

Imperial Zions: Mormons, Polygamy, and the Politics of Domesticity in the Nineteenth Century

By

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To my grandmother Naomi, my mother Linda, my sisters Laura and Jessica,
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Abstract

This dissertation addresses how discussions of Mormon domesticity intersected with the imperial and racial politics of the nineteenth century. Analyzing missionary correspondence, official LDS church records, church publications, and personal diaries, it tracks Mormon missionaries as they move through imperial spaces such as Great Britain, the United States, and the South Pacific. In identifying Great Britain and the United States as missionary spaces, it argues, Mormons challenged the expectation that the white, middle classes would be the bearers rather than the recipients of missionary work.

This was not the only way in which Mormons challenged nineteenth-century conceptions of race. This dissertation argues that in willingly entering polygamy, Mormons advocated for a form of marriage many people believed was more suited to people of color. As a result, Mormon women and their husbands were frequently racialized and portrayed as existing somewhere between white and non-white. In turn, Mormons did not reject racialized or imperial thinking in their defenses of polygamy. Rather, this dissertation concludes that they drew upon civilizing discourses, arguing that polygamy provided a better system for domesticating sexuality than monogamy did because it gave men multiple outlets for their sexuality.

Finally, this dissertation connects abstract discussions about sexuality and imperialism to individual lives. It explores the tensions that Mormon missionary work created both for white women whose husbands temporarily abandoned them for evangelizing missions and for indigenous women who married white Mormon men as plural wives. In connecting Mormon missionary work and domesticity, this dissertation makes an argument for the imperial nature of

nineteenth-century Mormonism. Although Mormonism has been imagined and synthesized as an American faith, it has a long history of missionary work and participation in American colonialism. By exploring this idea, the dissertation illustrates how historical conceptions of Mormonism should be fully integrated into the larger history of the United States and the world.

Introduction

In 1899, Hannah Kaaepa rose to address the Triennial Congress of the National Council of Women.¹ The young woman was born in the Hawaiian Islands, but had immigrated to Utah as a young woman to participate in temple rituals in Salt Lake City. Although she traveled with the Mormon delegation to the conference, she had been asked to speak on behalf of the women of Hawai‘i. According to an article in a Mormon journal for young women, Kaaepa wore a “cream satin holoku or gown, with native leis and ornaments about her neck.”² In spite of the important role she played within the Congress, Kaaepa has largely been forgotten. She is not mentioned in recent histories of the Mormon feminist movement or Mormonism writ large.

Part of the reason for Kaaepa’s omission from Mormon histories is archival—there are few documents available that tell her story. Although several newspapers mention Kaaepa’s speech before the congress, they do not record her specific words or make more than a passing reference to her.³ She is mentioned briefly in the writings of other Mormon feminists, but the distance between Salt Lake City and her home in Iosepa, Utah, meant that she did not develop the same type of intimate relationships that some white Mormon feminists had with one another. The special collections at Brigham Young University hold a few letters in her hand. In one letter, Kaaepa appears to be disappointed. Her mother will not let her meet Benjamin Cluff, Jr. because she needs her to help with temple work and write letters to an agent in Hawai‘i. From what I

¹ Kaaepa’s name is spelled multiple ways in the historical record. Her first name is variously spelled “Hannah,” “Hanna,” and “Hana.” I have chosen the spelling “Hannah.”

² “The Recent Triennial in Washington,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 10:5 (May 1899): 203 – 204.

³ See, for example, “Hana Kaaepa’s Presentation,” *Salt Lake City Herald* February 26, 1899, 4 and “The Council of Women,” *New York Daily Tribune*, February 15, 1899.

have been able to locate, she appears again only in court records surrounding her family's land holdings in Hawai'i and in a book that her husband compiled after her death, gathering her obituaries and listing the names of their children.⁴ The obituaries describe her mother as one of the Queen's closest friends. According to the book, among Kaaepa's last words to her husband were: "Give my aloha to the Prince Kalaniana[']ole, stand by him, stand by the church and stand by the flag."⁵ Although these sources are plentiful in comparison to those we have for some other indigenous women, they pale in comparison to the voluminous boxes that prominent white Mormon feminists left behind.

The paucity of documentation surrounding Kaaepa's life is not the only reason for her absence in Mormon history. In many ways, Kaaepa's story challenges the assumptions that historians have made about the faith's history. Although Kaaepa spent much of her life in the Hawaiian Islands, her story crosses imperial boundaries, moving between the American West and the Pacific Islands. The story of Mormonism has typically been told as a straightforward narrative in which waves of violence forced white Mormons to move from upstate New York to Missouri, Illinois, and eventually Utah. Gina Colvin, a Maori scholar of Mormonism, has argued that this narrative has led historians to foreground the experiences of white Americans. Most Mormon historians, she argues, include the experiences of indigenous people only when they serve the larger story of American exceptionalism.⁶ For the most part, scholars of Mormonism have not shifted the lenses through which they view Mormon history to examine the experiences

⁴ "Hannah Kaaepa Lowe's Prayer," *Honolulu Republican*, September 15, 1900, 1; "Local and General News," *The Independent*, October 23, 1900, 3. George Lowe, *Ohana Family Book*, microfilm, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁵ "Mrs. George Lowe, Failing Since Death of Queen Passes On," Newspaper Clipping, n.d., in Lowe, *Ohana Family Book*.

⁶ Gina Colvin, "Maori and Pakeha Mormonism in New Zealand," (paper presented at the Mormon History Association Annual Conference, Layton, Utah, June 6-9, 2013).

of non-white Mormons. As a non-white woman who lived most of her life outside of the boundaries of the United States, she has been doubly silenced.

There are a few notable exceptions to this lack of emphasis on non-white subjects. Marjorie Newton's *Mormon and Maori* asks how Maori prophetic movements and cultural dispossession affected the perception of Mormonism within the Maori community.⁷ Hokulani Aikau's work on Mormonism in the Hawaiian Islands highlights the contradictions and tensions that emerged from the designation of Polynesians as a chosen people within Mormonism and the simultaneous racism that Polynesian Mormons encountered within the church.⁸ Their research is deeply informed by cultural theory and Pacific Studies. Matthew Kester also attempts to place the development of Iosepa, a Native Hawaiian colony in Utah, in the wider history of American colonialism in the Pacific Islands.⁹ Although Russell Stevenson's recent documentary history of Mormonism and the African diaspora is less theoretically conversant than that of some other historians, his presentation of historical documents attempts to demonstrate how black people in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States understood the Mormon faith.¹⁰ As a white historian of Mormonism, I see the work of these historians as a challenge to rethink Mormon history. How does the story of Mormonism change when we take postcolonial theory, the histories of non-white people, and the connections between the United States and other colonial spaces seriously?

My attempt to answer this question causes me to begin my dissertation not with Joseph Smith's visions of the angel Moroni or Brigham Young's entrance into the Salt Lake City but with Kaaepa. Beginning with her story not only redresses the absence of non-white people within

⁷ Marjorie Newton, *Mormon and Maori* (Orem, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

⁸ Hokulani Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Chosen Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai'i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁹ Matthew Kester, *Remembering Iosepa: History, Place, and Religion in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Russell Stevenson, *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830 – 2013* (Orem, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

Mormon history; it also highlights the importance of missionary work to early Mormonism.

