MORMONS AND NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE ANTEBELLUM WEST

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For my mom.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Mormons and Native Americans in the Antebellum West
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Examining a host of primary sources, this thesis shows how Native Americans shifted in the eyes of early Mormons from potential converts to difficult adversaries.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT ...................................................................................................................... v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 1

- “Then Occurred the Butchery”: Murder at Mountain Meadows .................. 1
- Historiography ........................................................................................................ 2
- Sources ....................................................................................................................... 12
- Thesis Overview ....................................................................................................... 16

1  **“OUR LAMANITE BRETHREN”: EARLY MORMON CONCEPTIONS OF NATIVE AMERICANS, 1830-1845** ................................................................. 19
- Mormons in America’s Changing Racial Environment ............................................ 19
- The Lamanite: Scriptural Framework for Understanding Native Americans ..... 21
- “The Remnant Shall be Gathered”: Native Americans and Mormon Millennialism .................................................. 28
- “They did not like us at all”: Conflicts with Native Americans and Gentiles .......................................................... 35
- Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 42

2  **FALL FROM GRACE: THE LAMANITE BECOMES THE INDIAN, 1846-1853** ................................................................. 44
- “Exiles in a Christian Land”: The Mormon Westward Migration .................... 44
- “Morning fine and pleasant, no Indians”: Encounters on the Overland Trail .......................................................... 46
- “Put Ourselves in a State of Self Defense”: Community and Personal Protection ........................................................................................................... 53
- “Make Him Useful”: Assimilation Efforts ............................................................... 61
- Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 71

3  **“THE WORK OF DEATH SHOULD COMMENCE”: MORMON MANIPULATION OF NATIVE AMERICANS, 1854-1857** .................. 73
- Massacre at Elk Mountain ...................................................................................... 73
- “Again Feel They Possess Souls”: Revival of the Lamanite ................................ 75
“Preach Civilization to Them:” The Effect of Missionary Work on Indian Identity ..................................................................................................................78

“Make Them Our Fast Friends:” Native Americans as Mormon Allies .................90

“Make It an Indian Massacre:” Native Americans as Mormon Scapegoats ..........97

Conclusion ..................................................................................................................102

CONCLUSION ...........................................................................................................105

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................111

Primary Sources .........................................................................................................111

Secondary Sources .....................................................................................................113
INTRODUCTION

“THEN OCCURRED THE BUTCHERY”: MURDER AT MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

In April 1857, a wagon train of approximately 130 men, women, and children set out from Arkansas bound for California. After about four months the convoy, by then known as the Fancher train, arrived in Salt Lake City and decided to take the southern route to the Pacific Coast. This decision turned out to be a deadly mistake, as their newly proposed path would take them right through southern Utah and the heart of the increasingly hostile Mormon country.¹

By the beginning of September the Fancher train had made its way to Mountain Meadows, an idyllic and well-used stop on the California Road. The area that drew the emigrants in was “a beautiful level plateau, shut in by mountains, carpeted with luxuriant grass of the best varieties for grazing, and divided by a perennial stream of clear cold water.”² Mormons had consistently denied the Fancher party supplies and food for their animals so this inviting, rejuvenating meadow with its plentiful grazing and beautiful streams seemed like an excellent place to stop for a few days. On 7 September 1857 a group of Paiute Indians and white men disguised as Indians attacked the party. The wagon train held them off for four days, but then, on 11 September, the emigrants waved a flag of truce. Mormon leaders, who had supposedly come to the Meadows to save the wagon train, approached and offered the travelers rescue and an escort to Cedar City, the nearest settlement. The only caveat was that the emigrants must “lay down their arms and march out.”³ The party gratefully agreed, and the Mormons divided the emigrants into three groups. The wounded, children under seven years of age, and some mothers rode in wagons, followed by the rest of the women and older children who were walking. Last came the

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¹ Throughout this study, I use the terms “Mormons” and “Saints” interchangeably and equally to refer to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I use “Church” or “LDS” to designate the institutional arm of the religion.


unarmed men, each accompanied by an armed Mormon. After marching about a mile and a half, John D. Lee gave a prearranged signal and “then occurred the butchery of the unarmed and helpless men, women, and children.”⁴ According to an eyewitness, the ambush “lasted not over five minutes – not over three minutes,”⁵ yet when it was over only seventeen children under seven remained alive. The bodies were quickly and shallowly buried, and just as quickly, the Mormon Church constructed a cover-up, blaming the entire massacre solely on Indian depredation.

Scholars from Juanita Brooks in the 1940s to Ronald Walker, Will Bagley, and David Bigler in 2008 have offered interpretations of the events at Mountain Meadows and of the subsequent Mormon denial. Historians mostly disagree about the motives behind the massacre and how much responsibility Brigham Young and other Church leaders should have assumed for their participation in the massacre. This thesis does not seek to enter that historical debate. I am more interested in the immediate and total casting of culpability on local Native Americans, as well as the unquestioned acceptance of such behavior by the general Mormon community. For this study, I consider Mountain Meadows an endpoint from which to work backwards. This perspective unveils Mormon and Indian roles in the massacre as reflective of broader trends concerning American racism, formation of religious identity, responses to oppression, and western expansion. This thesis traces changing Mormon conceptions and understandings of, as well as concomitant actions toward, Native Americans in the first thirty years of the Church. The malleability of early Latter-day Saint doctrine, cosmology, and behavior is nowhere more evident than in Mormon Indian policy in the middle third of the nineteenth century.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The field of Mormon history has grown significantly in the past sixty years, becoming a “prolific division of Western and American history, requiring its own specialists.”⁶ The trend from amateur, and generally pro-Mormon, popular history to the academic study of

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⁵ John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis: M. E. Mason, 1891), 344.

Mormonism was mostly complete by 1950. The introduction of non-Mormon scholars into the field, along with increased accessibility to resources through journals, university presses, historical associations, and digitalization, has helped correct the previously myopic body of literature. The “new Mormon history” that resulted is less polarized, less polemical, more balanced, and more willing to approach controversial or difficult issues. The professionalization of the field has allowed for a critical analysis of Mormonism’s place in the national historical narrative, as well as a better understanding of the religion’s significance independent of its faith claims. Yet there are still many areas of Mormon history that remain to be explored or that have received insufficient attention. Mormon-Indian relations are one such topic. Historians Ronald Walker and David Whittaker have identified several areas within this subfield for further study: examinations of the missionaries who worked with Indians; changing Mormon perceptions of Native Americans in the visual arts, popular literature, or church literature; detailed accounts of the various missions; and aspects of Indian culture.

My own research fills some of these holes, as well as additional voids I have discovered. There is currently no authoritative and comprehensive history of Mormon Indian relations. Individual articles or chapters tend to be limited to one geographical area or period of time and concentrate on practices endorsed by Church leadership. In addition, a dichotomy exists that characterizes Mormon Indian policy as either uniquely benign and conciliatory or typically violent and inflammatory. Recent scholarship is more nuanced, but the concentration on Church leaders, particularly Brigham Young, persists.

Much of the existing literature on Mormon-Indian relations focuses on either the pre-migration period or the early years of Utah settlement. There is little to no sense of continuity of either ideas or policies from Joseph Smith’s leadership to Brigham Young’s. With a heavier concentration of work on Young’s policies than Smith’s, a significant portion of the scholarship gives the impression that Mormon-Indian relationships did not begin until the Saints settled in the Salt Lake Valley. Ronald Walker, Robert Trennert, and Lawrence Coates

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7 Ibid., 51.
are three Mormon historians who attempt to correct this assumption with their studies of Mormon Indian policy in the first decade and a half of the Church. Walker offers an intense examination of the meaning of the Lamanite identity in the Joseph Smith years. He explains that through prediction, prophesy, and preaching, Mormons internalized the millennial role of the Native Americans, ministered to them with genuine fervor, and rejoiced at conversions as confirmation of millennial expectations. Walker argues that despite Gentile, or non-Mormon, accusations of Indian tampering, Mormon-Indian relations in the Smith period were theologically motivated and sustained by the Saints’ faith. These religious beliefs about the providential destiny of the Indians “helped to shape the next several decades of the Latter-day Saint experience.”

Robert Trennert also addresses the tendency to disregard Mormon experiences with Indians prior to the Saints’ arrival in Utah with his look at the Mormons’ time in Nebraska in the winter of 1846-1847. He discusses the tensions between the federal government and the Mormons over the latter’s extralegal treaties with the Omaha and argues that the Saints’ presence agitated both federal Indian agents and the Indians whose land was being destroyed. He also demonstrates that rather than identifying Mormons as the persecuted, as is typical when referring to the first fifteen years of Mormon history, they should be classified as the persecutors, based on their treatment of Native Americans. In Trennert’s assessment, these early Indian relations were not only illegal, but also harmful to the tribes.

Writing twelve years later, Lawrence Coates supports Trennert’s overall argument that the Mormons’ stay with the Omaha in Nebraska was rife with conflict. Although Coates does mention tensions with the federal government, his main argument is that misunderstanding and miscommunication exacerbated cultural differences between the Mormons and Indians. He contrasts the Indians’ pre-existing religious beliefs and traditional lifestyles with Mormon ideas of civilization and assumptions of superiority. When this culture clash combined with resource competition, Mormon-Indian relations declined.

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10 Ibid., 21.
until the Mormons left for Utah. Coates effectively shows that the differences between the two groups were too great for the Mormons and Indians to live cordially, particularly because neither side made an effort to truly understand the other or adapt behaviors to alleviate conflict. Coates and Trennert demonstrate that Mormons encountered and learned ways to cope with negative experiences with Native Americans before they entered the Great Basin.

These three historians demonstrate the importance of the theological and ideological underpinnings of Mormon perceptions of Native Americans, as well as the impact of the earliest direct experiences that shaped future interactions. Indian relations in the pre-migration period should be explored more thoroughly because it is in the early years of the Church that ideas about Indians were first acted upon and modified as necessary to fit particular situations. The assumptions, knowledge, and understandings gained prior to the westward removal informed later action to an extent not currently fully appreciated. My work serves as a bridge between pre- and post-migration scholarship by following the Saints from New York to Utah and connecting earlier ideas with later actions.

The body of literature on Mormon-Indian relations in Utah is more extensive, although it too is generally limited to journal articles or chapters in longer studies. For example, sociologist Nels Anderson’s 1942 Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah follows the declension of the Mormon kingdom from the idea of a self-supporting, isolated, homogenous, and pious state of Deseret to a United States territory that eventually bowed to the federal government for acceptance into the union. In his examination of Mormon Indian relations, Anderson shows that Brigham Young and other Mormons ignored Indian rights to the land, consoling themselves with the idea that they were offering Native Americans a superior culture in return. The Mormons followed a basic policy of friendliness to reduce Indian depredations, to facilitate expansion, and to avoid federal surveillance. Since the Saints’ ultimate goal was to become an independent theocracy with no ties to the United States, they tried placatory measures to ensure they could continue to expand with no bloodshed. To Anderson, economic concerns determined Mormon Indian policy.

LDS historians Juanita Brooks and Leonard Arrington, however, argue that Mormon ideological and theological beliefs drove their Indian policy in Utah. Brooks argues that a

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“feeling of moral responsibility…by virtue of the Book of Mormon” influenced the early pioneers to exhibit conciliatory attitudes toward the Indians they encountered. These same sensibilities motivated the early settlers to purchase Indian children in order to improve their station in life and effect their salvation. She rejects outright the idea that the adopting families could have held ulterior motives, such as gaining free labor, with her claim that nothing other than “a strong belief that these children were worth ‘redeeming’ could have prompted” most of the adoptions. Arrington also does not probe too deeply into Mormon motivations, arguing that Mormons developed a “benevolent but protective” Indian policy after a short time in the Salt Lake Valley. In his interpretation, Mormons wrestled with the idea of Indians as worthy of help and the recognition that they required physical protection as they expanded deeper into Indian territory.

Along with conversations about the motivations behind the administration of Indian affairs, historians debate the nature of official Church policies regarding Indians. There are those scholars who see Church policy as altruistic and beneficial to Native Americans and those who cast a more critical eye at Church leadership, as personified by President Young. Anderson and Brooks believe that Young was mostly benevolent and followed the approach that it was cheaper to feed the Indians than fight them. These scholars tend to condone, and even praise, Young’s “enlightened Indian policy” for its nonviolence and tolerance. Although Anderson and Brooks recognize the economic and political benefits of a conciliatory Indian policy, they are products of their time and religious upbringing and unquestioningly accept the unique strategy as proof of Mormon exceptionalism. They are joined by fellow 1940s historians Andrew Neff and Leland Creer in their admiration for Young as a humanitarian savior. Relying heavily on Young’s personal correspondence, Neff claims that Young’s “sagacious handling and masterful manipulation of human elements” created feelings of happy accord between Indians and Mormons. Creer echoes Neff’s

15 Brooks, 14.
17 Anderson, 124.
18 Andrew Love Neff, History of Utah, 1847 to 1869, ed. Leland Hargrave Creer (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), 386.
conclusions in his look at the colonization of Utah with the claim that the “guiding genius of Brigham Young” pacified local Indians and helped develop the Great Basin’s potential.¹⁹

Historians like Howard Christy, Lawrence Coates, Eugene Campbell, and David Bigler favor a more practical and political explanation for Young’s Indian policy. To them, Young used whatever methods were most expedient to meet his changing goals and could vacillate between extreme generosity and outright extermination as necessary. Utah historian Bigler in particular emphasizes Young’s Indian relations as punitive, retaliatory, and brutal.²⁰ The critical nature of these historians’ work is partially explicable in light of the altered intellectual and cultural milieu in which they are writing. In the 1970s, Mormon history, like many historical genres, entered a revisionist phase. Non-Mormon and younger historians with new points of view changed the tone of historical discourse. The new approach stressed the conflicts, tensions, and tragedies associated with Mormon-Indian contact in the Great Basin while taking a harsher stance against Mormons for their past treatments of Native Americans.²¹

In the same issue of the *Utah Historical Quartely* in 1978, Christy and Coates examine Young’s tenure as ex-officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs to conclude that his policies evolved over time to include violence and bloodshed when necessary. Christy takes the firmer stand, going into extensive detail about Young’s extermination campaigns and ruthlessly brutal punishments, while Coates defends Young, claiming he only condoned fighting for reasons of self-preservation.²² While Christy does agree that Young would engage in retaliatory violence for security purposes, he alleges that the Mormon desire for expansion mirrored mainstream American manifest destiny and was the true cause behind most of the attacks on Indians.²³ Campbell offers a different hypothesis for Young’s apparent change of heart. He argues that the earlier peaceful policy was reversed after Young came to believe that the Indians could never be converted. His loss of faith in the possibility of native

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²³ Christy, 235.
salvation meant the “policy of benevolence and fairness would be changed.”

Christy, Coates, and Campbell come to the conclusion that Young’s adoption of the “cheaper to feed than fight” policy only came about after years of continual conflict had convinced him to find a more effective tactic in dealing with Utah’s Indians.

Twenty-first century historians have been more willing to confront the violence inherent in the Mormon occupation of the Salt Lake region while placing more emphasis on the Indian perspective. Native American historian Ned Blackhawk has demonstrated that the Ute, Paiute, and Shoshone Indians of the intermountain west have generally been rendered invisible and deprived of agency in stories of American westward expansion. Historians Jared Farmer, W. Paul Reeve, and Blackhawk and anthropologist Martha Knack have aimed to correct this deficit in recent years, centering the narrative of American settlement of the Great Basin on the Indian populations originally residing there. In Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes, Reeve considers Mormons and Indians as distinct ethnic groups outside the pale of mainstream nineteenth-century America. He describes each group’s relationship to the land, arguing that Mormons and Indians imbued the natural landscape with sacred meaning and went against prevailing norms of the Gilded Age, as embodied in the miners, that viewed land as a developable commodity. Reeve shows that Mormons and Indians struggled not only with each other but also with broader American culture for the power to define space. In Reeve’s reading, Mormon-Indian interactions were characterized by confrontation, violence, and distrust caused by incompatible belief systems and complicated by their need to validate their positions in a national social hierarchy that equated the “Indian Problem” with the “Mormon Question.”

Farmer’s 2008 On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape is also an ethnohistory that stresses the importance of geography in the relationship between Mormons and Utah’s Indians. In his study of the changing meaning of Mount Timpanogos and the Utah Lake, Farmer documents the retaliatory violence, ambushes, raids, and depredations that marked Mormon-Indian interactions in the first decade of settlement. He

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24 Campbell, 101.
argues that these clashes were brought on by competition over resources in the Salt Lake Valley, such as water, land, and fish, that mirrored the larger conflict occurring throughout the West between native rights and the Mormon incursion. Farmer claims that Brigham Young vacillated between “callous pessimism” and “cautious hope” in his Indian policies and, with pioneer diaries, demonstrates that the conflict between spiritual obligations and political and economic realities flowed to the laity as well.27 Although his focus remains on Young, Farmer is one of the few scholars to introduce the perspective of the common Mormon into the discourse.

Unlike Reeve and Farmer who zero in on the Mormon Indian experience in Utah, Martha Knack and Ned Blackhawk assess the larger narrative of American westward expansion. Knack’s chronologically expansive Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes 1775-1995 investigates the creation and preservation of Paiute ethnic boundaries. Knack looks at the social, economic, and political interrelationships that tied Paiute and non-Indian communities together and credits the Paiutes’ cultural flexibility for their ability to absorb new innovations while still maintaining their own sense of identity.28 In her work, Knack includes two chapters on the Mormon settlement of Paiute land. Her overview is by necessity general, and she concentrates on the role of religious and political leaders in colonization, explaining that their relations with Indians were ideological, yet mostly self-interested. As the Saints gained “control over virtually all productive areas and major water sources throughout Southern Paiute country,” the “Paiutes learned that in violent confrontations with Mormons, they would lose.”29 Displaced from their land, the Paiute response was to form alliances with Mormon leadership and live in relative peacefulness.

Blackhawk’s Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the American West also offers a sweeping view of the settlement of the American West as he argues that colonialism, “violence, and American nationhood…progressed hand in hand.”30 Blackhawk calls attention to the trauma that many indigenous peoples experienced as their land was invaded by whites, including Mormon pioneers. In his chapter on “Utah’s Indians and the

29 Knack, 53 and 86.
30 Blackhawk, 9.
Crisis of Mormon Settlement,” Blackhawk pinpoints economic strife as represented in competition over resources as the underlying cause of Mormon-Indian tension. He argues that the Saints’ “multipolar Indian relations” and violent paternalism destroyed native economies, causing a cycle of progressively deadly retaliation.\(^{31}\) Blackhawk’s condemnation of the Mormon’s militarized Indian policy effectively shatters the image of Brigham Young’s treatment of the Indians as beniginly benevolent.

Many of the revisionist historians acknowledge and emphasize the role of competition between Native Americans and Mormons and the violence that resulted. They also acknowledge the ethnic divisions that existed between Mormons and Indians, but their arguments do not center on racial distinctions. While they do not deny that there may be a racial component in Mormon-Indian conflicts, Reeve, Farmer, and Blackhawk locate the animus in the competition over resources. Knack’s analysis is the most pointed of the four in terms of race, but the limited space she assigns to Mormons and Paiutes does not allow for a comprehensive examination of the evolution of Mormon racial thinking about Native Americans.

Although many scholars have focused on race when it comes to Mormonism and African-Americans, race as pertains to Native Americans is an understudied segment of Mormon history. Sociologist Armand Mauss and historian Colin Kidd are the two scholars who do consider the Mormon relationship with Indians from a racial standpoint. Mauss, in *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*, argues Mormons had a religiously motivated understanding of race in which those with darker skin were considered less favored by God. Mormon interactions with Native Americans were dominated by an unresolved ambiguity. According to the Book of Mormon, Indians enjoyed divine favor and had a place in the millennial kingdom, yet Mormon experience with Indian tribes found them difficult to convert or civilize. When native tribes did not live up to Mormon religious expectations, Mauss contends that Mormon attitudes took on a racial connotation that allowed them to adopt more militant and contemptuous attitudes based on skin color.\(^{32}\) Mauss identifies the year 1845 as the terminal point by which “religious

\(^{31}\) Blackhawk, 239-245; quote from 239.

idealism had thus become a casualty of practical experience.”

As the Saints moved west onto Indian land, their opinions and conceptions of Native Americans did change. My research locates this change slightly later than Mauss’ 1845 to the early 1850s, although I do not disagree that by 1845 a foreshadowing of the shift existed.

In his look at Christianity’s influence on the construction of race, Colin Kidd comes to a slightly different conclusion about Mormon racialization of Native Americans. He claims that Mormons held lineage-based prejudices that mimicked racism but were not driven by traditional skin color categories. Instead, Mormons practiced an “unconscious racism [that] lurked under the mantle of pro-Indian philanthropy.” My research supports Kidd’s conclusions by showing that ordinary Mormons, in claiming spiritual equality with Native Americans, generally rejected scientific, color-based racism in the early years of the Church. As they entered into sustained contact with Indians on the frontier, prejudices and assumptions of native inferiority emerged. Violence gave way to philanthropy, but these responses were informed by the increased Othering of natives. Throughout their experience in the Great Basin, however, Mormons more often Othered Indians based on religious status or perceived stage of civilization, not skin color. My work with everyday Mormon understandings of and reactions to Native Americans strengthens elements of both Mauss’ and Kidd’s analysis.

Mauss and Kidd offer intellectual histories, tracing thoughts and theories through time. However, they do not attempt to investigate how these ideas trickled down through the Church hierarchy to Mormon laity. There is little to no discussion on how religious theories translated into secular practice or how convictions became actions. I aim to bridge this gap with my work by moving between the influential and the experiential. I explore the intellectual forces that shape the framework for understanding Native Americans and follow these over time and space to reveal how the framework changes. In so doing, I avoid the insularity intrinsic to earlier studies that are restricted to the Joseph Smith period or the settlement of Utah. In addition, I integrate Mormon-Indian interactions to show how beliefs influenced acts and to explore the relationship between leadership and laity. By moving

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33 Mauss, 42.

between what is happening at the official policy level and what is happening on the ground, I am best able to illustrate the connections between religious hierarchy, western migration, faith, and the construction of race.

In adopting this vantage point, I show that the assignment of guilt to Native Americans for the Mountain Meadows massacre was not only a natural extension of Mormon thought and feelings about Indians, but an inevitable conclusion to the tension building in Salt Lake City. I argue that the Mormon participants at Mountain Meadows felt it was acceptable to frame Indians because their worldview had shifted. Instead of their original beliefs in which Indians were to be understood in religious terms as harbingers of the millennial reign of Christ, Mormons adopted the attitude that Indians were to be used for practical purposes as workers and, more importantly, defenders of the Mormon kingdom. Increasingly racialized rhetoric accelerated this transformation, as did ongoing resource competition with local Indians. As Mormons minimized certain spiritual beliefs and adjusted their conceptions about natives, interactions changed as well. On that September day at Mountain Meadows abstract ideals manifested as physical actions, and the Fancher party were not the only victims.

**Sources**

The stories of rank and file Mormon men and women may have been largely ignored in historical analysis, but their contributions to settling the West and building the lasting foundations of the Mormon Church should be, and can be, explored. As biographer Ronald Barney has observed, the “under-represented, quiet majority of Mormonism” has much to tell scholars about life for the “worker bees of the kingdom.” The LDS Church supported a definite “hierarchical structure imposed by divine appointment” in the nineteenth century. Travelogue author Phil Robinson identified the top layer of Church leadership in Utah as consisting of seventeen men: the President, two Councilors to the President, twelve Apostles, and two Councilors to the Apostles. Much has been written about these men who were responsible for the ecclesiastical and administrative leadership of the Church, but I want to

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37 Phil Robinson, *Sinners and Saints: A Tour Across the States, and Round Them with Three Months Among the Mormons* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 113.
reorient the focus to the bottom of the pyramid. For the purposes of this study, I concentrate as much as possible on average Mormons. By that, I mean Mormon men and women who do not belong to the elite stratum of power. When it is necessary to introduce the views of Church leadership, I do so to illustrate if and how their beliefs and ideas influenced their followers. More than anything, I am interested in the experiences of the common Mormon.

The voice of the ordinary Mormon can most easily and accessibly be found in the multitude of journals, diaries, and autobiographies that remain from the westward migration journey and settlement of Utah. I agree with Barney that “the essence and marrow of Mormonism is [best] understood through the lives of its participants.”38 The journalists’ notations of everyday life, whether simple and brief or complex and lengthy, are windows into the past that glorify the average Mormon “peasants” who settled the Great Basin.39 These records of everyday life speak for lay Saints and reveal their concerns, fears, expectations, and beliefs. Literary critic Steven E. Kagle has identified that nineteenth-century American diary writers often mixed external incidents and introspective observations.40 The same pattern is evident in Mormon journals as descriptions of mundane tasks like visiting a sick neighbor are inscribed alongside ruminations about a patriarchal blessing bestowed upon the writer. Diarists generally wrote unguardedly, having few reasons to lie in the pages of private journals, and it can be assumed that the authors believed what they wrote. John Mack Faragher found as much in his extensive study of early nineteenth-century American diaries: the confidentiality of a diary made it “a more open and honest reflection of contemporary thought and feeling than other sources.”41 Uncensored personal writings are the closest scholars can get to their subjects, and studying them is the most effective way to enter the minds of these historical actors. When an investigation, such as this one, endeavors to determine how a people felt or thought about a particular issue, diaries serve as the most expedient conduit to the past.

