Joseph Smith and the Clash of Sacred Cultures

Keith Parry

Routinely, in speech and print, Church authorities and other Mormon commentators align the Mormon present and the Book of Mormon past in the following manner: We possess a unique understanding of the Indians. They are Lamanites, descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples, sprung from the House of Israel. The Book of Mormon was written for them in particular, so that they might be redeemed from the curse which fell upon their ancestors. As custodians of this record of their past, a sacred record of their heritage and destiny, we have a duty to ensure that the Indians regain their true identity. We accepted that responsibility from the first — our missionaries went among the Lamanites soon after the Church was restored. Since then, our prophets have seen to it that we have done our duty by the Indians. Now, more than ever, we must meet our obligations, for President Kimball has said that "the day of the Lamanite is surely here and we are God's instrument in helping to bring to pass the prophecies" of the Book of Mormon (TSGD 1978, 74).[1]

This statement expresses a sacred history, one to be faithfully accepted rather than tested. In it, the most substantial fact standing between the days of the Book of Mormon and the present is likely to be the "first mission to the Indians," undertaken by Parley P. Pratt and his companions in the winter of 1830–31. A pivotal element in the sacred history, the first mission stands for the inspiration of the Book of Mormon, for the unwavering Mormon commitment to the Lamanites over 150 years, and for the missionary zeal which Mormons should emulate now and in the future. Certainly, it will be taken to represent the quality of Mormon-Indian relations in Joseph Smith's time. But two

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[1] Though many other sources might have been cited, this composite statement drew in order upon: Burnett 1971, 12; Talmage 1976, 284; TSGD 1979, 194; Larsen 1966, 63; TSGD 1978, 69; Kimball 1971, 8; Doxey 1969, 198; MGD 1979, 145.

Mormon classics suggest that this popular interpretation of the first mission is too simple — that it is more valid as a reflection of the Mormon present and as a didactic tool for shaping the future than as a balanced depiction of the Mormon past. Together, Parley Pratt's *Autobiography* and Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* point to a complex of questions, and to their answers. What part did the Book of Mormon play in Mormon relations with the Indians during the Joseph Smith years? What emphasis did Mormons place upon missionary work with the Indians in those years? What effect did the gentile presence have on the relations of Mormons and Indians in that period? Did those relations prefigure developments during the Brigham Young years, and even into the present?

Addressing these questions, this essay offers a critique of the popular capsule history as it portrays the relations of Mormons and Indians in Joseph Smith's time. In its essentials, the critique does not draw upon secular analyses, for historians have written little enough on the topic. Rather, it is derived from hallowed Mormon texts: Parley Pratt's *Autobiography*, as the source of most accounts of the first Indian mission,[2] and Joseph Smith's *History*, which refers sporadically to the Lamanites as it chronicles the westward movement of the Mormons, from New York to Kirtland and Missouri, and then onward to Nauvoo. The critique rests upon an interpretation of what is and what is *not* to be found in those texts. So, only in a limited sense is this essay about a particular period in history. In a broader view, it is about the histories of a period — or at least about those which are most available to Mormons. These variant versions of history each have something to tell about Mormon-Indian relations in the present as well as in the past.

PARLEY PRATT'S *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*: THE FIRST INDIAN MISSION

A few months after the restoration of the Church of Christ by Joseph Smith, a revelation was "given through the mouth of this Prophet, Seer and Translator, in which Elders Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Ziba Peterson and myself were appointed to go into the wilderness, through the western States, and to the Indian territory." So writes Parley Pratt, who then describes the westward journey from New York, which they began in October 1830: "After travelling for some days we called on an Indian nation at or near Buffalo; and spent part of a day with them, instructing them in the knowledge of the record of their forefathers. We were kindly received, and much interest was manifested by them. . . . We made a present of two copies of the Book of Mormon to certain of them who could read, and repaired to Buffalo" (1979, 47). Preaching with great success among Sidney Rigdon's congregation at Kirtland, the missionaries established the Mormon faith in Ohio. Then, joined by Frederick G. Williams, they visited the Wyandots in the western part of the state. Again they were well received, and they laid the Book of Mormon before the tribe. The Wyandots "rejoiced in the tidings, bid us God speed, and desired

[2] Doxey 1969, 197; Evans 1940, 75; Petersen 1958, 55–59; Roberts 1965, 1:220–25, 251–55; and TSGD, 1978, 70 all quote or paraphrase Pratt 1979, 47–57.

us to write to them in relation to our success among the tribes further west, who had already removed to the Indian territory, where these expected soon to go" (p. 51).

