

mains itself is quite ironic in that Descartes is seen as the father of the mind-body split. And he literally suffered a mind-body split himself. The religion-secularism theme carries into what happened to his bones as well, with the skull being in a science museum and the other bones in a church. In my view, though, the bones of René Descartes are not in the church of St.-Germain-des-Prés. I believe that the skull is quite well documented, but the ashes of Descartes' bones are scattered.

Yerxa: Could you speak to how some attempted to enlist Descartes' skull in what we now know to be bad science?

Shorto: Around 1820 it was brought to the attention of the members of the French Academy of Sciences that ever since the French Revolution the remains of Descartes had been sitting in a corner of a garden somewhere. And by this point they considered him their intellectual godfather. They thought something had to be done about this, so they sent a team out, opened the sarcophagus, and discovered that in fact the skull was missing. It happened that there was a Swedish scientist who was visiting at the time. He then went back to Sweden, and about two years later he opened a newspaper and read that someone had died, and his personal effects were auctioned off, including the skull of René Descartes. He thought this was an amazing coincidence, so he tracked it down, bought it, and sent it back to Paris to the French Academy. The skull then took part in a couple of different episodes involving the development of comparative anatomy and attempts by Georges Cu-

vier, who was at the head of the academy and an important figure in science, to advance the theory that skull size and shape were indicators of intelligence. Cuvier believed that the slope of the front of the skull and the face was correlated with intelligence. He argued that African skull shapes denoted less intelligence than Caucasian skull shapes. And there was

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also an idea that the larger the brain or the larger the skull, the more intelligent the person. A couple of decades later, anthropologists used the skulls of great thinkers to argue that a larger skull size indicates more intelligence. Cuvier himself was dead, and his skull now joined others in defense of this theory. Apparently, he had an enormous skull. But someone at this time discovered that they had Descartes' skull sitting around. Well, Descartes was a small man with a very small skull. I've seen it. So the tiny skull of this great French thinker rebuked the notion.

Yerxa: How did you become interested in looking at modernity through the story of Descartes' remains?

Shorto: My previous book, *The Island at the Center of the World*, was about the Dutch founding of New York. A central person in that narrative is Adriaen van der Donck, who studied at Leiden University in the 1630s. And while reading about Leiden University, I discovered that Descartes was the intellectual celebrity on campus at the time. I read Stephen Gaukroger's *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, and his last chapter, "Death and Dismemberment," is only one page long. In one page he covers the whole story of Descartes and Queen Christina and Descartes' remains. This intrigued me and stayed with me. I wrote a piece for the *New York Times Magazine* about conservative Christian activists in the U.S. working to oppose gay marriage. And as I spent time with these conservative Christians, it dawned on me what it means to have a theological worldview. Somehow that sort of thinking merged with the bones of Descartes, and I started to realize that the bones of Descartes were a vivid metaphor for a clash or contrast of worldviews.

Yerxa: What do you wish the reader would take away from your book?

Shorto: How wild and wonderful and weird the world is. And since 9/11 was an attack in some way on Western culture, I think there has been a yearning to understand or reconnect with what Western culture is. What are its roots? And what are its flaws? Maybe this very small exotic story helps nudge people in that direction.

DISPLACED FROM ZION: MORMONS AND INDIANS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Jared Farmer

Typical and exceptional at the same time, Utah's frontier past offers an illuminating perspective on U.S. history. The story of Utah's formation—settlers colonizing Indian land, organizing a territory, dispossessing natives, and achieving statehood—could not be more American. This typicality requires explanation. How is it that Mormons (members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) managed to replicate a colonial pattern of Indian displacement when their ideas about Indians, not to mention their ideas about place, were so different from those of other American Protestants? Early Mormons saw Indians as spiritual kin with whom they would build a new Zion. But prophecies, dreams, and intentions did not become

realities. Before they submitted to American conventions of marriage and the family, Latter-day Saints had freely absorbed the racist ideology of the nation.

The Mormon-Indian connection goes back to Joseph Smith's teenage imagination. "In the course of our [family's] evening conversations," his mother recalled, "Joseph would give us some of the most amusing recitals which could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent—their dress, their manner of traveling, the animals which they rode, the cities that were built by them, the structures of their buildings, with every particular of their mode of warfare, their religious worship as particularly as though he had spent his life with them." In 1830, as a serious adult, Smith produced the Book of

Mormon. This 584-page scripture purports to be a record of North America's ancient inhabitants.

