<sup>539</sup>

Yet, they dismiss and ridicule precisely those scholars who have conducted actual tests and analysis. “The first professionals to view the [Michigan] artifacts could offer no explanation for them and, not able to recognize the writing as any script with which they were familiar, declared, in each and every case, that the artifacts were fraudulent.”

“Photos were sent to museums and universities in the hope that someone could recognize the writing or identify the objects. Every answer was negative.”<sup>540</sup> LDS general authority James Talmage conducted an extensive investigation in 1911 of the artifacts found by James Scotford, concluding on the basis of investigation by museum archaeologists, independent excavation of mounds, and the testimony of Scotford’s step-daughter that Scotford forged them.<sup>541</sup> Goble and May attempt to defend Scotford by claiming that some objects were found before he was born, but offer nothing beyond Scotford’s own testimony for such claims. Instead of welcoming such diligent efforts to investigate the artifacts Goble and May dismiss them as an “official campaign of academic hysteria.”<sup>542</sup>

Scientific investigation, the authors seem to be unaware, proceeds by attempting to disprove a hypothesis. They refuse to accept Talmage’s conclusions because upon “first reading Talmage’s notes, it becomes obvious that he went to Detroit with the explicit intention to discredit the artifacts (my personal evaluation).” If this personal evaluation of theirs is accurate then it would only make Talmage a good scientist. On the basis of their descriptions and pictures provided in their book one can continue this effort to discredit the Michigan and Burrows’ artifacts. A brief perusal of the images and

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 25-29.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 25, 46.

descriptions provides abundant evidence of their anachronistic rendering of biblical narratives to anyone familiar with the historical development of the Bible. If these are genuine artifacts left by pre-exilic Hebrew refugees from Jerusalem visited by the resurrected Jesus then they should represent the historical development of Jewish ideas at about 600 BCE and those of the Christian community at about 34 CE. Some of the more readily apparent anachronisms include the following: sharp distinctions between God/Jesus as good and Satan as evil (not present in Hebrew Bible, slowly developed from earliest to latest Christian gospels), presence of Satan in Garden of Eden (post-34 AD reading of Genesis), Virgin Mary (stories of virgin birth are a post-34 AD development), images of menorahs (emerging in Maccabean era), and images of stars of David (magical symbol that Jews borrowed from Greeks, Romans, and/or Babylonians).<sup>543</sup> Some of these same anachronisms also appear in the Book of Mormon.<sup>544</sup> It is highly unlikely that the authors genuinely desire a scientific examination of the artifacts; rather they seek an unwarranted scientific stamp of approval.<sup>545</sup> Yet, they

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<sup>543</sup> For the history of biblical texts see the following. Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide to the Bible*. Richard Elliot Freedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987). Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001). Pagels, *Origin of Satan*. John Shelby Spong, *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).

<sup>544</sup> Vogel, *Word of God*. Metcalfe, *New Approaches*. Vogel and Metcalfe, *American Apocrypha*.

<sup>545</sup> The authors appear to tire of their project as they approach the end of the text. The last few chapters include a number of excessively long quotes and unnecessarily repeat the same arguments from earlier in the book. The authors also fail to provide a complete bibliography, making it difficult to follow and substantiate many of their claims. A clear trail of references is vital if the authors want to convince a skeptical scholarly community of their claims. If the Goble and May want to succeed in their efforts to convince Mormons, historians, and anthropologists to take their ideas seriously then the first steps they need to take include: 1) iron out the inconsistencies in their own model; 2) ensure that their sources support their arguments; 3) approach their sources more skeptically and exercise critical thinking skills; and 4) stop pleading with scientists to seriously examine their artifacts and begin their own efforts to discredit their artifacts. If the authors can make a serious and genuine effort to disprove the artifacts that interest them then they would begin the first steps towards sifting truth from fiction. Until the authors begin their own efforts to think critically, informed readers will continue to remain unconvinced of their claims. If there is any redeeming value to the book, it is the manner that Goble and May effectively employed the revelations of Joseph Smith, statements of early church leaders, and prophecies of Mormon scriptures to discredit the

have posed a challenge to the predominance of the Central American focus of scholars at FARMS and FAIR.

While the examples of the variety of Mormon thought I surveyed above are far from a comprehensive overview of the evolution of twentieth century interpretations of the Book of Mormon, they do offer some insight into the struggles Mormons have had with their central sacred text. The demise of biblical history and the myths of Mound Builders have posed intractable problems for a view of the Book of Mormon as ancient history. At the end of the twentieth century FARMS and FAIR have emerged as collective advocates of a limited geography for the Book of Mormon in Central America while AAAF prefers a return to the myths of the Mound Builders and a limited geography in North America. No defender of the Book of Mormon has yet offered an adequate accounting for the inaccurate references to Old World flora and fauna, technologies, and cultural patterns in the New World. To date, no ancient American archaeological site is convincingly associated with any Book of Mormon cities. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Mormon scholarly views of scripture are a far cry from the hemispheric models that dominated debate at the beginning of the previous century and still remain to this day rooted in the beliefs of most Mormons. Yet, strikingly lacking from the shifting foundations of Book of Mormon studies is serious attention to American Indian views of the Book of Mormon. Even the broad historical surveys of debates about the Book of Mormon by John L. Sorenson and Terryl Givens overlooked

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claims coming from FARMS that the Book of Mormon events took place in Mesoamerica. Despite its other problems, their model does not attempt to salvage Smith's prophetic status by denying the bulk of his prophecies.

contributions and views of those Native American Mormons who identify themselves as Lamanites (see previous two chapters). It is time that Mormon scholars devote more serious attention to American Indian views of the Book of Mormon.

## Chapter 9: Slain by Ugly Fact

It has been a very interesting thing to see the descendants of Father Lehi in the congregations that have gathered in the (Ecuadorian) temple. So very many of these people have the blood of Lehi in their veins, and it is just an intriguing thing to see their tremendous response and their tremendous interest.

*Gordon B. Hinckley*<sup>546</sup>

I don't think there is one iota of evidence that suggests a lost tribe from Israel made it all the way to the New World. It is a great story, slain by ugly fact.

*Michael Crawford*<sup>547</sup>

By the beginning of the twenty-first century genetic research into American Indian origins has emerged as a central issue in Book of Mormon Studies and another thorn in Mormon-Indian relations. The implications of the biological sciences for the Book of Mormon go well beyond the highly publicized DNA evidence pointing to a northeast Asian origin of American Indians. A summary of the latest scientific research in genetics, physical anthropology, archaeology, and biology suggests humans are not the product of a spontaneous creation in the Garden of Eden, the Biblical narratives of human origins and migrations are not accurate historical events, dark skin color does not result from immorality, the biblical concept of a seminal seed is an inaccurate portrayal of human procreation, and American Indians are not descendants of ancient Israelites. The scientific research strongly supports American Indian objections to the Book of Mormon as a prejudicial history of the Americas and challenges the claims of those who believe it contains the stories of their ancestors.

The biological challenge to the Book of Mormon at the beginning of the twenty-first century has prompted a flurry of activity often likened to Galileo's confirmation of

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<sup>546</sup> Egan, "BYU Gene Data."

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

Copernicus's proposal that the earth revolved around the sun. Mormon biologists, anthropologists, and others have acknowledged the overwhelming evidence that Native Americans came from northeast Asia and the absence of biological evidence that any known group of American Indians have ancestors who came from the ancient Middle East during the time frame required by the Book of Mormon. The limited geography of a previous generation of apologists has now been reduced to a local colonization of a small party that left no known genetic descendants in Central America or elsewhere. Early responses from some Native American Mormons to such contractions of the scope of the Book of Mormon indicate a sense of betrayal and quests for clarification from church leadership. Insistence by some Mormon scholars that the Book of Mormon must be historically accurate creates serious dilemmas for Mormon students encountering differing narratives of human origins and migration from the biological and anthropological sciences. Yet, other Mormon scholars favor an approach that treats Smith's encounters with spirits and gold plates as metaphysical rather than mundane encounters.

### **Human Origins**

Biologists classify humans as a mammalian species in the Primate Order with our closest relatives among the monkeys and apes. Humans, apes, and Old World monkeys share a striking amount of anatomical similarities. These include larger brains relative to body size, identical dental patterns (2 incisors, 1 canine, 2 premolars, and 3 molars), eyes positioned in the front of our face, color vision, stereoscopic vision, bony enclosure behind the eyes, downward facing nose, moveable upper lip, fingernails and fingerprints

on all digits, grasping five digit hands with thumbs, two mammary glands, free hanging penis, long childhood, and a tendency to bear single offspring. We share even more striking commonalities with chimpanzees, our closest relatives. Chimps live in social groups with structured hierarchies, manufacture simple tools, eat meat, hunt in small groups, form coalitions, exchange females between groups, engage in war with rival troops, and use medicinal plants. Bonobos (pygmy chimpanzees) even use sex for social purposes; to ease tension, navigate social hierarchies, and facilitate food exchange. Gorillas, bonobos, and chimps have even learned to communicate, albeit at a rudimentary level, with human observers using an adapted form of American Sign Language.<sup>548</sup>

Physical and social similarities with other primates tell us we are close relatives but genetic research surprised many scientists by demonstrating just how closely related we may be to forest dwelling apes. Niles Eldredge, paleontologist from the American Museum of Natural History, observes that Darwinian notions of evolutionary descent with modification from a common ancestry predict that humans must resemble some animals more than others.<sup>549</sup> Comparative analysis of human and chimpanzee DNA have demonstrated that we share an astounding 98.76% of our genomic sequence.<sup>550</sup> This remarkable similarity of nearly 99% is in part tempered by the different degree to which we express various genes, especially in brain activity.<sup>551</sup> Yet, these data should leave little, if any, doubt that humans evolved from a common ancestor with chimpanzees.

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<sup>548</sup> Craig Stanford, *Significant Others* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Robin Dunbar and Louise Barrett, *Cousins: Our Primate Relatives* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2000). Jared Diamond, *The Third Chimpanzee* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993).

<sup>549</sup> Niles Eldredge, *The Triumph of Evolution* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 2000), 26.

<sup>550</sup> Ingo Ebersberger, et al., "Genomewide Comparison of DNA Sequences Between Humans and Chimpanzees," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 70 (June 2002): 1490-1497.

<sup>551</sup> Elizabeth Pennisi, "Gene Activity Clocks Brain's Fast Evolution," *Science* 296 (12 April 2002): 233-235.

Mormon biologists Trent D. Stephens and D. Jeffrey Meldrum observe, “These data powerfully support the theory of evolution and its prediction that closely related species exhibit closely related DNA sequences.” The power of such genetic data lies not only in their confirmation of conclusions based upon observed similarities in anatomy but also because, according to Stephens and Meldrum, they “are objective and do not depend on the subjective comparisons of early systematics.”<sup>552</sup> Genetic research permits us to quantify and independently test proposed relationships based upon qualitative comparisons of the past.