Early in 1831, after travelling 1500 miles, mostly on foot, the missionaries reached Independence, Missouri. With little delay, three of them crossed into Indian territory, "tarried one night" with the Shawnees, then "entered among the Delawares." That tribe's chief "had ever been opposed to the introduction of missionaries" among them. At first, he refused to call his council together, but he changed his mind as he "at last began to understand the nature of the Book [of Mormon]." After he and his council listened to Cowdery's "glad news," the chief told the missionaries that the Delawares were "new settlers in this place" and had much to do in the spring, "but we will build a council house, and meet together, and you shall read to us and teach us more concerning the Book of our fathers and the will of the Great Spirit" (pp. 52–56).

According to Pratt, excitement and interest were contagious among the Delawares as the missionaries "continued for several days to instruct the old chief and many of his tribe." But then:

> The excitement . . . reached the frontier settlements in Missouri, and stirred up the jealousy and envy of the Indian agents and sectarian missionaries to that degree that we were soon ordered out of the Indian country as disturbers of the peace; and even threatened with the military in case of non-compliance. We accordingly departed from the Indian country, and came over the line, and commenced laboring in Jackson County, Missouri, among the whites.

Concluding this account, Pratt trusts that "at some future day, when the servants of God go forth in power to the remnant of Joseph, some precious seed will be found growing in their hearts, which was sown by us in that early day" (p. 57). Apart from a casual reference, his autobiography says nothing more about the first mission to the Indians.

Joseph Smith's *History*: The First Indian Mission

The *History of the Church* provides some background for Parley Pratt's narrative. In September 1830, a revelation given through Joseph Smith instructed Oliver Cowdery to "go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings, thou shalt cause my church to be established among them" (HC 1:111). Some days later, responding to "a great desire . . . manifested by several of the Elders respecting the remnants of the house of Joseph, the Lamanites, residing in the west," the Prophet sought and received further divine guidance, and he then instructed Whitmer, Peterson, and Pratt to proceed with Cowdery on the missionary venture (HC 1:116–19).

The *History* also includes a letter from Missouri, where Oliver Cowdery had "nothing particular to write as concerning the Lamanites" (HC 1:182). In a footnote, B. H. Roberts claims that the first Indian mission "is a very prominent event in early Church history" (HC 1:183), but such a conclusion could not be deduced from the text, which makes no mention of the Cowdery

party's missionary work among the Indians. Though Pratt returned to the east to give him "verbal information," Smith notes only that "the mission to Western Missouri and the gathering of the Saints to that place was the most important subject which then [in May 1831] engrossed the attention of the Church" (HC 1:181–82). Later in the year, after the leaders of the Church had assembled in Missouri, that land having been "consecrated for the gathering of the Saints," the Prophet records that "the first Sabbath after our arrival in Jackson county, Brother W. W. Phelps preached to a western audience over the boundary of the United States, wherein were present specimens of all the families of the earth . . . [including] several of the Lamanites or Indians — representative of Shem" (HC 1:189–91). At that point in Smith's account of the Missouri years, the Indian disappears as anything but a focus for Mormon-gentile polemics.

JOSEPH SMITH'S *HISTORY*: THE MISSOURI YEARS

Pratt asserts that Mormons and gentiles were soon at odds over Mormon contact with Indians on the Missouri frontier, blaming the demise of the mission among the Delawares upon "the Indian agents and sectarian missionaries."[3] Similarly, Joseph Smith claims that, when the Jackson County mob confronted the Mormons in 1833, "most of the clergy acting as missionaries to the Indians, or to the frontier inhabitants, were among the most prominent characters, that rose up . . . to destroy the rights of the Church." He reports that he responded in print to the "slanderous tract" of a clergyman "sent by the Missionary Society to civilize and Christianize the heathen of the west," who had "used his influence among both Indians and whites to overthrow the Church in Jackson county" (HC 1:372–73). He follows this entry with the text of a manifesto in which the "citizens of Jackson county" express an intention to "rid our society" of the Mormons. R. W. Cummins, the Indian agent responsible for the expulsion of the Cowdery party from Indian territory, is listed as one of the signatories (HC 1:374–76).