Among other things, the Book of Mormon narrates the emigration of an Israelite family out of Jerusalem around 600 B.C.E. With God's assistance, these Hebrews traveled by boat to America. Here in the (other) Promised Land, they fragmented into antagonistic groups—the Nephites and the Lamanites. The Lamanites lived as nomads and were cursed with dark skin, whereas the Nephites built great cities. Something like the two kingdoms of ancient Judaism, the groups repeatedly switched roles as the wicked and the righteous. Only for a brief period did harmony reign across the land. The righteousness came from Christ. The Redeemer himself appeared in the

New World during his absence from the tomb. The resurrected Savior repeated the Sermon on the Mount, performed the sacrament, and appointed twelve disciples. Ultimately, however, the Lamanites reverted to wickedness and idolatry. They eliminated all the fair-skinned Nephites and with them all the vestiges Christianity.

Moroni, the last of the Nephite scribes, buried the scriptural record in the Hill Cumorah before his death around 421 C.E. Much later, in angelic form, Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith and showed him the location of the hill, which was not far from Smith's home in Palmyra, New York. After finding and translating the Book of Mormon, the new prophet published it.

On the original title page, Smith announced one of the main purposes of the Book of Mormon: "to shew unto the remnant of the House of Israel 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 forever." Even in their degenerate state, the descendents of the Lamanites remained part of the covenant. In the Last Days, the "seed of Israel" would be redeemed. Many 19th-century Christians tried to convert the Indians, but only the Mormons had such lofty expectations. Once redeemed, the "remnant of Jacob" would take the lead in building the New Jerusalem, the site of the Second Coming. Repentant "Gentiles"—Mormon converts—would work with the Lamanites as *assistants*. The remaining Gentiles—the unconverted—would be annihilated in the apocalypse. Earthquakes and floods would wipe out the wicked. In addition, Mormons anticipated an army of Lamanites—the "strong arm of Jehovah," the "battle-ax of the Lord"—crushing their enemies like a lion among sheep. In the midst of this creative destruction, the Lamanites would reclaim their former glory, including fair skin.

In short, the religion of Joseph Smith reserved a paradoxical place for Indians. Knowing nothing of their lineage, these future Christian Israelites were destined to save the world, though they couldn't save themselves. Early Mormons saw themselves as "grafts" of Israel. Through conversion, Latter-day Saints acquired "believing blood." Later, influenced by British Israelism, the Saints would claim to possess literal Hebraic bloodlines. Either way, they had reason to regard Indians as extended family. Early church members sometimes referred to native peoples as "Cousin Laman" or "Cousin Lemuel" (after figures in the Book of Mormon).

Joseph Smith wasted no time trying to fulfill prophecy. In 1830, shortly after the publication of his scripture and the organization of his church, Smith announced the doctrine of the gathering. Nineteenth-century Mormons were essentially Christian Zionists. Their "center place" was supposed to be "on the borders of the Lamanites." Missouri fitted the description. It was located at the center of the continent and at the edge of the United States—right next to newly created Indian Territory. Before moving to Missouri himself, Smith dispatched four missionaries to Indian

Territory. Although the Shawnees and the Delawares seemed receptive at first, the Mormons couldn't get beyond first impressions because the responsible U.S. Indian agent evicted the missionaries for not having a license. Reporting to his superintendent, the agent noted that the "the Men act very strange."

After the failure of the Indian mission, Joseph Smith turned his attention to other aspects of building his kingdom. Yet he did not lose faith in the destiny of Indians. In 1835, traveling from Ohio to Missouri with an ad hoc army meant to assist perse-



A Mormon baptism of an Indian, 1882. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [reproduction number, LC-USZ62-89934].

cuted Mormon settlers, Smith rekindled the Lamanite enthusiasm. When some of his followers exhumed a skeleton from a burial mound, Smith received a vision. He identified the bones as the remains of Zelph, an uncursed "white Lamanite" warrior who had fallen in battle. Impressed by the vision, one of Smith's apostles carried Zelph's thighbone to Missouri to bury the relic at the envisaged temple site. Before the temple could be built, Missourians forcibly evicted Latter-day Saints from the state. Allegations of misconduct included "Indian tampering." Rumors of nefarious alliances with Indians would dog the Latter-day Saints for decades.

Displaced from Zion, Smith recognized that the day of prophecy—for Indians *and* Mormons—had been deferred. He went on to build the theocratic city of Nauvoo, Illinois, before running afoul of his neighbors again. In 1844, days before his martyrdom in a county jail in Carthage, Illinois, Smith looked forward to finding refuge in the Rocky Mountains, where the Lamanites would serve as a shield. In the tumult following the lynching of the Prophet, the Latter-day Saint movement splintered. As anti-Mormon violence spread in Illinois, various would-be prophets vied for control of the Saints. The majority faction, 12,000-15,000 strong, lined up behind the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Its president, Brigham Young, approved the idea that Zion could be relocated to the Rocky Mountains or beyond.