Although few Pacific Islanders would be surprised by a history of Mormonism that included the Hawaiian Islands or Tonga, historians in the United States have traditionally located the center of Mormonism in the United States, calling the faith “the quintessential American religion.”¹¹ The scholarship that has explored Mormon missionary work in the Pacific Islands, Latin America, and Europe has not been integrated into general histories of Mormonism. In 1986, R. Lanier Britsch published an impeccably researched history of Mormon forays into the Pacific.¹²

Historians working at the Hawai‘i campus of Brigham Young University supplemented his work with histories of the ‘awa rebellion in the Hawaiian Islands, the sale of beach front land in Lā‘ie in the 1920s, and the construction of the Waialua Ward Cemetery.¹³ It would be unfair to critique earlier one-volume histories of Mormonism for not including these insights since they were published before the insights of Mormon Pacific Studies. Recent histories of Mormonism, however, have also tended to define Mormon history in such a way that omits this literature. The United States that Richard and Claudia Bushman take as the subject of their study of Mormon

¹¹ John L. Brooke has a discussion of the origins of the idea that Mormonism is the “quintessential American religion” in his book *The Refiner’s Fire*. He locates the beginning of this appellation in the arguments of Whitney Cross and David Brion Davis that Mormonism grew out of the religious culture of early New England. Although Brooke agrees that there is important overlap between the religious revivals that marked New England in the early nineteenth century, he argues that its origins cannot be understood without exploring the Radical Reformation in early modern Europe. Although Brooke’s discussion of the problem is brief, it does engage with the significant schools of thought and the history of the idea that Mormonism is an “American religion.” See John L. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of a Mormon Cosmology, 1644 – 1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xiv – xv.

¹² R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1986).

¹³ Many of these articles were published through the Mormon Pacific Historical Society, which was formed at BYU-Hawai‘i in 1978 to promote the study of Mormon history in the Pacific Islands. In addition to publishing a journal, the organization also sponsored symposia and annual conferences. For the specific articles mentioned above, see Lance Chase, “The Hawaiian Mission Crisis of 1874: Character as Destiny,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Studies* 1:1 (1980): 87 – 97; Lance Chase, “The Meek Did Not Inherit the Earth: The 1927 – 1928 Laie Beach Front Sale and Lawsuit,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Studies* 14:1 (1993): 47 – 58; and “Waialua Ward Cemetery,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Studies* 15:1 (1994): 12 – 18.

history, for example, excludes Hawai‘i.¹⁴ When a Random House editor asked the historian Matthew Bowman to write a popular history of the faith, they asked him to emphasize the relationship between Mormonism and American politics. Although the intent was to provide context for Mitt Romney’s run for the presidency, the result was a history of Mormonism that emphasized the faith’s history within the continental United States.¹⁵

The work of these historians has been instrumental to understanding the political and cultural contexts of Mormon history, but it has also underplayed the importance of missionary work to early Mormonism. It is impossible to fully understand the dynamics of early Mormonism without understanding Mormon missionary work. Within months of the organization of his church in 1830, Joseph Smith sent four men on a mission to nearby Native American communities. He believed that American Indians were a remnant of the once mighty people who were the subject of the Book of Mormon and that their conversion to Mormonism would be the beginning of the apocalypse.¹⁶ Mormon theology postulated a world undone. They anticipated the establishment of God’s kingdom, which would undo national and religious boundaries. The men and women who joined the fledging Mormon Church accepted the responsibility to go into the world and gather the elect to a new Israel. Great Britain, Scandinavia, the Pacific Islands, and Canada eventually became key sites of Mormon missionary work. Mormon missionaries also traveled throughout the United States, creating substantial congregations in Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio by 1845.

¹⁴ Claudia Lauper and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Matthew Bowman, Conversation with Author, August 4, 2015. For the resulting book, see Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House Publishers, 2012).

¹⁶ Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938), 47 – 58; Ronald Walker, “Seeking the ‘Remnant:’ The Native American during the Joseph Smith Period,” *Journal of Mormon History* 19:1 (Spring 1993): 1 – 33; Ron Romig, “The Lamanite Mission,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 14 (1994): 24 – 33; Leland Gentry, “Light on the ‘Mission to the Lamanites,’” *BYU Studies* 36:2 (1996 – 97): 226 – 232; and Mark Lyman Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith’s Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 49 – 69.

My dissertation, as a result, does not just focus on the connections between the American West and the Pacific Islands. Instead, it follows Mormon missionaries as they move through imperial spaces—proselytizing white, middle class men and women in Great Britain, challenging the ascendancy of the London Missionary Society in what is now French Polynesia, and creating a settler empire in the deserts of Utah. In connecting the American West to other imperial spaces, my research demonstrates the importance of these stories to Mormon history. It is impossible, I argue, to fully understand the experiences of early Mormons without examining their attempts to spread the gospel to the “islands of the sea” and “nations of the earth.”¹⁷

Foregrounding Mormon missionary work ultimately rewrites Mormon history, casting familiar stories in new terms. Mormon historians such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Samuel Brown have argued for the significance of family connections to early Mormon theology. Early Mormons frequently emphasized the importance of converting family members to their newfound faith. They believed that family connections would be preserved and even multiplied in the eternities, if individuals accepted the gospel that Smith had restored to the earth.¹⁸ At the same time, however, Mormon missionary work required that male converts be willing to temporarily abandon their families in order to travel as itinerants and spread the gospel. Their willingness to do so meant that Mormonism promised to bind families together in the afterlife while tearing them apart in this one. The contradictions within Mormon ideas about the family are impossible to see without taking Mormon missionary work seriously.

¹⁷ These phrases occur frequently in the blessings that Mormon missionaries received before they left Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois to serve as missionaries. They also appear in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 29; D&C 25:17).

¹⁸ See Samuel Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Worthy to be Recorded Upon the Archives of Heaven: Ornamentation in the Diaries of Wilford Woodruff,” Plenary Session, Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Independence, Missouri, May 29, 2010.

My focus on the attempts of Mormon to spread the gospel, however, does not just affect the way we write Mormon history. It raises several important questions: What role did domesticity played in nineteenth-century colonialism? What was the importance of race to Christian missionary work? And, ultimately, how do we define the relationship between the American West and the Pacific? These questions are just as important to understanding Mormonism as the literature surrounding Mormon theology and lived religious practice.