38 Barney, xviii.
The difficulty of working with personal writings, as literary scholar Lillian Schlissel has pointed out, is determining if the writers are indeed indicative of wider social patterns. Similarities in subject matter, tone, and cultural assumptions between the dozens of diaries examined for this study have established their representativeness. In addition, many of the claims based on autobiographical evidence made in this thesis are supported or supplemented by other outside evidence. That the two are usually in direct agreement is a further indication that Mormon personal writings can accurately, if inadvertently, capture larger public opinions.

Mormon journals, diaries, and autobiographies were typically intended for a small and private audience, and their ability to influence others of their time was minimal. The Mormon press, however, had a large and receptive audience as well as considerable influence over public opinion. Print media exploded in the nineteenth century and provided most Americans with local news, entertainment, and some knowledge of foreign affairs. Correspondingly, there was a surge in theological publications from all denominations, including the Latter-day Saints: “almost all religious groups began to sponsor these quarterlies, which were as heavy with print as they were leisurely in argumentation.” The first LDS-sponsored publication went out in 1832, only two years after the founding of the Church itself, and there has been an almost continuous Mormon press ever since. Through persecutions, relocations, and modifications, the press remained a constant source of information about Church beliefs, precepts, and concerns for Saints scattered throughout first the nation and then the world. These early periodicals were unabashed organs of the Church as they disseminated local and national news, explanations of Mormon doctrine, practical advice, religious discourse, and missionary reports. As Church membership grew, the press emerged as “one facet of the church’s central authority.” Brigham Young felt the press should be an extension of the priesthood for Saints at home and abroad. Mormon leaders


understood they could mold the press into the voice of the Church by appointing a trusted Saint as editor, which allowed them to exercise control over content.\textsuperscript{45}

Above all, the purpose of these periodicals was communication. As they relocated and settled new areas, Mormons sometimes found themselves far from population centers. There were also small groups of converts scattered throughout the states who had perhaps accepted Mormonism when a missionary visited, but who no longer had a strong religious community. Until these Saints gathered in Nauvoo or Salt Lake City, they depended on these irregularly received publications for news and education. Mormon leadership knew it was “necessary to establish newspapers and periodicals to keep them [Church members] apprised of the events of the time.”\textsuperscript{46}

Newspapers were paramount to inculcating uniform values to the laity, clarifying tenets of the faith, demonstrating the exceptionalism of the new Church, offering scriptural interpretation and defense, and scolding those who disobeyed Church doctrine or principles. This reification of Church regulations in the pages of these periodicals suggested that the press exercised considerable influence upon the readership’s thinking and behavior. The newspapers served as a sort of one-way communication from leadership in lieu of personal visits. The popularity of the papers indicated that the Mormon community desired the direction that these early periodicals provided. Members of the early Mormon Church were mobile, and they carried copies of the newspapers with them as they traveled. Journalism thus helped create and reinforce a sense of shared identity that sustained the Saints even as they moved west. Print culture was one way for a mobile and diffuse community to standardize thinking and build a homogenous “social structure and belief culture.”\textsuperscript{47}

It is fair to assume that newspapers informed Mormon thinking about Native Americans with what the editor chose to print. Letters, reports, or reprinted articles from other newspapers appeared in the pages of the \textit{News} at the editor’s discretion. His decisions shaped public perception, but also reflected common understandings of Indians. The newspapers were to present “the thoughts, positions, incidents, and movements of individuals

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 90-91.


\textsuperscript{47} Saunders, 25.
and of nations…as in a mirror – a reflex of the thoughts and progress of man and the world." The paper identified certain characteristics with Native Americans, impressed them upon the general population, and then printed stories to prove those characterizations. From original ideas of Indians as spiritually significant to later ideas of natives as dangerous, ordinary Mormons learned how to think about Native Americans through the Church-sponsored press.

Of course, print journalism did not reflect the viewpoints of all Mormons. Reactions to Native Americans could vary based on proximity to population centers, security within the settlement, gender, Indian tribe, and recent events. As well, Church newspapers were innately biased and operated within restrictive agendas. Newspapers are valuable for their ability to show historians culturally available ideologies that members of a particular society may have tapped into. Conclusions can then be compared to evidence from additional resources, such as personal writings, sermons, or government documents, for verification and authentication.

Examination of Mormon newspapers and life writings reveals one way in which religious beliefs and ideas trickled down from religious leadership to the common folk. Everyday Mormons acted upon what they absorbed from the press and the pulpit. Rhetoric came to life when Mormons encountered Indians, whether in missionary work or in violent confrontations. Many times the Mormon response was as preached, but as the Saints stabilized their settlements in the Salt Lake Valley, ordinary Mormon actions toward Native Americans diverged from leadership’s goals.

**THESIS OVERVIEW**

The overarching question that drives the thesis concerns this interplay between ideas and actions. I explore the ways in which ideas about Indians percolate down to the laity, the extent to which they are absorbed, and the behaviors that result. Mormon scripture, sermons, and the press establish an ideological framework while journals, letters, and autobiographies show how the lay Mormon response fits within it. Themes of racialization, oppression, faith, retribution, and marginalization intertwine throughout to show the harsh consequences when romanticized identities clash with reality.

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The first chapter argues that early Saints sustained a primarily religious understanding of Native Americans in the earliest years of the Church, despite conflicts with the federal government and Indian tribes. Looking at scripture and early newspapers, I show that Mormon converts accepted two themes exhibited in methods of mass communication: the possibility of Indian redemption and the role of Native Americans in Mormon millennial hopes. In the first sixteen years of the Church’s existence, ordinary Mormons embraced the millennial destiny of Native Americans as laid out in the Book of Mormon. Their faith enabled many early Saints to transcend the racial thinking of their time and claim religious brotherhood with Indians. Later persecution should have strengthened the bonds of affinity between Mormons and Native Americans, as Mormons became Others to settlers along the American frontier. Now outcast outsiders themselves and competing with Indians for food and natural resources, lay Mormons instead turned to violence to establish their dominance.

The second chapter argues that Indians had descended from potential Saints to definite savages in the Mormon collective imagination by the early 1850s. An intense examination of pioneer diaries and the continuing press pinpoints the migration to and settlement of Utah as the pivotal period in which ordinary Saints sublimated their religious sentiments to a harder, more practical stance towards Native Americans. Lived experience overrode imaginary romantic conceptions, leading to increasingly punitive and violent Indian relations informed by pervasive fear and distrust.

The third chapter argues that vestigial beliefs in the redemption of the Indian surfaced in a series of Indian missions in 1855, but Mormon concern over the continued sustainability of their kingdom in the face of federal pressure eventually won out in Mormon Indian policy. Missionary diaries and mission records revealed that, although missionaries themselves hoped for conversion, the true goal of missions was control and influence. Church leadership increasingly deployed racialist messages that painted Indians as inherently different and inferior. Self-interest and self-preservation overrode any interest in Indian salvation as Mormon leaders hastened to shore up defenses against an incoming federal army. Indians were seen as utilitarian military allies rather than potential spiritual equals. The fluidity of early Mormon theology permitted reconstruction of native identity, yet that identity as an Other became more rigidly defined after the Saints arrived in Utah. The impending Utah War further solidified the Otherness of Native Americans as Mormons progressively perceived
them as sacrificial allies or scapegoats. By the time of the Mountain Meadows massacre, it was as natural for the Mormons to play on Indian fears to ensure their cooperation in the slaughter as it was to blame them after the fact.
CHAPTER 1

“OUR LAMANITE BRETHREN”: EARLY MORMON CONCEPTIONS OF NATIVE AMERICANS, 1830-1845

MORMONS IN AMERICA’S CHANGING RACIAL ENVIRONMENT

In the winter of 1831 four Mormon missionaries set out on foot from Manchester, New York bound for Independence, Missouri. They walked over “vast prairies and through trackless wilds of snow,” facing harsh winds and intense cold. The houses were “few and far between,” and the road was usually obscured. The men carried everything they needed, including clothing, books, and bread “so frozen that we could not bite” through it, on their backs as they waded through snow up to their knees. After journeying fifteen hundred miles over the course of four months, the missionaries reached their destination and began earnestly proselytizing to their intended audience: Native Americans on the frontier.49 Recent converts to the newly formed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the missionaries unquestioningly accepted revelations from their prophet Joseph Smith that ordered them to the edges of civilization to bring the gospel of the Book of Mormon and redemption to the Indian tribes.

What did it mean that these men were willing to leave their lives in New York for an uncertain future in a dangerous land, all for the sake of converting American Indians? For Native Americans, the Book of Mormon opens with a dedication and a promise. First published in 1830, the Book of Mormon asserted that the new scriptures were “written to the Lamanites [American Indians], who are a remnant of the house of Israel.” The dedication further pledged that these Lamanites would learn “what 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

49 This account of the 1830-31 Lamanite mission is adapted from Parley P. Pratt, Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, ed. Parley Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980), 51-52.
forever.” The missionaries’ actions showed that they embraced the new scripture, believed its promises, and took its messages to heart. An examination of Mormon thought and behavior in the first sixteen years of the Church’s history proves that this faith initially directed Mormon-Indian relations.

At a time when the federal government was forcibly removing Indians beyond United States’ borders, Mormons were actively reaching out and claiming religious solidarity with native tribes. In addition, Mormons defied a changing racial climate that increasingly defined and reinforced a color-based social hierarchy by insisting that Indians were as deserving of and receptive to salvation as any white American. Historian James Stewart argues that the American North entered “racial modernity” in the late 1830s as beliefs about African-Americans’ inherent inferiority and the necessity of racial separation permeated Northern society, politics, and culture. Identity in the North was solidified by pigmentation and enforced by *de facto* segregation. Color racism spread quickly to the South where the ideas that races were fixed, permanent, determined by environment, and hierarchical took root. White scientists advanced archaeological, anthropological, and geological evidence as proof that blacks were naturally subservient and Indians were incapable of civilization. In addition to science, visceral understandings of race substantiated by sensory stereotypes, “racial common sense,” and a person’s “reputation, associations, and appearance” contributed to racial construction in the mid-nineteenth-century South.

Mormon racial attitudes toward Native Americans differed from their contemporaries. Early Saints did not trouble themselves with the scientific justifications for racial differences; rather, they drew from scripture and tried to live up to the ideals set forth in the Book of Mormon. Faith defined their racial convictions in this period. Similar to French treatment of indigenous peoples in Canada in the 1800s, the Mormons sought to elevate frontier Indians as a racial group by encouraging adoption of white ways.

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50 *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), title page.


Native Americans with a patronizing cultural and religious superiority, claiming to know not only the Indians’ past but also their future, yet they evidenced little concern over native skin color.

Early Mormons, much more so than the Church’s later adherents, absorbed Church teachings as propounded in various ecclesiastical publications and acted toward Indians in ways that reflected their religious convictions. The ideological framework for understanding Native Americans was laid out in Mormon scripture, including the Book of Mormon and founder Joseph Smith’s revelations, and in other Mormon publications like newspapers and missionary tracts. Woven through these methods of mass communication were two themes: the possibility of Indian redemption and the pivotal role of Native Americans in Mormon millennial hopes. It is evident from examining Mormon scripture, the Mormon press, and Mormon-Indian contact prior to the westward migration that early Saints regarded Native Americans in a religious light. This chapter will explore how religious theories translated into secular practice and how convictions became actions, as well as how ideas were transformed as they trickled down through Church hierarchy to Mormon laity. This chapter will also examine Mormon ideas through 1846 about Indians, demonstrating that Mormons pictured Native Americans in a primarily spiritual context and as a necessary component of the fulfillment of millennial prophesy in the earliest years of the Church.

**THE LAMANITE: SCRIPTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING NATIVE AMERICANS**

In Mormon tradition, Joseph Smith received the golden plates that would become the Book of Mormon from the angel Moroni in 1827. After a laborious process of translation, Smith published the new scriptures in 1830. Offered partially as an authoritative history of the New World, the Book of Mormon revealed that a colony of Israelites from Jerusalem had arrived on the American continent almost four millennia prior to the discovery of the golden plates. The initial colony eventually divided into two groups, the Nephites and Lamanites, who were locked in an almost continuous war of good versus evil. The Nephites were originally righteous followers of the Lord whom the Lamanites had rejected. The Book of Mormon traces their internecine conflict until “the Lamanites have hunted my people, the
Nephites, down from city to city and from place to place, even until they are no more.”

After defeating the Nephites, the Lamanites broke into many tribes and scattered throughout the Americas. Although the Lamanites were summarily abandoned by God for their disbelief, the Book of Mormon prophesied that this remnant, the descendants of Jacob and the lost tribes of Israel, would be redeemed: “And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore they shall be restored…to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.” Mormons believed Lamanites to be among the ancestors of modern-day Native Americans.

Historians have long debated the source of Smith’s understandings of Native Americans as laid out in the Book of Mormon. While some historians recognize Smith’s inspiration as divine, others offer secular interpretations. Philip Barlow suggests that religious themes of antebellum America and Smith’s cultural surroundings, including beliefs in the imminent millennium, America as a chosen nation, and Indians as the lost tribes of Israel, were unconsciously woven into the Book of Mormon. Richard Abanes argues that Smith’s exposure to tales he heard as a teenager and “books, newspapers, and clergymen, promoting various ideas about Israel’s lost Ten Tribes” influenced the incorporation of these ideas into the Book of Mormon. John Brooke suggests that it was not the literature Smith was exposed to, but his circle of acquaintances that influenced the story of the Lamanites. Oliver Cowdery, one of the men who helped Smith translate the Book of Mormon, was familiar with the work of Ethan Smith (no relation) and others who argued that the American Indians were the Lost Tribes. Åke Ström finds enough parallels between Indian religion and Mormon doctrine, including polytheism, belief in pre-mortal spirits, and mysticism, to postulate that Smith may have appropriated spiritual elements of the Delaware tribe near his home in Palmyra, New York. Most recently, Colin Kidd has interpreted Lamanite inclusion

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54 Mormon 8:7.
55 2 Nephi 30:5.
in Mormon scripture as a “racialist misreading of the curse pronounced on Cain and Ham,” especially prominent in the pointed description of Lamanite skin as dark and cursed.\(^{60}\)

Regardless of Smith’s revelatory or cultural influences, the point remains that he held strong convictions about Indian redemption that preceded the publication of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon became a vehicle for their expression, and its adherents accepted its veracity. Parley Pratt stated in a missionary tract that the Book of Mormon “contains some of the most sublime truths ever revealed to man” and expressed his absolute trust in its authenticity.\(^{61}\) Pratt’s position made his devotions more public, but other early Saints held comparable views. Almost every nineteenth-century Mormon diary, journal, or autobiography began in the same manner: a recitation of the writer’s lineage, followed by the story of his or her conversion to Mormonism. William Draper said simply of his conversion in January 1832, “I heard Brigham Young preach the same gospel [of the Book of Mormon] and I believed it.”\(^{62}\) Joel Johnson embraced Mormonism at the age of eighteen and recorded in his autobiography that, after much comparison of the Book of Mormon with the Bible, “I concluded that work was of God and embraced with all my heart and soul.”\(^{63}\) Nancy Tracy recalled that immediately upon adopting the new religion, she tried to convert her family, noting that she “was full of the Gospel…[and wanted] to bear my testimony to them of the truth of Mormonism.”\(^{64}\) Similarly, when Phineas Howe Young converted in 1830, he “bore a powerful testimony to the work” and preached a sermon so inspired he forgot “everything but my subject.”\(^{65}\) Mormon converts knew without a doubt that the new gospel was genuine and true, and they wholeheartedly accepted the Book of Mormon. Their personal writings and actions showed that they were prepared and willing to live their beliefs.

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\(^{61}\) Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York: W. Sandford, 1837), 128.


\(^{64}\) Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, Autobiography, BOAP, page 3.

Before the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was even incorporated, Smith received a revelation regarding the Lamanites. This revelation, in July 1828, informed Smith that the Indians “had dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers,” yet there was hope. In time, the Lamanites “might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ…and through their repentance they might be saved.”66 Despite their drift from godly ways, the Indians could still be redeemed. Smith and his disciples took this idea to heart and in 1830, only months after the Church was officially founded, the first Mormon Indian mission was launched.

In the fall of 1830, Smith received revelations that identified four Lamanite missionaries and instructed them on their mission. The first was given through Smith to Oliver Cowdery and told Cowdery that he “shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them.”67 Peter Whitmer, Jr. received a personal message from God through Smith: “Peter, that you shall take your journey with your brother Oliver…[and] you shall open your mouth to declare my [God’s] gospel.”68 One month later, the elders of the Church expressed interest in proselytizing to the Indians but were unsure if a mission was the Lord’s will. Smith had a revelation in response that named Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson as the two additional missionaries to join Cowdery and Whitmer.69 On 17 October 1830, the four men signed a missionary covenant that affirmed that they were “to go forth unto the Lamanites, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy unto them.”70 The missionaries showed no hesitation in their avowals to “do this business, and this glorious work” as directed by the Holy Spirit.71 These four men were exceptional in their commitment to Mormonism and Smith. All were ordained elders and three of the four died in the Church. Cowdery assisted Smith with the translation of the Book of Mormon, and both he and Whitmer were witnesses to the golden plates. Pratt was one of the Church’s most fervent missionaries. Although

69 D&C, 32:2-3.
70 “Missionaries Covenant, 17 October 1830,” in Vogel, 3:505.
71 Ibid.
Peterson later apostatized, he was a Church member in good standing at the time he undertook the Indian mission.

The four traveled nearly 1500 miles “through a wilderness country, in the worst season of the year” to initiate their mission among the Lamanites.72 Along the way, the men preached to a few Indian tribes, including the Cattaraugus of New York and the Wyandots of Ohio, and made presents of the Book of Mormon as a “record of their [Lamanite] forefathers.”73 Although the missionaries exhibited an air of spiritual paternalism, they harbored deep faith in the Indians as people of promise.

Once in Missouri, Cowdery and Pratt commenced their mission among the Lamanites by meeting with the Delaware while Whitmer and Peterson stayed in Independence. The Delaware chief, Mr. Anderson, soon agreed to call a council of approximately forty men to listen to the missionaries’ message. Cowdery told the assembly of a time when their ancestors “‘prospered, and were strong and mighty; they cultivated the earth; built buildings and cities; and abounded in all good things.’”74 Cowdery and Pratt presented the Book of Mormon, which they claimed revealed truths of native heritage, to the chief in the hope that “he will cause [it] to be read and known among his tribe.”75 Cowdery further promised that acceptance of the Book and the Mormon religion would ensure that the Indians would be “‘restored to all their rights and privileges.’”76 According to Pratt’s account, the two evangelists stayed among the Delaware for several days, during which time “nearly the whole tribe began to feel a spirit of inquiry and excitement on the subject.”77 The autobiography does not indicate if any Delaware formally converted, but Pratt’s tone was positive and belief in the possibility of Indian redemption obvious.

The conception of Indians as worthy and capable of exaltation equal to the white man clearly existed in early Mormon thought, but the missionaries distinguished between white men and Indians. Their ingrained assumptions about native inferiority became obvious in

Cowdery’s sermon. He described the arduous journey he and his fellow evangelists had undertaken to reach the Delaware and insinuated that the Indians should feel gratitude for the Mormon presence and message. He explained that the Book of Mormon revealed that their forefathers had once “cultivated the earth; built buildings and cities, and abounded in all good things,” but the Lamanites’ wickedness overcame them as they descended into violence and degeneracy. If the Indians would accept the Book of Mormon, however, they could be restored to their former glory. Speaking as if to children, Cowdery told the gathered Delaware that receipt of the Book of Mormon “would do them good.” He seemed genuinely driven to share the Lamanite story as laid out in the Book of Mormon, with no recognition that his assumptions of cultural and religious superiority were both condescending and paternalistic.

Cowdery was clearly not color-blind, but the racial hierarchy established in his mind was based on acceptance of the new Mormon dispensation. While he referred to the gathered Indians as “red men” and to white Americans as the “pale faces” it seemed to be an unconscious adoption of nineteenth-century vernacular rather than a value judgment. The first missionaries did not attach as much importance to Indian skin color as they did to religious development. For Cowdery and other early Mormons, if Native Americans were willing to “receive this Book and learn the things written in it,” they would regain favor with the Lord and live in peace and equality with the Mormons. Even though the missionaries were native New Englanders, the Church of the 1830s and early 1840s rejected the scientifically-supported biological racism that arose in the North and spread to the South, at least when it came to Native Americans. As there was little else to distinguish them from their eastern countrymen, the difference must have lain in their religious beliefs. That they were able to transcend the racial thinking of their time says much about the strength of the early Mormons’ faith.

An affinity for Native Americans became apparent with the first mission. Cowdery addressed the Delaware as “red brethren,” a sentiment echoed by Newel Knight almost fifteen years later when he referred to Pawnee, Ponca, and Sioux Indians as his “Lamanite

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78 Pratt, Autobiography, 55.
79 Pratt, Autobiography, 42.
80 Pratt, Autobiography, 55-56.
brethren.”

The perceived connection between Mormons and Indians also manifested itself in glossolalia, a charismatic experience common in early Mormonism. Adopting Indian habits or languages seemed to be an accepted way to express these spiritual gifts. Jesse Crosby, a Canadian convert, described a meeting in which “the language or dialect of various tribes of the American Indians was spoken, and that too by persons who had never spoken with an Indian in their lives.” Crosby could confirm that these were indeed Indian languages because he had the occasion later in his life to travel among various Indian tribes and “recognized not only the language, but the gesture and very manner in which it was spoken.” Sometimes the Holy Spirit would appear in a different way, inducing trances or visions. John Corrill reported in his 1839 History of the Mormons that, when entranced, Church members “imitate[e] Indians in their manoeuvres.” Non-Mormon reporter Josiah Jones similarly informed his readers in The Evangelist that some Mormon converts “perform many of the Indian maneuvers, which they try to imitate in various ways” when they are “carried by the spirit.” Non-Mormon writers were likely reporting on these behaviors to emphasize Mormon difference, but Mormons who integrated Native Americans into their spiritual experiences were demonstrating not only their sympathy for the Indians but also their faith in the absolute truth of the Book of Mormon. Crosby made this connection explicit when he claimed that his co-religionists spoke in “the language of these wandering outcasts” because of the “promises made to their fathers” in the Book of Mormon. The strong desire to see Book of Mormon prophesy fulfilled could express itself in the outlet of spiritual gifts.

Despite feelings of sympathy for Native Americans and adoption of Indian mannerisms in ecstatic moments, the first Indian mission went largely unnoticed by the small Mormon population of the early 1830s. Knight mentioned the mission in passing in his diary, but he did not imbue it with any significant import: “Brother Oliver Cowdery had been called by revelation to go with Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, and Peter Whitmer, Jun., to preach to

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 John Corrill, History of the Mormons (St. Louis: n.p., 1839), BOAP.
85 Josiah Jones, “History of the Mormonites, Kirtland, 1831,” The Evangelist 9 (1 June 1841), BOAP.
86 Crosby, page 2.
the Lamanites.”

Knight, like Pratt, left the success of the mission ambiguous. The importance of the mission was not in the number of converts, but in how it symbolized Mormon understanding of the Indian’s theological and racial role laid out in the Book of Mormon. In the Mormon Church’s first official encounter with Native Americans, the missionaries rejected a hierarchical color-based racial identity for natives and instead viewed them as potential spiritual equals.

**“THE REMNANT SHALL BE GATHERED”: NATIVE AMERICANS AND MORMON MILLENNIALISM**

Mormons of this period seemed less interested in general with converting Indians than in the role Native Americans would play in the impending second coming of Christ. Mormons, like many evangelical Christian groups, harbored “a surge of burning hope for personal conversion and millennial splendor” in the tumultuous years of the 1830s. The millennium was something to anticipate, and its arrival was the goal of many religious movements during this time period. As premillennialists who believed that Christ would appear on Earth in physical form to inaugurate a thousand year reign, Mormons were no exception.

One of the most important tenets of Mormon millenarianism was the gathering of the remnants of Israel, including the Indian tribes, to the kingdom of Zion. Concentrating Native Americans to a “local, Indian Israel” was imperative to ushering in the Second Coming. The theme of the gathering and Indian salvation as a necessary precondition to the millennial reign was prevalent in Mormon rhetoric. It could be found in Mormonism’s open scriptural canon, prophetic pamphlets, and the Mormon press. These influences helped establish the millennial understanding of Native Americans that dominated Mormon thinking prior to the westward migration.

Smith continued to receive revelations concerning the gathering of the Lamanites throughout the Saints’ time in Kirtland, Ohio, and later in Jackson County, Missouri. In a

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87 Knight, page 12.
March 1831 revelation, the Lord addressed Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt, and Leman Copley through Smith and promised them that “before the great day of the Lord shall come…the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose.”  

This revelation indicated that redemption and uplift of the Indians would have to occur before Christ would return. Another revelation in March listed several signs of the Second Coming that the Saints would recognize. The revelation warned of natural disasters, divine punishment of non-believers, the appearance of angels, “blood and fire and vapors of smoke,” and that “the sun shall be darkened and the moon to be turned into blood, and the stars to fall from heaven.” Along with these prophesies was one more: that the “remnant shall be gathered unto this place [Zion].” Smith’s revelations were published as the Doctrine and Covenants and were accessible to the general Mormon population as early as 1835. These ideas about the Lamanites would have been available to the Saints, even as the business of the Church focused Smith’s attention elsewhere.