Charles Darwin’s prediction that similarities between apes and humans indicated a probable human origin in Africa has also been confirmed by fossil and genetic evidence. Analysis of genetic data points to a split in the lineage between humans and chimpanzees approximately 5-7 million years ago.<sup>553</sup> Paleoanthropologists have collected an impressive array of fossil hominids (human ancestors and their close relatives) spanning the past six million years. Fossils from the genera *Sahelanthropus*, *Ardipithecus*, *Ororin*, *Kenyanthropus*, and *Australopithecus* demonstrate that ancient hominids shared a number of human and chimp-like features.<sup>554</sup> These ancient hominids

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<sup>552</sup> Trent D. Stephens and D. Jeffrey Meldrum, *Evolution and Mormonism: A Quest for Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 112.

<sup>553</sup> A. C. Wilson and V. M. Sarich, “A Molecular Time Scale for Human Evolution,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA* 63 (1969): 1088-93; and C. G. Sibley and J. E. Ahlquist, “The Phylogeny of the Hominid Primates as Indicated by DNA-DNA Hybridization,” *Journal of Molecular Evolution* 20 (1984): 2-15, cited in Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza et al., *The History and Geography of Human Genes* (abridged ed.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 86.

<sup>554</sup> John Whitefield, “Oldest Member of Human Family Found,” *Nature Science Update*, 11 July 2002, retrieved electronically from [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) 17 July 2002. Henry Gee, “Touma, face of the deep,” *Nature Science Update*, 11 July 2002, retrieved electronically from [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) 17 July 2002. Miche Brunet, et al. “A New Hominid from Upper Miocene of Chad, Central Africa,” *Nature* 418 (2002): 145-151. Henry Gee, “New Early Human Fossils,” *Nature Science Update*, 12 July 2001, retrieved electronically from [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) 16 July 2001. Michael D. Lemonick and Andrea Dorfman, “One Giant Step for Mankind: Meet Your Newfound Ancestor, a Chimplike Forest Creature That Stood Up and

walked around on two feet yet had a brain much closer to the size of modern chimpanzees. Larger brained hominids, classified in the *Homo* genus, appeared around two million years ago. *Homo erectus* and archaic *Homo sapiens* spread from Africa throughout much of Europe and Asia. Fossil and genetic evidence indicates that fully modern humans first evolved in Africa and then spread out of Africa beginning about 100,000 years ago to Asia and reached Australia and Europe by around 40,000 years ago.<sup>555</sup> The fully modern humans may have entirely displaced or interbred to a limited degree with the more archaic forms.<sup>556</sup>

### *Biblical Archaeology*

Insights from the archaeological record in ancient Israel indicate that the biblical account of human origins and the founding of an Israelite nation are primarily mythological. Not only does Genesis fail to accurately describe the origin of the earth, life, plants, animals, and humans but substantial additional problems plague a literal reading of the biblical text. Israel Finkelstein, archaeologist at Tel Aviv University, and Neil Asher Silberman, historian from the Ename Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Preservation in Belgium, report,

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Walked 5.8 Million Years Ago," *Time*, 23 July 2001, 54-61. Robert Jurmain, et al. *Introduction to Physical Anthropology* (Belmont, CA: Wadworth, 2000).

<sup>555</sup> Ian Tattersall and Jeffrey Schwartz, *Extinct Humans* (New York: Westview Press, 2000). Lee Berger, *In the Footsteps of Eve* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Adventure Press, 2000). Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, *Genes, Peoples, and Languages* (New York: Northpoint Press, 2000). Alan Walker and Pat Shipman, *The Wisdom of Bones* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996).

<sup>556</sup> Alan R. Templeton, "Out of Africa Again and Again," *Nature*, 7 March 2002, 45-51. Allan C. Wilson and Rebecca L. Cann, "The Recent African Genesis of Humans: Genetics Reveal That an African Woman of 200,000 Years Ago Was Our Common Ancestor," *Scientific American* (Apr. 1992), 68-73. Alan G. Thorpe and Milford H. Wolpoff, "The Multiregional Evolution of Humans: Both Fossil and Genetic Evidence Argue that Various Human Groups Arose Where They are Found Today," *Scientific American* (Apr. 1992), 76-83. Christopher B. Stringer, "The Emergence of Modern Humans," *Scientific American* (Dec. 1990), 98-104.

The historical saga contained in the Bible—from Abraham’s encounter with God and his journey to Canaan, to Moses’ deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage, to the rise and fall of the kingdom of Israel and Judah—was not a miraculous revelation, but a brilliant product of human imagination. It was first conceived—as recent archaeological findings suggest—during the span of two or three generations, about twenty-six hundred years ago. Its birthplace was the kingdom of Judah, a sparsely settled region of shepherds and farmers, ruled from an out-of-the-way royal city precariously perched in the heart of the hill country on a narrow ridge between steep, rocky ravines.<sup>557</sup>

Archaeological excavations in the ancient Near East have revolutionized scientific and historical views of the bible, casting “serious doubt on the historical basis of such famous biblical stories as the wanderings of the patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt and conquest of Canaan, and the glorious empire of David and Solomon.”<sup>558</sup> Mormon scripture defending this biblical world-view may also need to be reexamined accordingly.

While Mormons have been willing to entertain the possibility that errors have crept into the biblical narratives, Mormon scripture has assumed the general historicity of biblical accounts that are now substantially undermined by archaeological data. The Book of Mormon, for example, confirms that Moses was commanded to lead the Israelites out of bondage, in Egypt, that he miraculously drew water from a rock, that Israelites rebelled against him, and that he received commandments on mount Sinai (1 Ne. 17:24-42; 2 Ne. 3:10; Mosiah 12:33). Yet, abundant archaeological and historical data from Egypt provide “no clue, not even a single word, about early Israelites *in* Egypt: neither in monumental inscriptions on walls of temples, nor in tomb inscriptions, nor in papyri. Israel is absent—as a possible foe of Egypt, as a friend, or as an enslaved nation.”<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Finkelstein and Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 1. See also John C. Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). Leslie J. Hoppe, *What are they saying about biblical archaeology?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).

<sup>558</sup> Finkelstein and Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 3.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.* 60.

Likewise, no evidence appears in the archaeological record to support the Israelite's dramatic escape from Egypt, their years of wandering in the desert, or the brutal conquest of Canaan. Numerous archaeological surveys throughout the Sinai Peninsula during proposed times for the Exodus "have yielded only negative evidence: not even a single sherd, no structure, not a single house, no trace of an ancient encampment."<sup>560</sup> The archaeological record leads Finkelstein and Silberman to the conclusion "that the Exodus did not happen at the time and in the manner described in the Bible."<sup>561</sup>

Moses does not appear to have written the so-called books of Moses (Pentateuch). By the seventeenth century scholars were struggling with striking inconsistencies within the biblical record, statements about Moses' death in the book of Deuteronomy, and periodic descriptions indicating that some things were visible "to this day." Different versions of the same stories (including the creation account, genealogies of Adam, and interspersed flood stories) within the Pentateuch led scholars in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to doubt that Moses was involved at all.<sup>562</sup> Yet, the Book of Mormon presumes that Moses was the author (1 Ne 5:11, 19:23) and the Doctrine and Covenants modeled Joseph Smith's revelatory experience after that of Moses (D&C 8:3, 28:2). Mormon scholar Susan Staker has illustrated the extent to which Smith's Mosaic self-image helped shape the character construction of a line of record keeping seers in the Book of Mormon and subsequent revelatory writings.<sup>563</sup> Most biblical scholars now attribute the authorship of the five books of Moses to four or more authors (J, E, P, D)

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>563</sup> Susan Staker, "Secret Things, Hidden Things: The Seer Story in the Imaginative Economy of Joseph Smith," in *American Apocrypha*, edited by Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 235-274.

and one or more redactors (R) who lived between the tenth and sixth centuries before the Common Era.<sup>564</sup> Biblical scholar Robert M. Price has suggested that the alleged discovery of the Book of Deuteronomy, a pseudepigraphic text probably constructed in the seventh century BCE, in the temple during the reign of King Josiah serves as a biblical model for interpreting the Mormon prophet.<sup>565</sup> In each case the discovery of an ancient text validates a new theological and political agenda. Neither Moses nor Mormon appears to be the actual authors of the scriptures that bear their name.

### The Myth Of Race

Most Mormons, like most Americans, operate on the assumption that human populations of today and the past are easily divided into distinct racial categories that are rooted in clearly distinguishable biological differences between different groups of people. At first glance, the DNA evidence discussed below might even appear to substantiate those assumptions.<sup>566</sup> Few realize that the very idea of biological races was relatively rare in Western society prior to the eighteenth century. It rose to a high level of popularity among scientists and in popular discourse in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, scientists in the latter part of the twentieth century have generally rejected the division of human populations into distinct biological races.<sup>567</sup> While humans clearly

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<sup>564</sup> Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*

<sup>565</sup> Robert M. Price, "Joseph Smith: Inspired Author of the Book of Mormon," in *American Apocrypha*, edited by Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 321-366.

<sup>566</sup> While Cavalli-Sforza and colleagues build a strong argument against the utility of racial categories, their own classifications of human populations have drawn criticism for failing to adequately account for social and cultural construction. For their statements on race see Cavalli-Sforza, et al. *History and Geography*, 19-20; and Cavalli-Sforza, *Genes, Peoples*, 3-32. For critiques see the following article and the commentaries that accompany it: Scott MacEachern, "Genes, Tribes, and African History," *Current Anthropology* 41.3 (2000): 357-384.

<sup>567</sup> Eugenia Shanklin, *Anthropology and Race* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994).

differ from each other biologically across time and space the patterns apparent in physical variation are not consistent with the popular categories of race. Many Native Americans, for example, share a maternal or paternal lineage with some Asians while they have a different lineage than that of other Native Americans. An American Indian man with a European great-great-great grandfather in his paternal line would not exhibit the same mutations on his Y-chromosome as other Native Americans. Genetic inheritance, like that evident in mtDNA and Y-chromosomes, cuts across socially constructed racial boundaries.<sup>568</sup>

Most social scientists today view race as a social and historical construct, not a biological fact.<sup>569</sup> While popular concepts of race usually involve physical characteristics, the boundaries we draw between groups of people and the meanings we assign to those groups reflect cultural and social rather than biological assumptions. The American Anthropological Association's "Statement on Race" effectively summarizes the current view of most anthropologists.

Historical research has shown that the idea of "race" has always carried more meanings than mere physical differences; indeed, physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them. Today scholars in many fields argue that "race" as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and

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<sup>568</sup> A news story about the surprise expressed by my students at Edmonds Community College when the mtDNA they extracted defied common racial categories illustrates this point. Eric Stevick, "DNA test results surprise EdCC students: Racial, ethnic lines get blurry over the years," *Herald* (March 17, 2003), B2.

<sup>569</sup> As is the case with many issues in scientific discourse, there is some disagreement on the existence of races. For a general and easily accessible overview of the debate within the subfield of physical anthropology see: C. Loring Brace, "Does Race Exist?: An antagonist's perspective," retrieved electronically 1 Aug. 2002 from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/first/brace.html>; and George W. Gill, "Does Race Exist? A proponents perspective," retrieved electronically 1 Aug. 2002 from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/first/gill.html>.

other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor.<sup>570</sup>

The evolution of interpretations of the curse of Ham (see chapters three and four) demonstrates similarly that the increasing racialization of the story was a late historical development. While there is no doubt that there are genuine biological differences between humans observable at a surface and genetic level, the attempts to link physical characteristics like skin color categorically to morality, intelligence, etc. tell us far more about cultural prejudices and values than they do about human biology.