Planning the exodus took priority over everything else, but true believers did not forget that some-

day they would have to turn their attention to the Lamanites. In July 1847, immediately after arriving in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake with the vanguard emigrants, President Young reminded his flock of its moral duties. In a sermon on the roles of men and women, he exhorted wives to obey their husbands, and husbands to obey the will of the Lord—including the principle of plural marriage. This principle would be extended in time to Indians. Young envisioned that "the Elders would marry Wives of every tribe of Indians, and showed how the Lamanites would become a White & delightsome people & how our descendants may live to the age of a tree & be visited & hold communion with the Angels; & bring in the Millennium."

One congregant pondered Young's words, especially his prophecy about Lamanites. "A part of [our] duty in this world is to bring the Indians from their benighted situation," wrote Levi Jackman. "In this place we finde a place and a people to commence with." Still, Jackman wondered how this could be achieved given the "brute" intelligence and "mean" existence of these "filthy, degrade[d] and miserable beings":

When I reflect and co[n]sider that thay are of the haus of Isreal, or the stick of Jacob, and the children of the covenant seed, unto whome belongs the priesthood and the oricals of God ... I say to myself O Lord who is able to do all this—But the decree has gon foarth and it must be accomplished, and it will be marvilous, not onley to us but to generations yet to come.

This quote beautifully illustrates the tension in Mormon thought between Indian-as-brother and Indian-as-other; between sympathy and contempt, belief and doubt. Mormon Indian policy never transcended these contradictions. The first testing ground was the Ute stronghold in Utah Valley to the south of the new Mormon capital. Utah Valley centered on Utah Lake, a freshwater fishery with prodigious runs of cutthroat trout. Local bands of "Utahs" (Ute Indians) went by place- and food-specific names like Lake People and Fish Eaters. Utah Lake hosted large semi-permanent villages and larger seasonal gatherings.

In 1849 Mormons boldly established a lakeside settlement—today's Provo—next to the largest Indian village. The settlement's first year was disorderly. Mormons built a fort to keep out the Indians, yet invited Indians in anyhow. They traded and gambled and fished with Utes. But in autumn, after a few aggressive Mormons killed a native man and failed to make amends, certain Fish Eaters retaliated by killing Mormon cattle and threatening worse. By winter, local leaders convinced Brigham Young to send a military force to exterminate all of the hostile Indians. The "Indian war" was shockingly sanguinary, including the massacre of at least eleven unarmed male Ute prisoners in front of their families on the ice of Utah Lake. Strangely enough, by the time of the trout spawn in spring 1850, Mormons and Utes were once

again trading and gambling together.

Over the ensuing decade, as Mormons gradually displaced the Lake People from their fishing grounds, interethnic relations vacillated between segregation and neighborliness, disdain and respect, war and peace. This fluctuation puzzled U.S. Army Lieutenant John Gunnison, one of the earliest and best outside commentators on the Utah Saints. Gunnison's own view, one shared by most whites at mid-century, was harsh but simple: the "red devils" were part of a "doomed race" that deserved to be extinguished. By comparison, Mormons struggled to understand their relationship to natives. Concerning the "Indian war," Gunnison wrote:

It is a curious matter of reflection, that those whose mission it is to convert these aborigines by the sword of the spirit, should thus be obliged to destroy them—but they stoutly affirm that these people will yet, under their instruction, fulfil the prophecy that "a nation shall be born in a day"; and when they have completed the destined time, will listen to the truth and become "a fair and delightful people."

In actuality this belief varied from Saint to Saint and from year to year. The church laity generally cared less about the redemption of the Lamanites than did the hierarchy. As the lay population absorbed larger numbers of English and Scandinavian converts—people with no connection to Joseph Smith and no experience with Native Americans—this divide widened.

Even the authorities were neither united nor consistent. Brigham Young can be described as a skeptical or fair-weather believer. In 1849 he expressed his doubts that the "old Indians now alive" would enter "the new and ever lasting covenant." It would be "many years" before the Lamanites would be redeemed, he suggested. The current generation of Indians "will not do it, but they will die and be damned." A few days later he said that "this presant race of Indians will never be converted." If they were all killed off, "it mattereth not." In 1850 he argued for the removal of all Indians from Utah Territory. At other times he expressed faith that the Lamanites would soon "blossom as the rose." The "Mormon Chief" got to know many Ute leaders personally, even intimately: he baptized them; gave blessings to them; wrote letters to them; smoked with them; sang hymns to them; spoke in tongues to them; and ransomed slaves from them.

Ute chiefs were just as conflicted. They fought with each other as well as with Mormons. When it suited them, they made overtures to New Mexicans, Mormons, federal officials, and other natives. To Brigham Young's exasperation, they acted like neither true friends nor true enemies.