Smith’s greater obligation may have been to building the Church, but he did not entirely forsake his beliefs in Indian redemption. At the dedication ceremony of the first Mormon temple in March 1836, Smith offered a prayer given to him in a revelation. In the midst of a busy and trying time, Smith asked God “to have mercy upon the children of Jacob…and cause that the remnants of Jacob, who have been cursed and smitten because of their transgression, be converted from their wild and savage condition to the fulness [sic] of the everlasting gospel.” The public nature of the dedication ensured that hundreds of Saints were favorably exposed to the idea of Lamanite redemption. Later publications and reprints of the speech would have reinforced this idea to a much wider audience, as well as strengthened the connection between the newly formed Church and Native Americans.

Early Mormons would have also been exposed to providential conceptions of Native Americans in Parley Pratt’s 1837 millenialist pamphlet A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People. Pratt explained and elaborated on LDS doctrine and teachings, including three themes regarding Native Americans: lineage, religious salvation, and role in the impending millennium. Pratt told readers that, although Native Americans were “the seed that the Lord

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92 D&C, 45:43.
hath cursed,” they were still of the chosen nation of Israel.\textsuperscript{94} Pratt’s explication of the origins of the American Indian in \textit{A Voice of Warning} revealed that the Indian tribes were of the family of Ephraim, one of Joseph’s sons, and consisted of “a race of men, evidently of the same origin, although as evidently divided into many nations.”\textsuperscript{95} A direct biblical lineage connected the natives of America to ancient Israel. Alternately referred to as the “remnants of Joseph” or Jacob, Native Americans received the American continent as their inheritance when the Lord divided the world among his children.\textsuperscript{96}

Pratt used his prophetic booklet as an opportunity to address Native Americans and reassert the promises made in the Book of Mormon. He informed them that their “redemption draweth nigh” now that the record of their history had been unveiled.\textsuperscript{97} Pratt knew that the Indians were “despised, smitten, scattered, and driven by the Gentiles, from place to place, until you are left few in number,” but their treatment at the hands of the Mormons would be different.\textsuperscript{98} The Mormons had been subjected to their own persecutions by this time, and these words created even stronger bonds of mutuality between Indians and Latter-day Saints. Pratt’s dialogue to the Indians continued with an admonition to allow the Gentiles to gather them so they could be built up into a “delightsome people” with the “scales of darkness” gone from their eyes.\textsuperscript{99} The desire for Indian redemption was clear and certain. When he pondered the fate of the natives, Pratt felt joy and yearning. The subsequent “gathering of Israel will be the greatest day for Revelation and Miracles, that the world ever witnessed.”\textsuperscript{100} Pratt thus reinforced the prevailing understanding of the gathering of the Indians as a necessary precondition of the millennium. Pratt’s \textit{A Voice of Warning} was one of the most-used missionary tracts of early Mormonism, and his words exposed numerous converts to the religious ideals of gathering and salvation associated with the American Indians. In a racial climate in which white Southerners denied souls to blacks and Indians, Pratt’s pamphlet

\textsuperscript{94} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 66.  
\textsuperscript{95} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 122.  
\textsuperscript{96} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 193.  
\textsuperscript{97} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 190.  
\textsuperscript{98} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 190.  
\textsuperscript{99} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 190-191.  
\textsuperscript{100} Pratt, \textit{A Voice of Warning}, 127.
showed that Mormons not only explicitly affirmed the existence of souls for Native Americans, but insisted that they could be saved.

As widely used as Pratt’s tract was, another medium could more effectively reach a larger audience of Saints: the Mormon press. To fulfill their objectives, these Church-sponsored periodicals printed stories, letters, and editorials that explained church doctrine, exalted the growth and greatness of the Church, and advanced evidence of the impending Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They also educated nascent Saints in how to think about Native Americans. Looking at the early Mormon press, both domestic and international, it becomes evident that it was within a millenarian context that Mormons of the 1830s understood Indians. As a whole, the press contributed to the ideological framework for early understandings of Indians and their significance in Mormon millennial prophecy.

For Mormons of the 1830s, the millennium would be characterized by a homogenized belief system and legal codes under the religious and political leadership of Christ. The period of time leading up to the personal reign of Christ would be tumultuous and terrifying. After this destruction, only believers, who essentially consisted of Mormons and Indians, would be present in this peaceful, edenic environment in which they would have direct and continuous experience of Christ. Evidence of millennial longing is plentiful in the American Evening and Morning Star and Messenger and Advocate and in the aptly-named British Millennial Star. With article titles like “Plague, Pestilence, Famine, and the Sword: IN THESE LAST DAYS!,” “All Must Come to Pass but the End is Not Yet,” and “Is the End Near?,” these periodicals constantly reminded readers that the events described therein were proof that the end times were coming. In these articles, the editors of the papers published or reprinted stories about national and international “accidents, troubles, calamities, etc.” that were to be understood as evidence that the hour of redemption was near.

Short excerpts of the signs of the times were intended to ensure Mormon readers that in the time of redemption, “happy will that man be, who has obeyed the gospel, and put his trust in God.” These articles were filled with descriptions of fatal cholera epidemics,

102 Ibid., 35-41.
103 “All Must Come to Pass, but the End is Not Yet,” Evening and Morning Star (June 1833): 102.
104 “All Must Come to Pass,” Evening and Morning Star (April 1833): 86.
murders, suicides, devastating urban fires, colonial rebellions, and destructive natural disasters. With abundant confirmation presented in the pages of the papers that “in the east there is trouble; in the west there is fear; in the north there is no peace, and in the south there is consternation,” how could any believer doubt Christ’s imminent return? In addition, the Star ran a serial called “The Second Coming of the Savior,” in which the authors explored various biblical prophesies concerning the upcoming rule of Christ and asserted that the fulfillment of these prophesies would catalyze the millennium. Printing about catastrophic events and prophesies were one way Mormon publications impressed a sense of urgency about the millennial future.

The concerns of Mormons with the millennium were firmly established and developed within the pages of early periodicals. As in other Mormon publications, newspaper editors eventually honed in on the crucial role Native American tribes would play prior to the arrival of Christ. As historian Grant Underwood has shown in his studies of Mormon millennialism, “much of the early history of the Church can be understood only in reference to the doctrine of the gathering.” As scriptural literalists, the Mormons took the prophesies of the Book of Mormon to heart and fervently believed in the role Indians were destined to play. To early Saints, the gathering of the Indians, as members of the nation of Israel, was essential to ushering in the millennium. Joseph Smith confirmed as much with the release of the thirteen Articles of Faith that defined the fundamental creeds of Mormonism in 1842. The tenth article asserted “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the new Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the Earth.” In one statement, Smith both sacralized the American landscape and ensured Lamanites a place in the millennial kingdom.

In 1830 President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law. This Act required the relocation, forcibly if necessary, of all tribes east of the Mississippi to western territories. The relocation efforts took many years and were watched eagerly by Mormon leaders. Smith believed the gathering “reflects the highest honor upon our government”, and he praised the government for “locating them [the Indians] upon lands to be their own,”

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although he continued to await the day when the tribes would be gathered by the gospel alone.\footnote{B.H. Roberts, ed., \textit{History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints}, rev. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1948), 2:358 & 2:362.} While the U.S. instituted the removal to free up land and resources for settlements on the Eastern seaboard, the Mormon press saw removal efforts as fulfillment of the prophecy that the tribes of Israel would be collected together in one place. The \textit{Messenger} lauded the United States’ government for its part in congregating the Indian tribes to the country west of the Mississippi River. In an editorial, Oliver Cowdery informed his readers that the U.S. government, in gathering the Indians, made possible, “according to scripture, the gathering of the elect of the Lord, out of every nation of earth; and bringing them to the place of the Lord of hosts, where the city of righteousness shall be built, and where the people shall be of one heart and one mind when the Savior comes.”\footnote{“The Indians,” \textit{Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate} (January 1836): 245.} W.W. Phelps felt that the government, if they could succeed in easing the condition of the Indians, could, with the help of God, realize the “prediction of Isaiah” and turn the western frontier into “the Land of Israel.”\footnote{W.W. Phelps, “Letter No. II,” \textit{Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate} (December 1834): 33.} Readers of the \textit{Messenger} would invariably learn that the “seed of Joseph” were to gather home and have a part in building up Zion; furthermore, as “people of the Lord,” the Indians were worthy of the “robes of righteousness.”\footnote{Ibid.}

The English press celebrated the gathering as well. In an editorial in the \textit{Millennial Star}, Pratt told readers that the government of the United States, in creating a place for the “gathering and permanent residence of all the Indian tribes,” had aided in “the fulfillment of our text, and also the fulfillment of the prediction in the record of the Nephites.” Pratt predicted that their new location would allow the Indians to become “an industrious, intelligent, and prosperous people,” as more and more were instructed on their “origin as Israelites” and received the gospel. As much as he celebrated the relocated remnant of Israel, however, Pratt lamented that all tribes were not yet gathered. He waited for the day when “all must come into the covenant,” including tribes from Central and South America, Mexico, and Canada.\footnote{Parley Pratt, “Present Condition and Prospects of the American Indians, or Lamanites,” \textit{The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star} 2, no. 3 (18 July 1841): 40-42.}
As well as describing the Indians’ role in initiating the return of Christ, the press instilled the idea that they were redeemable and occupied a place in God’s kingdom. A letter by Phelps pled “let good will and mercy become a sweet invitation to the poor Indians, that they may come into the kingdom.” Wilford Woodruff’s wife echoed these sentiments in a letter to her husband published in the *Millennial Star* five years later. In giving him news of home in Iowa Territory, she told Woodruff and, by extension, English Saints of the Church’s success with Indian conversion: “There was an Indian, his wife, and daughter, baptized in Commerce a few days since; they came hundreds of miles to become acquainted with the work.” The conclusion to be taken from these letters was that Mormons should pursue the salvation of Native Americans and treat them mercifully because they were not responsible for their unenlightened situation. The message to early Mormons was clear: Indian redemption, in conjunction with the gathering, would initiate the millennium.

Belief in the possibility of Indian redemption did not preclude the adoption of prejudicial attitudes toward natives or the assumption of racial superiority. In this respect, Mormon converts were not unlike their Gentile, or non-Mormon, contemporaries and assumed the same attitudes toward Indians expressed in mainstream American thought. The seminal volume of the *Star* in June 1832 included a story on an Indian war on the frontier of Illinois. Despite a lack of information, the editor wasted no time in assuming that the “Indians are undoubtedly the aggressors” and assuring readers that the United States would soon “crush them at one step.” Two months later, the *Star* reported that Indians were disrupting mail service on the frontier of the upper Mississippi River and had driven settlers from their farms into forts for protection, lest they fall “a sacrifice to the tomahawk and scalping knife.” In September 1832, the *Star* mentioned in passing that the Indian War in the upper Mississippi region was over, and in October, a short article reported on the increasing hostilities of the Blackfeet and Nez Perce Indians against fur traders that had resulted in “28 trappers hav[ing] been killed.”

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114 Mrs. Wilford Woodruff to Wilford Woodruff, *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 1, no. 4 (August 1840): 89.
would have been exposed to characterizations of Native Americans as hostile, dangerous, and untrustworthy.

English converts who held different preconceived notions of Indians than their American co-religionists were exposed to an alternate view. As well, editor Pratt’s sympathetic inclinations made their way to the pages of the *Millennial Star*. Even after Mormons were exposed to Indians along the frontier, the *Millennial Star* presented positive depictions of Indian life in a short series called “Characteristics of the Indian Character.” The series offered excerpts from early nineteenth-century travelogues that described Indian customs, personalities, physical characteristics, and virtues in an almost unanimously positive and extremely romanticized manner. For example, the Cheyenne were “the genuine children of nature…[who were] artless, fearless, and live in the constant exercise of moral and Christian virtues – though they know it not” while the Creek lived in an “unsophisticated state.” Pratt chose passages that informed readers that the Choctaw were a “hardy, subtle, brave, intrepid, ingenuous, and virtuous race,” and the Indians at Plymouth “never offered to us the least wrong in word or deed.” The passages selected and therefore implicitly endorsed by the Mormon Church painted an idyllic and decidedly romanticized picture of various Indian peoples. Although the press in America had changed its tone slightly by the mid-1840s when these articles were published, the *Millennial Star* was able to maintain this idealized version of the Lamanite longer. Readers likely would have no first-hand knowledge or experience of Indians and so could maintain their ideological and romantic notions longer and more effectively than American converts in the 1840s who had begun living side by side with Indian tribes.

**“They Did Not Like Us At All”: Conflicts with Native Americans and Gentiles**

Belief in the importance of Indian salvation resulted in a new set of Indian missions radiating from Nauvoo, Illinois, in the early 1840s. While in Nauvoo, Smith received Indian leaders on a regular basis, preached to them, and stressed their acceptance and understanding

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of the Book of Mormon. Helen Whitney, one of Smith’s wives, recorded in her journal one such visit in which “a deputation of Pottawatamie chiefs were in the city waiting to see Joseph.” Upon being granted an audience, the chief told Smith through an interpreter that he and his people were directed by the Great Spirit to seek out Smith’s wisdom. According to Whitney, Smith wept at these words and told his visitors that the “Great Spirit has given me a book, and told me that you will soon be blessed again.”

Smith directly proselytized to nearby Indians when he had the chance. An incident in the summer of 1841 afforded him the opportunity to go among the Sac and Fox tribe near Nauvoo. Smith “recited to them the promises contained in the Book of Mormon respecting themselves” and revealed their history as set down in the gospel. Keokuk, their chief, promised to listen to Smith’s advice while Smith was able to demonstrate to his followers his commitment to the responsibilities of the Church to the Lamanites. However, Smith generally could not carry out these missions himself so he appointed his followers to the work of Indian salvation. For example, Charles Lambert was “asked if I would be one of the twelve to go and preach to the Indians.” Although he never called on Lambert to serve as an Indian missionary, Smith “began a series of Indian evangelizing efforts – usually confidentially” in 1840. John Lowe Butler and James Emmett were sent west to the Sioux while Jonathan Dunham was ordered to Indian Territory.

Butler recounted in his journal that he and his partner “had but little success among the Indians this time; they did not like us at all. They stole our horses and shot our cattle and came very near shooting us.” Butler and his family were able to escape the harrowing situation, but Smith, upon hearing of the mission’s failure, ordered him back out in the field. Firm in his convictions of Indian salvation, Smith sent Butler and Emmett back among the Sioux without their families. The two met with similar results. Butler noted that the Sioux “did or could not understand the principles of the gospel” so he and Emmett returned home.
again disappointed.\textsuperscript{125} Despite his failure as an Indian missionary, Butler was honored with a patriarchal blessing from John Smith, Joseph’s uncle, which foretold that his “way lieth in the wilderness among the Lamanites and thou shalt be mighty in bringing them to a knowledge of their Fathers and also to a knowledge of the Savior.” Butler’s wife was similarly blessed with a proclamation that she would be “a Mother among the Lamanites.”\textsuperscript{126} Joseph Kingsbury recorded similar blessings in his personal history. He received a blessing in August 1844 that he would “preach to gentiles and Jews, the Lamonites also Shall here [sic] thy voice and thousands Shall obey the gospel through thy teachings.”\textsuperscript{127} On that same day his wife received a prayer in which she learned that she would “be a Teacher of the Children of the Laminites,” implying that Church elders who administered these blessings retained ideas about the potential for Indian redemption and imparted them to their converts. Even when faced with direct evidence of Indian disinterest or hostility toward their message, some Saints remained committed to the vision of a millennial kingdom that included Indians.

Jonathan Dunham enjoyed more success in his missionary efforts. He first traveled to Indian Territory where he preached among the Kickapoo and Delaware. He met with a good response there and reported that “many Lamanites ‘were believing the Gospel.’”\textsuperscript{128} His success prompted Smith to send him East. Along the way, he preached to the Allegheny, Buffalo, Cattaraugus, Onondaga, Oneida, Tonawanda, and Tuscarora nations, but did not gain as many converts as he had in the West.\textsuperscript{129} The conversions that Dunham effected were celebrated by his fellow Mormons as confirmation of their millenarian views.

Church-sanctioned outreach to Indians slowed after Dunham’s missions, but that did not serve as a deterrent to at least one devoted Mormon. In the summer of 1845 James Emmett, Butler’s partner in the 1840 missions to the Sioux, led an unauthorized company of Saints across Iowa to Fort Vermillion. His goal was twofold: to establish a farming settlement and to preach Mormonism to local Sioux Indians. The mission at first appeared

\textsuperscript{125} Butler, page 16.
\textsuperscript{128} Walker, 25.
\textsuperscript{129} Walker, 24.
rewarding as the chief accepted a gift of the Book of Mormon and once he “explained it to his comrades, they all gave a great shout for joy.”¹³⁰ One of Emmett’s companions, James Holt, recorded in his autobiography that the Indians rejoiced at receiving the proffered record of their forefathers and treated the missionaries kindly. Mormon leadership called Emmett back to Nauvoo, however, and scolded him for preaching to the Lamanites without Church approval. To the admonition that he could not engage in missionary activity among the Indians without being “sent according to counsel,” Emmett insisted that he had the blessing of God for his mission and wanted only “to teach them the Book of Mormon, in the course of time they would understand that the Great Spirit would open their understanding.”¹³¹ Even though his dealings with the Sioux at Fort Vermillion were rife with conflict, Emmett preserved his belief in Lamanite salvation.

The sporadic nature of Indian missions in the first years of the Church can be traced back to the antagonistic nature of Mormon-Gentile relations in the various locations where the Mormons settled. Mormons were conscious of the disquiet their treatment of the Indian caused, and their desire to alleviate the tension curbed their missionary efforts while they were settled in Missouri and Illinois. One facet of the evolving Mormon identity in this time period was their unique perspective on Native Americans, which led to Gentile mistrust and fear of Mormon-Indian relations. Gentile paranoia of a Mormon-Indian alliance was behind federal disapproval of Mormon settlement on Indian lands and some of the attacks on Mormon communities in Missouri, Illinois, Nebraska, and Iowa. For example, the Illinois State Register reported in November of 1844, when the Saints were settled in Nauvoo, that “the Mormons and Indians had assembled in great force…with hostile intentions toward some of the good citizens of this county.”¹³² Inflammatory articles such as these fed anti-Mormon sentiment and stirred up feelings of hostility in white settlers.

Gentiles also questioned Mormon relationships with the Omaha, Ponca, Pawnee, Otoe, and Potawatomie tribes near Winter Quarters, Nebraska, when they settled there in 1846 as a way station between Nauvoo and the Great Salt Lake Valley. The Omaha gave the Mormon refugees permission to spend a few months in their territory, but the federal

¹³⁰ James Holt’s diary quoted in Hartley, 167. Italics in original.
¹³¹ Hartley, 169.
¹³² “Interesting from the Mormon Country,” Illinois State Register, 1 November 1844.
government saw this intrusion as a violation of Indian rights. Mormon leaders negotiated their own agreements with the tribe in which they offered the Omaha protection from other tribes and the promise of religious instruction in exchange for the use of Omaha land. The government could not overlook this attempt to undercut federal prerogative, and the Indian Superintendent of the region warned the Mormons to leave as soon as they were able. Mormon pioneers faced a similar situation in their settlement at Council Bluffs, Iowa. The Indian Intercourse Act of 1834 guaranteed an Indian Territory where whites could not settle, yet the Mormon presence along the Missouri River blatantly breached that agreement. In this case, the government feared that the extralegal treaties the Mormons had negotiated with the Iowa would result in a substantial and permanent settlement among the Indians. The Mormons’ “pro-Indian rhetoric, the immediacy of the Mormon mission to the Indian, a perceived allegiance between the two, and the threat of a Mormon-Indian alliance” were provocative and potentially dangerous. Local and federal officials fought to keep the two from forming lasting alliances.

As wary as the federal government was about Mormon-Indian relations, the Saints were contemptuous of federal Indian treatment. Their outrage found expression in the press. The press of the 1840s, as embodied in the *Millennial Star* and the *Times and Seasons*, was more political than its predecessors and was utilized as a tool to expose Gentile perfidy. To this end, reporting on Native Americans began to be used to advance Mormonism and denounce the federal government. For instance, the *Millennial Star* ran an address to the Saints in Britain that told of the Potawatomie who accepted the Mormons after they had been driven by “the sword and the faggot of the feeling christians.” The Potawatomie issued an invitation to “kill their deer – to drink their water – to till their lands – to burn and use their timber, and to find a home with them” while angry Gentiles “have been praying for our destruction.” Sarcasm was abundant in this article that praised the Indians for their hospitality and razed the government for its hypocritical treatment. The government, in

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seeking to keep the two apart, had inadvertently and ironically forged a link of shared oppression that only served to reinforce the Mormon sense of duty to American Indians.

Mormons in Illinois were not likely to forget the persecution that had driven them into the midst of Indian tribes. Reminders of persecution often had front-page prominence, ensuring that readers would not miss them. In 1840, the *Times* ran a series of articles entitled “A History of the Persecution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Missouri” and gave them as much conspicuity as the serial of Joseph Smith’s life that they would later release. Any Saints who were not in Missouri at the time of expulsion were exposed to a stirring recollection of the wrongs done to their brethren, and Mormons who had suffered the banishment could relive their feelings of anger and hatred toward the mob that ousted them. Historians R. Laurence Moore and Patrick Mason have convincingly shown that narrating and reliving persecution, especially through the press, was crucial to the early Church’s survival. Mormons invented and sustained themselves as a separate religious and cultural community out of this sense of opposition. The press was instrumental in shaping a unique Mormon identity, as well as in reminding Mormons that they shared a history of government oppression with Native Americans.

The press also offered examples of inadequate or failed federal Indian policy to further denigrate the federal government. A letter to the editor in 1842, which was essentially an Indian report, hinted that the American policy of removal was ineffective as Indians were not changing or adapting fast enough to justify the expenses incurred for resettling and educating them. The government spent years and much money to move the Indians to areas where they would be better able to hunt and farm, yet the “appearance of a very speedy advance from Indian to English, or American habits, customs, manners, improvements, refinement, and intelligence, is not, by far so prominently perceptible.” Implicit in this “sketch of the Red Man” was a condemnation of the government’s failure to adequately assimilate Indian tribes. Three years later, another report on Indian affairs in the *Times* alleged corruption against Indian agents for siphoning federal money into their own pockets.

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As proof the paper offered testimony from two Indian chiefs, Nesomquot and Sho-ko-pe, of the Sac and Fox tribe, affirming monetary fraud: “We did not get $4,700 in 1838-no such sum was received by us; and if our receipts were made, they were not made by us, but were forged.”139 Corroboration was offered by Nauchemingo, the principal chief of the Iowa, who also did not feel his tribe received what the government had promised them.140 These reports were intended to show Mormon readers the deceitful and duplicitous nature of the federal government and Indian agents. Readers were to gather that the temptations of wealth and power corrupted officials responsible for Indian policy. Contrasted with the Mormons’ own religious ideas of the Indians, government actions were even more despicable.

As reproachful as the Mormon press was toward federal Indian affairs, the Mormons themselves were not without their own troubles with Indians at this time. Clashes with local tribes over use of resources were prevalent. Mormons may have had a place for Indians in their celestial kingdom, but while on Earth they consistently refused to acknowledge Indian land title or autonomy. Although Church leaders attempted to impress an understanding of Indians as part of the Mormon celestial family in the pre-migration era of the Church, their efforts were not always successful. In the 1840s, as the Saints experienced life among the Indians for the first time, a gap began to form between Church leadership’s religious beliefs about Native Americans and lay perceptions of their indigenous neighbors. Once in direct competition with Indians, idealistic conceptions of the Lamanite slipped just a bit.

In the summer of 1846, Brigham Young negotiated an extralegal treaty with the Potawatomie and Omaha Indians on the Iowa frontier that promised protection and trade in exchange for the use of land. The Mormons christened this settlement Winter Quarters and immediately set up villages and began deforesting land for timber and farming. Less than nine months later, the Omaha complained to their federal Indian agent that the Mormons were “killing game and laying waste much of the land.”141 Confrontations between Mormon settlers and the Omaha escalated as Mormons continued to abuse the land, and the Indians launched retaliatory attacks on Mormon livestock. Young had negotiated a temporary stay in

139 “Indian Affairs,” Times and Seasons (1 March 1845): 827.
140 Ibid., 828.
141 Trennert, 390.
Indian lands, but when it began to look as if the settlement would become permanent, the Omaha reacted by killing at least one settler and slaughtering more cattle.\footnote{142 Trennert, 395.}

In addition to confrontations over material resources, Mormons and Indians experienced cultural conflicts over lifestyles and religion. Although the Omaha way of life included permanent villages with agriculture, Mormons perceived their nomadic summer hunting habits as inferior to the farming economy the Saints practiced.\footnote{143 Coates, 293.} Raiding was another important aspect of the Omaha lifestyle that Mormons could not accept, primarily because the object of the raids was Mormon cattle. Likewise, the Mormons had no respect for Omaha religion and made no attempts to understand Omaha worldview, even as they lived among the tribe.\footnote{144 Coates, 291.} In 1847, two Mormon men desecrated Omaha graves by stealing buffalo robes and other articles with the intention of selling them.\footnote{145 Coates, 299.} Mormon leaders chastised the men for this sacrilege, but this occurrence demonstrated that ordinary Saints had a different conception of the validity of native religious beliefs. Miscommunication and misunderstanding permeated Omaha-Mormon interactions at Winter Quarters and only exacerbated the violence caused by resource competition. When Mormons and Indians came into direct conflict over precious resources such as land, timber, and game, survival came first for Mormons, causing a general disregard for religious imperatives concerning Native Americans.\footnote{146 Trennert, 398.} The actions taken by ordinary Mormons against local Indians were predictable, but they were a long way from the benevolence and acceptance advocated by early Church leaders.