Biologists and geneticists, in agreement with social scientists, have found grounds for rejecting the scientific utility of racial categories. Biologists and physical anthropologists have long noted that human physical variation among indigenous populations appears gradually over space and does not involve clear demarcations between distinct groups.<sup>571</sup> Harvard geneticist R. C. Lewontin evaluated the genetic differences between and among seven geographical groups that roughly correspond with common racial categories. He found that only 6.3 percent of the total genetic variation between individuals could be explained by differences among these large groupings. That left nearly 94 percent of human genetic diversity to be found within the larger group. Even when Lewontin divided people into smaller local populations, he found that geographic and local “races” together accounted for only 15 percent of human genetic variation.<sup>572</sup> Stanford geneticist Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza explains, “Variation between two random individuals within any one population is 85 percent as large as that between

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<sup>570</sup> American Anthropological Association, “Statement on Race.” 1998.  
<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>.

<sup>571</sup> Jurmain, et al. *Introduction*, 388-438.

<sup>572</sup> R. C. Lewontin, “The Apportionment of Human Diversity,” In T. Dobzhansky, et al. *Evolutionary Biology* Vol. 6 (New York: Plenum, 1972), 381-398.

two individuals randomly selected from the world's population."<sup>573</sup> The physical characteristics we use to categorize people vary gradually over time and space and appear strikingly superficial when the small genetic variation that underlies them is compared to the larger human genome.

Why should these scientific findings matter to someone interested in the naturalization of white authority in the Book of Mormon? First, they indicate that Latter-day Saints may need to jettison purported linkages in the Book of Mormon between morality and skin color. These linkages clearly represent the cultural biases and prejudices of a nineteenth century author and/or translator and stand in stark contrast to scientific knowledge today. The time is right to publicly and officially disavow them. Second, the arbitrariness of racial categories presents serious difficulties for any scientifically valid attempt to use biological markers such as DNA to distinguish categories of people (such as Israelites or Lamanites) that are also social and cultural in origin and practice. The meanings of racial or ethnic classifications such as Lamanites or Israelites vary over time and place and the selection of any particular definition is culturally rather than biologically rooted.

### *Biology of skin color*

The physical feature most commonly associated with popular ideas of race is skin color. The idea that a dark skin constitutes a categorical curse from God for wickedness ties the Book of Mormon unequivocally to the place and time of its modern production.

There is no evidence outside Mormon scripture that I am aware of indicating that ancient

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<sup>573</sup> Cavalli-Sforza, *Genes*, 29. See also Guido Barbujani, et al. "An Apportionment of Human DNA Diversity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 94 (April, 1997): 4516-4519.

Americans ever believed a dark skin was a curse from God. No biological or genetic evidence has shown a linkage between skin color and people's morality. Instead, biologists and physical anthropologists point to the quantitative and qualitative difference in the pigment melanin as the critical factor in determining skin color. Differences probably evolved in response to geographic variation in exposure to ultraviolet light. Darker skin, it appears, may protect people against skin cancer while lighter skin may protect against cold injury and aid in the processing of vitamin D from sunlight and thus protect against rickets.<sup>574</sup> The differences in skin color reflect the actions of natural selection rather than divine approbation. Yet, the idea that a dark skin is a curse for wickedness can be closely tied to a standard nineteenth century Euroamerican Christian "excuse for Black slavery" and justification for a "serviceable Indian."<sup>575</sup> In today's multicultural world with relatively easy access to scientific knowledge, continued advocacy of the validity of this concept, via the Book of Mormon, is inexcusable.

### **The Fallacy Of A Seminal Seed**

The concept of seed as it appears in the Book of Mormon and Bible displays the biases and prejudices of a patriarchal culture. Carol Delaney, cultural anthropologist at Stanford University, critically analyzes the notion of paternity in the Biblical story of Abraham in *Abraham On Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth*.

The seemingly simple word *seed* is anything but simple or neutral. By evoking associations with agriculture and the natural world, the image naturalizes a

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<sup>574</sup> Ashley H. Robins, *Biological Perspectives on Human Pigmentation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also Jurmain, *Introduction*, 421-423. Cavalli-Sforza, *Genes*, 8-13. Diamond, *Third Chimpanzee*, 110-121. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

<sup>575</sup> Sanders, *Lost Tribes*, 63.

structure of power relations as it also conceals it. Represented as seed and soil, male and female roles have been differentially valued and hierarchically ordered. This theory of procreation, common to both the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks, has been the dominant folk theory in the West for millennia, shaping popular images and sentiments of gender.<sup>576</sup>

Abraham's obsession with the perpetuation of his seed reflects the world-view of a patriarchal culture in which the creative power of a seminal seed is imagined in masculine terms. Sarah bore "unto" Abraham a son, Isaac (Gen. 21: 2-3). God promised Abraham the perpetuation of his "seed" through his son Isaac, as well as his other son Ishmael (Gen. 21: 12-13). The female contribution to procreation is imagined as akin to the soil in which the seed is planted—not as a co-creator who contributes her own biological lineage to her offspring. This bias can be seen in the biblical description of the births of Manasseh and Ephraim, "And *unto Joseph* were born two sons ... which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare *unto him*" (Gen. 41:50, emphasis added).

Mormon scripture promises the perpetuation of the seed of Joseph in the promised land. The Book of Mormon identifies Lehi, patriarchal founder of subsequent populations, as a descendant of Joseph (1 Ne 5: 14). It reports the Lord's promise of the preservation of the seed of Joseph and their restoration to the knowledge of the Lord (2 Ne 3:16; 3 Ne 5: 23). Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham, purportedly translated from an Egyptian papyrus in 1842, would subsequently link all Egyptians (including Asenath, Joseph's mother) to the curse of Ham (Abraham 1: 21-24). In fact, the central premise of the Book of Mormon, itself, is its prophesied role to facilitate the return of the

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<sup>576</sup> Delaney, *Abraham On Trial*, 8.

descendants of Joseph to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the removal of the curse upon the Lamanites.

The Book of Mormon racializes as well as sexualizes the concept of seed by linking it to a curse and a mark of a dark skin. Through this imagery the text naturalizes a social structure that privileges the authority of men over women, heralds white men as just and holy, and portrays dark skinned men as perpetrators of incorrect traditions.

And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon *their fathers*, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against *their brethren*, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Same, *who were just and holy men*.

And their brethren sought to destroy them, therefore they were cursed; and the Lord God set a mark upon them, yea upon Laman and Lemuel, and also the sons of Ishmael, and Ishmaelitish women.

And this was done that *their seed* might be distinguished from the *seed of their brethren*, that the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.

And it came to pass that whosoever did mingle *his seed* with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon *his seed*. (Alma 3: 6-9, emphasis added)

The Book of Mormon's concept of a cursed male seed planted in a female's womb is a cultural construction that serves to perpetuate the authority of white men.

The biological sciences today, however, illustrate the fallacy of the Book of Mormon's cultural constructions of a seminal seed. Delaney's explanation of the problems with this model of procreation in the Bible is equally applicable to the Book of Mormon.

From today's perspective, this theory of procreation is obviously erroneous. Today we believe that both male and female contribute the same kind of thing to the identity of the child, namely genes, and that each contributes half the genetic endowment, half the seed, so to speak. Women, of course, contribute much more—by way of nurture to the fetus in utero, by giving birth, and often by providing additional nurture and care during its early life—but women are still popularly associated with the nurturing not the creative aspects. The modern, biogenetic understanding of reproduction is relatively recent, known only to

certain of the world's peoples, and it tends to be confined explicitly to biomedical discourses. Yet notions of paternity and maternity were culturally constructed long before the development in biology and genetics, and these older notions are still being perpetuated by popular images and sentiments about gender and by the social arrangements, especially the family, that continue to affect the way men and women are thought about.<sup>577</sup>

Today, biology makes it clear that the racialization and sexualization of *seed* in the Book of Mormon is a cultural construction that tells far more about social relationships than physical ones.

### American Indian Origins

Archaeological and literary studies have demonstrated the folly of using the Bible as a guide to the history of ancient Israel, let alone the rest of the world. The origins of American Indians, while still not fully understood by scientists, contrast sharply with the portrayal in the Book of Mormon. Speculations on lost tribes of Israel and an ancient race of white mound builders have given way to the general conclusion that the original Americans derived from Asia, a conclusion made most abundantly clear by biological evidence.<sup>578</sup> Michael Crawford, biological anthropologist at the University of Kansas, observes that genetic, morphological, craniometric and cultural resemblances indicate “extremely strong biological and cultural affinities between New World and Asian populations and leaves no doubt that the first migrants into the Americas were Asians,

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<sup>577</sup> Delaney, *Abraham On Trial*, 8.

<sup>578</sup> Nina Jablonski, “Changing Perspectives of the First Americans: Insights Gained and Paradigms Lost,” in *The First Americans: The Pleistocene Colonization of the New World*, edited by Nina G. Jablonski (San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences, 2002), 1-7. Gordon R. Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff, *A History of American Archaeology* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1974).

possibly from Siberia.”<sup>579</sup> Crawford observes that there is not “one iota of evidence that suggests a lost tribe from Israel made it all the way to the New World.” Yet, he acknowledges the evidence does not rule out “the possibility of some small-scale cultural contacts between specific Amerindian societies and Asian or Oceanic seafarers.”<sup>580</sup> There may have been some contact between the Old and New World but if that contact occurred it was not between ancient Israel and any known group of American Indians.

Contemporary American Indian and northeastern Siberian populations “have similar frequencies of many blood types, forms of serum proteins, red-cell enzymes, distributions of DNA variable numbers of tandem repeats (VNTRs), and haplotypes or haplogroups of mitochondrial DNA.”<sup>581</sup> In multivariate statistical analyses of gene frequencies New World populations cluster together with those from Siberia and greater Asia rather than with Jews, Israelites, or other Middle Eastern populations.<sup>582</sup> If descendants of Book of Mormon peoples were still alive today then those populations should cluster with Middle Eastern or Jewish populations.

### *Native American mtDNA*

When new technologies developed for tracing maternal lineages via maternal lineages in the mid-1980s, geneticists directed early attention to the question of the peopling of the New World. Mitochondrial deoxyribonucleic acid (mtDNA) is a double-stranded molecule containing the genetic code of organelles found in the cytoplasm of

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<sup>579</sup> Michael Crawford, *The Origins of Native Americans: Evidence from Anthropological Genetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>580</sup> Egan, “BYU Gene Data.” Crawford, *Origins of Native Americans*, 4.

<sup>581</sup> Crawford, *Origins of Native Americans*, 4.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*

eukaryotic cells. MtDNA is more abundant than the nuclear DNA found only in the nucleus of the eukaryotic cells. Unlike nuclear DNA that recombines with each new generation shuffling the record of paternal and maternal heritage, mtDNA is inherited only from the mother and thus provides a valuable tool for examining one's maternal lineage.