In recent years, it has become commonplace to note the importance of white domesticity to colonialism. Much of this work draws on the research of Ann Stoler, an American anthropologist currently at the New School in New York City. Stoler's work in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* focuses on the relationship between the families of white colonial officials and their indigenous servants in the Dutch East Indies. Stoler argues that regulating the interaction of white and brown bodies was important to colonial rule. White colonial officials became obsessed with regulating the ways in which Indonesian nursemaids cared for white infants. Nursemaids could be forbidden from returning to their homes to sleep and required to change their diets before they were acceptable.¹⁹ In the East Indies, the Dutch also became concerned about the food that their servants made for them, the way that their clothes were washed, and the education of their older children. Stoler argues that the home became a site of intense regulation because the intimacy that occurred as Indonesian servants cared for their European masters threatened to undo any separation between white and brown

¹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 197. Stoler has elaborated these ideas in other places as well, see *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995) and the edited collection *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of the Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

bodies. In those moments, the superiority of the Dutch to their colonial charges threatened to come undone.²⁰

Although Stoler's definition of intimacy extends beyond sex, there is always an erotic undertone to her work. Other scholars have focused more explicitly on the attempts to govern sexual relationships between white men and indigenous women in colonial spaces. Anne McClintock, for example, argues that a sexualized desire for non-white bodies is an inherent part of imperialism. She uses soap advertisements, photography, maps, and racial cross-dressing as evidence for a simultaneous longing to touch non-white bodies and be distanced from them.²¹ As a literary scholar, McClintock focuses on textual analysis to understand how the erotics of empire functioned. Philippa Levine, on the other hand, examines how the regulation of sexuality affected white soldiers and non-white women within the British Empire. She argues that British colonial officials feared that the venereal disease that sometimes resulted from sexual relationships between white soldiers and local prostitutes would degrade white bodies and render them unfit for military service. She explores the multiple ways in which the British government regulated prostitution and sexual relationships between white men and non-white women.²²

It is important to note here that the sexual relationships that colonial governments imagined were not always between white men and brown women. The presence of white women in the colonies raised the possibility that they too would desire the bodies of indigenous people. European and American colonial governments, however, always imagined that sexual relationships between white and non-white bodies would involve white men and not white

²⁰ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*.

²¹ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995).

²² Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (London: Routledge, 2003).

women. Many of the strictures that colonial governments used to govern the home were meant to ensure that white women and brown men would never desire each other.

White men and women who traveled to colonial spaces were not always monogamous. White men frequently developed semi-formal, long-term relationships with indigenous women even if the white men were already married. Although some men ended these relationships once they entered into formal marriages with white women, others continued to support and have sexual relationships with their non-white partners. The co-existence of these relationships means that it is impossible to reduce colonial relations to any one category. Although white, middle class understandings of domesticity posited monogamy as an ideal, the domestic practices of white men in colonial spaces were rarely so simple. In addition to long-term sexual relationships with indigenous women, white men visited prostitutes, seduced young women, and engaged in homosexual acts. Scholarly research has reminded scholars of the erotics of colonialism and the importance of sexual regulation within colonial spaces.

Mormon historians rarely reference the work of Ann Stoler or Anne McClintock. In many ways, however, Mormon historians actually augment the conclusions of these scholars. W. Paul Reeve, for example, has argued that white Americans saw polygamy as a non-white marital practice. His research suggests that sex was partially used to define race in the nineteenth century. In willingly entering into plural marriage, Mormons compromised their whiteness.²³ His work is part of a larger conversation within Mormon Studies about the meaning of the religious tradition within the United States. For J. Spencer Fluhman, that meaning is found in the role that Mormonism played in debates about which spiritual practices were legitimate. He argues that Mormonism demarcated the boundary between religious faith and fanaticism for people living in

²³ W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

the United States. Mormonism lay outside what was considered respectable.²⁴ Although Fluhman does not foreground race to the extent that Reeve does, his work suggests that Mormon religious practices led many Americans to associate them with non-white people. He points out that Brigham Young himself felt that Mormons “should sympathize more with Turks than with Christians.”²⁵ Descriptions of Mormons also frequently had an erotic tone. Nineteenth-century exposés of Mormonism often described white women being seduced by Mormon men. White Americans imagined that white women were unable to resist their charms and, as a result, agreed to enter into marriages that they otherwise would have found untenable.²⁶

The work of scholars like Reeve and Fluhman has been important to understanding the role that Mormonism played in American culture. I draw on it in the first chapter of this dissertation to help readers understand the importance of Mormonism to the American imagination. My work, however, departs from theirs in a key respect. In this dissertation, I bring sex to the forefront of my analysis. My research suggests that the Mormon practice of polygamy was a departure from the assumptions people made about sexuality in the nineteenth century. It is possible to view the federal government’s prosecution of polygamous men as being akin to other forms of state regulation of sexuality.²⁷

²⁴ J. Spencer Fluhman, *A Peculiar People: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). For the other works published concerned the place of Mormonism in the American imagination, see Terry Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2002); and J.B. Haws, *The Mormon Image in the American Mind: Fifty Years of Public Perception* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁵ Fluhman, *A Peculiar People*, 89.

²⁶ For examples of depictions of Mormon men as seducers, see Fanny Stenhouse, *Tell It All: The Story of a Life’s Experience in Mormonism* (Hartford, CT: A.D. Worthington & Co., 1875); Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19, or The Story of a Life in Bondage* (Hartford, CT: Dustin, Gilman, and Co., 1876); and Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Ward, Lock, and Co., 1887).

²⁷ For the literature on state regulation of sexuality, see John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality* 3rd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

The creation of a straight, white, monogamous family was key to American ideas about citizenship and the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although sexual relationships varied among white people in both colonial and metropolitan spaces, in general, people assumed monogamy as a social ideal. Nancy Cott has argued in *Public Vows* that marriage was seen as “a God-given but also a civilized practice.”²⁸ The idea of the home as “civilized” and “natural” became essential to American expansion in the nineteenth century. Amy Kaplan has argued that the United States in the nineteenth century was driven simultaneously by a desire for limitless expansion and a need to separate themselves from foreign spaces. Out of this tension came a desire to domesticate the “frontier” by creating the structures of white domesticity in spaces that had once been seen as wild and ungovernable.²⁹ Kaplan’s work argues that it is ultimately the recreation of the white home that marks the transition from the foreign to the domestic for white Americans.

In this imaginary, Mormonism becomes a problem. Mormons publicly denied that monogamy should be at the center of social life. Instead, they explicitly argued that it had failed to control male sexual desire. In Mormon feminist publications from the nineteenth century, the existence of prostitution in major cities became evidence for the failure of monogamy to provide for women who became the victims of male sexuality.³⁰ Mormons were not the only ones to critique marriage. Many early women’s rights activists made similar charges. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, called women’s sexual subordination within marriage a kind of “legalized prostitution.” She even told warned that those who were “dabbling with the suffrage movement” should realize that social equality ultimately meant “free love” and that those who wanted to “get

²⁸ Cott, *Public Vows*, 10.

²⁹ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

³⁰ Janelle Higbee, “*President Mrs. Kimball: A Rhetoric of Words and Works* (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1998).

out of the boat,” should “for safety’s sake get out now, for delays are dangerous.”³¹ Stanton, however, was not able to create a large-scale society that mirrored her ideals. The Mormon kingdom, which spanned multiple states and attracted thousands of followers, offered a tangible alternative to white, middle class understandings of marriage.