**CONCLUSION**

Overall, though, Saints retained their positive perception of Native Americans as they settled among them temporarily while awaiting the trek into the intermountain West. There was at least one attempt at outreach while the Mormons wintered in Nebraska in 1846. Orson Pratt visited the Oto and Omaha near Winter Quarters and returned to the camp to report what he had shared with the Indians. Pratt told the Indians about the Book of Mormon and
“what was in it about them and…we believed it.”\textsuperscript{147} He recorded in his diary that the Potawatomie were “very honourable, and treated us with the greatest of friendship.”\textsuperscript{148} Mosiah Hancock also proselytized to local “Pottawatomie, and some of the Delaware Indians and read the Book of Mormon to them.”\textsuperscript{149} In thanks, the Indians gave him dried venison and buffalo meat. Newel Knight recorded the following observation of the Saints’ time along the frontier: “The Pawnees, Poncas, Sioux and other Indian tribes permitted us to pass through the country almost unmolested. We sought their friendship and they gave it, and many friendly meetings were held with our Lamanite brethren.”\textsuperscript{150}

Saints in the first decade and a half of the Mormon Church accepted and sustained a primarily positive and religious understanding of Indians. Early millennial tendencies and desires for Indian salvation persisted through unsuccessful Indian missions, persecutions, and conflict with the federal government. The Book of Mormon established a conceptual framework for understanding Indians as Lamanites and for the pro-Indian philanthropy that drove Smith and other early adherents.\textsuperscript{151} Subsequent understandings of Native Americans continued to be shaped by scripture, the press, and actual contact. Life writings of early Mormons confirmed that ideas about Lamanites trickled down to the general population and motivated their actions toward Indians, as personified by Indian missionaries. As the Church was driven west and encountered Indian nations, Saints did not lose their sense of divine duty toward their Lamanite brethren; however, they did have “difficulty living in harmony with this noble ideal.”\textsuperscript{152} It is in this period of increased contact and exposure that the first inkling of later Mormon attitudes emerged. Religious ideals did not disappear in the mid-1840s, but they were sublimated to greater concerns and the realities of lived experience. Mormon millennial tendencies combined with frontier realities to foreshadow the cracks in Mormon conceptions of Indians that would split open on the westward migration trail.

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\textsuperscript{148} Extract from the Private Journal of Orson Pratt, \textit{The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star} 12, no. 1 (1 January 1850): 3.
\textsuperscript{149} Mosiah Hancock, Autobiography, BOAP, page 17.
\textsuperscript{150} Knight, page 31.
\textsuperscript{151} Kidd, 233.
\textsuperscript{152} Coates, 276.
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CHAPTER 2

FALL FROM GRACE: THE LAMANITE BECOMES THE INDIAN, 1846-1853

“EXILES IN A CHRISTIAN LAND”: THE MORMON WESTWARD MIGRATION

In the winter of 1849 three Mormons accused Old Bishop, a Ute Indian, of stealing a shirt. Old Bishop responded with a counter-accusation that those men had stolen deer from his tribe’s hunting grounds. The group quarreled until the young men shot and killed Old Bishop. Fearful of discovery, they eviscerated the Indian’s body, filled his empty belly with rocks, and dropped his body in a nearby river. Old Bishop refused to cooperate, however, and his corpse rose to the surface. The incident kicked off months of brutal fighting between Mormon settlers along the Provo River and local Native Americans. The issue was settled on the frozen Utah Lake in February 1850 when Mormon militiamen and federal soldiers chased down and exterminated their native foes “one by one, leaving a grisly trail of blood and bodies on the ice.”

Less than twenty years before this gruesome incident, Mormon missionaries had approached Indian tribes and promised them that they would be “restored to all their rights and privileges…in common with the pale face, who were willing to believe and obey the same Book.” That book was the Book of Mormon, a recently revealed scripture, and it promised the Indians a place in Heaven. This chapter will explore how Mormon sentiment regarding Indians devolved from this lofty ideal of harmonious salvation to contemptuous disfavor and violence.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was no stranger to persecution by the time the Mormons settled in Utah. Driven from six locations in as many years, the Saints

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headed west across the Great Plains to the Great Basin after the death of their prophet, Joseph Smith. The fledgling Mormon community, now led by Brigham Young, settled on Utah as a place of refuge where they could practice their religion and structure their society without interference. The Saints had become self-imposed “exiles in a Christian land.” Young led the first company of pilgrims west in 1847, and successive waves of emigration brought thousands of Saints over the next two decades. The Mormon community grew from approximately 11,000 settlers in 1850 to almost 40,000 by 1860.

No white Americans had permanently settled the Great Basin until the Mormons arrived to establish their kingdom, but the area was home to several Native American tribes. Pioneer Lewis Barney made note in his diary of the “Indians that infested the country by [the] thousands.” To early settlers like Barney, the native inhabitants surrounding them may have seemed more numerous than the approximately 12,000 residents in the Utah Valley area. Earlier Mormon experience with smaller numbers of Indians had been short, temporary, and generally peaceful, but it was apparent to Mormon settlers that they were now outnumbered, which inspired feelings of trepidation and nervousness.

Personal writings such as diaries and journals revealed that ordinary Mormons had conflicting attitudes toward Native Americans as they colonized Utah and the Great Basin in the mid-nineteenth century. Latter-day Saint cosmology included Indians who deserved redemption and mercy, leading some Mormons to look upon natives with favor. The realities of trail and frontier life, however, contrasted sharply with the idealized understanding of natives that Mormons had established in the first sixteen years of the Church. Imaginary and romantic conceptions of Indians were abandoned as lived encounters turned all too real and violent. Ordinary Saints faced direct competition for resources, especially in settlements established away from the Mormon heartland of Salt Lake City. Isolation meant vulnerability for these communities, and use of and access to resources like game, livestock, and

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158 The Indian population estimate is from Bigler, 63n1 and Nugent, 10.
agricultural products resulted in competition with local natives. Violence was a symptom of this competition, but even as confrontations escalated, Mormons as a whole did not succumb to the color racism so prevalent east of the Mississippi River. This is not to say that Mormons did not hold racist conceptions of Indians, only that their beliefs of natives’ inherent inferiority remained based on level of civilization and religion rather than skin color. Mormons in Utah continued to defy mainstream American racial thought, even as their millennial expectations of Native Americans declined.

Trail diaries contain few mentions of Indians in a theological context as well as an increased use of vocabulary that reflected general prejudices against Indians. Upon settlement in Salt Lake Valley, religious ideals were abandoned further as Indian interactions became increasingly hostile. In the period of westward migration and settlement of the Great Basin, Mormons overwhelmingly shed their religious beliefs about Indians in favor of pragmatic self-interest.

“MORNING FINE AND PLEASANT, NO INDIANS”: ENCOUNTERS ON THE OVERLAND TRAIL

On 7 April 1847 the Pioneer Company set out from Winter Quarters, Nebraska, to found a home for the Saints far from United States control. Thousands of Saints would follow in their wagon tracks to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake over the next few years. Each surge of migration faced its own hardships and tribulations, but all had experiences in common: fellowship, faith, harsh trail conditions, unpredictable weather, disease, and encounters with Indians. For these pilgrims, reactions to Native Americans ran the gamut of emotions from indifference to insidious and underlying fear. For emigrants on the trail, spiritual concerns about Indians, if they had any, became secondary to concerns of survival and reaching a haven in the West. This is not to say that religious ideas about Indians were abandoned completely, only that they were subsumed to more immediate concerns. As experience in Nebraska and Iowa had shown, religious and secular thoughts about Indians were not mutually exclusive; rather, religious convictions and conversion efforts declined in these years as the Saints struggled to establish their Zion.

The casual use of the term “Lamanite” in diaries and journals is proof that the Mormons generally accepted Book of Mormon teaching of Native Americans as the descendents of the lost tribes of Israel. For some diarists, the terms “Indian” and “Lamanite”
were interchangeable and would often be found next to each other. William Clayton, describing a camp location, said the village was the “noted place where the Lamanites for years held their council.” Two paragraphs later he recounted a band concert in which “Indians and half breeds collected $10.10 and gave it to us.”159 In his dichotomous vocabulary, Clayton echoed Benjamin Johnson, an earlier convert, who explained that upon meeting a “number of Indians encamped,” he felt compelled to “bear a great testimony to these Lamanites.”160 Indians were Lamanites, and, as such, some Mormons felt they had a sacred obligation to save their “red brethren.” Levi Jackman, an early convert to Mormonism and a member of the Pioneer Company, spoke of this topic often in his journal. On his fiftieth birthday in 1847, he penned a prayer that included a wish that the “Loamonites [sic] came to an understanding of the plan of salvation.”161 In January and February of 1848, Jackman expounded that it was a Mormon duty to “bring the Indian from there benighted situation and rais them as a bra[n]ch of the house of Israel, to a knowledge of the true and living God” because once this was accomplished “it will be marvilous not onley to us but to generations yet to come.”162 Sentiments about the salvation of Indians at Mormon hands were rare in the migration period, but some of the earliest pioneers still held these views.

On the trail it became apparent that interest in Indians as key to the end times faded in response to the harsh realities of trail life and the Mormons’ precarious position. As time went on, references to Indians in theological contexts diminished. The Mormon pioneers who recorded encounters with Native Americans evinced a collection of emotions from curiosity to contempt and revealed a persistent undercurrent of fear and distrust even during friendly interactions. These themes steadily overrode the themes of salvation found in pre-migration journals and the early Mormon press.

Interest in Indian lifeways and tribal society was manifest in the very first company that embarked from Winter Quarters in 1847 and continued throughout the Mormon

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161 Levi Jackman, 28 July 1847, Diary, Trails.

162 Jackman, pages 44-46.
migration. In their trail diaries, men and women chose to focus on different aspects of native life. Mormon women tended to remark on Indian lifeways that caught their attention and to infuse their impressions with empathy. Caroline Barnes Crosby, crossing the plains in June 1848, mentioned Indian graves in her diary. Finding them to be a “great curiosity,” she devoted over half of her diary entry for 2 June to describing them. For a woman whose entries tended to be pointed and focused, the longer entry indicated more than a passing interest. Crosby saw “two infants coffins which had been put up in trees, one had fallen down and broke open, they were each made of two troughs, the child was laid in one.”

Crosby’s sister, Louisa Barnes Pratt, expressed her fascination with these funerary arrangements more succinctly: “A strange idea of burial have the poor savages.” Crosby’s interest in the graves of children and Pratt’s use of “poor” to describe the Indians indicated compassion and concern that was lacking in men’s observations of the same time.

Similarly, Mary Haskin Parker Richards demonstrated her curiosity about her Indian subjects when she recorded a meeting in Council Bluffs, Iowa, between Mormon leaders and Indian chiefs. Although she said nothing of what actually transpired, her remarks showed her interest and desire to go to the meeting simply because she was “quite interested to hear them [the Indians] talk and see them act.”

Mormon women gravitated toward Indian women, mentioning them favorably in their diaries. For instance, Crosby wrote of two Indian families they encountered near Weber River; one was headed by a “squaw…who appears to be quite a modest intelligent woman,” and midwife Patty Sessions remarked on a visit to her camp of “many Squaws” who appeared “friendly they sing and dance and ride round.”

Male pioneers, on the other hand, were less relational and adopted a more scientific approach as they recorded aspects of Indian life such as the kind of homes they had, the plants they grew, or their clothing. Unlike their female counterparts, the men’s ethnographic

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descriptions were generally devoid of humanity and treated Indians more as specimens for observations than as people. William Clayton, as official Church historian, faithfully recorded studies of the several Indian tribes the company came across. He apportioned several pages to each group and covered everything from territory, economic structure, and relations with other tribes to tribal leaders, weaponry, and hygiene. He rarely mentioned individual Indians. In describing a Pawnee community, Clayton wrote of the “200 houses or lodges varying in size,” “several cachets where corn and other necessities are deposited,” and “circular stables,” but he did not provide a sense of the Pawnee who inhabited this village as people.167 Even when he described a physical body, he remained aloof and general. In describing a group of Sioux Indians, Clayton noted that they have “nice robes artfully ornamented with beads and paintings. All had many ornaments on their clothing and ears…and moccasins of a clear white, ornamented with beads [and] fit very tight to the foot.”168

Historian David Bigler has alleged that “Mormons regarded all Indians as Lamanites and failed to understand” tribal distinctions and politics.169 In other words, all Mormons saw all Indians as the same. Appleton Harmon, Hosea Stout, and William Clayton, members of the vanguard Pioneer Company, belied this assumption with their detailed look at Indian society and an obvious knowledge of the differences between the tribes they met. In his extensive diary of 1850-1853, Harmon never failed to distinguish between the various bands he encountered and identified Ponca, Pottawatomie, Sioux, Omaha, Crow, Pawnee, and Ute Indians in his writings. Harmon never specified how he knew the Indians’ tribal affiliations so it can be assumed that the features that distinguished one tribe from another were well-known and understood by this time. Hosea Stout, who kept a diary in Winter Quarters before the Saints left for the Great Basin, differentiated between the Omaha and the Pottawatomie in an entry from 1 August 1846: the Omaha were “not so well dressed,” but they were friendlier than the Pottawatomie.170 Furthermore, Mormons could have learned that the Pawnee had a “love of plundering travelers of their horses and mules,” the Sioux were “neatly dressed and

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167 Clayton, 97-100.
168 Clayton, 181.
169 Bigler, 95.
very tidy,” the Utah were “mostly armed with guns,” and the Shoshone enjoyed “large crickets…crisped over the fire” for their meals from Clayton’s writings.171

As one of the Church’s official historians, Clayton’s journal was intended to be read by others, and those readers would get the impression that the Indians were mere curiosities, not people. Most Mormon men did not endow Native Americans with humanity as early as women, which may explain their actions toward Indians as the Mormons began to settle the Salt Lake Valley. The men’s detached and dispassionate entries implied that the native villages and peoples were of interest simply because they were yet another in a series of new experiences.

An omnipresent anxiety about and fear of Indians abounded in early Mormon trail diaries, despite the fact that most encounters on the trail were friendly. Frontier historian Lillian Schlissel has demonstrated that less than ten percent of Indian encounters on westward migrant trails were violent or dangerous, yet Indians remained universally feared.172 Recorded experience shows that this apprehension manifested itself in specific ways for Mormon pioneers. Concerns about defense and worry over potential Indian depredations were expressions of the unspoken and underlying fear that dominated Mormon relations with various Indian tribes throughout the migration period. Even if Indians themselves did not materialize, as soon as the wagons entered “Indian Country,” the pioneers were constantly on edge waiting for the Indians to unexpectedly “come after us unawares and try to kill us.” Distrust was evident in statements like Daniel Wood’s “The Indians are like a snake in the grass, they will lay all around you, and you can see nothing of them, and there is no dependence to be placed on them.”173

The problem of defending a vulnerable wagon train was foremost on the minds of Mormon men crossing the plains. Even when there was no immediate danger of Indian attack, these men imagined there was and acted accordingly. The wagon companies traveled in “four columns going abreast as a precaution against the attacks of the Indians.”174 A guard was set every night to protect the horses, livestock, and emigrants. Bathsheba Smith noted in

171 Clayton, 95, 182, 275, and 329.
her journal of 1849 that her husband “Mr. Smith Stood guard until half past twelve O
clock.”¹⁷⁵ Many male emigrants kept record of their particular watches and guard duty as
well. Job Smith, no relation to Bathsheba, remarked in his entry of 6 November 1849 that
“Every night we kept strict guard. Each man stood 3 ½ hours once in three nights.”¹⁷⁶ Sarah
Rich was grateful for guard duty, especially since the companies were “not very strong in
number of men, for there were more women and children than men in our camp.”¹⁷⁷ Clayton
wrote of a much more extensive defense system that required all men to stay beside their
teams and wagons with loaded guns at hand at all times. “In case of attack from Indians or
hostile appearances, the wagons to travel in double file,” and the wagons were to be circled
evory night with the “horses and stock tied inside the circle.”¹⁷⁸ A safe day in this emigrant
period was one in which Clayton could write, “Morning fine and pleasant, no Indians.”¹⁷⁹

Guard duty and circling the wagons were meant to ensure that the Indians did not get
too close to the emigrant companies. If they did, however, the Saints were prepared. Journal
entries of the 1847 expedition indicated that the use or threat of violence against Indians was
perfectly acceptable. One night when Indians came too near the wagon train, Howard Egan
preserved the Mormon reaction: “One of the brethren cocked his pistol and pointed it at one
of them, then they all ran.”¹⁸⁰ Clayton recounted in his journal an experience where he urged
the company to continue on a few more miles beyond an Indian camp because he did not
want to have to fight them. When the company chose to stop anyway, his request for an
increased guard showed both fear and distrust of Indian motives.

In the same year, Thomas Bullock reported that in response to seeing a group of
Indians nearby, his company fired a cannon “about 9 o’clock to warn them we were
prepared.”¹⁸¹ Such demonstrations of firepower were common. Nathan Porter recalled an

¹⁷⁵ Bathsheba W. Bigler Smith, 18 August 1849, Diary, Trails.
¹⁷⁶ Job Smith, 6 November 1849, Diary, Trails.
¹⁷⁸ Clayton, 81.
¹⁷⁹ Clayton, 111.
¹⁸⁰ William M. Egan, ed., Pioneering the West 1846 to 1878: Major Howard Egan’s Diary (Salt Lake
¹⁸¹ Will Bagley, ed., The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of
Thomas Bullock, vol. 1 of Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier (Spokane: The
incident in which he and his fellow travelers were trading peacefully with an Indian group when the “field piece was drawn out” and fired simply to “deter them from molesting us.”\textsuperscript{182} The interesting aspect of these entries was that the feared Indians rarely materialized and when they did, they had no intentions of physically harming the Mormons. The Indians were interested in horses, cattle, and oxen, either as foodstuffs or as potential trade items. Government action, continuing pressure from white settlers, and a general disruption of native life had altered Indian economy, rendering many tribes destitute. Mormon pioneer diaries were full of references to Indians begging for food along the trail, but the pioneers did not seem to recognize that they were part of the problem. Entries like the one in Clayton’s diary that tell of Indians who “begged some bread” and possibly desired to “plunder” indicated that the emigrants realized the Indians’ impoverished state, but they did not seem to understand the cause or that they were contributing to it by competing for already depleted food and water sources.\textsuperscript{183}

The preponderance of Indian “attacks” consisted of raids on livestock such as the one Jackman recorded in which the “Indians who ware camped near the Eutaw Lake drove off and killed maney [oxen and cows] which was a grate loss to our destitute circumstances.”\textsuperscript{184} Jackman’s comment got to the heart of the real issue for Mormon settlers. Their supplies were limited and they depended on their cows for milk and beef, their oxen for farming, and their horses for hunting. The Indians of the region originally stole Mormon supplies to feed themselves, not to starve out the settlers, but continuing Indian depredations against Mormon livestock and provisions could spell disaster for already shaky expeditions. Resource competition extended to Mormon-Indian interactions on the trail where the survival of one group over the other stood in stark relief.

Mormon diaries, both pre-migration and early pioneer, showed that ordinary Mormons initially held primarily religious or benign views of Native Americans. The Indians’ role in ushering in the Second Coming, connected to the belief in Indian redemption, was an accepted tenet of early Mormon faith. As the Mormons moved along the overland trails, they downplayed these millennial tendencies and the concomitant theological beliefs of

\textsuperscript{182} Porter, page 24.
\textsuperscript{183} Clayton, 45.
\textsuperscript{184} Jackman, 46.
Indian importance. They increasingly expostulated the stereotypical views accepted in mid-nineteenth century America regarding Indians. In a sense, the Indians lost their luster, and the consequences would be felt as the Saints built their kingdom in the desert.

**“PUT OURSELVES IN A STATE OF SELF DEFENSE”: COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL PROTECTION**

As the Saints settled in the Salt Lake Valley and surrounding frontier communities, religious sentiments about Native Americans continued to fade. Beliefs that Indians deserved redemption declined further in this period, and Mormons instead focused on Indian threats, including thefts, violence, and the resultant need for protection, and Indian policy, aimed at assimilation and civilization of nearby tribes. Indian relations in Utah were intermittently violent before exploding into fierce fighting in 1853. The longer the Saints faced hostilities in the Great Basin, the more intensely public rhetoric established the Indian as the Other. To justify their continued violence and mistreatment of native populations, Mormon pioneers had to make Native Americans worthy of contempt and hatred. Rather than encouraging harmonious ideals of redemption, Young and other leaders resorted to fear, distrust, and violence as ways to cope with Indian difference. Although there were vestiges of religious sentiment, perceptions of and attitudes toward Indians became dominated by the more practical concerns of protection and assimilation that evolved and solidified on the trail.

Themes of safety and native acculturation resounded in pioneer diaries, as well as the weekly press. Mormon periodicals, as historian Virgil Peterson has observed, “mirrored frontier life” while tracing trends in the Mormon western movement and Church doctrine. Mormon newspapers, as participants in public discourse concerning Indian policy and attitudes, complemented and reinforced personal reminiscences about Native Americans in the Salt Lake settlement period as they did in the pre-migration period. The *Deseret News* was concerned with the issues, including Indian affairs and policy, that would occupy any budding frontier town. Descriptions of Indian depredations and violence and advice on how to civilize Indians emerged as the influencing factors in how ordinary Mormons would think of and understand Indians during the initial settlement of Utah.

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As on the trail, Saints in Salt Lake City were first and foremost worried about the threats that Indians posed to their growing colonies. Once the Mormon community grew to outnumber local Indians, these concerns dissipated, but fear of thefts and violence accompanied by a preoccupation with protection was universal in the first years of peopling the Great Basin. Stories of Indian depredations, defined as any kind of altercation or theft of Mormon property, were common in the Deseret News in the early 1850s. The articles sometimes carried the simple titles “Indian Depredations” or “Indian Difficulties” and went on to elaborate the violent or capricious actions conducted by the Indians. These incidents, along with confrontations that did not make the newspaper, were often reported or elaborated upon in diaries and autobiographies.

In October 1850 the News reported that a band of Indians “committed depredation on the grain in the Big Field” and “assumed a menacing attitude towards some of the citizens in that vicinity.”¹⁸⁶ Later stories related thefts of horses and oxen, ambushes on travelling parties, grain pilfering, and other disturbances by Indians on unprotected Mormon communities that served to remind Mormons that their situation was not secure. Emigrants en route to newly formed communities within Utah were no safer. In a letter published in the News, Joseph Cain related that the “Indians [around Mary’s River] are very troublesome and hostile,” driving a wagon train’s livestock into the mountains and stealing over “1000 head of animals” over the emigration season of 1850.¹⁸⁷ Articles often stressed the monetary value of stolen goods, as in Brigham Young’s Sixth General Epistle addressed to all Saints and published in November 1851. In this letter, Young detailed depredations in Tooele Valley over the previous summer that cost the settlers “more than 5000 dollars worth of cattle and horses.”¹⁸⁸ In a struggling pioneer community, the loss of cattle, horses, or wheat would be just as dangerous as the loss of men in Indian skirmishes.¹⁸⁹ Likewise, in a community that did not have ready cash, animals and grain served as commodities for barter and any loss would be as keenly felt as the theft of hard currency.