Beginning in 1985 geneticists reported a frequent (40 percent) polymorphic genetic marker in the Pima-Papago of southern Arizona. Similar markers existed in low frequency among East Asians. A subsequent study of mtDNA variation in 1990 found that the Pima-Papago, Yucatán Maya, and the Ticuna from Brazil likewise shared high frequencies of the same genetic marker. In addition to this first marker researchers were able to distinguish three other mtDNA families in these three distant populations, providing clear evidence of descent from a common founding population.<sup>583</sup> Since that time geneticists have confirmed that 98 percent of living Native Americans belong to one of four sets (A, B, C, and D) of clustering lineages of mtDNA called haplogroups that all derive from Asia.<sup>584</sup> Debate over the number and timing of migrations continues, but a probable scenario appears to be a single separation of mtDNA founding lineages from

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<sup>583</sup> D. C. Wallace et al., "Dramatic Founder Effects in Amerindian Mitochondrial DNAs," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 68 (1985): 149-55; and T. G. Schurr et al., "Amerindian Mitochondrial DNAs Have Rare Asian Mutations at High Frequencies Suggesting a Limited Number of Founders," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 46(1990): 613-23, cited in Antonio Torroni, "Mitochondrial DNA and the Origin of Native Americans," *America Past, America Present: Genes and Languages in the Americas and Beyond*, edited by Colin Renfrew (Cambridge, UK: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2000), 77-87.

<sup>584</sup> Torroni, "Mitochondrial DNA," 79. Theodore G. Schurr, "Mitochondrial DNA and the Peopling of the New World," *American Scientist* 88 (May 2000), 246-253. Douglas C. Wallace and Antonio Torroni, "American Indian Prehistory as Written in the Mitochondrial DNA: A Review," *Human Biology* 64 (June 1992): 403-416.

their Asian counterparts approximately 25,000 years ago.<sup>585</sup> Throughout the rest of the world researchers have identified at least twenty-nine additional mtDNA lineages or haplogroups to which living humans belong.<sup>586</sup>

Most of the remaining two percent of Native American mtDNAs also originate in Asia, although premature speculations on possible European or West Asian ties excited Mormon audiences. The lineages X6 and X7, found widely in Asia and Siberia, are derived from haplogroups C and D and probably entered the New World as additional founding lineages.<sup>587</sup> The largest of the remaining groups, known as (Brown's) X, accounts for about one percent of American Indian mtDNAs. The molecular anthropologists from Emory University School of Medicine who proposed X as a fifth founding haplogroup included Michael D. Brown and Theodore G. Schurr.<sup>588</sup> Schurr's speculation of a linkage of the X lineage to Europe or West Asia (including Israel) at the April 1998 meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in Salt Lake City ignited interest among Latter-day Saints.<sup>589</sup> Yet, from the first publication of the research there was no reason for LDS excitement. The timing of the entry of X to the

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<sup>585</sup> Andrew Merriwether, "A Mitochondrial Perspective on the Peopling of the New World," in *The First Americans: Pleistocene Colonization of the New World*, edited by Nina G. Jablonski (San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences, 2002), 300-301.

<sup>586</sup> Bryan Sykes, *Seven Daughters of Eve: The Science That Reveals our Genetic Ancestry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 274-75. Mormon genealogists of European heritage may find Bryan Sykes' examination of genealogical roots of the seven lineages commonly found in Europe quite fascinating.

<sup>587</sup> Andrew Merriwether, "A Mitochondrial Perspective," 301. Merriwether notes that the separate identification of X6 and X7 is not as widely accepted. Additionally, a few Native Americans belong to lineages that owe their origin to admixture with Europeans or Africans. For a discussion of non-Native admixture see Schurr, "Mitochondrial DNA."

<sup>588</sup> Michael D. Brown et al. "mtDNA Haplogroup X: An Ancient Link between Europe/Western Asia and North America?" *American Journal of Human Genetics* 63 (Dec. 1998): 1852-1861.

<sup>589</sup> For example of that excitement see "Problematic Role of DNA Testing in Unraveling Human History," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9.2 (2000): 66-74; and Jeff Lindsay, "Questions About Book of Mormon Evidence," retrieved electronically 31 July 2002 from [www.jefflindsay.com](http://www.jefflindsay.com). While Lindsay did insert a note in August 2001 indicating that this information needs to be updated he has maintained the outdated anticipation of vindication for the Book of Mormon on his website. For his updated note (a work in progress), see Lindsay, "Does DNA Evidence Refute the Book of Mormon?"

Americas at 12-36,000 years ago, the partial identification of X among Eastern Asians, and the limited distribution of X among northern American Indians (Ojibwa, Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Sioux, Yakima, and Navajo) all indicated that speculations of European connections hyped in the press were unwarranted. Andrew Merriwether, molecular anthropologist from the University of Michigan, offered his opinion of the hype.

The fact that [Brown's X] has yet to be completely identified in any populations between Europe and the New World has led to a number of (in my mind) highly questionable speculations about long range migrations across Asia, or worse yet, across the Atlantic Ocean. The fly in the ointment may be a pair of partially intermediate haplotypes found in Korea and Mongolia that are identical to a pair of Nootka sequences from the New World that are closer to the New World variants than to the European variants of X.<sup>590</sup>

Bryan Sykes, geneticist from Oxford University, was likewise more circumspect in his conclusions. He traced X's origin to the borders of Europe and Asia approximately 25,000 years ago, noting an early separation into distinctive European and Asian/Native American branches.<sup>591</sup>

The report of the discovery of X in Southern Siberia in July 2001 by Miroslava Derenko and colleagues put a damper on Mormon speculation. A letter to the editor of the *American Journal of Human Genetics* indicates that they found the X haplogroup in 3.5% of the Altaians of Southern Siberia. The haplotypes found among the Altaians "occupy the intermediate position between the European and American Indian haplogroup X mtDNA lineages." Northern and Southern Altaians "exhibit all four Asian and American-Indian specific haplogroups (A-D) with frequencies of 57.2% and 46.8% respectively." The frequency of American Indian founding mtDNA haplogroups among

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<sup>590</sup> Andrew Merriwether, "A Mitochondrial Perspective," 302. Merriwether originally presented this summary presented October 2, 1999 at the Fourth Wattis Symposium in San Francisco. I have removed his citations and parenthetical comments from the quote.

<sup>591</sup> Sykes, *Seven Daughters of Eve*, 213-220, 274, 281.

Altaians exceeds that reported for Mongolian, Chinese, and Tibetans indicating Altaians “may represent the populations which are most closely related to New World indigenous groups.” This research is consistent with the view that “the candidate source population for American Indian haplotypes may therefore include the populations originating in the southwest and southeast of Lake Baikal, including the Altai mountain region.”<sup>592</sup> The closest relatives of American versions of the X lineage are found in Siberia, not Europe or the Middle East.

Simon Southerton, an Australian geneticist and former LDS bishop, has summarized the data from the investigation of more than 5,500 living Native Americans. His research reveals that 99.4% of Native American mtDNAs can be traced back to Asia via the maternal lineages A, B, C, D, and X. Only 0.6% came from Africa or Europe, most likely after 1492. While the X lineage also is found in Europe and the Middle East, Asian and American lineages have distinctive markers that indicate an ancient separation

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<sup>592</sup> Miroslava V. Derenko et al. “The Presence of Mitochondrial Haplogroup X in Altaians from South Siberia,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 69 (July 2001): 237-241. The reluctance of Mormons like Jeff Lindsay to accept the more recent findings, however, is evident in his hopeful anticipation that future researchers might demonstrate an erroneous mutation rate in the timing of X’s arrival to the New World. See Lindsay, “Does DNA Evidence Refute the Book of Mormon?” Even if future researchers were to revise the dates for the timing of X’s entry into the New World Lindsay’s continued speculations would remain ill founded. First of all, it is highly unlikely that revisions of the mitochondrial clock would ever place the migration of X within the time frame of the Book of Mormon’s alleged migrations. Second, revisions in the timing would not change the fact that the Siberian X haplotype is intermediate between the Eurasian and American Indian haplotypes. Third, regardless of timing, the evidence consistently points to a geographic origin in Southern Siberia, not a sea-faring voyage from ancient Israel. Fourth, the limited North American distribution of X in the New World also contradicts Lindsay’s uncritical acceptance of Sorenson’s problematic limited geography for the Book of Mormon in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Recognizing this problem, Lindsay happily reports the tentative finding by David Reed, molecular anthropologist at the University of Michigan, of a possible ancient X lineage individual from Iximché, Guatemala (David M. Reed, “Recent Activities,” retrieved electronically 30 July 2002 from <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~dmreed/Activities.html>). Reed more cautiously notes, “We haven’t prepared anything for distribution regarding the Iximché ancient DNA. We must verify our results before establishing the genetic composition of those peoples.” (David Reed to Thomas (Murphy), letter, nd. Envelope bears the postmark of 5 July 2002.) In sum, verification of Reed’s tentative results would have no bearing on the Book of Mormon because of the implausibility of Sorenson’s geography (discussed in chapter eight) and the clear evidence of intermediate forms of X in Southern Siberia, whose populations, unlike Israelis and/or Jews, exhibit all the founding mtDNA and Y-chromosomal lineages found in America.

long before the events described in the Book of Mormon. He calls this data “the most damning scientific evidence facing the Church today.”<sup>593</sup>

Research and scientists at the LDS owned institution Brigham Young University agree that the data collected to date point to Asia, not the Middle East. Molecular biologist Scott Woodward states, “It’s pretty clear that A, B, C, D and Xs are also found in Asia.” He notes, BYU has “a large sample of DNAs from South America, primarily Peru, about 6,000 samples of which we have typed mitochondrially and we find the same types of evidence that have been found by other researchers that primarily those mitochondrial DNAs are A, B, C, D and Xs and some others.”<sup>594</sup> Michael Whiting, BYU biologist, also acknowledges, “current genetic evidence suggest that Native Americans have a genetic history representative of Asia and not the Middle East.”<sup>595</sup> Non-LDS scientists like David Glenn Smith, molecular anthropologist at University of California at Davis, state the case more boldly, “Genetic research, particularly that using mtDNA and Y-chromosome markers, provides quite emphatic refutation of any such relationship between Jews and Native Americans.”<sup>596</sup>

### **Native American Y-Chromosomes**

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<sup>593</sup> Murphy and Southerton, “Genetic Research.”

<sup>594</sup> KUER Radio West, “Science & Foundations of the Book of Mormon,” Interview: Terryl L. Givens, Thomas Murphy and Scott Woodward. Host: Doug Fabrizio, Salt Lake City, UT, 19 Dec. 2002, retrieved electronically April 12, 2003 from <http://www.fairlds.org/>.

<sup>595</sup> Michael F. Whiting, “Does DNA Evidence Refute the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” streaming video of lecture at BYU on January 29, 2003, retrieved electronically April 11, 2003 from <http://farms.byu.edu>.

<sup>596</sup> David Glenn Smith to Thomas Murphy, “Aztec DNA analysis,” electronic mail July 20, 2002. See also Living Hope Ministries, “DNA vs. the Book of Mormon,” streaming video retrieved electronically April 11, 2003 from <http://mormonchallenge.com>.