Young's faith in Indian solidarity increased during the "Mormon Reformation" of 1855-57. In the heat of this millenarian moment many Mormons anticipated the rise of an independent Latter-day Saint nation from the ashes of the United States. As fore-

seen by Joseph Smith, the apocalypse included a prominent role for the "remnant of Jacob." In preparation, Young established several Indian missions.

In 1857, adding fuel to a roaring fire, President James Buchanan ordered a large armed force—2,500 men—to install a non-Mormon appointee to the territorial governorship. Buchanan acted rashly on the exaggerated complaints of runaway officials—federal appointees who had left the territory frustrated by the LDS shadow government. Having been driven from their homes in Missouri and Illinois, the Mormons responded with defiance to the perceived federal invasion. Young bragged in public about his influence over the Indians and worked to shut down overland mail routes. His chief liaison to the Indians,

The cold war between the LDS Church and the federal government relaxed in 1858, but the episode had long-lasting consequences for Indians.

Dimick Huntington, conducted negotiations with Shoshones, Utes, and Paiutes. Huntington hoped to get them to ally with the Mormons instead of "the Americans."

The cold war between the LDS Church and the federal government relaxed in 1858, but the episode had long-lasting consequences for Indians. The "Utah War" diverted attention and personnel away from the Utah Superintendency of Indian Affairs. In Utah Valley, a newly established Indian Farm—a quasi-reservation meant to compensate for the appropriated fishing grounds at Utah Lake—fell into disrepair. And so 1858 became another year of hunger and sickness for the Fish Eaters. Since the founding of Provo, the native population had been hit by measles, cholera, consumption, scarlet fever, whooping cough, and mumps. When Dimick Huntington went to the barren Indian Farm to give away food, a Ute leader asked "what it ment they was all sick & [asserted that] Brigham & I had talked to the Great Spirit to make them all sick & die. I told him it was not so for when B & all the good mormons prayed, they prayed for them. he sayed o shit you Lie."

Huntington actually spoke from his heart. Not long afterward he concluded his journal with a prayer: "may God turn away our enemies from us & all that are not of us & Gather Israel. wake up the sons of Laman[.] make them a defence to Zion & Let Zion be redeemd, the Jews be gatherd to Jerusalem & it be rebuilt [and] the tribes come from the North. Amen." In retrospect, this prayer was a coda to the reformation rather than a prelude to the millennium. After the détente of 1858, the U.S. government played a greater role in the prosecution of Indian affairs in Utah Territory. In 1865 Ute leaders met federal officials near Utah Lake to sign a reservation treaty. Brigham Young attended the treaty session and urged the Utes to sign. Lacking options, the starving rem-

nants of the Fish Eaters agreed to relocate from Utah Valley to a distant, lakeless region. Banished from their Center Place, the displaced Utes lost their identity as Lake People.

In the 1860s Mormon millenarianism waned and Lamanite missions faded. Like successful colonizers throughout the nation, Mormons began to think of themselves as victimized survivors. "The early history of Provo, if written, would be devoted in the main to a recital of extreme hardships, resulting from bitter and almost incessant Indian wars," editorialized the Provo Chamber of Commerce in 1888. After overtures of peace, the "Indians soon began a characteristic and most violent warfare upon the hardy settlers." By the early 20th century, as the last of the pioneer generation passed away, Utah Mormons told pseudo-historical Indian stories indistinguishable from the fakelore told by post-frontier Americans everywhere. In collective memory, Lamanites and Lake People became generic "squaws," "bucks," "savages," and "princesses."

There are three main ways to interpret the 19th-century history of Mormon-Native interaction. The first, offered by sectarian apologists, highlights examples of magnanimity by individual Mormon pioneers. Not all Latter-day Saints carried out the teachings of Joseph Smith, but many tried, and generally Mormons practiced more charity than other American settlers in comparable frontier settings. The second interpretive viewpoint—common among historians of the U.S. West—asserts that Mormons were actually worse than other settler groups because they failed so miserably to live up to their exalted beliefs. Judged by their own standards, Mormons come across as hypocrites or transgressors—or both.

A third, less judgmental position argues that Mormon culture and theology existed in creative tension with American culture and politics. By studying the fringe we can better understand the core. While Latter-day Saints inherited from Joseph Smith an unusual racist perspective on Native Americans, they also inherited a normative racist perspective from Euro-American culture. Interpreted as American history, Utah offers a sobering case study in Indian dispossession. Only here did a colonial U.S. population conceive of having a "homeland" in the Native American sense—an endemic spiritual geography. Mormonism, a religion indigenous to the United States, initially embraced American Indians as spiritual kin. Metaphysically and geographically, this religion reserved a privileged place for natives. What does it say about the limits of the racial imagination in 19th-century America that even Christian Israelites couldn't coexist for more than one generation with Hebraic Indians?

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