¹⁸⁶ “Indian Depredations,” Deseret News, 19 October 1850.
¹⁸⁷ Joseph Cain to Dr. Willard Richards, Deseret News, 5 October 1850.
¹⁸⁹ “Indian Difficulties,” Deseret News, 29 October 1853 and 24 November 1853.
The starving and destitute tribes were tempted by the lure of accessible food as their traditional foodstuffs were depleted by white settlers. As Mormons expanded into Indian land and appropriated limited resources, native tribes faced impoverishment and starvation. As Native American historian Ned Blackhawk has demonstrated, the Mormon presence “undercut Ute subsistence patterns” by disrupting “valley ecologies.”\(^{190}\) In his autobiography, pioneer James Brown outlined Indian grievances against the Mormon newcomers as articulated by Ute chief Walkara: “This is my country, and my people’s country…The buffalo and elk came here to drink water and eat grass; but now they have been killed or driven back out of our land. The grass is all eaten by the white man’s horses and cattle, and the dry wood has been burned.”\(^{191}\) Faced with a declining standard of living caused by the intrusion of white settlers, the local Ute, Shoshone, and Cheyenne Indians resorted to their traditional lifestyle of raiding and plundering to supplement their dwindling food supplies. Depredations such as theft or destruction of livestock and grain became common as tribal leaders targeted Mormon towns as sources of food supplies. In addition, depredations were sometimes committed in direct retaliation for mistreatment by whites. For example, after the murder of two Shoshone women by white travelers, the Shoshone “manifested a very different disposition” and began harassing northern settlements by “robbing the corn fields, abstracting from melon patches, running off cattle and horses, etc., etc.”\(^{192}\)

Such evidence of Indian opposition was readily accessible to ordinary Mormons. Their fear and animosity were only amplified by Church leaders who became most vitriolic about Indian differences when Indians were in direct competition with Mormons. The longer the Saints faced hostilities in the Great Basin, the more intensely Young’s rhetoric established the Indian as the Other. Church leadership devoted only a few sentences to Indians in the first General Epistles, but this increased to complete paragraphs and then to a full column by the last letter of 1856. Epistles of 1852 and early 1853 told Saints of peaceful relations with the Indians and confirmed that showing Indians how to “live by their labor,

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\(^{192}\) “Don’t Loose Your Cattle,” *Deseret News*, 21 September 1850.
rather than steal, starve, or live by begging” led to “less disturbances and outbreaks.”Starting in October 1853, the focus shifted to Indian depredations, cruelty, and treachery. The shift demonstrated that the safety and continuation of the Mormon kingdom in the West took precedence over Indian salvation, especially when Indians were so intensely and purposely Othered.

Mormon reactions to incursions on their property were similar to their responses while on the trail. Naïve to their own role in the problem, the Mormons called for retribution. They seemed to have little sympathy for their Indian neighbors. Far from earlier ideals of shared affinity, retaliatory attacks became the norm as early as 1849. John D. Lee recorded in his diary on 6 March 1849 that thirty men had set out for the Utah Valley to “call the Indians to an account for killing Some of our cattle.” After the vigilante group discovered “10 Beeves hides & 3 calfs skins,” they killed four Indian men. These deaths warned nearby Indians what they could expect for encroaching on Mormon property. No Saints seemed troubled by the disproportionate punishment being handed out to local tribes. Appleton Harmon documented a similar experience in his journal almost a year later in February 1850 after the Utah Indians had stolen some cattle. These Indians had become “so troublesome that it was thought best to Chastise them.” A company of one hundred men was sent after the Indians, and, after a two-day skirmish, thirteen Indians were dead and several wounded to the Mormons’ one dead and eleven wounded. Hosea Stout’s diary authenticated these numbers and expressed his general approval for the campaign: “Genl Wells has laid the Utah under Marshal law….and all things are going on well.”

In May of 1851, Stout mentioned that the Indians of Tooele Valley were being troublesome so “a party is going out tonight against” them. As in previous disciplinary campaigns, the Indians were dealt with harshly and decisively; according to Stout’s diary, at least sixteen Indians were slain. A letter published in the 13 December 1851 edition of the

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195 Harmon, page 45.
Deseret News publicly affirmed this punitive policy: “we are compelled for our safety to keep a good lookout, and sometimes chastise them a little” when the Indians “steal our horses, kill our cattle, sometimes disturb the quiet…of our settlements.” Mormon readers were to understand that it was acceptable to react to occurrences of theft with extreme violence to protect their property.

To justify their continued violence and mistreatment of native populations, Mormon pioneers had to make Native Americans worthy of contempt and hatred. Fear, distrust, and violent tendencies were projected onto local tribes by Mormon leadership and laity alike. Stories of Indian violence against Mormons in the Deseret News served to reinforce the common stereotypes of Indians as “numerous, savage, and bold cowards” in the settlement period. The accounts that were disseminated publicly in the pages of the newspaper contained graphic detail that left no doubt of the Indians’ depravity and ruthlessness and seemed designed to inspire antipathy in Mormon readers. An article from mid-November 1850 described the murder of three travelers by Indians in which the bodies underwent “some cutting and scalping,” and a later article emphasized the “horribly mutilated” bodies of two Mormons killed by Indians near Uinta Springs. Articles like these provided additional rationale for the sustained violence against Indians. Newspapers both justified and perpetuated the cycle of violence, as the negative perceptions of Indians inspired by their stories escalated physical and verbal attacks.

Security in an insecure land was undoubtedly a concern of early Mormon settlers in Utah, especially after the unprecedented outbreak of hostilities between Mormons and Indians in 1853. Although Mormon leaders had advocated protective measures for their communities since 1849, their admonitions became more strident as the Saints became more settled and began moving to outlying areas. The warnings in the press and the ordinary Mormon response demonstrated a furtherance of the fear and distrust cultivated during the westward emigration. The unspoken message was that uncontrolled Indian encounters were undesirable and so were to be avoided. There was something potentially hazardous about allowing Indians access to Mormon communities. As Mormons did not bar their settlements

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198 Brigham Young to David Adams, Deseret News, 13 December 1851.
199 George Cannon to Joseph Cain, extract, Deseret News, 16 November 1850.
to other whites, the gates served as a reminder that Native Americans were not Mormon equals. Mormon settlers advocated two basic strategies of defense: erecting physical barriers to separate Mormon and Indian communities and vigilance as expressed through military readiness and personal preparedness.

As early as 1849, Brigham Young and others pushed for the building of fences and walls to protect their settlements. Mormon historian Howard Christy convincingly argues that Young ultimately feared the loss of the entire Utah settlement at the hands of Native Americans.\(^\text{201}\) The destruction of the Mormon kingdom in the Great Basin would have been devastating; the Saints already faced relentless persecution and essentially had no other alternatives for an autonomous society. The fixation on protection was indicative of a much larger concern: the very survival of a people. In a meeting of the Pioneer Company, H.G. Sherwood expressed his desire to “cultivate the city and fence it in with an adobie wall, and a high one will make a guard against the Indians.” Immediately after, Young proposed that the city be fenced, asking the brethren, “Is it not necessary that the yard should be secured, that the Indians cannot get in?” Dimick Huntington quickly seconded the motion, and, although the other men expressed concern about finding the labor to build such a wall, they agreed it was necessary to ensure “an Indian could not see in, and then they won’t be tempted.”\(^\text{202}\)

Aside from a few mentions, the subject of fortifications was quietly ignored throughout the scattered Mormon settlements until 1853 when the Saints felt themselves more threatened and vulnerable. In a speech that was later published in the News, George Smith chastened the settlers for not yet gathering into forts as recommended and warned them that they remained vulnerable to the “cruel savage” if they did not fort up “in case of attack by the red men.”\(^\text{203}\) The Saints apparently took his words to heart. A letter from Lee three months later praised the founders of Cedar Fort who had “voted to enclose the city with walls, bars, and gates” for protection from the local Utes and Pah-vants.\(^\text{204}\) Young expressed his approval of the physical barriers in his Eleventh General Epistle in early 1854, but


\(^{202}\) Egan, 120-128.


\(^{204}\) John D. Lee to Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, 16 February 1854.
cautioned the Mormons to not relax their vigilance. The Indians, although “quiet for several months,” could attack the Saints at any time.\textsuperscript{205} To read the newspapers of this time would be to understand that the natives were not to be trusted because they were capable of overtaking a community with “sudden destruction,” attacking families at home and killing the inhabitants in their sleep.\textsuperscript{206}

Even the \textit{Millennial Star}, originally a monthly newspaper edited by Parley Pratt to serve the rapidly expanding Mormon community in England, carried stories of Indian trespasses and warnings for readers. In 1849 the Church established the Perpetual Emigration Fund to provide economic assistance for foreign Mormon converts to make their way to Utah. Stories about life on the frontier of the United States, including Indian experiences, prepared these emigrants for what they would find once they arrived. They were indoctrinated in perceptions and understandings of Indians long before they would ever see a Native American. English readers learned that Indian hostility against whites in the Salt Lake area was the result of Indians becoming “very jealous of the new settlers.”\textsuperscript{207} There were no illusions about the conditions between the two groups, just as there was no question about who was at fault. For instance, in July 1853, the \textit{Star} reported on an incident in which Indians, assumedly unprovoked, instigated an ambush that killed two men, wounded another, and netted “four horses and two mules in possession of the Indians.”\textsuperscript{208} The next year, the \textit{Star} printed an editorial with a faux conversation between two Mormons about enduring Indian tensions in Utah. The \textit{Star}’s editors hoped that “thinking readers may get some idea of the general moves of an Indian war,” including sneaky Indians who hid until it was time to “sally forth to scalp” a victim and pulling down homes and other buildings so Indians could not use them as fortresses.\textsuperscript{209} Characterizations of Indians were consistent with depictions in the American press, warning English converts as to what they could expect when they arrived in America. Taken together, the newspapers permeated Mormon consciousness with generally unflattering and hostile perceptions of American Indians.

\textsuperscript{205} Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Jedediah M. Grant, “Eleventh General Epistle,” \textit{Deseret News}, 13 April 1854.

\textsuperscript{206} Brigham Young, “Address at Tabernacle,” \textit{Deseret News}, 14 May 1853.

\textsuperscript{207} Editorial, \textit{The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star} 10, no. 10 (1 July 1848): 202.

\textsuperscript{208} “Indian Difficulties,” \textit{The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star} 15, no. 46 (12 November 1853): 738.

\textsuperscript{209} Editorial, \textit{The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star} 16, no. 36 (9 September 1854): 570-572.
An atmosphere of distrust toward the Indians was palpable as the settlers were constantly reminded of their susceptibility in a virtually unsettled wilderness. In addition to physical barriers, Mormon leaders sanctioned personal and military defense for the laity. Even at a time of relative tranquility in Mormon-Indian relations, men were to “become proficient at defending themselves and friends against the next Indian invasion.” \(^{210}\) As with the calls for community protection, attention to personal protection increased in 1853. The News ran stories of military scouting expeditions whose main function was to determine tribal strength and disposition towards local white settlers and of families who were called to fortify smaller communities. Saints were advised to be friendly toward the Indians, but also to keep their guns handy because “if the Indians know you are ready to defend yourselves, [they] will never attack you.” \(^{211}\)

Along with reading about the importance of protection in the newspapers, Saints could hear it from the pulpit. On 31 July 1853, Brigham Young delivered a sermon in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City in which he addressed Saints’ concerns about recent Indian troubles and chastised the people for not heeding his much-repeated advice. He warned his flock about going “to sleep with their guns unloaded,” exposing themselves and their property to danger by settling too far from a strong community, and failing to “put ourselves in a state of self defense” by building “good and efficient fort[s].” \(^{212}\) Although Young stressed peaceful relations and claimed that he would continue to give presents and act kindly toward local tribes, his other comments essentially negated those sentiments. He minced no words as he informed his listeners that if a “hostile band of Indians come round my house, I am good for quite a number of them. If one hundred should come, I calculate that only fifty would be able to go to the next house.” He intimated that the Indians would be extinguished by their own actions over time, but if they insisted on attacking Mormon villages, “we shall be under the necessity of killing them to save our own lives.” \(^{213}\) To that end, Young

\(^{210}\) “General Items,” Deseret News, 6 March 1852.


\(^{212}\) Brigham Young, “An address delivered by President Brigham Young, in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, July 31, 1853,” BOAP, pages 14-19.

\(^{213}\) Ibid., page 22.
recommended that women “carry a good butcher knife in your belt” for defense against any menacing Indians that might come upon them in the fields at harvest time.\textsuperscript{214}

Young’s messages about the dangerous nature of local Indians and the importance of protection trickled down to ordinary Mormons. Other Church leaders stoked the fear that Young implanted. In mid-August 1853, Heber C. Kimball, another member of the First Presidency, warned Mormon families living in new communities that they were “exposed to the Lamanites,” unsafe, and at risk because of their location away from the main settlement.\textsuperscript{215} Missionary and Church counselor Orson Hyde told his flock a month later that farmers who ventured “into the field to labor [were] liable to be shot down by the Indian.”\textsuperscript{216} Negative feelings about Native Americans were made culturally available to much of the Mormon community. Church leaders’ discourses were often reprinted in the \textit{Deseret News} so if Saints were not present at meetings, they could still be exposed to the ideas. Mormon leadership encouraged protective measures, especially for those settlements on the frontier, by delineating Indian differences to instill loathing. Written and spoken discourse excused competitive violence by implying that Indians deserved the punishments they received because of their unpredictable, duplicitous, and menacing nature. Ordinary Saints internalized and acted upon the message of the Indian as different and inferior, and violence against an entire racial group became an acceptable reaction when Mormon interests were threatened.

\textbf{“MAKE HIM USEFUL”: ASSIMILATION EFFORTS}

Along with being untrustworthy and dangerous, Native Americans were understood as being inferior to white settlers because of their nomadic lifestyle and lack of civilization. These differences were more emphatically depicted as the Saints spent more time in the Salt Lake region. Young and other leaders employed several methods to communicate with the Saints, but the most effective and far-reaching were their published general letters and sermons. Through these methods, ordinary Mormons absorbed ideas that Indians were savage, cruel, and treacherous, but these differences were not tied to skin color. Rather, they

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{214} \textit{ibid.}, page 17.
\bibitem{216} \textit{JD} 2:119.
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were linked to the natives’ lack of civilization or religious enlightenment. Young, although not always acting upon it, upheld the idea that the Lamanites were of the chosen family of God. He felt “The Lord God will work upon them in His own way.” The Indians were only benighted, degraded, and ignorant because they had not been introduced to the Gospel.

George A. Smith, one of the original members of the Mormon Church and an eventual member of the Church’s ruling First Presidency, carried this belief with him to Salt Lake City. In a sermon on lineage, he preached in September 1855 that the Lord blessed certain races of men with privileges of the Priesthood. “Other races,” however, had the Priesthood taken from them because of their corruption, wicked behaviors, “or the wickedness of their fathers.” Hearers of the sermon would have understood Smith to be discussing Native Americans as he affirmed the racial hierarchy built into the Book of Mormon. For Smith, as with Young, skin color was not automatically associated with lesser position; spiritual status was. Once the Mormons remembered their duty “to bring these natives to an understanding of the principles of civilization” and serve as examples to the needy tribes, the Indians would leave the darkness they inhabited. As miserable as they currently were, Young emphasized that “The Lord can reveal Himself to these Indians,” thereby redeeming a “lost and fallen race.” Young reminded Mormons of their obligations to offer salvation to the Lamanites, but he also consciously and consistently set up boundaries between the two groups.

Young may have rejected the color racism prevalent in the American East, but that did not mean he considered local Indians as Mormon equals. He told the faithful that they could not expect the Indians “in their present low, and ignorant condition…to understand and act in accordance with the provision of law which they never had the least knowledge of.” Young gave his followers the impression that the Indians were children who were unaware of the consequences of their actions. He warned readers of the News to “never condescend to their level, but always seek to elevate them to a higher, purer, and, consequently, a more

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217 JD 1:321.
218 JD 3:30
219 JD 3:61.
220 JD 1:69; JD 3:61
useful and intelligent existence.” Young’s language thus reinforced lay Mormon understanding of the Indians as subordinate and set apart. As the feelings of distrust and fear that emerged on the trail persisted into the settlement period, so did the conception of Indians as uncivilized. On the trail, Mormon emigrants simply remarked on the Indians’ degraded and low condition without offering many solutions. In the settlement period, however, the Saints developed concrete ideas about how the Indians could be improved. Some of these ideas, such as teaching the Indians to farm or providing education, were consistent with prevailing American thought on how to civilize natives. Others, such as integrating Indian children into Mormon homes or indenturing Indian labor, were not. Mormon efforts at assimilation and civilization were evidence of their belief in the inherent inferiority of Native Americans, but they also intimated that the Saints still held out hope for Indian temporal salvation, if no longer for spiritual redemption.

Mormon pioneers believed that Indian tribes sincerely desired and needed Mormon help. Even before the Saints settled the Great Basin, John D. Lee recorded that the Ute Indians “wanted to be Friendly to us & the Sioux & that they desired to have Pres. B.Y. [Brigham Young] in their midst once more to council them.” This idea was reinforced in later years as the Deseret News reported that the Ute chief expressed his tribe’s desire to be “instructed in tilling the soil” as they gave up their nomadic lifestyle. Likewise, local Paiute Indians wanted to live in peace with their new neighbors and claimed they “were glad to have the Mormons come live among them.” Indian motivations for welcoming the Mormons to their lands were complex, but Mormons did not delve too deeply into the reasons. Indian leaders may have been hoping for protection against other tribes and the federal government, favorable trade relations, or presents for befriending the Saints, but the Mormons seemed to have taken the invitation to settle among the tribes at face value. The assumed superiority of white culture prevailed as Mormons brought their idea of civilization to the tribes, solicited or not.

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223 Lee, 64.
225 William M. Mall to Editor, Deseret News, 28 May 1853.
Civilizing Native Americans by assimilating them to white lifestyles was a concern of many Americans in the mid-nineteenth century. The pursuit was considered important enough to have its own line item in the national budget of 1850: “Civilization of Indians $10,000.00.”\textsuperscript{226} Methods of civilization varied and were never defined in a concrete policy, but they included encouraging Indians to abandon their traditional lifeways and religions, participate in the market economy, adopt an agricultural existence, and don white clothing and hairstyles. Young’s patronizing attitude toward Indian lifeways was evident in his suggestions for Mormons to “instruct [Native Americans] in the arts of civilized life, teach them to plant and sow, reap and mow, raise stock, build homes, [and] make farms.”\textsuperscript{227} Believing that Indians required rescue from their primitive and barbaric ways, the Saints directed their energies to teaching the Indians to work and farm. Mormons hoped the establishment of a pastoral lifestyle would foster peaceful relations and make the Indians indebted to them. They also widely promoted the practice of bringing Indian children into their homes to introduce them to white ways and Mormon culture. These actions were calculated to keep Indian hostilities in check, “strengthen their attachment to the whites, and encourage them to imbibe the arts of civilized life.”\textsuperscript{228} Native spiritual salvation seemed farther and farther from the minds of these Saints as they pursued policies that would fundamentally benefit the Mormon community.

Mormons on the frontier felt they had an obligation to inculcate farming principles to local tribes. The introduction of agriculture was an important part of the establishment of permanent relations between a tribe and their Mormon neighbors. Because the Indians of the Great Basin were not entirely sedentary, Mormon settlers did not consider them to be fully civilized. Their refusal to acknowledge semi-nomadic Indian lifeways as valid was further proof of the understanding of Indians as inferior and helpless. Mormons rarely recognized pre-existing Indian knowledge of crop cultivation and animal husbandry. Indian agriculture was limited by irrigation, but many Paiute communities cultivated corn, melon, squash, gourds, and sunflowers on the banks of rivers. After outlining the thriving crops of a local


\textsuperscript{227} Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Jedediah Grant, “Thirteenth General Epistle,” Deseret News, 31 October 1855.

\textsuperscript{228} Erastus Snow to Editor, Deseret News, 15 December 1853.
Paiute band, J.C.L. Smith and John Steele paradoxically and condescendingly informed *Deseret News* readers that “we would learn them to work and raise breadstuff, make clothing.”

In keeping with their attitude of superiority, many Mormons ridiculed Indian foods and would only condescend to eating them when necessary. For example, Indians of the Great Basin had adapted to periodic locust infestations by eating the insects when they appeared. Even though the abundant grasshoppers destroyed vegetation and were in themselves a source of protein, Mormons would not follow the Indian example. Instead, they turned to foraging “bark, roots, nettles, pigweed, redroot, and sego lily roots,” many of which had probably been identified as safe for consumption by local Indians. When the famine period was over, Mormons abandoned the native-inspired diet and returned to their traditional eating habits. Even in times of extreme duress, the Saints could not step outside their ethnocentric assumptions and admit that Indians may have had something to teach them, instead of the other way around. One exception was Brigham tea, brewed from twigs of an Ephedra plant, which Mormon women adopted from Native Americans for its medicinal uses. LDS women may have been more receptive to native plant knowledge than men, but Saints as a whole were led to believe that they must “learn the Indians to raise grain, and live by their labor” instead of living off Mormon generosity. Teaching the Indians to farm was more self-serving than altruistic. If the local Indians became self-sufficient, they would no longer raid Mormon settlements and steal Mormon commodities. Agriculture thus served the same practical and protective purpose as the physical barriers and defense mechanisms the Saints embraced.

Although the teaching of agriculture was supposedly for the Indians’ benefit, John D. Lee made explicit another of the Mormons’ true motives in his journal:

> The business before the House, the policy of sending some 30 Families to the Utauh valley to settle and put in spring crops, open a fishery, introduce schools,

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teach the Natives how to cultivate the Soil...make Fishers of them, & then the Saints can buy the Fish of them for a trifle, which will preserve their feelings good.\textsuperscript{232}

In addition to allaying hostilities and reinforcing civilization, Indian farms were to be a source of cheap products for nearby Mormon settlers. In this scenario, Indians would be temporal allies lifted from their degraded situation by the civilizing influences of Mormon residents in their villages and cultivated crops in their fields. Another self-serving motivation was federal funding: expenditures from the Office of Indian Affairs accrued to Mormons for managing Indian farms.\textsuperscript{233} Eternal salvation was not considered, and it seemed the Mormon settlers of this time were more concerned with themselves than with redeeming Native Americans.

Amidst these exploitative relationships with Indians, however, phantoms of prior notions of Indians as part of Mormon cosmology remained. Mormon Indian relations also included fostering Indian children in Mormon homes to introduce them at a young age to the white culture they were expected to emulate. Trade in Indian captives was well-established in the Great Basin when the Saints arrived. Ute slave traders raided Paiute villages for child victims who would then be sold across the Mexican border. Like Native Americans who participated in the Indian slave trade in the colonial American South, Ute slavers were motivated by economic factors. The children they captured were strictly to sell, not to replenish their own populations or absorb into their tribes, as was common in the American Northeast.\textsuperscript{234} The practice was so prevalent that federal Indian agent Garland Hurt reported that “scarcely one-half of the Pyeed [Paiute] children are permitted to grow up in the band.”\textsuperscript{235} When the Mormons entered the Valley, they disrupted an economic system and the balance of power that had sustained it for decades. Non-equestrian, and thus more vulnerable, Paiutes began to look to the Mormons for protection from equestrian Ute tribes. Slavery soon

\textsuperscript{232} Lee, 100-101.


became the primary source of tension between the Mormons and the Utes, especially after
the Saints outlawed slavery, choked off trade routes, and destroyed markets.  

Brigham Young could not countenance traffic in human flesh, informing his disciples
that “no property can or should be recognized as existing in slaves, either Indian or
African.” He tried several times to stop “the purchase and removal of Indian children from
Utah territory” with the promise of criminal prosecution, but the trade endured. Young’s
eventual solution was to recommend that Mormon settlers buy up Indian children
themselves. Historians Ned Blackhawk, Martha Knack, and Sondra Jones have argued that
ordinary Mormons became complicit in this practice out of compassion. Ute captors often
tortured the children in front of Mormons, in hopes of prompting a purchase. If potential
Mormon customers refused to participate, the slave traders would often kill the children.
More often than not, Mormons yielded and took the children into their homes. As a
representative example, “each of the 100 households in Parowan possessed one or more
Paiute children.” Mormon involvement in the slave trade thus served two purposes. First,
the children would be saved from a potentially worse fate of being sold into slavery in
Mexico or even death. Secondly, as missionary Jacob Hamblin pointed out, Mormons could
improve the station of these Indians by “taking and teaching them to do good.”

Evidence from personal journals and the press revealed that many Mormons actively
pursued the acquisition of children. Indian children were purchased from traders, taken as
payment in kind, and given to Mormons by their parents. In 1851, George Smith received a
“Pihede girl about 4 years old” from a friend who purchased her from an Indian chief for an
ox. Caroline Barney acquired an Indian child in a similar manner when her brother-in-law

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236 Sondra Jones, “‘Redeeming’ the Indian: The Enslavement of Indian Children in New Mexico and Utah.” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 234.
237 “Governor’s Message,” *Deseret News*, 10 January 1852.
238 *Ibid*.
239 Blackhawk, 240.
241 “Indian Affairs,” *Deseret News*, 2 April 1853.
traded a yearling steer for a “little Indian baby girl.”243 Children could be given or taken as payment for offences against Mormons as well, including as prisoners of war. For example, William Empy took a twelve year old boy in exchange “for the ox which was crippled” when some Indians raided his party on a journey between settlements.244 Hosea Stout recorded an incident in his diary in which some Ute prisoners were “distributed among the people who were willing to take & educate and civilize them.”245 Sometimes parents willingly offered their children to Mormon settlers, as in the case of Jacob Hamblin. After encountering some struggling Indians on his way to the Tooele Valley, a young boy’s mother pressed her son on Hamblin, who took the boy and “gave her a blanket [and] biscuits” in return.246

Regardless of the method of acquisition, Indian children definitely had a place in Mormon households. The patronizing attitude that white Mormons could raise Indian children better than their natural families permeated these transactions. Assimilation through direct contact carried the same goal of civilization as the introduction of agriculture to Indian villages. The children were to “be raised, educated, catechized, and worked” as they were acculturated to the Mormon way of life.247 Remarks like Stout’s about the Ute prisoners and Hamblin’s assertion that he bought an Indian boy “to make him useful” reiterated arguments that connected work with civilization.248 Juanita Brooks, and more recently Bruce Cannon, have shown that most Indian adoptees were treated as loved and valued members of the family; some to the point of being sealed for eternity to their white foster parents. Cannon argues that even in the erasure of a child’s former culture, there existed an altruistic and humanitarian urge, albeit undergirded by assumptions of cultural superiority, to redeem the children.249 While the usefulness of Indian labor would have been indisputable, Mormon adoptions of Indian children more likely represented vestigial beliefs in the redemption of the Lamanite.