The first evidence of a concern among Mormons that their relations with Indians might provoke gentile hostility is found in a letter which Smith attributes to Frederick G. Williams, writing from Kirtland "to the Saints in Missouri" in 1833. By then the Prophet's second counselor, Williams refers to an earlier letter which claimed "that two Lamanites were at a meeting, and the following prophecy was delivered to them: — 'That they were our friends, and that the Lord had sent them there; and the time would soon come, when they would embrace the Gospel;' and, also, 'that if we will not fight for ourselves, the Indians will fight for us.'" Williams cautions, "Though all this may be true, yet, it is not needful that it should be spoken, for it is of no service to the Saints, and has a tendency to stir up the people to anger" (HC 1:417–19). However, an entry for 1836 shows that his warning was in vain. The "Minutes

[3] Cowdery's more vivid indictment specifies "Universalists, Atheists, Deists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and all the devils from the infernal pit" (Evans 1940, 75).

of a Public Meeting at Liberty, Missouri" describe Mormons as "objects of the deepest hatred and detestation to many of our citizens." Then the Mormons

> are charged, as they have hitherto been, with keeping up a constant communication with our Indian tribes on our frontiers, with declaring, even from the pulpit, that the Indians are a part of God's chosen people, and are destined by heaven to inherit this land, in common with themselves. We do not vouch for the correctness of these statements; but whether they are true or false, their effect has been the same in exciting our community (HC 2:450).

Having presented these minutes, the *History* documents two Mormon responses to the gentile agitation. According to the minutes of a "Public Meeting of the Saints in Clay County," the local Mormons denied "holding any communications with the Indians," assuring their gentile neighbors that they meant to stand "as ready to defend our country against their [the Indians'] barbarous ravages, as any other people" (HC 2:453). In a letter addressed to the spokesmen for Clay County's gentiles, the leaders of the Church at Kirtland claim that the county's Mormons share "a decided determination to be among the first to repel any [Indian] invasion" (HC 2:458). But, despite their protestations, the Mormons were driven from Clay County. Two years later, in Caldwell County, Joseph Smith would again be required to deny that the Mormons "stir up the Indians to war, and to commit depredations" (HC 3:29).

JOSEPH SMITH'S *HISTORY*: NAUVOO

When Joseph Smith's narrative passes to the Nauvoo years, his references to the Indians are again transformed. Most often, he records the presence in Nauvoo of Indian visitors. In 1841, Smith received Keokuk "and about one hundred chiefs and braves" of the Sac and Fox tribes, together with their families. He "instructed them in many things which the Lord had revealed unto me concerning their fathers, and the promises that were made concerning them in the Book of Mormon. I advised them to cease killing each other and . . . also to keep peace with the whites" (HC 4:401–2). Again, he reports "an interview with several Pottawatamie chiefs," adding an extract from Wilford Woodruff's journal which attributes this speech to an Indian orator: " 'We as a people have long been distressed and oppressed. We have been driven from our lands many times . . . . We have asked the Great Spirit to save us and let us live; and the Great Spirit has told us that he had raised up a great Prophet, chief, and friend, who would do us great good. . . . We have now come a great way to see you, and hear your words, and to have you tell us what to do.' " The Woodruff extract records that "Joseph was much affected and shed tears" at these words. In response, he told the chiefs that their fathers were once a great people, "but they left the Great Spirit, and would not hear his words or keep them. The Great Spirit left them, and they began to kill one another, and they have been poor and afflicted until now." Showing them the Book of Mormon — "the book which your fathers made" — Smith instructed them not to kill Indians or whites "but [to] ask the Great Spirit for what you want, and it will not be long before the Great Spirit will bless you,

and you will cultivate the earth and build good houses like white men" (HC 5:479–80). Other entries recording the visits of parties of Indians to Nauvoo are similarly phrased (HC 5:365; 6:402).