Data derived from study of the Y-chromosomes of male Native Americans provide independent confirmation of the likelihood of a Siberian origin of American Indians. The study of Y-chromosomes, inherited exclusively by men from their fathers, provides a complementary means of identifying ancestral populations via paternal lineages. Early studies of Y-chromosomes published in 1994 and 1995 suggested an initial founding haplotype for American Indians.<sup>597</sup> This initial founding haplotype is identified variously in the literature as DYS199T, 1G, & M3.<sup>598</sup> Along with a second major founding haplotype, identified variously as 1C and M45, these two haplotypes appear to account for greater than 90% of the male heritage in American Indian, including Central American, populations surveyed so far.<sup>599</sup> The number of additional haplotypes is still not clearly established and is complicated by the greater degree of admixture in paternal lines. While there is some dispute over the possibility of one or two migrations researchers agree that data from Y-chromosomes point to American Indian founding populations in Siberia.<sup>600</sup> Researchers favoring a single migration date it to approximately 20-30,000 years ago, while a possible more recent migration might date to approximately 7,000-9,500 years ago.<sup>601</sup> While research into paternal lineages is not as

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<sup>597</sup> M.A. Jobling and C. Tyler-Smith, "Fathers and Sons: The Y chromosome and Human Evolution," *Trends in Genetics* 11 (1995): 449-456; and A. Torroni et al. "mtDNA and Y-chromosome polymorphisms in four Native American populations from southern Mexico," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 54 (1994): 303-318, cited in Jeffrey Lell et al. "The Dual Origin and Siberian Affinities of Native American Y Chromosomes," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 70 (2002):192-206.

<sup>598</sup> Lell et al. "The Dual Origin." T. M. Karafet et al. "Ancestral Asian Source(s) of New World Y-Chromosome Founder Haplotypes," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 64 (Mar. 1999): 817-831. Nestor O. Bianchi et al. "Characterization of Ancestral and Derived Y-Chromosome Haplotypes of New World Native Populations," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 63 (1998): 1862-1871.

<sup>599</sup> Lell et al. "The Dual Origin." Karafet et al. "Ancestral Asian Source(s)." Peter Underhill et al. "A pre-Columbian Y chromosome-specific transition and its implications for human evolutionary history," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 93 (Jan. 1996): 196-200.

<sup>600</sup> Lell et al. "The Dual Origin." Eduardo Tarazona-Santos and Fabricio R. Santos, "The Peopling of the Americas: A Second Major Migration?" *American Journal of Human Genetics* 70 (2002): 1377-1380.

<sup>601</sup> Lell et al. "The Dual Origin." Underhill, "A pre-Columbian Y."

far along as that into maternal lineages, it continues to substantiate earlier conclusions of an Asian origin derived from maternal lineages.<sup>602</sup>

*What do the experts say?*

Non-Mormon specialists who lack a vested interest in the historical claims of Mormon scripture show the depth of the problem for the Book of Mormon. David Glenn Smith, molecular anthropologist at University of California at Davis, says, “If you look at genes that are most commonly found in Native American populations, and those that are most commonly found in Jewish populations, they don't coincide at all.”<sup>603</sup> Dennis O’Rourke, molecular anthropologist at University of Utah, states, “I don't know of any data that suggests particular similarity of Native American populations to any population of the Middle East.”<sup>604</sup> Stephen Whittington, bio-archaeologist at University of Maine specializing in Mesoamerica, emphasizes the lack of supporting data from both

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<sup>602</sup> The failure of premature Mormon speculation related to mtDNA should have prompted more cautious approaches to information from paternal lines. Caution, however, has not characterized the Lindsay’s portrayal of genetics and the Book of Mormon. Lindsay has centered his attention on Karafet’s 1C (same as Lell’s M45), noting that it also appears among Europeans, and especially some Jews. Contrary to Lindsay’s anticipation of a migration from the ancient Near East to the Near East, the data analyzed by Karafet, Lell, and their colleagues (op cit.) suggest ancestral populations exhibiting M45/1C migrated both east and west out of central Asia thousands of years before the Lehite era. Brazilian geneticist Eduardo Torazona-Santos and Fabrício R. Santos from University of Maryland, College Park (op cit.), argue alternatively that a substantial subgroup of M45 haplotypes derives from recent European admixture, of which there is a much higher probability in male lines. In his premature claims Lindsay is making the same mistakes here that he has made with mtDNA haplogroup X. He pulls a single marker out of the larger context of markers pointing to a Siberian origin, ignores the relative patterns of mutation underlying the dating of the marker, overlooks inconsistencies with his acceptance of Sorenson’s limited geography (M45/C1 is widely distributed throughout the hemisphere, not concentrated in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), and postulates that if the dates are wrong that this one marker might just lend credence to Book of Mormon claims. Lindsay’s claim of M45/C1 as plausible evidence for the Book of Mormon’s account is misleading. He minimizes the larger picture to focus in on a small detail taken out of context so that it can fit his preconceived notions about the origins and heritage of American Indians. See Lindsay, “Does DNA evidence refute the Book of Mormon?”

<sup>603</sup> Joel Kramer to Thomas Murphy, “Scientist Quotes,” electronic mail, November 30, 2002. See also the interview with David Glenn Smith available at <http://mormonchallenge.com>.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

archaeology and physical anthropology for the Book of Mormon in North, South, or Central America, “Archeologists and physical anthropologists have not found any evidence of Hebrew origins for the people of North, South and Central America.”<sup>605</sup> In response to my query during his appearance at the University Book Store in Seattle in the spring of 2001 Bryan Sykes, geneticist at Oxford University, emphasized that the X haplogroup provided no evidence of an ancient European or Semitic migration to the New World. Sykes along with Russian geneticist Miroslava Derenko have publicly reiterated their agreement with Michael Crawford that “the Indian gene pool is Siberian, not Middle Eastern.”<sup>606</sup> Neil Bradman, molecular anthropologist at University College London, and Tudor Parfitt, prominent scholar on the Lost Tribes of Israel, join these other experts in their conclusions that American Indian gene pools do not exhibit evidence of an ancient Israelite migration. Bradman and Parfitt, however, have found genetic evidence linking the Lemba, a South African Bantu speaking tribe, to ancient Israel.<sup>607</sup> Even BYU’s leading geneticist, Scott Woodward, acknowledges the lack of support for the Book of Mormon from genetic data and has expressed doubt that evidence linking American Indians to ancient Israel may ever appear.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Suzan Mazur, “Mormons in the Olympic Spotlight: Polygamy and Scripture Threaten to Steal Some of the Thunder from Winter Games in Utah,” *Financial Times* 9 Feb. 2002, retrieved electronically 10 Feb. 2002 from <http://globalarchive.ft.com>.

<sup>607</sup> Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis,” 59-61. Neil Bradman et al. “The Genetic Origins of Old Testament Priests,” in *America Past, America Present*, edited by Colin Renfrew (Cambridge, UK: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2000), 31-44. Neil Bradman and Mark Thomas, “Why Y? The Y Chromosomes Traveling South: The Cohen Modal Haplotype and the Origins of the Lemba, the ‘Black Jews of South Africa,’” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 66 (Feb. 2000): 674-86.

<sup>608</sup> Scott Woodward to Thomas Murphy, “Re: Clarification of FAIR Article,” electronic mail, 9 Apr. 2002. See also Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis,” 65-66.

### Local Colonization?

BYU biologists Michael Whiting, Bill Bradshaw, and Scott Woodward along with Mormon biologists and anthropologists D. Jeffrey Meldrum, Trent Stephens, and Brant Gardner all agree that the Book of Mormon could not possibly describe the origins of all or most Native Americans.<sup>609</sup> They point to a scaled down model of a limited geography (see chapter eight) or a local colonization, as a means of escape from the implications of the genetic research. While they claim that a limited geography is more consistent with the scripture, recent analyses of the statements in the Book of Mormon demonstrate the problematic nature of this assertion.<sup>610</sup> As far as the biology is concerned, none of them actually evaluates the genetic evidence available from Central America or ancient Mesoamerica, their proposed location for the local colonization. As noted above, Whittington, a specialist in the bioarchaeology of Mesoamerica has found no such evidence for Hebrew origins of the peoples of Central America. In fact, Southerton's analysis of the data from living and ancient indigenous peoples of Central America (including Maya, Mixe, Mixtec, Nahua, Zapotec, and others) show that of 496 samples 99.2% belong to mtDNA lineages A-D, traceable back to Asia.<sup>611</sup> The evidence collected

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<sup>609</sup> Whiting, "DNA Evidence"; KUER Radio West, "Science & Foundations"; Trent Stephens, D. Jeffrey Meldrum, and Thomas Murphy, "DNA and Lamanite Identity: A Galileo Event," panel discussion chaired by Brent Lee Metcalfe, Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium, August 2001; Bill Bradshaw, respondent to Thomas Murphy, "Sin, Skin, and Seed: Mistakes of Men in the Book of Mormon," Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium, August 2002; Brant Gardner, "Tempest in the Teapot: DNA Studies and the Book of Mormon," retrieved electronically 13 April 2003 from <http://fairlds.org>.

<sup>610</sup> Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe, "Editor's Introduction," in Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe, *American Apocrypha* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2002), vii – xvii. Earl M. Wunderli, "Critique of a Limited Geography for Book of Mormon Events," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35.4 (Fall 2002), 161-197. See also the previous chapter.

<sup>611</sup> Simon Southerton, "Losing a Lost Race," manuscript copy in my possession, appendix B. The four unidentified samples could potentially belong to X or may be the product of intermarriage with Europeans or Africans.

to date from Central America is just as problematic for the Book of Mormon as that found elsewhere.

The local colonization hypothesis is far from a scientifically valid proposition and is challenged by some leading Book of Mormon scholars. It rests on what Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe call “an *ad hoc* hypothesis designed to shield a central hypothesis from adverse evidence.” This approach violates “the principle of parsimony, or Occam’s Razor, which posits that the best hypothesis is the simplest or the one that makes the fewest assumptions.”<sup>612</sup> A few of the multitude of difficulties plaguing the limited geographic model in Central America include the following. 1) It requires elaborate and fanciful reinterpretations of numerous geographical references in the Book of Mormon that suggest a hemispheric population separated by a narrow neck of land.<sup>613</sup> 2) They require that passages in the Book of Mormon suggesting the absence of earlier peoples in the Promised Land be reinterpreted as misunderstandings. For example, the Jaredite migration from the Middle East was to “that quarter where never had man been” (Ether 2:5). Lehi, likewise, claimed between 588 and 570 BC, “it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations” (2 Ne. 1:8). 3) It contradicts the official position stated in the current introduction to the Book of Mormon, that “Lamanites ... are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” 4) Their model presumes names of animals and plants, especially those of horse, cattle, and wheat, in the Book of Mormon are misnomers. 5) Their hypothesis demands either two hills named Cumorah and/or a harrowing journey by Moroni from Central America to Hill Cumorah in New York. 6) The limited geography fails to account for the multitude of historical

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<sup>612</sup> Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe, “Editor’s Introduction,” *American Apocrypha*.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, Wunderli, “Critique of a Limited Geography.”

anachronisms in the theology and biblical quotations presented in the Book of Mormon.<sup>614</sup> 7) Their model fails to deal with the other biological problems in the Book of Mormon: its use of the biblical origin story, conflation of skin color with wickedness, and the sexualized and racialized use of the concept of seed. 8) These scholars confuse a spiritual witness of the text with a historical one by presuming that a personal prayerful confirmation of the scripture is a valid means of comprehending and elucidating history and biology. 9) Their proposal begins and ends with the tautological assumption that the Book of Mormon is historical, never actually subjecting it to a falsifiable external test. In this respect, it appears to be another effort to subvert rather than apply scientific method.