244 “Letter from George A. Smith,” Deseret News, 8 February 1851.
245 Brooks, Hosea Stout, 2:362.
246 “Indian Affairs,” Deseret News, 2 April 1853.
247 Jones, 227.
The Mormon press also intermittently re-exposed Mormons to the idea of Indian conversion. W.W. Phelps recognized the importance of Indian salvation, but no longer believed it was possible. In a speech published in the *Deseret News*, he let his listeners know that “the wandering, loathsome, lousy, degraded savages of those mountains yonder” would never be an acceptable tabernacle for the spirit of God.  

Brigham Young seconded that sentiment in a sermon a year later when he informed his parishioners that “the Lord Almighty cannot get at the hearts of the older ones to teach them saving principles.” Clearly, Indians in their present state were not receptive to, or worthy of, salvation.

On the other hand, in a letter to the editor in December 1852, readers learned that a “new era is opening up in the history of the Indians of North America” as agriculture and civilization was extended to the tribes and blessed them with “peace, and truth, and intelligence…and light, and knowledge, and wisdom.” From these, the “principles of eternal life and salvation will follow, and from them go forth to all the Indian tribes.”

The British *Millennial Star* reinforced Indian salvation prophesies while exposing English converts to the proper way to think about American Indians. Many of the articles published about Indians in the *Millennial Star* were reprinted from the *Deseret News*, which would have ensured that Mormons in all locations received a uniform understanding of Indians, including the waning hope for pre-millennial and collective Indian redemption. For example, in March 1854, the Star reprinted an address by President Young in which he proposed a mission to “save the Lamanites” because “all the prophesies concerning that people declare that the Gospel shall be preached unto them, and we have it to do, and it is time for us to begin.”

Both views about Native Americans were likely found in the general Mormon population of Utah and were characteristic of the vacillation in attitudes about Indians of this time. Whether in denigrating or hopeful prose, articles like these showed that the idea of Indian conversion persisted, even as Mormons retreated from its millennial significance.

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251 Young, “An address,” page 22.


253 “Synopsis of President Young’s Address to the Brethren Selected to Go on a Mission to the Lamanites,” *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 16, no. 12 (25 March 1845): 188.
While some Mormons trusted that redemption was possible for the Indians, the original pure ideal became tarnished over time by accompanying warnings that Indian relations required more than mere faith. Fear and suspicion trickled down from Church leadership even as they paid lip service to Mormon theological ideas. Although in other settings Young advocated Indian extermination, he occasionally affirmed for Mormons the place of Indians as part of the “chosen seed,” even though they possessed “dark, red skins” indicative of their curse. Hope for Lamanite conversion and salvation was encouraged: “faith and prayers will do a great deal of good to these wretched remnants of Abraham’s seed” to help them receive “the spirit of the Gospel.” Parley Pratt never relinquished his hopes for the Lamanites and urged his brethren to remember the prophesies concerning the Indians. He declared that, regardless of the expense, it was time for Indian redemption and restoration in accordance with the Book of Mormon, which told the Saints to “redeem the children of Nephi and Laman, [so] we shall be made rich in the promised blessings.”

These messages, although ostensibly religious in nature and possibly heartfelt, obscured deeper meanings. Young and Pratt were well-versed in the rhetoric of Indian salvation and knew that it could be deployed to meet certain needs. Young tempered his hopes for Indian redemption with caveats to mix prayer with constant watching for the “wild Indians” while Pratt began his speech with a scolding of the brethren for not securing themselves against Indian attacks. As well, Pratt’s mention of Indian redemption is tied most obviously to Mormon blessings, not benefits to the tribes. There were also unspoken racial connotations in their advice. Early Mormons believed that redemption would eventually result in a literal change of Lamanite skin color. Although they had once been light-skinned, the Lamanites’ unbelief caused them to become “a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people.” The Book of Mormon taught that the “skins of the Lamanites were dark…which was a curse upon them because of their transgression.” Lamanites who later repented and “converted unto the Lord” experienced a physical change in their skin pigmentation: their “skin became

white,” and their “young men and their daughters became exceedingly fair.” The link between righteousness and skin color is woven throughout the Book of Mormon, and pioneer Saints would have recognized the darker skins of nearby Native Americans as a sign of their iniquity and their own light skins as a sign of God’s favor.

**Conclusion**

In the settlement period, religious sentiments about Indians were not completely lost, but they were much less visible than in the early Church of the 1830s and 1840s. Practical concerns, including safety, continuation of the Mormon kingdom in the West, and assimilation of the Indians for Mormon benefit, abounded and were reflective of Mormon understanding of natives as dangerous, treacherous, inferior, and degraded. In the Mormon collective imagination, Indians had descended from potential Saints to definite savages by the early 1850s. The original ideas about Native Americans’ role and importance in inaugurating the millennial reign of Christ and the fervor for native conversion diminished as the Mormons traveled to and settled the Salt Lake area. The migration period was the turning point in which ordinary Saints relinquished their religious sentiments and adopted a harder, more practical stance towards the Indians they encountered. The harsh reality of life on the trail and frontier conflicted with Mormon ideals about Indians, and in the end, the realistic outlook triumphed. Feelings of fear and contempt persisted throughout this period, although the responses to each emotion manifested themselves differently during migration than settlement.

When community safety or sustainability was threatened, especially by a supposedly inferior group of people, early pioneers felt justified in responding with violence. Although this violence was eventually renounced, that it existed at all reflected the prevailing militant attitude toward racial differences that existed in nineteenth-century American society at large. Like their American contemporaries, most Mormons held deeply ingrained assumptions of native inferiority. The attitude of white superiority over Native Americans, combined with contempt, disdain, and paternalistic tendencies, was an accepted and unquestioned aspect of mid-1800s America.

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258 3 Nephi 2:12-16.
By 1854, the Mormons had adopted the oft-referenced policy that it was cheaper to feed the Indians than fight them. This policy was more than likely driven by concerns of safety and the pragmatic reality that the small community was not large or stable enough to engage in endless and costly Indian wars. A better course of action was to pursue alternatives that would make Indians dependent upon their Mormon friends. Accordingly, the years 1854 through 1857 were marked by peaceful relations and an increased interest in Indians as converts and as actors on the Mormon cosmological stage. The press carried the first hints of this change in attitude, but it was most evident in a series of Indian missions begun in 1854 and accelerated in 1855. The pendulum had swung once again to embracing religious ideas about Native Americans, but a decade of experience had tempered these ideals with a worldly and practical element.
CHAPTER 3

“THE WORK OF DEATH SHOULD COMMENCE”: MORMON MANIPULATION OF NATIVE AMERICANS, 1854-1857

MASSACRE AT ELK MOUNTAIN

In the fall of 1855 a Ute Indian invited James Hunt, a Mormon missionary at Elk Mountain, in present-day Wyoming, to inspect a horse. A mile away from the mission, the Indian directed Hunt’s attention to some cattle in the distance and then shot him in the back as Hunt turned to look. When Hunt’s fellow missionaries came to his rescue, the Indian’s companions fired on them as well. The Mormons retreated to their small walled community while the Utes “burnt the hay, and turned off the water that supplied the fort.” The next morning Indians surrounded the fort. Thirteen surviving evangelists deserted their mission for the nearby town of Manti, leaving “their enemies quarreling over the cattle and the spoils in the Fort.”259 The Deseret News ran several stories about the “massacre,” including a letter from William Sterrett, another of the Elk Mountain missionaries. Sterrett described the missionaries’ flight and mentioned a stop among some Yampah Utes, the tribe that had just attacked the mission. Sterrett recognized the oddity of the situation, but he informed his readers that “we trusted in the God of Israel...[to] direct us to some Lamanite camp.”260 Despite the loss of three of their brethren, the missionaries still desired to minister to the Indians. Church President Brigham Young had a different response. After sending a militia to preserve the peace, he cautioned Saints to “exercise patience, perseverance, and forbearance, as well as care and watchfulness” in their dealings with Native Americans.261

The Elk Mountain incident sparked various reactions that reflected contemporary perceptions of Native Americans and their usefulness to Mormons. After months of fighting,

259 This account of the Elk Mountain uprising is adapted from “Massacre near Elk Mountain,” Deseret News, 10 October 1855.


late 1854 saw a resurgence in religious sentiments towards Indians. The Church launched Indian missions to several locations in the Southwest. Mission journals and newspapers reveal that, although some missionaries may have held religious feelings about their native neighbors, Church leadership intended mission work as a control mechanism. As historian Eugene Campbell has demonstrated, Indian missions were not merely religious endeavors. Missions were selected and established for the purposes of pacification and establishing influence over the natives. The missionaries were to serve not only as religious ambassadors, but also, and more importantly, as political emissaries. Many Indian missionaries demonstrated genuine concern for Indian salvation and uplift, but communal self-interest altered the nature of the missions from pious to practical. Religious imperative may have driven the initial impulse for Indian missions, but it was soon undercut by Mormon political and military interest.

As the Mormons faced increasing scrutiny by the federal government for their civil and economic practices, the threat of federal military action became more real. American President James Buchanan dispatched U.S. Army troops to Utah Territory in the summer of 1857 to quell a supposed impending rebellion. According to historian David Bigler, federal fear of a Mormon-Indian alliance was one of the primary factors behind Buchanan’s decision. Haunted and united by memories of past persecutions, Mormons vowed to defend their Zion. Young and other Church leaders knew that the Mormon settlers alone would be no match for federal forces so they looked to friendly native tribes as potential allies.

The Gentile nightmare of a Mormon-Indian alliance materialized in September 1857 at Mountain Meadows when Paiute Indians, encouraged and led by Mormons, attacked the Fancher wagon train. After a two-day standoff, Mormon men convinced the Fancher party to surrender to protect themselves from further “Indian” attacks. After luring the emigrants from the safety of their circled wagons, Mormons and Indians ambushed and destroyed the

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entire party. Immediately, the Mormons involved placed full blame on their native accomplices, trying to convince each other and outsiders that Indians alone had been responsible for the slaughter of more than 120 men, women, and children. Native Americans became a convenient scapegoat for Mormon crimes.

By the time of the Mountain Meadows massacre, Mormon perceptions of Native Americans had deteriorated to the point where Indians were seen as tools to meet Mormon goals. Rather than individual souls worth saving, Indians had become potential allies and eventual sacrifices. The altruistic impulses that drove early Mormons in their Indian relations all but disappeared. Even resurrected missionary work among native tribes was driven by an ulterior political motive. Mormon self-interest dominated Indian relations, and Mormons concentrated on the ways Native Americans could serve purposes within the Church. This chapter will examine the final declension of Mormon religious conceptions of Native Americans in the mid-1850s. The bonds forged by religion and common interest had to be broken when casting the Indians as the sole perpetrators of murder. Mission records, newspapers, personal writings, and sermons revealed that the shift in perception was reinforced by an increased racialization of Indians. Church leaders deployed racialization when convenient to Mormon purposes, and racialization and Indian usefulness were inversely proportional. When Mormons needed native help, differences were downplayed. On the other hand, once Indians ceased to be useful, or even became an asset as at Mountain Meadows, racialization increased. These attitudes trickled down to Mormon laity through the press and sermons. By the time of the Utah War, lived experience among Indians trumped spiritual ideals.

“AGAIN FEEL THEY POSSESS SOULS”: REVIVAL OF THE LAMANITE

Seven years of continuous confrontations with multiple tribes along the frontier, culminating in the expensive Walker War of 1853, convinced Mormon leadership that their Indian policy must change. Brigham Young famously professed that it was cheaper to feed the Indians than to fight them. Leaders reminded their flocks of the Mormon obligation to the Lamanites, re-introducing the term into public parlance through sermons, speeches, and

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265 For a more extensive explanation of the factors behind Mormon policy change, see “The Mormons and the Indians – Ideals v. Realities” in Campbell, Establishing Zion, 93-112.
letters. Indians needed to be introduced to civilization and religion, and direct contact between Mormons and Indians would be the best way to accomplish these objectives. Accordingly, Young authorized several Indian missions throughout 1854 and early 1855. Ordinary Mormons absorbed the revived religious sentiments from the pulpit and the press and responded by answering the missionary call. By continually reminding the general population of past promises to Indian nations, Church leaders engendered a resurgence of religious feeling which they later capitalized upon.

Public speeches and sermons were an effective way to reach large audiences, and Mormon leaders employed this method of communication for everything from secular advice to religious guidance. These messages were sometimes presented informally, but they were impactful and memorable. Hosea Stout wrote in his diary on 8 January 1854 that “J.M. Grant preached on the subject of the Lamanites.”266 This short entry demonstrated that the idea of the Lamanite still existed and was considered important enough for Stout to note. In the spring and summer of 1855, at the height of missionary activity, Saints would have heard several speakers cover the issue of Mormon responsibility for Lamanite salvation. In mid-February, Orson Pratt asked his listeners “How can the poor ignorant Indians of the forest worship acceptably until they are taught about God and about Jesus?”267 A week later future Church President Wilford Woodruff addressed an audience at the Tabernacle. He told them that the Indians would eventually experience the blessings of Christ as assured to them by their ancestors. He reminded the assembled crowd that they must treat Indians kindly until “they are waked up by the visions of heaven” and “again feel they possess souls.”268 In May, Pratt invoked the millennial idea of the gathering of Native Americans to build Zion prior to the Second Coming of Christ. He told the congregation that the reign of Christ would not occur “before the Lamanites come in,” echoing popular sentiments from two decades prior.269 Such discourse may have influenced Heber C. Kimball’s prophesy that “soon we would [have] thousands of the Indians around us at Parowan” and a “Temple would be built

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268 JD 2:201.
269 JD 3:19. See also Chapter 1.
in the vicinity of the Rio Virgin, to where the Lamanites would come.” Kimball’s prediction showed that at least some Saints internalized ideas about Lamanite destiny and salvation.

A conference in Provo City on 13 July 1855 featured several speakers admonishing Mormons for ignoring their duties to the Indians while also expressing hope for future Indian relations. Ezra Benson chided the assembly, telling them “we have not been as faithful as we ought to have been” in serving as a positive religious example for nearby Indians. Joseph Young seconded Benson’s speech with observations that early ideas about the Lamanites had been abandoned, even as the Mormons lived among the tribes. He expressed hope that these feelings would be revived so the Indians could be carried to salvation. Joseph Young’s faith in Indian sanctification was strengthened by a vision in which he saw the Lamanites “in their redeemed state, and they looked so bright, and clean, and glorious.” George A. Smith was even more fervent in his address to a gathering in the Bowery of Salt Lake City: “[L]et us spend our means and labor, let us toil, and even spend our all for their redemption and preservation.” These speeches helped reshape ordinary Mormon ideas about Native Americans. As they listened to their leaders in a formal church setting or in an informal gathering, Mormons renewed their obligations to the Lamanites.

Reports from missionaries also reinforced the new Mormon Indian policy. The Deseret News printed letters and observations from Indian missionaries as confirmation that the Mormons were on the right path with their Indian relations. Henry Lunt sent a letter to the News’ editor in which he expressed his hope that “we may one and all be serviceable in rolling forth the great work” of saving the Paiute Indians in Iron County. John D. Lee sent a letter to Brigham Young confessing that he prayed that “the Spirit of the Lord would continue to rest upon these poor creatures.” An extract of a letter from Thomas Brown at the Southern Indian Mission to Young hinted of progress that could be made among certain

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271 JD 3:61.
272 JD 9:229-233.
273 JD 2:376.
275 John D. Lee to Brigham Young, Deseret News, 16 February 1854.
groups of Native Americans. Brown offered the opinion that if tribes were furnished with farming implements, “their present salvation, and the foundation for the exaltation” would be ensured.\textsuperscript{276} When Mormons read these published letters, they were reassured that Indian salvation was not only desirable, but possible.

International converts were also exposed to positive ideas about the Indians’ future. Editor Parley Pratt published a five-page article entitled simply “The Lamanites” in the 21 October 1854 edition of \textit{The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star}. In the article he revisited millenialist themes and the prophetic destiny of Native Americans. English converts learned that the United States government, in negotiating for Indian land that would require subsequent tribal relocations, continued to fulfill Book of Mormon prophesy concerning the gathering of Lamanites. Persecution at the hands of the Gentiles, as foretold in scripture, brought the Indians one step closer to “their restoration and redemption…[and] future destiny.”\textsuperscript{277} Pratt went on to enumerate the most important aspects of Young’s Indian policy, including the injunction to “teach them the principles of the Gospel as fast as they can comprehend them.”\textsuperscript{278} This would allow Mormons to redeem the fallen Lamanites and “bring them back to civilization and the religion of their forefathers.”\textsuperscript{279} British converts would have been reminded of the prophetic import of Lamanites, as well as Mormon sympathy and desire for Indian salvation. Thousands of English neophytes immigrated to Utah Territory in the mid-1850s, and they would have brought this conception of redeemable Indians with them. Although from a different cultural background, these immigrants found that their ideas about Native Americans matched those of their American co-religionists.

\textbf{“PREACH CIVILIZATION TO THEM:” THE EFFECT OF MISSIONARY WORK ON INDIAN IDENTITY}

Ordinary Mormons were exposed to pro-Indian rhetoric both at home and abroad. Acceptance of the revived tenets was made manifest in Indian missions, and missionaries went into the field with conversion and salvation in mind. Mormon leaders, however, had a

\textsuperscript{278} \textit{Ibid.}, 660.
\textsuperscript{279} \textit{Ibid.}
more opportunistic view of these missions and used them as a cover for creating political and military alliances.

Late 1854 through 1855 saw a flourishing of Indian missionary work. The Green River, White Pine Mountain, Elk Mountain, Las Vegas, Carson Valley, Lemhi, and Shoshone missions spread Mormon influence throughout the Great Basin. These locations were far from the Mormon metropole and representative of Brigham Young’s desire to “explore, settle, and hold as much territory in the Great West as possible.”\textsuperscript{280} His dream of Mormon self-sufficiency partially influenced the selection of mission sites as he chose locations that could provide resources the Mormons needed, such as iron or fertile land. Once a location was determined, men were called as missionaries. These men were typically in their twenties or early thirties, married, occasionally polygamously, healthy, and eager to bring the gospel to the Indians. They often left their families behind to establish these new settlements. Historian Juanita Brooks’ description of the missionaries near Harmony in Southern Utah could apply to many Mormon Indian missionaries: “Full of youth and vigor and faith, they set out to establish themselves in this last outpost on the edge of the desert.”\textsuperscript{281}

Most were honored by their appointment as missionaries. When Oliver Huntington was selected for the Elk Mountain mission, he answered the call immediately. A teacher, he “did not open my school another day but set directly about getting ready. Sold my House & lot on the hill.”\textsuperscript{282} Huntington’s impatience to start his mission was evident in his journal when he recorded that he was eager to assemble his outfit so he could “complete my Mission, for I felt it to be one of the greatest missions ever given in this dispensation.”\textsuperscript{283} Missionary Jacob Hamblin paralleled Huntington’s sentiments about the importance of the Indian missions. After spending just a few days among the Indians near the Santa Clara River, Hamblin recorded in his autobiography that he “fully made up my mind to do all I could to

\textsuperscript{280} Milton R. Hunter, “Brigham Young, Colonizer,” \textit{The Pacific Historical Review} 6, no. 4 (December 1937): 354.

\textsuperscript{281} Juanita Brooks, \textit{Dudley Leavitt, Pioneer to Southern Utah}, (1942), 27.


\textsuperscript{283} \textit{Ibid.}
alleviate their condition." The men selected as missionaries believed in the Indians as people of promise, but the reality of missionary work on the frontier with little to no support eroded their faith.

Despite the profession of concern with Indian salvation and redemption, missionary work could not truly begin until the missionaries had established a food supply and made provisions for defending their settlement. These tasks took priority over all else, including proselytizing to Native Americans. A report from the Las Vegas mission explained that missionaries would explore the area around the mission and meet with Indians “as soon as we can get through our farming and fencing.” The first acts of the missionaries at Harmony were to clear the land and plant corn, wheat, and potatoes. Although there were Indian interactions early on, most of the men spent their time plowing and sowing seed. Anxiety about a stable food supply dotted the early entries of the Journal of the Southern Indian Mission. Recorder Thomas Brown noted such details as soil quality, irrigation issues, fitness of the land for grazing and planting, and weather that would impact the mission’s ability to provide food for missionaries and natives. Missionaries saw food as a way to entice Indians to the mission, where the Mormons could then secure their influence. In a letter to the Deseret News, Brown explained that planting wheat “enabled [missionaries] to feed the Indians, keep them around us, learn their language, and do them good.”

Protection went hand-in-hand with provisions. In addition to laboring in the fields, missionaries devoted time to building up defenses around their settlements. By this time, Young’s exhortations about security had taken root, and fortifying up was a necessary part of a successful mission. Nelson Higgins of Manti assured the readers of the Deseret News that once “the gates are hung, [they] will form quite a barrier to Indian depredations.” The fort at Manti had walls eight feet high and three feet thick to enclose the temple, dwellings, mills, and fields. At the mission on Cedar Creek, the inhabitants voted to “enclose the city with...
walls, bars, and gates.” A report in the News later confirmed that Parowan was “completely surrounded with a wall” six feet thick at the base and twelve feet tall at its highest points. Slightly north of Parowan at Elk Mountain, Huntington recorded that their fort wall was finished on 19 July 1855 and the gates hung about one month later. Mormons found shelter and security in their walled communities, but the walls themselves served as visual reminders to local Indians that they were not welcome or trusted. Rarely stopping to consider how their actions would be perceived, missionaries and settlers concentrated on the defensive measures, as well as food production, that were so integral to safeguarding the small Mormon presence in the mission settlements.

Once missionaries ensured food and protection, they turned their efforts to reaching Native Americans in their mission’s vicinity. To better serve their potential converts, missionaries engaged in intensive native language study as part of their training. Jonathan Duke mentioned in his diary in passing that he was “studying the Ute language” in preparation for his mission. Often one missionary proficient in the required dialect would instruct the others, and all the brethren “strove hard to learn their [the Indians’] language.” Language classes met day and night at Parowan and Cedar City, and Iron County missionaries reported that they were paying off. Learning Indian tongues allowed the missionaries to get closer to those they were trying to convert. Mormon missionaries such as Hamblin and John D. Lee were able to preach to Native Americans in their own languages which would have attracted and retained native converts. Knowing this, Hamblin made it his “principal business to learn the Indian language” so he could do the most good as quickly as possible. On a visit to Harmony, Young publicly praised the missionaries’ efforts at mastering languages for the influence it would later give the Mormons over the Indians.

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289 John D. Lee to Brigham Young, Deseret News, 16 February 1854.
291 Huntington, Diary, page 81.
294 J.C.L. Smith to Editor, Deseret News, 16 March 1854.
295 Little, 31.
When evangelizing, missionaries often focused on the predictions made to Native Americans in the Book of Mormon. Thomas Brown’s “The Indian Missionary’s Song,” published in the *Deseret News* in July 1854, affirmed this practice. His lyrics told missionaries to “…pray quickly tell/Mormon and Moroni’s tales, and how their fathers fell.” As with earlier missionary efforts of the 1830s and 1840s, Mormons exhibited spiritual paternalism in their interactions with Indians in Utah. They maintained that they knew better than Native Americans what their past and future held. The Saints also continued in their assumption that their efforts would lead the Indians out of darkness, even if the Indians themselves did not realize they inhabited it. In one of James Brown’s first encounters with Chief Washakie of the Shoshone, he introduced the chief to the Book of Mormon as a record of promises made to the Indians by their ancestors. Washakie and his council accepted the scripture as a history of their forefathers and received it favorably, to the missionaries’ delight. Mormon felt their message was well-received by other Indian groups as well. L.S. Wood, an Indian interpreter, reported in a letter to the *News* that a band of Utes, led by Tintic and Sanpitch, desired to live in peace with the Mormons. These Indians told Wood that they “had lost the Good Spirit,” but his visit had changed their feelings. Similarly, J.C.L. Smith of Iron County said that the “Pi-edes have been friendly, as usual, and manifest a desire to live in peace with the saints” after missionaries had visited them.

Missionaries made headway in converting some Indians, particularly the Paiutes of Southern Utah. Baptism was the most visible sign than an Indian had accepted the truths of Mormonism and served as a measure of mission success. With a touch of pride, James Brown recorded that he baptized “three of the first Shoshone women that ever came into the Church,” as well as a “young Indian man” after he settled on Shoshone land. Thomas Brown noted the baptism and re-naming of several Indians in the Southern Indian mission region who accepted the Mormon religion. The men were re-christened with names from the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Parooamp became James, Ovanukets became John,

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299 “Our Correspondence: The Indians in Utah County,” *Deseret News*, 8 August 1855.
300 J.C.L. Smith to Editor, *Deseret News*, 16 March 1854.
Beshamp became Aaron, and Wanteits became Nephi. Seventeen Indian men were accepted into the Church one afternoon in May, and about a month later ten others joined them after begging the Mormons for baptism. Later James Brown wrote of a mass baptism on Shoshone land in which over 300 Indians were blessed and renamed. The cleansing ritual of baptism and the bestowing of new names symbolized a new life for the novice Mormons. The converts recognized this as well, requesting that they be called “Pahute Mormons to Pahutes.” Missionaries interpreted Indian acceptance of Mormon doctrine and civilization as signs of divine favor. These men genuinely desired Indian spiritual improvement and rejoiced at native conversions. Brown’s lamentation “O, Lord! my spirit exclaims when will their salvation begin?” was answered as missionaries witnessed Lamanite achievement of their destiny.