One entry for the Nauvoo years contrasts with those just cited. The record of an "exploring excursion west" to the Pottawatamies, Jonathan Dunham's 1843 journal shows little of the missionary perspective. Lodged in the tribe's "main village," Dunham was clearly concerned to assess the potential of the area for Mormon settlement. He notes that the "water is good and the climate wholesome. Some considerable timber, though no very great sawing timber." He spent one day "in looking up the creek for a mill seat, and found one and two beds of iron ore." Yet Dunham did not lack a missionary impulse. Impressed by the tenor of Indian worship, he notes: "All that is wanting to make them the happiest people in the world is the Gospel . . . and to feel its power. Their sectarian creeds and ceremonies would go to the moles and bats soon" (HC 5:541–49).

Indians and the Book of Mormon in the Joseph Smith Years

Together, Parley Pratt's *Autobiography* and Joseph Smith's *History* point to four related dimensions of the Mormon approach to the Indians in the Joseph Smith years: (1) the role of the Book of Mormon; (2) the relative priority of the missionary task among the Indians; (3) the place of Mormons and Indians in a society which was dominated by gentiles; and (4) the manner in which the Joseph Smith years prefigure the rest of Mormon history.

In 1830, even before the first mission, Parley Pratt and others felt a concern for the "remnants of the house of Joseph" because they accepted the Book of Mormon as scripture. Received as such, it gave a particular impetus to missionary work among the Lamanites. As well, it provided much of the substance of the missionary message to them. Pratt, Cowdery, and Smith all preached the Book of Mormon to the Indians, presenting it as an indigenous American scripture. Moreover, though Indians might reject the Mormon claim that it was the record of their Lamanite forefathers, the Book of Mormon structured the way in which Mormons understood the problems faced by the Indians. Both Cowdery and Smith attributed the desperate plight of the Indians to the moral defects of their ancestors. Cowdery told the Delawares that their forefathers once "prospered, and were strong and mighty. . . . But they became wicked" (Pratt 1979, 55). Reading the Book of Mormon past into the present, Joseph Smith told the supplicant Pottawatamies why their "fathers" had been "poor and afflicted until now" (HC 5:480).

The Book of Mormon set the measure of the degeneracy of the Lamanites. At the same time, it gave direction to the missionary task among them. Both functions were implicit for Cowdery when he told the Delawares that their ancestors "cultivated the earth; built buildings and cities, and abounded in all good things, as the pale faces now do" (Pratt 1979, 55). Here, he drew upon Mormon scripture to invest the life style of the pioneer farmer and its environing "civilization" with absolute moral value, while denying any value to the life

style of the Indian. In rescuing Indians from their "heathen worship," Mormons would do more than save them from "drunken frolic" and a supposed propensity for violence (HC 4:401; 5:480, 542, 548; 6:402). In the Mormon view, the spiritual regeneration of the Lamanites would flow from their acceptance of Mormon teachings and would lead them to "cultivate the earth and build good houses like white men" (HC 5:480). Beyond that, they would "become great, and have plenty to eat and good clothes to wear" (Pratt 1979, 55). In effect, then, the Book of Mormon sacralized the attitudes and values of the American pioneer, even as it engendered a missionary commitment to the Lamanite. Together, these otherwise disparate postures defined the Mormon missionary task as the displacement in the Indian of an identifiably Indian culture.

MISSIONARY WORK WITH THE INDIANS AND THE BUILDING UP OF ZION

While shaping the Mormon understanding of the Indians, the Book of Mormon provided an impetus for missionary contact with them, substance for the missionary message to them, and direction for the missionary task among them. That task was tied to the work of building Zion, itself a prerequisite to Christ's millennial reign. In his *History*, Joseph Smith declared that "one of the most important points in the faith of the Church . . . is the gathering of Israel (of whom the Lamanites constitute a part)," and he continued: "In speaking of the gathering, we mean . . . the gathering of the elect of the Lord out of every nation on earth, and bringing them to the place of the Lord of Hosts, when the city of righteousness shall be built" (HC 2:357–58). Certainly, the revelation which gave rise to the first Indian mission also set in motion the building of that city. It did not instruct the departing missionaries to establish Zion's location, specifying only that "it shall be given hereafter" and "shall be on the borders by the Lamanites" (HC 1:111). But there is much to suggest that, for Joseph Smith, the mission assigned to Cowdery was an *intentional* first step in locating Zion and in relocating the Mormon community. Pratt leaves the matter open, saying only that he was appointed "to go into the wilderness, through the western States, and to the Indian territory" (1979, 47). Consistent with that mandate, missionary visits to the Indians near Buffalo and to the Wyandots were made hurriedly as Cowdery's party pressed onward to the western frontier. When access to western Indians was denied them, only Pratt returned to the East to give a report. Then, in his narrative, the Prophet made no mention of the frustrated mission to the Indians, but wrote instead of gathering the Saints to Missouri. It seems that he "dreamed of a city in Missouri" for "his migrating disciples," and did not share their "illusion" of an "immediate, wholesale conversion of the 'Lamanites' " (Evans 1940, 61).