Mormonism’s evangelizing mission made it even more threatening. In nineteenth-century periodicals, it was often portrayed as an octopus whose reaching tentacles threatened to strangle those around it.³² In the British Library, there is a record of the surveillance that the East India Office undertook of Mormon missionaries in the 1880s. It describes their arrival in what is now Myanmar and the conversion of several South Asians, an old woman, and her son. It also includes articles from the *Rangoon Times* and letters from various government officials reporting on the whereabouts of the Mormon missionaries. The file is relatively slim, but its very existence serves as an example of the suspicions Mormons frequently encountered in foreign spaces.³³

In foregrounding the Mormon practice of polygamy, my dissertation casts new light on the role that sex played in colonial spaces. The Mormon adoption of polygamy led the community to legitimize interracial relationships in ways that other religious groups were unwilling to do so. Although early Protestant missionaries had played with interracial marriage as a way to “civilize” indigenous women, the sexual transgressions that haunted many mission stations led them to abandon the practice. Mormons, on the other hand, continued to encourage white men to marry Native American women throughout the nineteenth century. As Reeve has pointed out, racial mixing was frequently a part of the accusations against Mormons during this

³¹ Quoted in Ellen Carol Dubois, *Woman Suffrage and Women’s Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 77 – 78.

³² Edje Jeter, “Cephalopods 4 of 4: The Nineteenth Century Octopus,” *Juvenile Instructor* (blog), July 14, 2013, Accessed: May 15, 2015, <<http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/cephalopods-4-of-4-the-nineteenth-century-octopus/>>

³³ “Mormon Recruiting in India; Reports forwarded by Governor of India,” East India Office, IOR/L/PJ/6/160, File 1487, British Library, London, UK.

time period.³⁴ Plural marriage was one of the ways in which Mormons incorporated indigenous women into their families. In the nineteenth century, Brigham Young encouraged white Mormon missionaries to marry American Indian women in an attempt to speed the process by which Native Americans would remember their Israelite heritage.³⁵ Polygamy allowed Mormons to maintain the white home, even as they married American Indian women. Although some Mormon missionaries married Polynesian women, marriages between white Mormons and Polynesians were far less common.

It is important to note here that not all white Mormons were comfortable with the idea of marrying Native American women, nor did most do so. Young's commandments for white Mormons to engage in interracial sex, however, were a departure from the standard missionary practice. European colonial powers rarely saw the erotics that Stoler, McClintock, and others have described as a legitimate part of the colonial enterprise. When colonial governments did recognize the sexual relationships that formed between white men and native women, they sought to control them by regulating disease or forcing men to care for the children that resulted from such unions. Mormons, on the other hand, presented interracial sexual relationships as an explicit command. Exploring the challenge that the Mormon practice of polygamy presented to the assumed relationship between domesticity and civilization in the nineteenth century highlights the role that the family played in the colonial encounter. The East India Office placed the Mormon missionaries who traveled there under surveillance because they feared they would seduce white women into polygamy. Doing so would have presented problems not only to the United States who was trying to eradicate polygamy but also to the British colonial government, which used laws about marriage and the family to differentiate itself from its colonial subjects.

³⁴ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 106 – 11, 111 – 28, 128 – 38, 138 – 9, and 171 – 3.

³⁵ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 63.

Polygamy was not the only reason that Mormonism troubled people living in the United States and Great Britain. In the nineteenth century, Christian missionary work typically focused on two groups: non-white people and the poor. Mormons, on the other hand, believed that all people, including the white middle classes, needed to be re-baptized. They rejected the authority of Protestant ministers who they believed taught a corrupted version of the gospel that had resulted from centuries of apostasy.³⁶ They were, of course, not the only ones to do so. In the eighteenth century, a series of prophets arose who critiqued the power of settled ministers in the United States and Great Britain. These men and women were often part of a revolutionary underground that challenged the disenfranchisement of the poor.³⁷ Few of these prophets, however, were able to sustain a large following over the span of time that Smith and Young did. Mormons also explicitly called themselves missionaries. They saw themselves as participating in the same Great Commission that had inspired the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and the London Missionary Society (LMS) to send missionaries to the Pacific Islands, Africa, and Asia.

The presence of Mormon missionaries in Great Britain inverted nineteenth-century assumptions about missionary work. Although not all Mormons were members of the working class, newspaper articles frequently portrayed them as such. An anti-Mormon tract published in London in 1855 claimed that the “impure doctrine of Mormonism” had become “a cesspool of

³⁶ For a consideration of Mormon apostasy narratives, see *Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy* eds. Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁷ For a sampling of the work on these prophets, see J.F.C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780 – 1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); Jonathan Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795 – 1840* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988); Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Philip Lockley, *Visionary Religion and Radicalism in Early Industrial England: From Southcott to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

iniquity” while “spreading itself among the uneducated classes.”³⁸ The association of Mormonism with the working classes was about more than just class. It also invoked questions about race. In the nineteenth century, the working classes were frequently racialized. Seth Koven has pointed out that many middle-class reformers frequently compared “Darkest London” to “Darkest Africa.”³⁹ The members of the white, middle classes who engaged in missionary work within metropolitan Britain saw themselves as civilizing the working classes. Their language mirrored that of missionaries sent to foreign spaces. Missionary work became a way for individuals to assert their class and racial standing. When Mormon missionaries proselytized among white, middle class individuals, they challenged their respectability and their identity as white Britons. Although the United States was less explicitly imperial, Mormon missionary work had similar overtones there. Reeve’s recent work demonstrates the racialization of Mormonism. In focusing on Mormon missionary work, my dissertation highlights the role that it played in defining race and class in the nineteenth century.

Of course, my dissertation’s contributions do not lie solely in the history of colonialism. It also asks us to re-conceptualize the history of the American West. In 1992, Walter Nugent published the results of his poll of members of the Western History Association, the Western Writers of America, and a sampling of editors and publishers about how they would define the boundaries of the region. Although some of the respondents saw the American West as a myth with no physical boundaries, others sought to define it as a physical location whose boundaries lay somewhere between the Mississippi River and California. Some individuals excluded the Pacific Northwest and California coast. Others, parts of Texas. And, one particularly humorous

³⁸ T.W.P. Taylder, *The Mormon’s Own Book, or Mormonism Tried By Its Own Standards* (London: Partridge and Co., Paternoster Row, 1855), 164.

³⁹ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 237.

historian used the humidity, which they pointed out becomes bearable at Kearney, Nebraska along I-80—“zingo! without fail”—every year when they travel East to West.⁴⁰

The desire of some writers to define the American West as a myth and others to define it as a place is part of a long-standing debate among historians of the region. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner gave a lecture arguing that the frontier had provided the United States with its vitality as individuals brought once-foreign places into the United States.⁴¹ The “frontier thesis” that he created dominated Western history for much of the twentieth century. In addition to inspiring some historians to think about the role that the American West had played in the nation’s larger history, it became a foil for those who wanted to emphasize the West as a distinct region with its own history. Historians of the American West have long defined their work against the ethnocentrism and triumphalism of Turner’s work.

The treatment of the American West as a place has been important for the history of the American West. It has led to the insistence of Patty Limerick and other New Western Historians on the importance of the region’s history in the twentieth century. Rather than ending their studies of the American West with the region’s incorporation into the rest of the United States, they explore the effects that industrialization and the intensification of agriculture have had on the region’s history.⁴² The dominance of the New Western history, however, has not ended examinations of the American West as a process. At least one of the proponents of the New

⁴⁰ Walter Nugent, “Where Is the American West? Report on a Survey,” *Major Problems in the History of the American West* 2nd ed., ed. Clyde A. Milner, Anne M. Butler, and David Rich Lewis (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 1997), 27. Nugent’s article was originally published in 1992. See Walter Nugent, “Where Is the American West: Report on a Survey,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* Vol. 42 (Summer 1992): 2 – 23.