Beyond the scientific problems with a limited colonization are moral and ethical dilemmas posed by this interpretive tactic. The obfuscation of the genuine problems facing historical interpretations of the Book of Mormon perpetuates the text's misrepresentations of American Indians and its discrediting of the dignity and value of Native American spiritual and cultural traditions. The limited geographic proposals have already proved unsettling for many Native American and Hispanic Mormons such as George P. Lee and Jacqui Garcia (see chapter six) who had been taught they were descendants of the peoples of the Book of Mormon. The frustration felt by at least some "Lamanites" can be illustrated by the comments and questions Jose Jaloayza posed for Dr. Whiting and his co-panelists following a presentation entitled "Does DNA Evidence Refute the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon?" at BYU on January 29, 2003.

Dr. Whiting referred to the statement in the preface to the Book of Mormon that the Lamanites are the principal ancestors of the Native Americans, I thought somewhat condescendingly, a mere commentary. I want to know exactly what the

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<sup>614</sup> Vogel and Metcalfe, *American Apocrypha*. Metcalfe, *New Approaches*. Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins*. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*.

weight of the scientific evidence does to that statement. Does it support that statement? Does it contradict that statement? With the state of the science right now should there be a different statement?

It seems to me, I'm left with the impression that it contradicts that statement and if that's the case will you join me in requesting the Church leadership to remove that statement from the Book of Mormon? Because it is now as we speak being used in the entire American continent as a missionary tool to lure members into the Church, perhaps under the mistaken impression that they are the descendants of Lamanites.

I am Peruvian. I grew up believing that I was a Lamanite. I am now overwhelmed with the surprise coming from the science, coming from the archaeological evidence. We don't know where the Book of Mormon took place. We don't know where the Lamanites are. If we don't know who the Lamanites are how can the Book of Mormon promise to bring them back?

It's an identity crisis for many of us that has to be understood. If it's misunderstood then it's going to come back to haunt the Church, in my opinion.<sup>615</sup>

The panelists declined Jaloayza's invitation to join him in requesting a change to the current introduction to the Book of Mormon and failed to address his concerns. Their dismissive response drew reprisal from two subsequent questioners, whose calls for taking Jaloayza's concerns seriously were followed by moderate applause from the audience of predominantly BYU faculty and students. Continued sidestepping of the moral and ethical issues is inevitably going to leave many Mormons, Native American or otherwise, unsatisfied.

### *Metaphysical Scripture?*

Grant Palmer, former director of LDS Institutes of Religion in California and Utah, offers an alternative response to the dilemma posed by genetic evidence. He has

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<sup>615</sup> Steven Clark, "Question & Answer Session Following Dr. Michael Whiting's Presentation," retrieved electronically 1 June 2003 from <http://salamandersociety.org/news>.

added his voice to those who see the Book of Mormon as a fictitious product of Joseph Smith.

The LDS position that Israelites “are the principal ancestors of the American Indians” is no longer probable even if a possibility still exists for the yet uncharted 1-2 percent of Indian DNA. In addition, there is no evidence that ancient Americans practiced Hebrew or Christian rituals or held corresponding beliefs. No clearly identified Hebrew or Egyptian writing has been discovered in the New World dating before Columbus.<sup>616</sup>

Palmer reviews the historical development of Mormonism’s founding events and argues that what began as metaphysical events slowly came to be understood as physical ones. He contends, “The witnesses to the Book of Mormon reportedly saw both secular and spiritual treasure guardians by ‘second sight’ or through ‘the eyes of our understanding.’ Their testimony of the Book of Mormon was not a secular event.” In efforts to facilitate missionary work Mormons have reinterpreted the spiritual witness of scripture as a material witness. He continues, “Today we see the witnesses as empirical, rational, twenty-first-century men instead of the nineteenth-century-men they were. We have ignored the peculiarities of their world view, and by so doing, we misunderstand their experiences.”<sup>617</sup>

Grant Palmer’s approach is not without its problems. These difficulties are articulated most effectively by Terryl Givens, LDS professor of English at Richmond University. In *By the Hand of Mormon*, Givens wrestles with the grounding of the Book of Mormon in mundane as well as spiritual reality. Givens finds the roots of continued debate about the book in the combination of historical and religious claims in the story of the angel Moroni and the gold plates. “Grounding the text in a history that is proximate

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<sup>616</sup> Grant Palmer, *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2002), 57.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

and verifiable proves a keenly double-edged sword, subjecting the record as it does to the exacting gaze of scholarly verification. Its claim to reveal *this* continent's history gives it an appealing relevance at the same time it raises expectations of confirmatory evidence."<sup>618</sup> Givens builds a compelling argument that the validity of Smith's prophetic status rests upon historical claims of the Book of Mormon. He rejects as nearly impossible "a comfortable middle ground—that the record is a human product perhaps meriting some divine approbation."<sup>619</sup>

With its dependence upon historical and prophetic foundations Givens claims a unique status for the Book of Mormon and discourages attempts to find a middle ground by comparison with the Bible. First, he notes, "the story of the gold plates could not be fanciful mythology and the Book of Mormon still be scripture." Then, he proposes "any attempt to find middle ground by analogizing the Book of Mormon and the Bible that does not take cognizance of this fundamental and irreducible difference between those two sacred texts may be an exercise in futility."<sup>620</sup> In his effort to draw such a sharp contrast between Book of Mormon and Biblical Studies, Givens overlooks debates over alleged forgeries and frauds in the Bible, most especially the book of law found in the temple during King Josiah's reign.<sup>621</sup> Givens also devotes inadequate attention to sociopolitical boundary maintenance (i.e. excommunication, dismissals from BYU, temple worthiness, correlation, estrangement from loved ones, public demonization by scholars at FARMS and FAIR, etc.) in the LDS Church that likewise impedes allegorical

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<sup>618</sup> Givens, *Hand of Mormon*, 12.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>621</sup> Paine, *Age of Reason*. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* Although not available to Givens, Biblical parallels are more adequately addressed by Price, "Joseph Smith." See also Finkelstein and Silberman, *e Bible Unearthed*.

readings of the Book of Mormon. Yet, he does address a perplexing dilemma. For many Latter-day Saints their testimony of the Mormon gospel hinges on the validity of Joseph Smith's status not just as a prophet but as a translator of ancient documents.

Palmer's proposal of viewing the Book of Mormon as metaphysical scripture seeks to circumvent the materialistic approach that most Mormons have taken by proposing that the foundational events did not fit that mold. Yet, Givens has produced a compelling argument that claims of secular and mundane truths via spiritual witness began with Joseph Smith himself. Regardless of which interpretation most accurately reflects the experiences of the founders of the faith, Mormons today are left with same dilemma. Presenting Smith's prophetic claims and scriptural productions as secular histories may facilitate missionary work but they are just as dishonest today as they were during the prophet's lifetime. Furthermore, the Mormon tendency to confuse a spiritual witness with a material one has done immeasurable harm to the indigenous people of the Americas. Grant's distinction between a nineteenth century encounter with God and an ancient epic may offer a path that helps Mormons to avoid the perpetuation of harm to Native American peoples and cultures.

My conclusion is that a large body of evidence demonstrates that Joseph mistranslated a number of documents. I know of no substantial evidence to support his claim to have ever literally translated any document, leaving me to appreciate his writings at face value rather than because of their antiquity. With this perspective, when I read the Book of Mormon or Pearl of Great Price, I harbor the suspicion that they represent a nineteenth-century encounter with God rather than an ancient epic. This is enlightening on a spiritual level but of no value in trying to learn more about ancient America or the Middle East.<sup>622</sup>

Today, more than ever, presenting the Book of Mormon as a history of ancient America, in whole or part, flies in the face of overwhelming scientific and historical

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<sup>622</sup> Palmer, *Insider's View*, 36.

evidence against its material validity. The text contains a cultural construction of human origins, skin color, seed, and migration that has been invalidated by the biological sciences. The imagery of sin, skin, and seed in the text serves to privilege the authority of white men at the expense of women and Native Americans and fails to meet the moral standards the scripture sets for itself when it declares “all are alike unto God,” and the Lord “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” (2 Ne. 26:10). The title page of the Book of Mormon warns that if the text contains faults, “they are the mistakes of men.” The ideas that a dark skin is a curse from God, paternal seed is endowed with creative power, and Lamanites are the ancestors of American Indians (in part or in whole) may yet need to be relegated to the category of mistakes of men. Ether 2: 27 challenges readers to humble themselves and promises that if they do so, the Lord will make “weak things become strong unto them.” This coming century will tell whether Mormons have enough humility to relegate such problematic concepts to the category of the mistakes of men.

## Chapter 10: Prophets, Proteins, and Prayer

Ultimately religions ask and answer the question of the real meaning and purpose of human life. The fatal flaw in the world religions is their propensity to try to provide answers to these questions knowing full well that both the questions and answers must come from honest and open participation in the world. The Apostle Paul, filled with the Spirit and zealous to pass on his received theological truths, found no audience in Athens because no one was asking questions. Consequently his answers, already pre-formed in his mind and pushing for expression, had no relevance to his situation. Tribal religions do not claim to have answers to the larger questions of human life. But they do know various ways of asking the questions and this is their greatest strength and why they will ultimately have great influence in people's lives.

*Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux)*<sup>623</sup>

An evening meeting on Wednesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002 with Mathew Latimer, President of the Lynnwood, Washington stake of the LDS Church, set in motion a disciplinary process to excommunicate me for apostasy. President Latimer had objected to my recent publication of the article "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics" in the May 2002 anthology *American Apocrypha*. The article outlined recent genetic research using protein polymorphisms and DNA to probe Native American origins. I had concluded, "From a scientific perspective, the Book of Mormon's origin is best situated in early nineteenth-century America, and Lamanite genesis can only be traced historically to ca. 1828. The term Lamanite is a modern social and political designation that lacks a verifiable biological or historical underpinning linking it to ancient American Indians."<sup>624</sup> When he asked if I knew "the Church's position," I expressed my doubt that the Church had a position on genetics. Latimer clarified that his interest was in my interpretation of the Book of Mormon. I confirmed that I had concluded that the Book of Mormon was a

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<sup>623</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., "Vision and Community," *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 116-117.

<sup>624</sup> Murphy, "Lamanite Genesis," 68.

nineteenth century document, a position he found contrary to the teachings of the Church. After further discussion revealed my discomfort with racist, sexist, homophobic, authoritarian, and anti-intellectual teachings at Church and my intention to continue to publish scholarly research on these issues, Latimer scheduled a disciplinary council for Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> to consider my excommunication for apostasy.