In any event, Joseph Smith's *History* does not include an account of the first Indian mission. Moreover, it lacks an extended discussion of missionary work with the Indians or of a Mormon duty toward them. Nothing in it suggests that Smith saw the work as essential to the "building up of Zion" — a task which found its *primary* expression in the creation of a viable Mormon community. But such a judgment rests on the virtual absence of certain topics from the

History.[4] To extend and refine that judgment, other sources must be employed.

Assessing the priority of missionary work among the Lamanites during Joseph Smith's lifetime, Lawrence G. Coates refers to the polemical exchanges of the Missouri years to argue that gentile suspicions made it difficult for Mormons to involve themselves with Indians. He also shows that Mormon contact with Indians could excite the suspicion of gentiles even after the move from Missouri to Nauvoo (1969, 56). But he acknowledges that, in Nauvoo, Indians "were unable to contribute their nomadic skills to a growing, vibrant Mormon community. There was little attraction for the wandering red man" (p. 57). Earlier, in Kirtland — far from the tensions of the frontier — "even after the Mormons . . . had gained a measure of economic strength, mission work among the Indians continued to suffer because a higher priority was placed on building a temple . . . than on teaching the savage." While the temple was under construction, only three elders seem to have been "sent to the Indians, and their stay was very short" (pp. 43–44).

Brigham Young was one of the three who were called to the Indian work at Kirtland in 1835. As leader, he was to "open the door of the gospel to the remnants of Joseph, who dwell among the Gentiles" — that is, writes Wayne B. Lynn, to the "many groups of Indians . . . living peacefully among the white settlers in the eastern . . . United States," where they were much more accessible than western Indians to Mormon missionary work. Later in the year, at a conference held in Freedom, New York, it was resolved that Young "go immediately . . . to an adjacent Indian tribe to open the door of salvation to them. Hands were laid upon his head [and upon the heads of his companions] for that purpose." Young "mentions his call" and reports the travels which ensued from it in his own history. But "if any Indians were contacted enroute, the result apparently was not worthy of mention." Nor were Indians mentioned during 1836 and 1837, when Young engaged in "short missions" to the "Eastern States." It appears that "little, if anything, was accomplished by this group [of three] among the Lamanites" (n.d., 11–14).

A different impression is left by Robert B. Flanders's account of events at the Wisconsin "pinery," which served for three years as a source of timber for the temple and other projects at Nauvoo. "Church leaders thought that sawmills . . . might be operated in the Winnebago Indian preserve at no cost other than for outfit and equipment" (1965, 183). However, as soon as the second working party arrived at the mill, late in 1842,

> they began to have trouble with the Indians. The Winnebagos . . . demanded provisions under threat of burning the mill; they claimed . . . that the timber was rightly theirs. But they were put off with a little food. Again in the winter of 1843–1844 the Indians threatened to make trouble, this time by putting the government on the Mormons for poaching. If, on the other hand, the Indians received food, they offered to intercede with the Indian agent to allow the Mormons to cut . . . where the best timber was (p. 184).

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[4] A recent compilation of Smith's personal writings points to the same conclusion. In it, the only indexed item which relates to his Indian contemporaries is a letter from Oliver Cowdery (Jessee 1984, 230–31).

By 1844, the leaders at the pinery were advising its abandonment — but not on account of the Indians. In letters to Joseph Smith, Lyman Wight and George Miller proposed that they take the pinery colony to Texas "and there establish a Mormon mission. They would sell the mills, urge the friendly Indians to sell their lands to the government, and all go west together. . . . The Wisconsin Indian friends . . . would there aid in large-scale conversions of Indians." The letters from the pinery "struck fire in the Prophet's heart" (pp. 290–91). Within a week, Smith and his advisers had elaborated the proposal into a scheme whereby the Mormons would render aid to an independent Texas "by settling west Texas, thus creating a neutral buffer zone between the Texans on the one side and the Mexicans and perhaps the Indians on the other." An emissary had been "dispatched to Austin to begin negotiations with the Texas government" (p. 294).