Missionaries enjoyed success in proselytizing to Native Americans, yet they still perceived Indians as uncivilized and inherently inferior. As most missionaries were average Mormons who had little to no input about becoming messengers to the Indians, that they carried typical Mormon prejudices should not be surprising. All carried ethnocentric assumptions that Indian culture was underdeveloped. For Thomas Brown, formerly a shopkeeper, the Indians were degraded and pitiable in their current condition. They needed Mormon intervention to help them “quit [their] savage customs.” James Brown harbored the same beliefs about Indian worth. Native Americans needed the Mormons to “preach civilization to them.” Comments like these echoed earlier ideas and demonstrated that Mormons continued to regard Indian lifeways as invalid.

Jacob Hamblin, whom posterity remembers as a sympathetic and caring diplomat to the Indians, referred to his charges as “ignorant barbarians” with “simple and childlike ways.” Hamblin acknowledged that some of the Indians’ depravity could be blamed on the white man for destroying resources like land and game, but he still viewed them as helpless,

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303 Ibid., 74.
304 Ibid., 57.
305 Ibid., 25.
307 Little, 35.
stubborn, and in need of saving. He reflected more than once that he would have considered himself “fortunate as to be called among a higher class of people.” Hamblin accepted that his duty was to lift up his Lamanite brethren, but he held a very low opinion of the Paiutes among whom he labored. He perceived them to be “in a very low, degraded condition indeed; loathsome and filthy beyond description,” but Hamblin had a deep faith that the Indians could be improved and eventually saved. The missionaries may have desired Indian salvation, but that did not mean that they considered Indians equal to Mormons, even after conversion. The Southern Indian Mission experienced success in baptizing and confirming some Paiutes as members of the Church, but the missionaries would not take the next step of ordaining the Lamanites. Ordination would have made the Indians full and equal members of the Church, on par with white Mormon men, but the missionaries decided instead to delay ordination until they received further instructions. While a few Ute converts had been ordained prior to this mission, the hesitation shown by the missionaries suggested that it was not common or that they did not necessarily agree with the practice. Although they truly desired to help the Indians in their care, most missionaries could not rise above the racial thinking of their time. Unlike the first Mormon Indian missionaries of 1830 who ignored American racial restrictions, the next generation of missionaries acted upon their internalized ideas of Indian difference and inferiority.

Stories about continuing Indian depredations and violence in the press further entrenched ideas about Indians as inferior and dangerous. Unlike previous newspaper reports that called for retaliatory violence, however, articles after 1853 almost unanimously advised a temperate approach. The reports continued to highlight Indian difference, but they tended to distinguish between individuals acting alone and generalizations about entire tribes. For example, an August 1854 article reported on the murder and mutilation of two boys. The author was careful to point out that the action was probably the work “of a few reckless savages, without the previous countenance or knowledge of any tribe.” The article went on

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308 Little, 45.
309 Little, 50.
to caution against retribution, warning that any white who unjustly harmed an Indian would be “rigorously dealt with.”

Smaller settlements farther away from Great Salt Lake City had a more difficult time with Indians. In the early years of Mormon colonization in the Great Basin, isolation meant vulnerability. Thomas Williams wrote that the Indians around Fort Laramie were stealing horses while others near Fort Leavenworth “seem hostile” and threatening to families. Orson Hyde revealed that the Indians along Mary’s River in northern Nevada “feel that they are neglected [by the federal government], and they have become angry, turbulent, and very annoying to travelers.” This group attempted to steal Hyde’s livestock and horses as he camped. On the same day, the News ran a similar article about troublesome Indians in Provo who had plundered the fields and prevented Mormons from fishing in the river. Readers also discovered that the Sioux along the Platte River in Nebraska had conspired to steal horses. Responding to thefts with violence was a thing of the past, and John L. Smith’s reaction to potential incursions was typical of Indian policy of this time: “[W]e feel to trust in the Lord and do right.” The press persisted in representing Native Americans in a less than flattering light, but reoriented ordinary Mormon response to depredations. Mormons exchanged brutal fighting for benevolence and placation. Church leaders advocated this policy, and everyday Mormons as well as Indian missionaries adopted it. Even in the unexpected violence of the Elk Mountain massacre, Young stressed that the Saints should not engage in bloodshed because to do so would mean descending to savagery. Rather, Mormons should be watchful and stay the conciliatory course.

Incidence of violence or theft only reinforced the missionary belief that Indians needed Mormon intervention. Native Americans, however, did not always agree. In the summer of 1856, Paiute chief Agarapoots threatened the missionaries at Harmony. The area was in a drought, and the chief ordered the missionaries to leave his land and killed an ox to illustrate his anger. Shoshone chief Catalos expressed similar feelings to missionary James

312 Ibid.
313 “Elder’s Correspondence,” Deseret News, 16 May 1855.
315 George A. Smith to Editor, “Home Correspondence,” Deseret News, 27 June 1855.
Brown. The tribe felt threatened by the rapidly changing economy as game animals grew scarce. Catalos explained “We are only squaws now. We cannot hunt or defend our families. We are not anybody now.” In the winter, the tribal members had no way to support themselves so they were forced to camp with whites and work for food by husking corn, chopping wood, or helping with chores around Mormon homesteads. Brown seemed to feel sympathy for their plight, but, like many Indian missionaries, he was more concerned with Mormon survival.

The Paiutes of the Southern Indian Mission took a different route than the Shoshone. Repudiating complete dependence, the Paiutes told Hamblin that they could no longer be Mormon Paiutes. They tried to appease him, telling him that “it may be that some of our children will be good, but we want to follow our old customs.” The group renounced Mormonism and the civilization Hamblin offered and reverted to their traditional lifestyle. Both the Shoshone and the Paiutes valued their relationships with the Saints for the trade goods and occasional protection they received, but they were not interested in accepting a Mormon lifestyle. Mormon missionaries’ assumptions of cultural superiority clouded their understanding of the Mormon-Indian relationship. Whereas the missionaries thought the Indians should feel gratitude, Native Americans actually felt threatened and overwhelmed. Reactions to enlarging Mormon settlements and the consequent loss of resources ranged from the non-confrontational stance of the Shoshone to the antagonism of the Sioux. Missionaries tried to alleviate the strain as best as they knew how while relying on the shared God of the Indians and Mormons to craft a solution.

Regardless of how pious the missionaries were or how devoutly they may have wished for Indian redemption and uplift, the true purpose of their mission intruded on their zeal. As several historians have argued, Mormon Indian missions were not solely religious institutions. They were also intended as mechanisms of Mormon control. More important than religious imperative was political necessity. Missionaries knew from the outset their purpose was two-fold and that the greater emphasis of their work was forging friendly

318 Little, 44.
319 See, for example, Beverly Beeton, “Teach Them to Till the Soil: An Experiment with Indian Farms 1850-1862,” American Indian Quarterly 3, no. 4 (Winter 1977-1978): 299-320; Campbell, Establishing Zion; and Hunter, “Brigham Young, Colonizer.”
relationships with and gaining influence among Native Americans. Orson Hyde, president of the Green River mission in Wyoming, recognized the aim of missionary work to be to “operate as peacemakers…preach civilization…and prevent trouble for our frontier settlements.”\(^\text{320}\) Mormon missionaries were to ensure future cooperation and good feelings from the Indians. Lee recalled a visit from Young and Parley Pratt to Parowan in which Pratt preached that if the missionaries were to “feed, clothe, and instruct them [the Indians]…they will more than repay you for your outlay. Win their hearts, [and] their affections.”\(^\text{321}\) Pratt was a fervent believer in Lamanite promise, but even he subverted those impulses to support broader Mormon goals.

Cloaked by religion, missionaries traveled throughout Utah Territory and approached Native American tribes with ostensibly spiritual motives in mind. At the same time, they were able to gauge the disposition of the Indians towards the Saints. In May of 1854, for example, a council met to elect a delegation to visit surrounding Indian camps with the intent of learning “the feeling of the red men, and their movements.”\(^\text{322}\) In early 1855, missionary and Indian interpreter Dimick B. Huntington sent a detailed report to the *Deseret News* that described a trip he made with Garland Hurt, the federal Indian agent. As he accompanied Hurt as an interpreter, Huntington assessed the various bands of Indians for their friendliness to Mormons. He informed readers that the Indians at Lehi, Payson, Fort Ephraim, Manti, and Palmyra were amiable, but those at Springville and Nephi were upset and causing trouble.\(^\text{323}\) These reports indicated that missionaries were often used as advance scouts and that missions themselves could serve as bases for first contact and later influence.

Cementing Mormon influence was paramount. When determining a course for Mormon Indian policy, an anonymous editorial in the *Deseret News* recommended making the Indian dependent upon Mormons. As Indians “begin to lean upon us, and in a little while to look up to us,” the Saints would have more influence over Indian behavior.\(^\text{324}\) Pratt advised the missionaries in Southern Utah that kindness would “fasten” the Indians to the


Mormons.\textsuperscript{325} Hamblin’s journal confirmed Pratt’s theory. He postulated that the good spirit that governed the missionaries’ interactions with the Indians caused the natives to “regard our words as law.”\textsuperscript{326} Mormons relied on several methods to establish influence, including living among Native Americans, learning native dialects, sharing food, introducing farming techniques, making presents of weapons and tools, and accepting Indians into their religious family. How they ingratiated themselves was not important as long as the missionaries gained Indian trust.

Indian farms were one method of cultivating influence and trust. Young appointed Indian farmers to a bounded tract of land on which Native Americans were to be restricted. The white farmers planted, harvested, and distributed crops to tribal members on the \textit{de facto} reservations. Implicit in the foundation of the farms was an assumption that Native Americans remained lower than Mormons on the scale of civilization. The farms, such as the one at Fillmore, gave Mormons even more control over Indians by providing a “moral, religious, and educational environment where they could become ‘regenerated.’”\textsuperscript{327} Along with influence, Indian farms carried other tangible benefits for Mormons. If Indians could become self-sufficient through farming, they would stop depleting the Saints’ variable food supply through begging. Theoretically, fewer depredations on grain and livestock would occur. Also, Indian farmers were nominally employed by the federal Indian Office and received regular salaries. Indian farms allowed the Mormons to enhance their control over native tribes and take advantage of federal funds. As historian Beverly Beeton has observed, the “scheme” was “practical and beneficial for the Mormon community” as it allowed them to line their pockets and expand their influence.\textsuperscript{328} Lack of Indian interest and participation eventually caused the farms to fail, but not before Mormons had made friendly overtures to several Native American bands.

Marriage between Mormon men and Indian women was also suggested as a way to align the two groups. By marrying into a tribe, Mormons could claim kinship obligations if necessary. Young encouraged Saints to take Indian women as plural wives if the women had

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\item \textsuperscript{325} Thomas Brown, \textit{Journal of the Southern Indian Mission}, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{326} Little, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{327} Beeton, 301.
\item \textsuperscript{328} Beeton, 304.
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converted to Mormonism. These wives could continue living with their tribes, but the marriages would provide Mormons with political and familial ties. Orson Hyde realized that if Saints were “permitted to take the young daughters of the chief and leading men” to wife, these marriage alliances would allow the Mormons to further “identify our interests with theirs.” A meeting with Washakie, the Shoshone chief, revealed that marrying into Indian families would be more difficult than the Mormons anticipated, however. Washakie conceded that if a missionary could find a girl who would agree to marry him, the two could wed. But Washakie wanted reciprocal privileges within the Mormon community. Once the missionaries understood that “the Indians [meant] to have the same privilege among the white men…the council ended.” Like many Americans of the mid-nineteenth century, Mormons had a difficult time accepting interracial marriages, particularly between a white woman and a non-white man. Even with Young’s blessing, there were few instances of Mormon-Indian marriages. This method of sealing political alliances remained available but never lived up to the potential imagined by Mormon leaders.

Missions often provided the first points of sustained contact between Native Americans and Mormons. The blood shed in the Walker War and other retaliatory conflicts convinced Mormons that missionary work would be a more effective mechanism to reach Indians than violence. Church leaders purposely renewed Mormon interest in Lamanite redemption and sent dozens of missionaries into the field. The missionaries themselves zealously pursued Indian salvation, although they never considered Lamanites as Mormon equals. While these missions had the “avowed purpose [of] converting and civilizing the Indian,” in reality they served as a cover for more political action. Church leaders saw Indian missions and farms in terms of Mormon benefit. This attitude trickled down to the missionaries who eventually accepted that gaining influence for future leverage should be the primary focus of mission outreach to natives. By 1857, Indian missions were no longer for

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332 Hunter, 355.
the betterment of the Lamanites; rather, they existed for the advantage of the Saints. Ultimately, Indians were more valuable to the Saints as allies than as converts.

**“MAKE THEM OUR FAST FRIENDS:” NATIVE AMERICANS AS MORMON ALLIES**

Gentile fear of a Mormon-Indian alliance extended back to the Saints’ days in Missouri and Illinois. “Indian tampering” was but one of the many allegations leveled at the Mormons that contributed to their desertion of the United States for the Great Basin. Brigham Young directly linked the Mormon exodus to anxieties surrounding Mormon Indian relations when he reminded a congregation at the Tabernacle that “the fears…of the Government were aroused, because they, not we, said that it was our intention to tamper with the Indians, therefore we must not be allowed to exist in their vicinity.”

In Mormon memory, apprehension of an alliance was a factor in Gentile persecution. Once the Saints moved to Utah and essentially represented the only white contact most Indian tribes experienced, Gentile misgivings intensified.

As early as March 1852, federal Indian subagent Jacob Holeman sent a letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Luke Lea, outlining his concerns about Mormon interference in federal Indian duties. He explained that Mormon hostility to the U.S. government caused them to ignore government regulations about Indian relations and instead follow only the proclamations of Governor Young. As an example of Mormon defiance, Holeman reported gossip that alleged that Mormons were trying to form an alliance with Indians for mutual defense and protection. Even if formal alliances did not exist, federal agents felt that Mormons still had undue influence on the tribes around their settlements. Topographical engineer John W. Gunnison, a Gentile who had lived among the Mormons for a time and remained friendly to them, wrote that the strategic location of Mormon settlements allowed the Saints to “[exert] an influence upon both [the Utahs and Shoshones], and [ensure] them a controlling power ultimately.” The government realized Mormons efforts to possess influence over the Indians foreshadowed undesirable consequences.

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333 *JD* 2:172


Three years after Holeman’s letter, federal Indian agent Garland Hurt sent a report to Commissioner George Manypenny that questioned and cautioned against the work of missionaries among the Indians. Hurt feared that Mormon missionaries had created a distinction between Mormons and Americans, in favor of the Mormons, in Indian minds. Some Indian groups did distinguish between the two, referring with friendly overtones to Mormons as “Mormonee” and with distrust to Gentiles as “Mericats.” Hurt thought distinctions like these, which he believed to be deliberately planted and stoked by missionaries, would alienate Indians from federal efforts, leading him to suggest tracking of the missionaries by the Indian Office. Hurt may have been influenced by reports from U.S. Army officers in the Utah region. Colonel Edward J. Steptoe informed the War Department that Ute Indians in certain areas around Great Salt Lake City had been “taught that the Mormons were a superior people to the Americans….and that the Mormons were their friends and allies.” Lieutenant Sylvester Mowry corroborated Steptoe’s accusations with his observation that the missionaries’ “sole object was to impress upon the Indians the belief in the inferiority and hostility of the Americans, and the superiority and friendship of the Mormons.” Furthermore, these missionaries were responsible for arming mission Indians with guns and ammunition. Missionary activity also alarmed Secretary of War John B. Floyd. He suspected Mormon complicity behind Indian attacks on emigrant trains, and missionary activity only served to confirm his trepidation that the Mormons were aligning with Indians against the United States.

Although Mormons adamantly denied trying to form military coalitions with Native Americans, they actively recruited Indian allies throughout the 1850s. Mormon efforts to partner with Indians against the federal government were apparent in mission records, letters, and journals. Once leaders such as Brigham Young and George A. Smith determined that a Mormon-Indian alliance was necessary, they disseminated their beliefs through personal

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337 Morgan, 394.
339 Bailey, 344.
340 Bigler, “‘A Lion in the Path,’” 2 and 10.
interactions and relied on lay Mormons to carry out their wishes. One of the first places that Mormons sought to solidify these partnerships was one where Saints already had inroads to friendly natives: Indian missions. As the Saints came under increasing pressure from the federal government, the non-religious nature of the missions became more blatant. A letter to Hamblin from Young in mid-1857 counseled him that he must gain Indian confidence “for they must learn that they have either got to help us or the United States will kill us both.” Later that month George Smith visited the mission to determine from Hamblin if the Indians would ally with the Mormons in military action. Smith also visited Indian farmer Lee and told him to tell the Indians that “the Mormons were their friends, and that the Americans were their enemies.” In this piecemeal manner, Mormons learned to accept the idea of an Indian alliance. Even missionaries were forced to concede that that Mormons “must enter into alliances with [Indians] that cannot soon be broken or easily dissolved.”

Non-missionary Mormons absorbed the same message. In September 1857, Young sent a letter to William Dame in Parowan that warned him about incoming federal troops. Among other bits of advice and instruction, Young ordered that Dame “conciliate the Indians and make them our fast friends.” Dame passed this imperative on to men in lesser leadership positions, such as John D. Lee, and expected them to carry out Young’s order. Young himself made his intentions clear in a public speech in June 1857. He told listeners that as the Lamanites improved through receipt of “light and truth,” they would become “a shield to us in the day of trouble.” Although the federal army had not yet entered Utah Territory, Young was already preparing his people to accept Indians as allies and possible sacrifices. Indians, as well as being a protective shield, were to serve as the “battle axe of the Lord” to defeat Gentile sinners. As John Lott observed to a gathering of Saints, “May we not have been sent to learn how to use this axe, with skill?” If Mormons could convince Native Americans to work with them against federal troops, the Indians could become a potent weapon.

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342 Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, 223.
344 Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, 315.
In the summer and fall of 1857, Mormons in Utah developed a siege mentality. Increasingly fearful and suspicious of the Mormon stronghold in the intermountain west, President Buchanan ordered 2500 troops to Utah to install a new governor and assert federal control of the territory. Public outcries against polygamy, federal consternation over the theocracy in the West, and the Mormon propensity to run federal appointees out of the territory forced Buchanan to move against the Saints. Among the accusations made against them was the familiar one that Mormon Indian policies, along with other actions, demonstrated disloyalty to the United States. In fact, more than forty of the sixty documents that Buchanan submitted to Congress to receive approval for the campaign came from the Office of Indian Affairs.\textsuperscript{346} When Young heard of the impending “invasion,” he proclaimed martial law and ordered the territorial militia to block the army’s entry into the Salt Lake Valley.\textsuperscript{347} Young’s move essentially cut the nation in half, as no goods could pass through Mormon country to California, and made federal actions seem that much more justified. When federal troops reached Utah, there were a few skirmishes, but weather stalled the army just outside the Salt Lake Valley. From November 1857 to March 1858, the army rested on the Mormons’ doorstep, and Young and other leaders railed against them. Memories of past persecutions mixed with the surety of another attack, and the Saints prepared to defend the kingdom of God they had built.

Mormon leaders used the federal threat to strengthen a communal identity of the Mormons as a chosen people protected by God. If the Saints placed their trust in the Lord, they would remain protected: “the God who taught us and sustaine us in proclaiming this Gospel in its simplicity will also sustain us in whatever opposition may rise against us.”\textsuperscript{348} Young insisted that in this battle of good and evil, the Mormons were in the right when he told a congregation that “This is the kingdom of God; all others are of the Devil.”\textsuperscript{349} Leaders were not just dependent on God for help; they believed in helping themselves as well. Speakers impressed upon their congregations that when it came time for a “collision between

\textsuperscript{346} David Bigler, “Mormon Missionaries, the Utah War, and the 1858 Bannock Raid on Fort Limhi,” \textit{Montana: The Magazine of Western History} 53, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), 37.

\textsuperscript{347} David Bigler, “The Aiken Party Executions and the Utah War, 1857-1858,” \textit{The Western Historical Quarterly} 38, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 458.

\textsuperscript{348} JD 6:58.

\textsuperscript{349} JD 5:234.
us and the United States,” the people should be ready to stand and fight.\textsuperscript{350} Their dedication was not in question. Heber Kimball informed his listeners that he hoped the matter could be resolved peacefully, but “when it is necessary that blood should be shed, we should be as ready to do that as eat an apple.”\textsuperscript{351} He later proclaimed that he would “burn up my houses, my barns, and granaries” and live in the mountains rather than live under a corrupt outside government.\textsuperscript{352}

In addition to being corrupt, government officials and federal troops were wicked, unjust, dishonorable, fiendish, and wretched. Most of all, they were “strangers to this people, and are full of wrath and malice.”\textsuperscript{353} Mormon leaders truly felt their kingdom was about to be destroyed, and they pulled no punches when exhorting ordinary Mormons to come to its defense. The paranoia and hostility trickled down to the laity. Nancy Tracy recorded in her diary that the government “could not possibly let us alone” because they coveted the Saints’ beautiful cities, as well as their flourishing flocks and herds. Her righteous anger was evident as she also recorded that the troops would be disappointed when they came into Salt Lake City to appropriate the riches they sought because “they would have found it laid in ashes and as barren as it was when the Mormons first came here.”\textsuperscript{354} Nathan Porter was prepared to meet the army in the valley “in the strength not of our arms, but of Israel’s God” to protect his people’s religious and political liberties.\textsuperscript{355} In this atmosphere of panic, distrust, and fear, it was not surprising that the Mormons would look for allies or that those allies would be their Indian neighbors.

The creation of a feeling of mutuality between themselves and Indians was the primary tactic Mormons used in attempts to ensure Indian cooperation. Like Indians, Mormons had been persecuted by the federal government and white Americans on the frontier. Both Indians and Mormons knew what it meant to be Others. Gentiles wanted to civilize and Americanize the Saints, much as the Mormons tried to bring their version of

\textsuperscript{350} \textit{JD} 5:175.
\textsuperscript{351} \textit{JD} 6:35.
\textsuperscript{352} \textit{JD} 6:69.
\textsuperscript{353} \textit{JD} 6:43.
\textsuperscript{354} Tracy, page 18.
\textsuperscript{355} Nathan T. Porter, Autobiography, BOAP, page 42.
civilization to Native Americans. Of course, the goals were different in that Gentiles wanted Mormons to abandon polygamy, their communal lifestyle, and the theocratic political system while Mormons had attempted to introduce settled agriculture and a new religion to Indians. Still, Mormons played on that common experience to endear Native Americans to their cause. The bond that the federal government successfully prevented almost a decade earlier in Nebraska was forged even stronger in Utah. On 13 September 1857 Brigham Young stood in front of his congregation and gloated, “The people do not realize what they have done by driving us into the midst of the Lamanites.”\(^356\) Mormon leadership impressed the importance of a native-Mormon alliance based in shared persecution to lay Mormons, who then brought the message to the tribes. In addition to assuring Indians of Mormon friendship, Lee was also to tell the Indians that the Americans intended to enter Utah “and kill all of the Mormons and Indians in Utah Territory.”\(^357\) Likewise, Dame was told to inform local Indians that “they must be our friends and stick to us, for if our enemies kill us off, they will surely be cut off by the same parties.”\(^358\)

Indian interpreter Dimick Huntington carried the message of mutual interest to several Indian tribes. He met with a band of Yampah Utes in mid-August 1857 and warned them that after the federal troops killed the Mormons, they would next kill all the Indians. Two days later, he met with some Gosuite Utes and gave them a similar message that stressed Mormon-Indian affinity: “I told them that if the troops killed us they would then kill them all, that they and the Mormons was one.” Soon after, he told the chief of six Piede bands that federal troops had come to fight “us & you” and would kill both groups; the message “made them open their eyes.” Finally, Huntington and Young met with Anterro, chief of a Uintah Ute band, and told him that he should “be at peace with all men except the Americans.”\(^359\) Mormon spokesmen emphasized the commonalities between the Saints’ and Indians’ situation while also hinting at native destruction to encourage Indian acquiescence to Mormon military goals.

\(^356\) *JD* 5:237.
\(^358\) Daniel H. Wells to William H. Dame, 13 August 1857, quoted in Bigler, 10.
Native Americans chose to unite with the Church for varied and complex reasons. Some desired the arms and ammunition the Saints supplied while others were lured by the promise of spoils from ransacking emigrant trains. Still others believed in the religious message the Mormons promoted. For example, Ben Simmons, a Delaware Indian, trusted the prophesies recorded in the Book of Mormon and thought the time had come to rise up and fight as predicted.³⁶⁰ When influential Mormons like Lee told Indian allies that their participation in this Mormon war was “the will of the Great Spirit,” it only stiffened the resolve of those natives who wanted to help.³⁶¹ Indians who chose to unite with the Church received earthly rewards of rifles, medicine, cattle, horses, clothing, and protection from other Indian bands, which may have persuaded them more than the promise of heavenly rewards. The Mormons did not interrogate the motivations that drove their native allies; they were consumed only with guaranteeing and retaining alliances. After months of campaigning for Indian allegiance, Mormons trusted that they could count on native allies against the federal government when the time came.