The next ten days proved to be far more traumatic for me than I initially anticipated. After sharing the news with selected friends, family, and colleagues, it quickly spread to the media. Associated Press wires carried the story nationally and internationally on November 29<sup>th</sup>. Independent stories would follow in *National Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Herald* (Everett, Washington), *Seattle Times*, *Seattle P-I*, *Christianity Today*, *Scotland On Sunday*, *Baptist Standard*, and elsewhere. National and local radio and television shows likewise followed suit. Amidst this flurry of news coverage my students at Edmonds Community College allied with Mormons and ex-Mormons to organize a series of candlelight vigils at Mormon temples and at the Lynnwood stake center timed to correspond with my disciplinary council on December 8<sup>th</sup>. They hoped to show their support of my courage and intellectual freedom. Hundreds of email messages, letters, and telephone calls offering support and concern from Mormons, ex-Mormons, Native Americans, and Christians poured in.<sup>625</sup> Amidst this attention friends encouraged me to resign rather than face a church disciplinary council. Despite my marginal status in my

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<sup>625</sup> Representative selections from some of the messages I received from Native American Mormons appear in previous chapters.

local congregation, I chose not to voluntarily sever my relationship with the LDS Church and made plans to defend my membership in the upcoming disciplinary council.

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In this concluding chapter I reflexively consider the value of my Mormon heritage and culture despite its failings so evidently displayed in preceding chapters. I offer a subjective explanation of my perplexing desire to remain a Mormon, perhaps not as a Saint but as a Latter-day Skeptic. A pivotal personal prayer in 1988 propelled my subsequent embrace of the vibrant but skeptical Mormon intellectual community. It freed me to ask difficult questions and invigorated my interest in the Book of Mormon, anthropology, and Mormon history. When I encountered the writings of Vine Deloria, Jr. over the next several years I found a fresh new perspective on religious community that helped me to balance my questions with my passion for my cultural heritage. Deloria's skeptical approach to religion and science alike offers little comfort to those seeking certain knowledge of truth from either the Book of Mormon or the scientific research that undermines it. Yet, it offers a model for how I personally resolve tensions between prophetic inquiries, protein polymorphisms, and perplexing prayers. Questions rather than answers can fuel religious expression and scientific inquiry. In both cases, too much focus on particular answers draws attention away from the power of our shared questions.

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<sup>626</sup> Friends in the ex-Mormon and Christian communities urged me to resign my membership rather than have it stripped from me. After all, they correctly noted, the only times I had regularly participated in Church services in the previous decade had been while conducting ethnographic research in Guatemala and Mexico. My recent involvement in the Mormon community had been predominantly through family gatherings, intellectual circles, Internet discussion groups, academic conferences and symposia.

### Revelatory Prayer

Terryl Givens, LDS Professor of English at University of Richmond, attributes a revolutionary model of prayer to the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's prophetic career. The Bible, he contends, limits revelation to the privilege of prophets acting in a role of national leadership. He presents the approach to prophecy and revelation in the Book of Mormon as "a study in contrast."

Through chiasmic form, thematic structure, numerous textual examples, and a final concluding instance of readerly invitation, the scripture hammers home the insistent message that revelation is the province of everyman. As a consequence, in the world of the Book of Mormon, concepts like revelation, prayer, inspiration, mystery find powerful and substantive redefinition. That may well be the Book of Mormon's most significant and revolutionary—as well as controversial—contribution to religious thinking. The particularity and specificity, the vividness, the concreteness, and the accessibility of revelatory experience—those realities both underlie and overshadow the narrated history and doctrine that constitute the record. The "knowability" of all truth, the openness of mystery, the reality of personal revelation find vivid illustration within the record and invite reenactment outside it.<sup>627</sup>

Givens locates the Book of Mormon's emphasis on personal mystical confirmation within the democratizing culture of the nineteenth century but emphasizes the particularity of Mormon experience: the revelatory production of a new book of scripture.<sup>628</sup>

The Mormon scripture invites each reader to apply this revelatory model of prayer to questions they may have about the validity of the record.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4)

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<sup>627</sup> Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 221.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-231.

During my early teenage years in southern Idaho Sunday School and Seminary teachers encouraged Mormon youth to apply this challenge and thereby gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon. Lessons were often accompanied by attention to a passage in the Doctrine and Covenants that instructed Oliver Cowdery on why his attempts at translation had failed while those of Joseph Smith had succeeded. The technique outlined in this passage served as a model for how we could obtain a spiritual witness to fundamental questions.

Behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore you shall feel that it is right.

But if it not be right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me. (D & C 9:8-9)

In these passages readers are encouraged to study first then to seek a positive or negative confirmation of a truth via prayer.

My efforts to put these scriptural passages into practice as a teenager and young adult failed to generate a response of any kind; neither a burning bosom nor a stupor of thought. I repeatedly prayed for a verification of the truth of the Book of Mormon and the LDS Church. Despite the lack of such confirmation, my partner Kerrie and I marked the highlight of our activity in the LDS Church in April 1988 by sealing our marriage for time and eternity in the Chicago temple. Yet, troubling encounters with Masonic rituals in the temple and subsequent discussions about the Book of Mormon and archaeology with a Christian friend during the months that followed propelled me to once again seek a prayerful confirmation of the validity of the Church and the Book of Mormon. Night after

night Kerrie and I read aloud selections from the Book of Mormon. After completing our daily scripture reading I knelt at the side of our bed and prayed, asking God if the Book of Mormon and the LDS Church were true. Yet, my prayerful inquiries yielded no more response than they had in my youth.

One evening in the middle of one of these efforts to seek a spiritual validation of my testimony of the Book of Mormon; I paused waiting more patiently for an answer. I thought that maybe my prayers were too rushed and that I was not giving the Spirit sufficient time to respond or at least not for me to recognize a response. As I paused and waited my thoughts began to wander. An electrifying thought crossed my mind. What if the Book of Mormon was not true? What if my Christian friend was right that there is no archaeological evidence to support the scripture's claims? Suddenly, I decided to ask a different question. In my journal I recorded the surprising result.

This time I asked if the Mormon Church was false. For the first time in almost eight years of praying about this question the confirmation came. I felt a burning in my heart and shiver up my spine. It was quite unexpected but strong and definite.<sup>629</sup>

This unanticipated and inexplicable answer to my prayer was initially devastating but would later become liberating.

When I flipped the question around, asking not if the Book of Mormon or the Church was true but false, I did not really expect an answer. Reversing the question was a rather impulsive response to doubt. The intensity of my physical and emotional response left me convinced that something had happened, but the unanticipated result left me unable to explain how the Mormon process of inquiry might be valid but the Church and

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<sup>629</sup> Personal journal entry, May 5, 1989. For a longer and more detailed account of my struggles with the LDS faith see Thomas W. Murphy, "The Journey of a Latter-day Skeptic," *Case Reports for the Mormon Alliance*, in press.

the Book of Mormon along with it untrue. The possibility that the truth claims of Mormonism might not stand up to prayerful inquiry spurred me into a vigorous intellectual examination of questions about Mormon history and scripture I previously would not entertain. While the prayer served to validate such study, I lacked a viable explanation for the seeming validity of the same technique that had yielded so many opposite answers to many other Mormons, many of whom were near and dear to me.

My activity in the LDS Church soon lapsed only to be periodically regenerated for more social than theological purposes. During a temporary period of activity in our local ward in Iowa City, Iowa, Kerrie and I had dinner with a member of our bishopric who would hand me yet another surprise. When I mentioned that my anthropology courses at the University of Iowa had raised some difficult questions about the Book of Mormon, he forthrightly and openly acknowledged his disbelief in the scripture's historical claims. He assured me that many educated Mormons have struggled with the same issues and recommended the periodical *Sunstone* and the academic journal *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* as places to turn to encounter other critically thinking Mormons. Following his advice I attended a Sunstone symposium in Chicago and subsequently joined the Mormon History Association and John Whitmer Historical Association where I found a community of Mormon scholars willing to ask difficult and probing questions of our common faith tradition. Yet, frustration with the excommunication in 1993 of several of the people whose scholarship I had begun to admire would push me back into a marginal role in my local congregation. Nonetheless I remained involved as an active contributor to the Mormon intellectual community.

## History and Religion

A book by Vine Deloria, Jr. entitled *God is Red* captured my attention at a vendor's table at the University of Iowa's 1994 Pow Wow. Deloria's book raised fundamental questions about Christianity and its theological dependence upon the validity of historical events; a reliance on writing not unlike that found in Mormonism. I had assumed that all religious traditions shared similar conceptions but would soon learn that this was a point of view limited to particular cultural traditions. Deloria explains the contrast.

Lacking a sense of rigid chronology, most tribal religions did not base their validity on any specific incident dividing human time experience into a before and after. No Indian tribal religion was dependent on the belief that a certain thing had happened in the past that required the uncritical belief in the occurrence of the event. ... Salvation and religious participation in communal ceremonies did not depend on the historical validity of the event but on the ceremonies and powers that were given to the people in the event.<sup>630</sup>

Deloria presents an image of Native religious tradition that stands in stark contrast to the Book of Mormon's obsession with the truth and power of writing, especially historical records and the validity of the Biblical accounts.

Tribal religions, as depicted by Deloria, did not need to invalidate the accounts of others. Each community had its own stories but none "asserted its history as having primacy over the accounts of any other tribe."<sup>631</sup>

The recitation of stories by different peoples was regarded as a social event embodying civility. Differing tribal accounts were given credence because it was not a matter of trying to establish power over others to claim absolute truth. To be sure, tribes that had fallen under the wide-ranging military power of the various confederacies were reminded who ran things. Under the Iroquois and Creek alliances, weaker allies had no doubt about who was in charge. But there was no

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<sup>630</sup> Deloria, *God is Red*.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

coercion to convert the smaller tribes to an Iroquois or Creek conception of past historical events and their efficacy.<sup>632</sup>

Deloria reports, “the ceremonies, beliefs, and great religious events of the tribes were distinct from history; they did not depend upon history for their verification. If they worked for the community in the present, that was sufficient evidence of their validity.”<sup>633</sup> From this viewpoint, it becomes possible to separate the efficacy of religious ritual, like prayer and prophecy, from the historical claims one might make of the emotional responses.

Deloria’s critique of the historical assumptions of Western thought is not limited to Christianity. He also targets anthropologists and evolutionary biologists for critique and occasionally ridicule. He cites Cyrus Gordon’s claims of pre-Columbian expeditions in *Before Columbus* with a note of approval and attributes the reluctance of scholars to consider pre-Columbian visits to a political objective of protecting the status of Europeans as the discoverers of the New World.

The reluctance of scholars to consider the possibility of pre-Columbian visits to the Western Hemisphere is but one example of the stranglehold that the one interpretation of history has had.<sup>634</sup>

Through vigorous attempts to discredit the myths of Lost Tribes and Mound builders, anthropologists who ruled out a complex history in favor of a simple linear one may have overreacted. Deloria urges a skeptical approach to other findings of anthropologists and biologists. In *Red Earth, White Lies* he substantively challenges the idea that ancestors of the American Indians migrated across a land bridge connecting Asia and North America,

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid., 100-101.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid., 112.

declaring that it “exists and existed only in the minds of scientists.”<sup>635</sup> He encourages the scientific community to take the knowledge of American Indian elders more seriously and decries scholars who are unable to “see more than one explanation for data or phenomena” and who “hold in great disdain all traditions except the one in which they have grown up.”<sup>636</sup> Deloria’s inquisitive dismissal of simplistic explanations challenges anthropological explanations as well as Christian ones.