⁴¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison, Wis., 1894), 79-112.

⁴² For examples of New Western historians, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987); *Trials: Towards a New Western History* ed. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner, and Charles Rankin (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991); William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992); Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Richard White, “It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own:” *A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

Western History dissented from the idea that the West was best defined as a bounded region.⁴³ Michael Witgen, a historian at the University of Michigan, has recently argued for the importance of grounding the history of the American West in Native American experience. He argues that doing so would require historians to reconceptualize the West and investigate the New Worlds native peoples created as they negotiated the arrival of white merchants, settlers, and missionaries.⁴⁴

My dissertation examines the American West as both a process and a place. I see the American West as being intimately connected to other colonial spaces through the process of settler colonialism. As Elspeth Martini has argued, the removal of American Indians in the nineteenth century was part of a much larger phenomenon in which white settlers tried to erase the presence of indigenous people to justify their appropriation of native land. Ideas about the removal of indigenous people circulated between colonial spaces, moving between the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.⁴⁵ The Mormon missionaries whose experiences serve as the basis of this dissertation moved between these spaces as well. Joseph Fielding was born in Great Britain, moved to Canada, and immigrated to the United States after his conversion to Mormonism. James Stephens Brown served as a missionary both in the Pacific Islands and among the Shoshone. Their experiences demonstrate the connectedness of colonial spaces in the nineteenth century. When Mormon missionaries moved between imperial spaces, they brought ideas about interracial marriage, the nature of indigenous peoples, and the importance of white civilization with them. One question that drives this dissertation is how Mormon missionary work in the Pacific Islands was connected to their work among American Indians in the United

⁴³ Karl Jacoby, "We are all New Western Historians Now," *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001): 614 – 615.

⁴⁴ Michael Witgen, "The Native New World and Western North America," *The Western Historical Society* 43:3 (Autumn 2012), 292 – 299.

⁴⁵ Elspeth Martini, "The Tides of Morality: Anglo-American Colonial Authority and Indigenous Removal, 1820 – 1848" (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 2013).

States. In many cases, the men who had proselytized in what is now French Polynesia were also missionaries to Shoshone and Ute Indians. My dissertation highlights the similarities between missionary work in these disparate places. In both places, for example, white Mormons married indigenous women and adopted indigenous children in an attempt to teach them the ‘habits of civilization’ and whiten their skin.

The emphasis in my dissertation on the role that colonialism played in the history of the American West is not necessarily new. Historians like Pekka Hämäläinen and Ned Blackhawk have implicitly argued that we can only understand Western history if we employ the lenses drawn from colonial studies. Both of these texts explore the role that violence played in shaping the region’s history and the interactions between white settlers and American Indians.⁴⁶ This work, however, has largely focused on places that eventually became a part of the United States. It is the scope of my dissertation that departs from typical histories of the American West. I emphasize the connections between imperial spaces. In so doing, I place the American West into conversation with places like Great Britain, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Austral Islands.

In addition to changing how we think about nineteenth-century colonialism, the history of the American West, and the role of missionary work in defining race and class, my dissertation engages with American religious history. I examine how ideas about race and gender within Mormon theology affected individual lives. How, I ask, did people living in the Tuamotus understand the Mormon emphasis on gathering? How did individual women understand their husbands’ missionary work in relationship to the Mormon deification of the family? And, what

⁴⁶ See, for example, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650 -1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2008); and Kathleen Duval, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006).

did the establishment of a plantation on the island of Oahu mean for Native Hawaiians who had recently been dispossessed of their land and would soon lose their national sovereignty as well.

My emphasis upon individual experience and daily life is part of a larger movement within religious studies. Robert Orsi's *The Madonna of 115th Street* explores religion in the streets, homes, and restaurants of Italian Harlem. He argues that it is impossible to understand the religious rituals that occurred within Catholic churches in the city without understanding family life.⁴⁷ Other historians have pursued similar questions. Colleen McDannell's work on material Christianity highlights the ways that sacred objects—family Bibles, temple garments, and holy water—are experienced in everyday life. In one particularly telling example, she examines the role that physical garments play in Mormon stories about extramarital sex.⁴⁸ Other historians have explored the infusion of religious values into corporations like Wal-Mart.⁴⁹ This dissertation draws upon this emphasis on everyday, lived experience to explore how Mormon theology shaped women's experiences. In my analysis, the letters that Mormon women wrote about the absences of their husbands are just as important as the sermons of Joseph Smith.

This dissertation begins by outlining the major themes of Mormon theology in the nineteenth century. The first chapter explores how Mormon ideas about embodiment influenced its racial and gendered ideologies. My research suggests that the Mormon emphasis on the body raised questions about the organization of the family in the afterlife. Unlike many Christians, Mormons believed that the passions that individuals experienced in this life would extend into the next. Rather than being extinguished at death, sexual desire, hunger, and other human wants

⁴⁷ Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880 – 1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁴⁹ Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

would continue, slowly becoming perfected and brought into accordance with the divine will. The family was to be the mechanism through which this perfecting occurred—individuals could not attain the highest blessings of Mormonism without marriage. The Mormon emphasis upon embodiment also raised questions about the nature of race.

As I suggest throughout my dissertation, Mormons treated the Book of Mormon fundamentally as a history of the indigenous people of the Americas. The emphasis upon the physical body in Mormon theology raised questions about the permanency of race. For much of the nineteenth century, Mormons emphasized the impermanence of some racial identities. The bodies of Native Americans and other indigenous people would be physically whitened in the millennium as they remembered their godly heritage.

The next two chapters focus on the lives of Addison Pratt, Joseph Fielding, and their families. In Chapter Two, Pratt's mission to the South Pacific in the 1840s becomes a way to understand the importance of sexual restraint to white respectability in the Pacific. His willingness to live among indigenous people challenged the assumptions of the London Missionary Society about the role that white women and children would play in missionary work. The white men that the society employed feared that Pratt's presence would lead to dissipation and sexual sin. The decision of Pratt's companion to marry an indigenous woman only confirmed their suspicions. The rumors that began to circulate about the Mormon missionaries—and the rumors that they spread in response—demonstrate the way that sex became a language through which individuals sought to prove their moral rectitude and discredit others. The presence of the French colonial government meant that their attempts to do so would have real effects on who had authority and political power in the islands.

This chapter is deliberately placed next to the chapter on Fielding's mission to Great Britain. This juxtaposition invites comparisons between the two spaces, allowing us to contrast a white, middle-class space with an explicitly colonial one. The chapters are focused on the lives of men, but they raise questions about gender. In what ways did Mormon ideas about masculinity and male desire shape their missionary work and their willingness to live with indigenous people? How did questions about religious faith, domesticity, and sex become intertwined with politics in the South Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century? In what ways were the responses of British men and women to Mormonism shaped by their assumptions about the relationship between race, gender, and a willingness to accept ecstatic religious experience?