Reliance on Indian sidekicks did not mean Mormons suddenly regarded them as equals. Racialization continued, although not as stridently in the years before. When Mormons needed Indians, anti-native rhetoric abated but did not disappear. Native Americans were still portrayed as uncivilized and inherently different. In the summer of 1856, the Deseret News published a letter in which S.F. Atwood described a visit by Kanosh, chief of the Pahvants, to Harmony. During his visit, Kanosh told a council of Pide Indians and Mormons that the white presence had been a great improvement to Ute society. Atwood’s comment that the speech was “creditable… and the Indians paid good attention during the whole of it” let News readers know local Indians still needed white help to improve.³⁶² The letter was complimentary to Kanosh, but it also served as a testament to the success of the Saints’ efforts among Native Americans. An article three months later confirmed the direction of Mormon Indian policy, claiming that “Kanosh’s rapid advancement in the scale of civilization” was a result of the “patience and good example

³⁶⁰ Huntington, page 11-12.
³⁶¹ Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, 223.
exercised by the whites.” That Mormons thought Kanosh and his Indians needed to develop on the scale of civilization at all indicated that ideas about Indians as inferior persisted.

A Pioneer Day parade in the Mormon settlement of Fort Supply drove the message home in a much more obvious manner. Third in line in the procession was a group of “24 young Indians, dressed in buckskin pants, blue shirts, and moccasins, with banner ‘We shall yet become a white and delightsome people.’” Anyone present at the celebration, as well as anyone reading about it later, would have deduced that the Indians, regardless of far they had advanced to date, had not reached a state of equality with whites. “White and delightsome” referred to the state Native Americans could one day achieve if they became righteous followers of the Lord. Still bearing their inferior dark skins, the group of Indians was literally paraded with a banner that proclaimed their inadequacies. Mormons may have needed Native Americans for future military actions against Americans, but they considered them more as potential sacrifices or scapegoats than as equal partners.

“MAKE IT AN INDIAN MASSACRE:” NATIVE AMERICANS AS MORMON SCAPEGOATS

Anti-Mormon publications, such as exposés and the national press, intimated that Mormons used Indians as scapegoats for criminal activity. In her narrative of life in Salt Lake City in the 1850s, apostate Mary Ettie Smith laid out several charges against the Danites, a secret vigilante band, and Brigham Young, who supposedly authorized and sanctioned their actions. Smith described multiple plots against Gentiles which she purportedly witnessed or participated in as bait. After one occasion, Smith conversed with her neighbor, Ellen Clauson, about their parts in luring a Dr. Roberts to his death at the hands of the Danites. The women recognized that the Danites would not be punished or even caught for the murder because “even his [Roberts’] own company could not show it was not the work of Indians.” Smith later described a time in which two men came by her home for paints

364 “Celebrations, continued,” The Deseret News, 13 August 1856.
366 Nelson Winch Green, Fifteen Years among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith (New York: H. Dayton, 1858), 228.
which her husband, in service to the federal Indian Office, had hidden. In her recollection, the men “disguised themselves as Indians, by painting their faces and putting on blankets and horse hair wigs” to go after Alonzo Bowman of New York. A few days later, Bowman’s traveling companions came into Salt Lake City, convinced that he had been shot and killed by Indians. Smith’s memoir, however flawed, showed that the idea of Mormons using Indians as scapegoats for their own nefarious actions was alive in public imagination. Although her accusations were uncorroborated, there was sufficient detail in Smith’s anecdotes to cast doubt on Mormon innocence.

These suppositions about Mormon cover-ups and assignment of blame to nearby Native Americans attempted to tie Mormons and Indians together in criminal activity, but they were minor compared to the accusations made about Mormon involvement in the October 1853 Gunnison massacre. Topographical engineer John W. Gunnison and his party were exploring along the Sevier River when a band of Indians attacked them, firing upon the expedition members with rifles and bows. The party’s instruments, paperwork, animals, and baggage came into the possession of the Indians who perpetrated the attack. The Mormons were soon involved in cleanup efforts, collecting the remains of the engineers and attempting to recover the stolen property from friendly Indians. In early 1854, the Mormon press in America and abroad concurred that Indians alone were responsible for the massacre of the Gunnison party.

The national press, however, painted a different picture. The Deseret News published an article originally run in the Washington Globe that accused the Mormons of being principally responsible for the massacre. The article presented as evidence the facts that the bodies were not scalped, the Indians supposedly culpable did not have access to guns, and that papers and instruments that were unintelligible and of no value to Indians were stolen. Instead, the reporter charged, Mormons had donned “the garb of the Indian” and attacked quickly, giving the victims no time to recognize their killers as white men. As motive, he offered that the Mormons did not want federal agents surveying their land and hoped that an Indian attack on a government party would redirect federal attention to the Indians. The

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367 Green, 275.
368 “Indian Difficulties,” The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star 6, no. 11 (18 March 1854), 164.
author concluded that the Mormons had a “strong motive for throwing the odium of it upon the Indians.” While obviously containing an anti-Mormon bias, the article’s accusation stuck. By mid-1857, the idea that the Saints had engineered the Gunnison massacre was a fixture in contemporary society.

The British Millennial Star followed the controversy, taking care to deny Mormon involvement. When Judge W.W. Drummond asserted that Gunnison’s murder was carried out “under the order, advice, and direction of the Mormons…and not by the Indians,” the Star demanded proof. The editor remarked that it was “very strange indeed” that no evidence had been found to conclusively implicate the Mormons. An editorial three months later resumed the discussion of Mormon involvement in the crime and presented evidence from a well-known anti-Mormon that absolved the Saints. Solomon Carvalho’s account of the Gunnison massacre clearly stated that the “Parvain Indians killed Captain Gunnison and company, in revenge for the murder of their chiefs and others, by a reckless party of California emigrants.” There was never definitive evidence to substantiate Mormon involvement in the Gunnison affair. More likely, accusations of conspiracy theories reflected Gentile fear and hatred of Mormons.

Regardless of the Saints’ actual involvement, the Gunnison murders may have served as precedent and learning experience for the later Mountain Meadows massacre. Even if the Mormons were innocent in Gunnison’s death, leaders and ordinary Mormons discovered what Gentiles would accept as truth. In analyzing crimes along the Western frontier, Indian culprits were expected. Before anyone accused the Saints, Gunnison’s murder was assumed to be an Indian massacre for Indian gain. Even as Brigham Young ridiculed the popular press for the idea that he was “guilty of the death of every man, woman, and child that has died between the Missouri River and California gold mines,” he was storing away the Gentile suspicions that cropped up. If the Saints did not use Native Americans as scapegoats, they were getting the idea that they could. Those suspicions of Mormons dressed as Indians to

370 Ibid.
373 JD 5:78
commit depredations on travelers and Mormons using Indians as hired assassins would surface again at Mountain Meadows. This time, however, the Gentiles would be right to suspect a Mormon-Indian alliance.

The national press and other anti-Mormon publications may have planted a seed about the usefulness of Indians as scapegoats that sprouted at Mountain Meadows. The details and causes behind the 11 September 1857 annihilation of the California-bound Fancher wagon train have been probed by several historians over the past century. Mormon historians Ronald Walker, Glen Leonard, and Richard Turley have offered an exhaustive look at “the fears, the rumors, the mistaken beliefs, the bad timing, the poor communication, the leadership failures, the violent times, the perversion of religion, the concentration of authority, the unintended consequences of the Utah War – and the simple bad luck – that led to the massacre” in their 2008 *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. It is not the purpose of this chapter to rehash those arguments or try to shed new light on the motivations behind the massacre. Rather, I am interested in exploring Mormon manipulation and blame of their Indian accessories. The Saints always intended to hold the Indians fully culpable, and at some level, they must have thought they would succeed.

The guilty parties’ first obstacle was convincing their fellow Mormons that the Indians had acted on their own. Only hours after the extermination of the wagon train, leader John D. Lee ran into Indian missionaries Jacob Hamblin and Thales Haskell. He told them that local Indians had attacked the travelers with Mormon help, but “the Arkansas company of emigrants had been destroyed at the Mountain Meadows, by the Indians” alone. As the only participant ever tried for the crime, Lee supplied most of the details in his confession, *Mormonism Unveiled*. He revealed that the Mormons basically used the Indians as hired assassins, promising them spoils such as livestock, clothing, and horses in exchange for destroying the wagon train. During the planning phase, the Mormons always “intended that the Indians should kill the emigrants, and make it an Indian massacre;” if questions later arose, Mormons would lay all the blame on the Indians. Knowing this, the participants

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375 Little, 46.

thought to protect their identities by dressing up as Indians before the attack. One of the surviving children remembered seeing “a lot of the Mormons down at the creek after it was all over, washing paint off their faces, and some of them at least had disguised themselves as Indians.”\textsuperscript{377} The children were not fooled, but the fiction that Indians alone committed the crime persisted once the survivors were parceled out to Mormon homes. Nancy Cates, a young girl whose sister and four brothers were killed, was placed with John Willis. For the year that she was in his custody, he tried to make her believe it was the Indians who had perpetrated the murders. He staunchly denied his involvement and accused her of lying. Cates resisted his version of events, however, because she saw “Willis during the massacre; he carried me off from the spot; I could not be mistaken.”\textsuperscript{378}

A picture of a definite Indian-Mormon alliance emerged when Lee, in his confession, explained that the Saints supplied the weapons, ammunition, and provisions in return for Indian obedience to Mormon orders. On the morning of the massacre, two Mormon Indian interpreters outlined the battle plan and ordered the Indians into position. The Paiutes were to lie in wait for until directed that “the work of death should commence.”\textsuperscript{379} The Indians met Mormon expectations that they could “use up [kill] a large company of emigrants,” even if the Mormons had to participate in the butchery.\textsuperscript{380} After the massacre, the Mormon accomplices realized the importance of secrecy and the absolute necessity of “always saying the Indians did it alone.”\textsuperscript{381} Lee alleged that Church authorities ordered the attack and then commanded him to shift the burden of guilt to the Indians: “The orders to lay it all to the Indians, were just as positive as they were to keep it all secret.”\textsuperscript{382} He further testified that after the emigrants had been lured from their protective wagon circle and exterminated, authorities planned to disclaim any prior knowledge of the crime. With no witnesses, Church leaders could then craft reports of the incident to their advantage. In a statement published in

\textsuperscript{378} Bigler, \textit{Innocent Blood}, 427.
\textsuperscript{379} Lee, \textit{Mormonism Unveiled}, 237.
\textsuperscript{380} Pacific Art Company, \textit{History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre} (San Francisco: Spaulding & Barto, 1877), 22.
\textsuperscript{381} Lee, \textit{Mormonism Unveiled}, 247.
\textsuperscript{382} \textit{Ibid.}, 250.
an unofficial investigation, Lee recalled a conversation between William Dame and Isaac Haight, influential Mormons present at Mountain Meadows, discussing the best way to frame the massacre once its existence was known. “Haight said – ‘How-as an Indian massacre?’” When Dame demurred, Haight demanded “How the h—I can you report it any other way without implicating yourself?”

Among the Mormon community, it was accepted that the entire incident was the fault of bloodthirsty natives. In her autobiography, Nancy Tracy remembered that the Indians “according to their savage natures, turned upon the emigrants and massacred men, women, and children.” Mormons could countenance the tragedy if they could distance themselves from it. Young never admitted Mormon complicity or involvement. When Lee reported to him several days after the attack, Young accepted without question his contention that the “Indians were entirely responsible for the massacre; no white man was named.” It is understandable that Young, as well as ordinary Mormons, would not want to delve too deeply into the details. Devout Saints did not want to face the possibility that their loved ones were responsible for such carnage; it was easier to believe that Native Americans, whom they already understood as dangerous and untrustworthy, had independently executed the attack. Lee’s assertion that he “acted [his] religion, nothing more” probably hit a little too close to home. They, too, were living their religion, and the Mountain Meadows massacre showed that there was a blurry line between acting on religious beliefs and engaging in unrestrained deadly behavior.

**Conclusion**

True to the adage that “murder will out,” it was not long before the Mormon role at Mountain Meadows became public on the national stage. In mid-1858 Jacob Forney, superintendent of Indian affairs, sent a letter back East in which he expressed doubts about the Indians’ autonomous execution of the crime: “I know the Indians are bad enough; I am aware, also, that it is, and especially has been, exceedingly convenient to implicate the

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Indians in all such cases." Major James Carleton seconded Forney’s opinion when he discovered that Mormons had Fancher possessions, including surviving children, even as Mormons continued to blame Indians entirely. The first legal investigation into the events at Mountain Meadows began soon after in March 1859.

For a brief time, though, the illusion that Indians had performed the atrocities by themselves was accepted and perpetuated within the Mormon community. In the general population, months of understanding Indians as tools, and not as people, merged with racial assumptions about Indian character. Throughout their time in the Great Basin, Mormon leaders consciously inculcated the idea that Indians were inherently inferior, dangerous, untrustworthy, and uncivilized to the laity. These attitudes allowed for a certain level of dehumanization of Native Americans, resulting in intermittent violence that was explicitly condoned in situations of direct competition between Mormons and Indians. Although the Saints traded their policy of retaliatory violence for conciliatory relations in 1854, perceptions of Indians as different persisted. Mormons saw Indians in terms of self-serving interest and benefits, and they did not consider them to be equals in any way.

Mormon Indian missions purportedly offered religious salvation to local tribes, but the true motives of outreach efforts manifested quickly. The Mormons were no longer primarily interested in lifting up the Lamanites in preparation for their millennial role. Instead, the Saints sought influence and control over Native Americans and used Indian missions as the jumping off points for initial contact. Mormons established friendly relations with several tribes and assured themselves of multiple opportunities for future alliances. When federal troops entered Utah Territory in mid-1857, Mormons shored up their Indian partnerships by drawing on shared experiences of persecution. Although most of the Gentile-imagined Mormon-Indian military alliances did not emerge, one did. Mormons may not have foreseen the tragic results at Mountain Meadows, but they quickly fell back on long-practiced understandings of Indians to exonerate themselves. Native Americans agreed when the Mormons “thought best to use them[the emigrants] up” and, by carrying out the task, inadvertently conformed to Mormon expectations.388

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388 Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, 361. Italics in original.
Mormons believed in Indian complicity because they wanted to, but also because the behavior affirmed most Saints’ expectations and worldview. By the time of the Utah War, the providential conception of the Lamanite had all but disappeared. Mormons rejected the scriptural and theological framework that existed to define their relationships with Native Americans. Instead, lived experience among tribes on the American frontier came to define acceptable conceptions of and interactions with Indians. By 1858, millennial conceptions of Native Americans had been sublimated to economic and political concerns.
CONCLUSION

Mountain Meadows would not be the last time Mormons blamed Native Americans for their own crimes. At the beginning of November 1857, Mormon Major Samuel Smith captured six men from California, known as the Aiken party, who had entered Salt Lake City. Smith interrogated the men and accused them of being spies on their way to rendezvous with the federal army on the other side of the valley. He demanded that the men surrender their guns and then imprisoned them. A few days later, notorious Mormon gunman Orrin Rockwell Porter and three or four others left with the Aiken party, ostensibly to escort them back to California. Once on the westward trail and over the course of four days, Mormon assassins carried out premeditated and well-planned murders. Two of the Aiken men were killed immediately when their killers “drew a bar of iron each from his sleeve and struck his victim on the head.”\(^{389}\) The other two ran, one receiving a shot in the back from Porter as he tried to escape. When the two bloody victims reached a doctor in Nephi, he patched them up and sent them to their doom. As the Californians left Nephi, their Mormon companions stopped their buggy and “turned loose our double-barreled shotguns on them. We put their bodies in the springs.”\(^{390}\) The fifth member of the party was shot later that winter, and the sixth escaped into obscurity.

The Aiken party was most likely sacrificed for their property, particularly the thousands of dollars worth of gold they carried. Historian David Bigler argues that the party’s gold coins “may have seemed heaven-sent to finance the Mormon war with the U.S.”\(^{391}\) As with the Mountain Meadows massacre, what is most interesting to me is not the motivation behind the murders but rather the immediate assignment of guilt to Indians that followed. Alexander Cowan was the first Saint to report that Indians had destroyed the men, citing their annoyance over white interlopers as the cause. Journalist John Ginn later wrote to the editor of *The Valley Tan*, Utah’s first independent newspaper, that all six party members had been “killed by the Indians.”\(^{392}\) Perhaps this tendency was merely falling back on old


habits or perhaps a ruse to deflect even more federal attention, but Mormon acceptance of Indians as scapegoats continued.

The Aiken murders occurred at the height of the Utah War when the American army had just arrived in Utah Territory. Mormon suspicion and ire were high and directed at any and all outsiders. The travelers’ unfortunate and untimely appearance among a besieged and trapped people sealed their fate. The army’s appearance was a stark reinforcement of Mormon Otherness; the Saints were so different they could not be suffered to continue their theocratic kingdom in the desert. During previous periods of intense anti-Mormon rhetoric and actions, Mormons deflected their Otherness to Native Americans. In the attacks at Mountain Meadows and against the Aiken party, Mormons projected their own sense of Otherness, along with the resulting violent tendencies, onto local Indians.

Brigham Young bowed to federal pressure on 12 April 1858 and relinquished his position as governor of Utah Territory to non-Mormon Alfred Cumming. The army occupied Salt Lake City peacefully, and the Mormons received a full pardon for their seditious actions. Although the nation’s first civil war was over, the Mormon Church battled with the federal government until the incorporation of Utah as a state in 1896. The Utah War serves as a useful stopping point for this study because, as I see it, Young’s surrender sounded the death knell of complete Mormon autonomy in the Great Basin. The end of the Utah War marked the beginning of Mormon assimilation and accommodation to the American mainstream. This included adjusting their Indian policy. In 1863, the federal government negotiated treaties with the Shoshone and Bannock to extinguish native land claims and confine the tribes to a reservation. Two years later, the Ute and Paiute faced the same treatment. No longer responsible for the administration of Indian affairs and pleased with the increased land availability and decreased competition, the Saints turned further from their millennial expectations of Native Americans.

Even so, phantoms of millennial hopes surfaced occasionally. The Ghost Dance movement among the Plains Indians in 1890 brought Mormons and Indians back into direct contact driven by religious imperative. The Ghost Dance was a pan-Indian revitalization movement in response to the desperation, poverty, and disease of reservation life. Self-

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393 Bigler refers to the Utah War as the United States’ first civil war in Bigler, “The Aiken Party,” 458.
proclaimed prophet Wovoka, a Northern Paiute, spread his vision of a world in which deceased ancestors and game animals returned to the earth and white people disappeared. Native peoples were to purge themselves of white influences and come together to dance the Ghost Dance to bring about their salvation. When Indians began to regard Wovoka as a messiah, the Mormons took notice. It was “perfectly understandable that the Messiah would return and show himself to the Indians since they were…the ‘chosen’ people.” The Saints were also interested in the arrival of a messiah because a revelation from Joseph Smith had identified year 1890 as the inauguration of the Millennium. Mormons viewed the spreading Ghost Dance movement as evidence that the second coming was near and regarded “Messiahism as evidence that God had intervened to redeem the Lamanites.” Research has shown that Native Americans joined the peaceful Ghost Dance religion to restore and protect native heritage, but Mormon interest and involvement showed that ideas linking native salvation and the Second Coming of Christ remained alive, if itinerant.

When fear and suspicion about the Ghost Dance led to the federal massacre of at least 150 Lakota Sioux in the Wounded Knee massacre, Mormons were among the first blamed. Newspapers and federal agents claimed that Mormons impersonated the messiah or the Christ to inflame the passions of the Indians against the whites. Contemporary witnesses also assumed Mormon involvement because of the ghost shirt, which Native American followers believed were impervious to bullets and often wore while dancing. James Mooney, a Smithsonian ethnologist, suggested that the ghost shirt was adapted from Mormon temple endowment robes. He concluded that the Mormon presence among various Indian communities had inspired Ghost Dancers to borrow the idea of an invulnerable sacred garment. These coincidences, as well as Mormon interest in the Indian messiah, convinced Americans that the Mormons had somehow influenced or perpetuated the movement. What the Mormon involvement in the Ghost Dance showed was that Mormons had not completely forsaken their ideas about the millennial significance of Native Americans.

395 Barney, 211.
The rise of modernity and secularization may have effectively diminished Mormon millennialism by the end of the nineteenth century, but the specter of Indian destiny rose again in the 1940s with the advent of an LDS Indian Placement Program. This program echoed earlier practices of adopting native children into Mormon homes by placing “school-age children into Mormon families where…they could go to school,” assimilate into white culture, learn the value of work, and absorb the Mormon religion. Spencer W. Kimball was explicit in his aspirations for the program: “the rapid and permanent advancement and progress of the Indian child.” Twentieth-century Mormons exercised the same patronizing and paternalistic assumptions of cultural superiority as they reached back to previous models of assimilation. Much as Young and Mormon missionaries of the 1850s sought to elevate Indians to their idea of civilization through farming, work, and religious education, modern Church leaders have espoused the same goal of Lamanite advancement, albeit with different tactics. The Indian Placement Program did not come to an official end until 1996.

Mormon involvement with the Ghost Dance and the Indian Placement Program are but shadows of the earliest Mormon converts’ belief in Native American redemption and millennial glory. Relieving their own Otherness and gaining admittance into the United States superseded the Saints’ obligations to native peoples. By 1858, the Mormons had ventured far from their hypothetical scenarios of shared brotherhood and racial equality to arrive at a place not too different from that of other white settlers in the western migration. Mormon millennialism waned in response to the progressive marginalization of Native Americans. Once Indians posed little to no real threat, Mormons shed their sense of duty to save them. While the LDS Church of the 1830s had a place for Indians as part of the Mormon identity, experiences in Utah caused the boundary to contract until Indians became Others.

Mormons in the first sixteen years of the Church harbored deep and true beliefs in Indians as a people of promise. Scripture, missionary tracts, and Church-sponsored newspapers both defined and reinforced this faith as they concentrated on the themes of

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398 Sondra Jones, “‘Redeeming’ the Indian: The Enslavement of Indian Children in New Mexico and Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 240.
399 Spencer W. Kimball, “The Expanding Indian Program,” LDS Conference Reports, 6 October 1956, quoted in Jones, 240.
Indian redemption and the gathering of Native Americans as necessary preconditions to the impending millennial reign of Christ. With these convictions at heart, Mormon missionaries approached Indian tribes as early as 1830 to share the Book of Mormon. In these interactions, the missionaries defied the prevailing American racial climate and claimed spiritual equality with Indians. Rather than view Indians as inherently inferior because of their skin color, Mormons clung to an older racial hierarchy based on level of civilization and religion. The Saints carried these romantic notions of Native Americans with them to the American frontier where they encountered the Lamanite incarnate.

The Saints soon found that the realities of living among Indians did not match their imagined and idealized conceptions. The first inklings of this disparity became apparent at Winter Quarters and other pre-migration settlements, but it was on the overland trail that Mormons largely set aside their spiritual convictions about Native Americans. More concerned with safety and survival than religious imperative, Mormons focused their energy on building and strengthening a presence in the intermountain west. Settlers erected physical barriers around their homes and settlements that served as visual reminders of distrust. Church leaders preached vigilance and protection and condoned violent reprisals against even minor Indian depredations. Ordinary Saints, responding to the purposeful Othering of Indians by the press and leadership, projected their hatred and fear onto Native Americans to justify their sustained violence. In addition to being depicted as dangerous, most Mormons perceived Indians as childlike, uncivilized, primitive, and naturally subordinate. Assimilation efforts included the teaching of agriculture and the adoption of Indian children into Mormon homes, but these relationships were often self-serving and exploitative. In the first years of settlement, concerns about the sustainability of the Mormon kingdom replaced religious sentiments about the Lamanite.

After several years of fighting, however, Church President Brigham Young determined that Mormon Indian policy needed a new direction. He now advocated peace and conciliation where before he had thundered for vengeance. Ordinary Mormons renewed their sense of obligation to the Lamanite and dozens set out on missions with a genuine fervor for Indian conversion and salvation. The missions were not solely religious institutions; in fact, Church leadership intended them to be loci of control and influence over local tribes. Anticipating a federal campaign, Young instructed the missionaries to secure Indian
alliances. Anger, hatred, and paranoia over the additional persecution and potential destruction of their Zion drove ordinary Mormons to obey. Missionaries cultivated a sense of mutuality between the Mormons and Indians, while drawing sharp distinctions between Mormons and Americans, through reminders of shared persecution at the hands of the national government. Unlike the previous generation’s sense of brotherhood toward Native Americans, 1850s Mormons merely paid lip service to the idea as a means to an end. Gentiles had long feared a Mormon-Indian alliance, and their anxieties were realized at Mountain Meadows. Before and after the massacre, the Mormons involved planned to lay all the blame on their Paiute allies, acting on years of training to think of Indians as inferior, degraded, and capable of such a brutal act.
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