Along with the *Autobiography* and the *History*, these three sources clarify Mormon priorities in the Joseph Smith years. Certainly, the Book of Mormon impelled a number of elders to serve as missionaries among the Lamanites. But, as Brigham Young shows, the most dedicated Mormons were not always imbued with a particular concern for Indians. Even so, it seems that the initiative for Indian missionary work lay more with the members of the Church than with Joseph Smith. The revelation which sent Parley Pratt to Missouri was shaped by a "great desire" expressed by some of the elders; the Texas proposal was made by the pinery leaders and backed by colony members. While Smith was quick to respond to both initiatives, he embedded them in Mormon settlement plans. He sent Jonathan Dunham to scout for a settlement site in Pottawatamie territory. He sent colonists to the Winnebago "preserve" to cut timber for Nauvoo. Neither project was conceived as a missionary outreach to the Indians who visited Nauvoo. The Prophet's design for that community called for English tradesmen rather than dispossessed Indian hunters. In sum, as Coates has noted, the gentile threat is not sufficient to explain the absence of a consistent Mormon missionary thrust among the Lamanites.

Evidently, in Joseph Smith's time, Mormon relations with Indians were beset by contradictions. The Book of Mormon afforded a positive view of a distant Indian past and of an Indian future which Mormons themselves were to mould through missionary work. But it also offered a view which allowed Mormons to distance themselves from their Indian contemporaries. They did so in Missouri, disclaiming any particular interest in the Indians when Mormon survival was at stake. There, as elsewhere, the task of building Zion was not allowed to wait upon the conversion of the Lamanites. An ambivalent theology of the Lamanite allowed Mormon and Indian interests to be distinguished so that Mormons could practice a flexible "politics of the Indian."

MORMONS AND INDIANS IN A GENTILE POLITY

Mormon relations with the Indians were tied in complex ways to the gentile presence. Attributing religious significance both to the territory and to the Constitution of the United States, Mormons had to accomplish their premil-

lennial tasks within a polity which was dominated by gentiles and which effectively excluded Indians from citizenship. The nature and the potential of this ethnic triad are discernible in the related issues of property rights and threats of violence. In clamoring for the expulsion of the Saints, the gentiles in Missouri implied their own vulnerability to an alliance of Mormons and Indians. In responding to gentile threats of violence, Mormons sometimes hinted at such an alliance, though they also claimed that they stood with gentiles against the threatening "savages" — a pioneer epithet. In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith consistently urged Indians to forego violence among themselves and in their relations with whites. Yet, as Coates has noted, "Capitalizing upon his military image among the Indians, Smith frequently wore his Nauvoo Legion uniform. The Pottawatomies were so impressed that they invited the Mormons to join an alliance in which ten tribes had agreed to defend each other." Smith demurred, but Brigadier General Henry King, the interpreter, was impelled to warn Iowa's governor: "It seems evident . . . that a grand conspiracy is about to be entered into between the *Mormons and Indians* to destroy all white settlements on the frontier" (Coates 1969, 56). Certainly, Smith did not decline the offer out of an inherent pacifism, for he accorded to Mormons the right to defend their lives and property. But he conceded no such right to the Indians, though he agreed that they had been much abused. Consistently, he interpreted recourse to violence on their part as a symptom of chronic Lamanite degeneracy rather than as an outcome of environmental disruption. Had he done otherwise, he would have called in question the underlying morality of the processes of the frontier, a morality which was grounded in the prophecies of the Book of Mormon.

Without justifying the actions and the attitudes of gentiles, the Book of Mormon validates their role as scourge to the fallen Indian (1 Ne. 22:7). Though Joseph Smith found a place in his narrative for a protest made on behalf of the dispossessed Choctaws by one of their chiefs, he offered no comment other than that it provided a "specimen of the way the seed of Joseph are being 'wasted before the Gentiles' " (HC 5:358–59). While he did not explicitly endorse the Indian removal policy of Andrew Jackson, "our venerable President," he suggests that the "joy that we shall feel . . . will be reward enough when it is shown that gathering them to themselves . . . is a wise measure" (HC 2:358–62). In 1844, when he became a candidate for the American Presidency, "he said nothing about Indians" though his expansionist views were evident: "When we have the red man's consent, let the Union spread from the east to the west sea" (Coates 1969, 60; HC 6:206).