The fourth chapter shifts its focus from the mission field to the continental United States and from the lives of men to those of women. When Addison Pratt and Joseph Fielding traveled to the Pacific and Great Britain, they abandoned their families. Pratt left his wife to care for their children and Fielding abandoned his two sisters—women with whom he had lived as a family in Canada. This chapter explores how Mormon women dealt with a faith that deified the family at the same moment that it required men to forsake them in order to spread the gospel. Pratt's wife Louisa eventually decided to follow him to the Pacific. Fielding's sisters Mary and Mercy, on the other hand, developed a deeply affectionate relationship with each other. Although contemporary understandings of marriage demanded that relationships between husbands and wives take priority over those between women, Mary and Mercy continued to rely on each other after their marriages to an extent that troubled their husbands' families.

The effects of Mormon missionary work were not limited to their immediate families. Chapter Five explores how missionary work affected the settlement of Utah. It does so by examining Mormon attempts to create a white, polygamous domesticity in Utah. I argue that

Mormon understandings of the family shifted during this time period. In Nauvoo, the secrecy with which Mormons practiced polygamy undermined the alternative kinship networks that women created to support themselves in their husbands' absences. As Mormons moved across the Great Plains, they began to openly practice polygamy. Its development into a public practice meant that Mormons were suddenly faced with the problem of regulating who could practice polygamy and when. Contrary to accusations that polygamy was just another form of licentiousness, Mormons were deeply invested in developing a form of white polygamy that was just as a 'virtuous' and 'respectable' as monogamy. In this time period, Brigham Young's family became came to symbolize the practice of polygamy. As a result, his ability to correctly practice a white, middle-class form of domesticity became a focal point for debates about polygamy. One of Young's ex-wives and women like Fanny Stenhouse accused him of abusing his children and family members, while several of his daughters defended him as a stalwart man.

It is important, however, not to forget the role that Native Americans played in the creation of Mormon polygamy. In their attempt to domesticate the American West, Mormons emphasized the importance of disciplining native bodies. Mormons frequently incorporated American Indians into their families through plural marriage and the adoption of Indian children. They believed that doing so would allow them to "civilize" American Indians by creating women and children who could serve as missionaries to their family members.

The final chapter of this dissertation uses the lives of Joseph F. Smith and Susa Young Gates as a way to understand the effects of the prosecution of polygamy on individual families. It follows Joseph F. and Susa to the Hawaiian Islands to explore how what most Americans would have seen as an "exotic" space became a place where Mormon families were reconstituted. In many ways, Kaaepa serves as both the beginning and the end of this story. In the late nineteenth

century, Mormon leaders encouraged Native Hawaiians to immigrate to Utah to participate in the building of the Kingdom of God. Fears about the “cleanliness” of Native Hawaiians, however, led Mormon leaders to ask them to leave Salt Lake City and found a separate colony in the Utah desert. In spite of this racism, the colony they founded would become an important part of the identity of Mormon Polynesians. The site of the town serves as a gathering place for Mormon Polynesians every year to celebrate their existence and identity within the church. The town was also an important symbol for nineteenth-century Mormons who saw its existence as proof of the appeal of their faith to indigenous people and the work that God had performed among them. Kaaepa was important not only for the impassioned pleas that she made to the National Council of Women on behalf of the Hawaiian kingdom, but also for the symbol she provided to Mormon leaders of the success of their missionary programs. Descriptions of Kaaepa emphasized her education and refinement. Mormon leaders were all too willing to claim her as a successful Mormon woman even as they persisted in viewing her people as degraded and in need of salvation. As such, she provides a perfect introduction and epilogue to the history of Mormon missionary work in the nineteenth century.

Chapter One

The Nucleus of Heaven: Missionary Work, the Family, and Indigenous People in Early Mormon Theology

Introduction

In 1831, the Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt returned from a mission to the Delaware and Shawnee to discover that “strange spiritual operations” had crept into the community of Saints he had left behind in Kirtland, Ohio.⁵⁰ According to contemporary accounts, some of the men and women who participated in these spiritual excesses acted like Indians, scalping each other before sliding and scooting on the floor, “with the rapidity of a serpent, which the[y] called sailing in a boat to the Lamanites.”⁵¹ In a recent article in the *Journal of Mormon History*, Christopher C. Smith explicitly identifies some of the people who participated in the rituals.⁵² In newspaper accounts from the period, references to American Indians are spectacularized in scenes in which white Mormons climbed stumps and fences to preach to imaginary crowds of American Indians. The newspapers describe individuals participating in a baptism that anticipated the day when thousands Native Americans would be baptized into the faith. After they emerged from the

⁵⁰ Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 9th ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1972), 61.

⁵¹ John Whitmer, *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer* ed. Bruce Westergren (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1995), 57.

⁵² Christopher C. Smith, “Playing Lamanite: Ecstatic Performance of American Indian Roles in Early Mormon Ohio,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41:3 (July 2015): 131.

water, the participants pretended to be Native Americans. One newspaper claimed that it seemed as if “soul and body were completely metamorphosed into the Indian” during these rituals.⁵³

The accusations made against the community were not limited to their assumption of an Indian identity. One newspaper accused the community of baptizing ghosts, creeping on their hands and feet, and encouraging women to roll around on the floor.⁵⁴ These spiritual experiences diverged from those of the Mormon community as a whole, but they were not completely outside of Mormon experience. Instead, they played on Mormonism’s association of Native Americans with a people in the Book of Mormon called the Lamanites. When he learned of the practices, however, Joseph Smith’s response was an empathetic rejection of their legitimacy. He told the community that there were “hypocrites” among them “who had given the adversary power” and included within his statement a warning that those people who had invited Satan into the community “shall be detected and cut off.”⁵⁵

In spite of Smith’s rejection of the practice of “playing Indian,” it represented an important strand within early Mormonism.⁵⁶ For many people, the visions Smith received inaugurated a new dispensation in which people would prophesy in heavenly tongues and experience frequent manifestations of the divine. At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836, one man recorded stories that were circulating in the Mormon community that “angels” had stood at “the four corners of the house of the Lord with drawn swords.” He added that others had seen the roads filled with “the ten tribes returning in chariots as far as the eye could [see].”⁵⁷ Another man reported seeing “cloven tongues” of fire resting on the heads of participants as they

⁵³ “The Mormon Delusion,” *Christian Mirror* 16 (Nov. 24, 1831).

⁵⁴ C.M.S., “Mormonism,” *Painesville Telegraph* 2, 35 (15 February 1831): 1–2.

⁵⁵ Doctrine and Covenants (D & C), 50:6 – 10.

⁵⁶ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁵⁷ Letter, Benjamin Brown to His Wife, 1836, quoted in Steven C. Harper, “Pentecost Continued: A Contemporaneous Account of the Kirtland Temple Dedication,” *BYU Studies* 42:2 (2003): 17.

spoke in tongues and prophesied. It was a second Pentecost. As the man watched, “the glory of God, like a great cloud, [came] down and rest[ed] upon the house.”⁵⁸

In addition to reopening the heavens, Smith’s revelations focused on the role of indigenous people in divine history. Early Mormonism sacralized American history. Smith’s boyhood visions culminated in the discovery of golden plates detailing the history of a group of American Israelites who built an impressive civilization after escaping the destruction of Jerusalem in the seventh century B.C.E. These visions eventually compelled Mormons to send missionaries not only to American Indians but also to indigenous people living in Latin America and the Pacific. For early Mormons, God’s announcement that His church had been restored to earth required individuals to spread the gospel even as it granted them immense power.