Deloria takes on both evolutionary biology and creationism in his new book *Evolution, Creationism, and other Modern Myths*. Western science, he contends, has been too readily shaped by Christian beliefs. At the root of the conflict between creation and evolution is the pervasive “assumption that Christian beliefs contain accurate secular knowledge as well as religious inspiration.”<sup>637</sup> He identifies a “set of absolute beliefs uncritically accepted by science that have restricted our intellectual horizons for more than a century.”

*Monogenesis*—the idea that all life must come from one source, held to be a creator in religion, determined to be an arbitrary, unseen process in science.

*Time as real and linear*—derived from Aristotelian logic (either/or) and Christian missionary zeal (“those who are not for us are against us”).

*Stability of the solar system*—nothing has changed in our solar system since god created it or produced our sun.

*Homogeneity and interchangeability of individuals*—we allege to believe that all atoms and particles are the same, and that all humans are equal—derived from Christian theology and Greek philosophy.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 107.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>637</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Evolution, Creationism, and other Modern Myths* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2002), 15.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*

Deloria's critique hits hard for those scientists and believers who focus too much attention on the answers that science and religion proffer and too little on the questions that each asks.

The greatest strength of both Mormonism and the science that challenges its faith claims is the inquisitive process that each inspires. The call in Mormon scripture to subject spiritual truths to a prayerful inquiry and the skepticism that drives scientific method share a practice of questioning even when they differ in the methodologies employed and answers received. Yet, the Mormon belief in continuing revelation and the scientific recognition that we can only disprove, not prove, ideas should caution against the reification of any particular answers to our prayers or outcome of a scientific experiment. Contexts change, new questions emerge, and novel techniques will be forthcoming. DNA research may yet reveal evidence of pre-Columbian contacts between the Old World and New World but that evidence is far more likely to come from Asian or Oceanic seafarers than from the Middle East. It does not appear that genetic research will ever provide the type of evidence needed for a validation of the history recorded in the Book of Mormon. Yet, Deloria's skepticism towards both science and religion provides me with a model for viewing my Mormon heritage anew. I can revel in and admire the questions Joseph Smith and other Mormons have asked without attaching myself too closely to any particular answer. New questions, contexts, and techniques have changed the answers for me but the inquisitive process remains an indispensable component of my faith.

I now recognize that I previously expected prophets and prayer to deliver universal rather than particular answers to problems of human existence. I expected all

answers to come from one monogenetic source outside of oneself. I assumed that bits of gnosis or knowledge built upon each other in a linear and systematic fashion.

Following the model of questioning in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants I accepted, without any question, either/or propositions as the only method for confirming truth. The Church and the Book of Mormon must be true or false. I could not explain why or how it could be false for me and true for people like my mother who had her own prayerful confirmation of the validity of the Church and its scriptures. I was trapped in a cultural model of Aristotelian logic and Mormon missionary zeal. I did not consider the possibility that the context of my life was different from that of my mother. I had assumed that truth and the gospel were stable and unchanging and that answers to my prayer and research applied equally to her as to me. I placed too much faith in the homogeneity and interchangeability of our experiences. I simply expected too much of prophets and prayers. Until I encountered Deloria's probing and unsettling critiques of Christianity and Western science I had not considered the possibility that spiritual confirmations of truth may be specific to individuals and irrelevant for history and biology. The truth of Mormonism and science, I now believe, lies in the questions we ask not the answers we generate. The redeeming legacy of Joseph Smith, to me, is his willingness to ask difficult questions. The answers he created leave me unsatisfied but the questions inspire a vibrant faith in the skeptical veins of my cultural and religious tradition.

*Exterminating our own creations*

Deloria's critique serves as a caution against simplistic answers to the questions of the identity of Lamanites. On the one hand scientific and historical inquiry fails to generate any evidence of Lamanites prior to the revelations of Joseph Smith ca. 1828. Yet, the lack of an ancient origin of such people cannot rule out the social power that images of Lamanites have held over Mormon imaginations since that time. Mormons have imagined Lamanites primarily as if they were ancient and that belief has lent a primordial quality to their interactions with the various peoples they have identified with the descendants of Book of Mormon peoples. American Indians targeted by Mormons for conversion, extermination, incorporation, and physical and cultural transformation have experienced all too intensely the social power of such imagery.

Native people who have adopted a Lamanite identity have displayed an incredibly versatile ability to transform that image into something new. Mormon Indians have not simply submitted to the naturalization of white authority idealized in the Book of Mormon. They have emerged as capable military foes in nineteenth century Utah, leaders of schismatic movements in early twentieth century Mexico, and incisive internal critics as well as stalwart saints in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Scholars of the Book of Mormon, trapped in a monogenetic and linear view of history, have narrowed the breadth of Lamanite identity with no attention to consequences of their geographic models for the people who now imagine themselves as Lamanites. While Mormon evangelization and social programs have fostered new expressions of Lamanite identity, Book of Mormon scholars have imagined a paper world

in which Lamanites are slowly but steadily disappearing. Meanwhile, Mormon missionaries continue in their efforts to turn Indians white. Yet, assimilative tactics have not succeeded in destroying Indian cultures. Instead, native converts create innovative and dynamic expressions of Lamanite identity that often perpetuate elements of their traditional cultures. Meanwhile, Book of Mormon scholars vigorously but ironically endeavor to exterminate those creations.

### *Self and Other*

Too much pain and suffering results from the Mormon tendency to confuse our spiritual witnesses of truth with historical and scientific ones. Such confusion nearly led to my excommunication from the religious tradition of my culture and upbringing. Yet, as my students, Mormons, Native Americans, and ex-Mormons came together to light candles in support of my right to question and news media spread a story reminiscent of the Inquisition, President Latimer called me on the evening of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002 and indefinitely postponed my disciplinary council. Two months later he permanently halted all efforts to discipline me for my heretical act of questioning.

If the act of questioning faith is a transgression then I am proud to be in the company of sinners like Joseph Smith who forged a pervasive model of skeptical inquiry. Excommunication will never eradicate skepticism from Mormonism. It will not exterminate novel and unsettling expressions of Lamanite identity. Questioning and imaginative personal transformation are indelible and indispensable expressions of Mormon faith. To be a Mormon is to be trapped in a tautological cycle of creation and destruction in which we seek to eliminate the products of our own imagination.

I have come to recognize that Mormon portraits of Lamaniteness are not simply images of otherness. They are an integral part of a conversation with self. Identifying Lamaniteness has served as a necessary precondition of Mormonness. The various images of Lamanites ultimately tell us far more about Mormons than about the people selectively represented as Lamanites. Thus, unfamiliar images of Lamaniteness constitute a threat to Mormon conceptions of themselves and in particular to Mormon conceptions of whiteness. When converts adopt a Lamanite identity and employ it in a self-affirming manner, as did Margarito Bautista and George P. Lee, their positive sense of self becomes a threat to the whiteness of Mormon leadership and the privileges that status entails. When American Indians resist Mormon ascriptions of Lamanite status, Mormons experience such resistance as an assault on self. When research in history, archaeology, and the biological sciences casts doubt on the origins of the Book of Mormon and undermine the validity of its Lamanite history, the scholarship threatens Mormon self-identity. This interdependence of images of self and other has prevented Mormons from ever truly understanding American Indians on their own terms.

Not only have we failed to understand others we have failed likewise to understand ourselves. I believe that Mormons will continue to struggle with fluctuations in Lamanite identity as long as we fail to come to terms with our own history. When we write sanitized histories that remove our blemishes and hide our failures we deny the wholeness of our humanity. We construct a faith that is built upon a precarious historical artifice rather than upon a holistic knowledge of self. The method of introspective prayer that Joseph Smith advocated does not generate reliable and accurate history but it does provide an opportunity to truly know oneself. Yet, when we project the answers to our

prayers beyond ourselves and onto a historical and scientific plane then we create a dangerous and self-destructive cycle in which new historical and scientific insights necessitate a new evaluation of self. Our visions of Lamanites as anti-selves become self-fulfilling prophecies. The self we have projected onto others is a delicate and partial one that denies and seeks to destroy its own otherness. Until we learn to accept and validate the otherness coming from within ourselves, we will never be able to appreciate and understand otherness beyond ourselves.

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## Vita

Thomas W. Murphy was born 14 August 1967 in Los Angeles, California to Roy Franklin Murphy and Cheryl Ann Harmon. He graduated from South Fremont High School in St. Anthony, Idaho in 1985. He married Kerrie Sumner Murphy of Davenport, Iowa on 5 September 1985 and they have one daughter, Jessyca Brigitte Murphy, born 18 August 1986. Murphy served meritoriously in the U.S. Army in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 1990-1991. He earned a B.A. in anthropology and religion with honors and high distinction from the University of Iowa where he represented his graduating class in 1993 as commencement speaker. He has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Guatemala (1993) and Mexico (1996, 1997, 1998) and ethnohistorical research in the United States. He earned an M.A. in anthropology from the University of Washington in 1996 and this Ph.D. in anthropology, also from the University of Washington, in 2003.

Murphy's academic accomplishments, writing, teaching, and research have garnered several awards. The Elie Wiesel Foundation awarded him honorable mention for the 1993 Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics and *USA Today* selected him as a member of the 1994 All-USA College Academic Team, Second Team. He has published widely in *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Ethnohistory*, *Journal of Latter-Day Saint History*, *Journal of Mormon History*, *Mormon Scripture Studies*, and elsewhere. The Dialogue Foundation recognized his article "Laban's Ghost: On Writing and Transgression" as the best article in scripture and theology in 1997. Edmonds Community College's Student Program recognized Murphy as the "Club Advisor of the Year, 2000-2001" for his work with the Native American Student Association which also won "Club of the Year, 2000-2001." Renamed the American Indian Student Association, the club he advises, was awarded "Program of the Year, 2002-2003" for its 17th Annual Pow Wow. In 2003 Edmonds Community College awarded him tenure as Anthropology Instructor. He currently serves as the Chair of the Department of Anthropology.

The publication of "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics" in *Mormon Scripture Studies* and subsequently in the anthology *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Signature, 2002) brought international attention to his scholarship. *Financial Times* and *Indian Country Today* ran articles featuring his conclusions during the 2002 Winter Olympics, hosted in Salt Lake City. When the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints initiated disciplinary procedures in December 2002 to excommunicate him in response to this publication, a flurry of news articles, beginning with the Associated Press, followed. The *LA Times* represented him as the Galileo of Mormonism and independent stories appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christianity Today*, *Anthropology News*, *National Post*, *Scotland On Sunday*, *Indian Country Today*, *Seattle Times*, *Seattle PI*, (Everett) *Herald*, and elsewhere. Murphy's students allied with Mormons and former Mormons to organize candle light vigils at LDS temples throughout the Western United States in support of his scholarship. In light of the negative publicity and out of concern for the impact of excommunication on him and his family, the LDS Church postponed and then halted disciplinary action early in 2003.