Whatever Smith understood by "the red man's consent," it did not involve recognition of aboriginal title or other legal claims. At the pinery, the resources of an Indian "preserve" were treated as a free good. Having sympathized with the Pottawatamies over land they had already lost, the Prophet sent Jonathan Dunham to scout their territory for settlement. When visiting Sacs and Foxes "complained that they had been robbed of their lands by the whites," Smith agreed that "they had been wronged." But he countered that "we had bought this land and paid our money for it" before telling them not to sell any land in

the future (HC 6:402). Oliver Cowdery might promise that regenerated "red men" would "cultivate the earth in peace, in common with the pale faces, who were willing to believe and obey the same Book" (Pratt 1979, 55). But Mormon theology and practice conceded little to unregenerate foragers. Though Mormons spoke of an inheritance which they should share with Indians (2 Ne. 1:5), they were as much involved as gentiles in the processes of the frontier. Like other Americans, they required that Indians accommodate themselves to those processes. At the same time, their millennial priorities distinguished them from gentiles. As millennialists on the one hand and as frontiersmen on the other, Mormons stood apart from gentiles and Lamanites. Yet, as the third member of an emergent ethnic system, they could find common ground with either.

BRIGHAM YOUNG AND THE INDIANS: SOME BASIC CONTINUITIES

For four decades after Joseph Smith's death, Mormons were more closely involved with Indians. In the Great Basin and southward, Mormons encountered viable Indian societies which had not yet been subordinated to American authority.[5] While the encounter produced "buckskin apostles," it also produced "Indian fighters." Still, the God-given task of building Zion, with its premise of Mormon survival and prosperity, absorbed the energies of both, for their services were needed on the expanding frontier of Mormon settlement.[6] Along that frontier, Indians soon learned to distinguish between the "Mormon" and the "White man," while "Americans" distinguished themselves from "Mormons" (Brooks 1944a, 18–19). Mormons and Indians were involved in the Mountain Meadows massacre of a gentile immigrant train (Brooks 1962). Mormons and Americans each suspected the other of attempting to activate Indian allies during the "Mormon conflict" with the United States (Furniss 1960, 161–62). Then, with American authority established in the Great Basin and Indians no longer a political factor, Brigham Young enlisted the aid of the United States in expelling them from the pale of Mormon settlement — an outcome which he had been seeking since 1850 (Christy 1978, 228–29).

Certainly, in the Brigham Young years, Mormon involvement with the Indians bore the stamp of that prophet's personality. As well, it was marked by the exigencies of settlement in the Great Basin. But, beyond the specifics of time and place, person and incident, the Brigham Young years were in various ways prefigured in Joseph Smith's time. Most obviously, the Book of Mormon continued to shape the Mormon understanding of the Lamanite. Yet that understanding was expressed in divergent "orientations" toward the Indian.[7]

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[5] The competition for resources which led to the destruction of the "morally inferior" lifestyle of the Indian is discussed in Smaby 1975. See also Allen and Warner 1971; Euler 1966, 50–96; Peterson 1971.

[6] For missionary biographies, see Brooks 1944b and 1972; Brown 1960; Creer 1958; Little 1881; Smiley 1972. For early Mormon militia actions, see Christy 1978. For the role of the Indian mission on the frontier, see Campbell 1973; Peterson 1973, 212–13, and 1975.

[7] In a summary discussion of "stresses and strains" in Mormon society, O'Dea states that one of the "dilemmas" faced by Mormonism is that posed by "Mormon orientations to convert the Indians and their pioneer attitude of condescension and suspicion, as well of rivalry,

The "missionary" orientation fused condescension with an altruism which drew its strength from a prophetic view of the Lamanite future.[8] The "pioneer" orientation recognized the Indian as a rival — as a threat to Mormon interests or an impediment to their pursuit.[9] More evident when Mormons confronted Indians in the Great Basin, this almost secular perspective was incipient in Joseph Smith's willingness to appropriate Indian land and resources for Mormon purposes.