Historians of Mormonism who have focused on this period tend to disembody Mormonism, ignoring the ways that it became embedded in the racial and gender politics of nineteenth-century America. This chapter seeks to understand how the development of an early Mormon theology that embraced the miraculous and sacralized American history became focused on a highly racialized and gendered body. When Mormon men and women plunged into a river near Kirtland, they ritually transformed themselves into Native Americans at the same moment that they enacted a future redemption of indigenous people. Although the majority of Mormons did not accept these spiritual practices as legitimate, the emphasis on Native Americans reflected a larger Mormon preoccupation. According to the Book of Mormon, a dramatic gathering of Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other descendants of the peoples of the Book of Mormon would inaugurate the Second Coming. As these men and women

⁵⁸ Oliver Cowdery, “Sketchbook” (1836), quoted in Leonard Arrington, “Oliver Cowdery’s Kirtland, Ohio, ‘Sketch Book,’” *BYU Studies* 12:4 (1972): 426.

gathered in what would become the New Jerusalem, their skin would be lightened as they embraced God and rejected their savagery.

Gender was equally important to the Mormon theology. Early Mormons envisioned an eternity patterned after the households that individuals established in this world. Men and women would continue to procreate and enjoy physical pleasures such as eating and drinking. Their kingdom would expand as the children that they bore attained positions according to their righteousness. The families that individuals established during their mortal lifetimes became the beginnings of the kingdoms they would enjoy in the next life.

The dual emphasis within Mormonism upon the family and Native American conversion created a difficult situation for early Mormons. When individuals converted to Mormonism, they joined a faith that deified the family. Early Mormons envisioned an eternity in which they would progress throughout the ages joined to their spouses until they became perfected and were exalted as gods. Mormon missionary work, however, required that men be willing to temporarily abandon their wives to spread the gospel to “the islands of the sea” and “the nations of the earth.”⁵⁹ In this chapter, I explore the development of early Mormon theology as way of framing the chapters that follow. In the first section, I argue that early Mormons understood the body differently than other new religious movements in the nineteenth century. Unlike the Shakers, Methodists, and many other nineteenth-century Christians, early Mormons embraced the body and argued that humans were not ontologically different from God.

The second section of this chapter explores the effects that the Mormon embodiment of the divine had on their understandings of the family. Joseph Smith’s revelations created an expansive system in which knowledge would be added to knowledge until humanity reached perfection. Although Smith initially accepted the propriety of the nuclear family, he eventually

⁵⁹ These terms were frequently used in early Mormonism and do not come from a specific source.

adopted an understanding of the family that was as expansive as his vision of the eternities. The practice of polygamy allowed Mormon men to multiply the connections that could be formed through marriages between families.

The third section explores the conflict that Mormon missionary work posed to these visions of the family. Although Mormonism saw individual families as the nuclei of later kingdoms, the practical requirements of Mormon missionary work temporarily tore families apart as men left their wives and children to spread the gospel. In the final section of this chapter, I explore how Mormonism was perceived in popular American culture. Mormonism's emphasis on the multiplicity of divine revelation, expansion of the family, and placement of Native Americans at the center of sacred history challenged traditional Christian assumptions about the divine. The Mormon became a figure of derision whose presence in the American landscape threatened to undo the white, middle class domesticity that many Americans believed had allowed them to establish a godly civilization in the American wilderness.

A Multiplicity of Revelations

Early Mormon theology did not arise out of a vacuum. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the spiritual landscape was a raucous, disorderly place. White Baptist itinerants entered slave quarters, evangelizing those they found and defying the hierarchal structure of the South by calling enslaved men and women their “brothers” and “sisters”.⁶⁰ The encroachment of white settlers into Indian territories undid the familial and religious structures of American society, leaving them outside of fatherly and church control.⁶¹ And, finally, members of dissident

⁶⁰ Rhys Isaac, “Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptists’ Challenge to the Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765 – 1775,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 31:3 (July 1974): 361.

⁶¹ Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13 – 48.

religious movements such as the Oneida and Shakers retreated from mainstream society to create small enclaves where they could radically reimagine the family.⁶² Individual religious experiences mirrored the disorder of public religious life in the United States. In camp meetings throughout the nineteenth century, individuals barked like dogs, jerked in bizarre dance movements, laughed out loud, and fell down as though they were dead.⁶³ The physical bodies of white women and slaves mingled with those of white men, and the former were just as likely to feel the power of God shake their limbs and raise their voices in shouts and song as the latter. For many Christians in the nineteenth century, these spiritual practices represented a fundamental disordering of the kingdom of God. The mingling of peoples of different races, genders, and classes collapsed categories that many people saw as essential to social and religious order.

The spiritual disorder of the early nineteenth century formed the context in which early Mormonism emerged. Smith's later descriptions of the visions that he received at age fourteen emphasized the confusion he felt as a child over the multiplicity of churches in the early republic. Writing to his followers, he explained that the conflicting interpretations of Biblical texts he encountered as a child destroyed "all confidence" that he could settle a "question by an appeal to the Bible." He described the religious landscape of his childhood as "cry and tumult."⁶⁴ The young man saw his visions as providing order to the religious landscape. In this section, I explore how early Mormons understood the religion unfolding before them and the tensions that

⁶² Louis Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias – The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*; and Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

⁶³ Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740 – 1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); and John Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶⁴ Joseph Smith, "Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Accessed: November 2, 2014. URL: <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/js-h/1.18?lang=eng>.

developed as individual men and women began to prophesy and claim divine knowledge. Smith's understanding of the divine caused him to re-evaluate the tumultuous bodily practices that had marked earlier spiritual manifestations. Smith came to believe, I argue, that God manifested himself in ways that reinforced order. Prophetic knowledge, far from being inscrutable, became part of reasonable discourse. Individuals gained knowledge by reading the scriptures and asking questions. This understanding of divine knowledge eventually led Smith to distance himself from female and Native American prophets at the same moment that he centered the Kingdom of God around the family and the figure of the American Indian.

Smith's understanding of the divine placed him at odds with many other early American religious groups. For early Methodists and other charismatic Christians, the presence of disorder within manifestations of the divine reflected the radical distance they placed between earthly flesh and God. As Benjamin Park noted in a recent article in *Dialogue*, many medieval and early modern Christians felt that the body was a "burden" to be transcended as individuals became perfected and sanctified.⁶⁵ At the same time, the female body presented a key site through which people experienced the divine. The bodies of medieval women were transformed, exuding sweet smells, swelling to unnatural proportions, and pouring out blood as they were opened to the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶ Following the work of medieval historians, Susan Juster has argued that "it is difficult for modern readers to know whether such visions should be read as physical or as imaginative forays into the mysteries of the unknown."⁶⁷ What is clear, however, is that the experiences of medieval mystics were inseparable from the body in spite of a tendency among medieval Christians to view the body as inherently sinful.