Both the pioneer and the missionary perspectives were informed by the concept of the Lamanite, with its negative implications. Together, those perspectives supported a flexible theology of the Lamanite which let Mormons achieve pragmatic solutions to the problem of the Indian when altruism and the interests of the Mormon community were in tension. By giving priority to their millennial impulse, Mormons could pursue their own interests without regard for those of the Indian. They might argue, as Heber C. Kimball did, that Indians should not be paid for land which "belongs to our Father in heaven" (Larson 1961, 314). They might properly set aside the missionary task or subordinate it in other ways to that of building Zion. As in the Joseph Smith years, the Book of Mormon gave a pragmatic cast to relations with the Indians, and this in its turn gave greater latitude to Mormon relations with gentiles. The ethnic triad — more a matter of rhetoric in Joseph Smith's time — was realized in action in the Great Basin.[10]

Parley P. Pratt and the Present

For the better part of seventy years, from the late 1880s, Mormons paid less attention to the Lamanites.[11] But, during the past three decades, their concern has been renewed. Once again, it bears the stamp of particular prophets — David O. McKay at first and then Spencer W. Kimball. Arguably, it is also a Mormon response to the growing political involvement of the Indian and the resurgence of Indian communities, not least in the American Southwest.[12] As in the Joseph Smith years, Mormons subscribe to a model of con-

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toward them" (1957, 223). Here it is argued that O'Dea's "missionary" and "pioneer" orientations are *not* polar opposites, for they find common ground in the Book of Mormon. As well, they are not so much vocations as perspectives. Over time, a person might incline more or less toward one or the other, as Brigham Young did in his policies and pronouncements. See Larson 1963; O'Neil and Layton 1978.

[8] Condescension pervaded the missionary advocacy of Church authorities, as is seen in Jensen 1983. But, of all Mormons, the handful of men for whom missionary work with the Indians was a lifelong vocation were those least likely to hold that Indians were utterly degraded. See, for example, Jones 1960.

[9] In charge of the colonizing venture on the Little Colorado — officially an Indian mission — Lot Smith "became the symbol of trouble to the Indians" (Peterson 1970, 412).

[10] Says Brooks of the Brigham Young years: "The three offer a triangle as intriguing as any provided by fiction" (1944a, 1).

[11] The responsibility of the Church toward the Indian disappears as a conference topic between 1890 and 1950 (Shepherd and Shepherd 1984, 241).

[12] In arguing that Mormons have an obligation to the Indian, Larsen notes: "In some states the Indian is becoming a factor to be reckoned with in the political power struggle" (1966, 58).

version which sees no value in Indian culture, and seeks to displace it, for example, through the placement program (Topper 1979). No less significant, though, for the relations of Mormons and Indians in the present, are their discrepant perceptions of the past.

Essentially, for Mormons, the "Indian history" of the Joseph Smith years has been collapsed into the story of the first mission to the Lamanites. That story has itself been reduced to a "ritualization" which focuses upon three ethnic stereotypes: dedicated Mormons, obstructive gentiles and incipiently responsive Lamanites.[13] More specifically, this ritual history underscores a developing missionary impetus in the Church and, in particular, the renewed commitment to missionary work among the Lamanites (Britsch 1979, 22; Allen and Leonard 1976, 555–56). Coupled with Book of Mormon prophecy, Pratt's account now functions to validate the current missionary policies of the Church. But, as a representation of the Mormon past, it is history written backward. In expressing a commitment to the Lamanite, it gives Mormons the history they need — a sacred history in which altruism is untainted by self-interest, whether communal or personal. Of course, there *is* a historical continuity which links Parley Pratt's journey with the present. It is the continuity of a missionary ideal which derives from the Book of Mormon. Mormons have, for a century and a half, shown a special concern for the Indian. But there is another continuity, a parallel continuity, to be discerned through a more critical approach to history. It is the continuity which carries the complexities of Joseph Smith's time through the Brigham Young years and into the present. Mormons will have to recognize *that* continuity if they are to cope with problems which are now arising in their relations with Indians — who have their own ritualized histories, and who are bringing them into the political arena (Parry n.d.).

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[13] Bitton speaks of the "ritualization of Mormon history" in pageants, parades, monuments, and other forms, including "standardized narratives reminiscent of morality plays in their insistent simplification" (1975, 68). Ritualized forms present versions of the Mormon past which have a contemporary relevance. Here, a ritualized narrative assumes various phrasings, most of them derived entirely from Pratt's brief account.

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