⁶⁵ Benjamin Park, "Salvation through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and Early Mormon Theologies of Embodiment," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43:2 (Summer 2010): 4.

⁶⁶ Susan Juster, "Mystical Pregnancy and Holy Bleeding: Visionary Experience in Early Modern Britain and America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 57:2 (2000): 254.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 254.

The rhetoric of Christian divines in the early modern period echoed this earlier emphasis on the corrupt, fallen nature of the body. They adopted a fundamentally different understanding of the relationship between the body and the divine. In the medieval period, the body was fundamentally transformed in mystical encounters, blurring the boundary between human flesh and God. The early modern period, however, solidified the boundaries between the sacred and the profane. Although individuals still encountered the divine, their bodies were no longer transformed by the experience. Although they were wracked with pain and jerked with the movements of God, their bodies maintained their shape and form.⁶⁸

The result was often painful. As the divine presence, holy, perfect, and entirely Other, filled their bodies, the sinful flesh responded by contorting and jerking to-and-fro. Ann Lee had described her suffering during her religious experiences as “so great” that “my flesh consumed upon my bones.”⁶⁹ Her exertions emphasized the sinfulness of the body and the importance of transcending the degraded flesh in order to lose oneself in something greater and more powerful. Contemporary reports of visions and spiritual gifts echoed the intense agony in which Lee found herself. In 1799, a Connecticut man published an account of his vision of heaven. Before passing through the veil, he was “disturbed with a pain in [his] breast, which darted at times across [his] bowls [sic].”⁷⁰ Eventually, it racked his entire body until he expected to feel the “pangs of death.” As soon as his soul was “freed from the cage which had confined it, all things around [him] wore a delightful complexion.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid, 249 – 288.

⁶⁹ Susan Juster, “Mystical Pregnancy and Holy Bleeding: Visionary Experience in Early Modern Britain and America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 52, No. 2 (April 2000), 259.

⁷⁰ Aaron Warner, *A remarkable dream, or vision, which was experienced on the night of the 20th of May, 1799* (Hartford, CT: John Babcock, 1801), 6, 8.

⁷¹ Ibid, 8.

This understanding of spiritual experience was fundamentally at odds with early Mormon understandings of the relationship between the human and the divine. Unlike their nineteenth-century Christian brethren, early Mormons posited a radical oneness between man and God in which their relationship was one of degree rather than kind or ontological difference.⁷² Individual humans would become perfected and deified. The body was integral to the divine potential of individual men and women. The followers of Joseph Smith looked forward to the resurrection of the righteous. They were told that though “the earthly tabernacle is laid down and dissolved,” individuals would “rise again to dwell in everlasting burnings in immortal glory.”⁷³ Their vision of resurrection was grounded in the physical world. Smith believed that the resurrected body would be composed of the same atoms it had during its mortality. One of Smith’s followers assured his brethren that “the component parts of man” would not be transformed into “the flesh of beasts or fishes than gold can become silver, lead turn to iron, or copper to gold.”⁷⁴ Instead, the pieces of their body would be reassembled as they had been during their lives.

Early Mormons shared this hope for resurrection with their contemporaries but their understandings of the afterlife invested the body with more theological significance than their Christian contemporaries. According to early Mormon theologians like Pratt, pre-existent spirits passed through the veil of the flesh and were born *in order to* gain a tabernacle. In a poem written to his wives and later published in his autobiography, he explained that they had come to earth not because their Father hated them but “to be born of flesh,” “to fashion and perfect” their “earthly house,” “to *live, to love, to suffer and to die.*”⁷⁵ It was only in so doing that they could

⁷² Samuel Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation.” Paper presented at the national conference of the Mormon History Association, Independence, Missouri, May 27 – 30, 2010.

⁷³ This phrase comes from Joseph Smith’s King Follett Sermon, which was originally published as “Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons* Vol. 5, No. 15 (August 15, 1844) 614.

⁷⁴ John Taylor quoted in Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth*, 61.

⁷⁵ Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 351.

“*rise and reign in immortality.*”⁷⁶ Without their earthly bodies, exaltation was impossible. The imagery that the Quaker George Fox used to describe the atonement, in which Christ’s sacrifice allows us to divest ourselves of our sinful bodies and be in covenant with God, made little sense in a worldview in which the body was absolutely necessary for salvation. If the human body were already divine, why would individuals need to divest themselves of it or shriek in pain in order to experience the presence of God or be glorified?

In early Mormon theology, the body reflected God’s divine order. An article published in *Times and Seasons* in June 1842 wrote that the church was “strictly analogous to the human system;” the spiritual gifts with which each member was endowed functioned to create a perfect system – “the one body” of Christ.⁷⁷ The spiritual gifts of charismatic Christian groups, then, were problematic not only because they relied on understandings of the body early Saints had rejected but also because they disrupted the order that early Mormons believed was divine. In spite of their rejection of these spiritual gifts, the Methodist influence on early converts meant that such practices persisted in the Mormon Church in spite of the development of a unique body theology.⁷⁸ The Kirtland gifts were one such example of the persistence of earlier understandings of the body and its relationship to the divine. The disorder they created coexisted and overlapped with newer understandings of the body. Mormon reactions to the disorderliness of spiritual manifestations mirrored those of other Christians in the nineteenth century, but Mormon objections focused less on the confusion that these manifestations caused within society and more on the impossibility of reconciling them with Mormon theology.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 351.

⁷⁷ “Gift of the Holy Spirit,” *Times and Seasons* 3:16 (June 15, 1842) 824.

⁷⁸ Nathan O. Hatch, “Mormon and Methodist: Popular Religion in the Crucible of the Free Market,” *Journal of Mormon History* 20:1 (Spring 1994): 24 -44. See also, Christopher C. Jones, “‘We Latter-Day Saints are Methodists:’ The Influence of Methodism on early Mormon Religiosity,” (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009) and Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1988).

The question, however, was how to respond to these spiritual excesses. Mormon understandings of the divine made this question even more intractable. Many charismatic communities checked the wild spiritual practices of their members with an emphasis on asceticism. Shaker communities, for example, had strict behavioral codes that required individuals to deny themselves pleasure in order to physically weaken the flesh and increase the possibility of spiritual enlightenment. Drawing on the ideas of the Presbyterian minister Sylvester Graham, they encouraged their followers to deny themselves the pleasure of meat and forbade sexual intercourse in an attempt to remove base desires from the mind. Methodists also emphasized the importance of ensuring that individual members lived by the word of God even as they embraced ecstatic movements and asked followers to meet frequently in small bands in which they discussed each other's sins.⁷⁹ Thus, the disorder introduced by violent shaking and enthusiastic dance in these communities was met with the discipline by which they lived.

Mormon understandings of the divine potential of the body, however, precluded asceticism. Pratt's vision of the celestial kingdom was not one of a disembodied, eternal glorification of God but of an earthly paradise replete with fine food and dancing. In *Immortality and the Eternal Life of the Body*, Pratt offered sumptuous descriptions of the Millennium, describing the inheritance of the saints as one in which they would "possess houses, and cities, and villages, and gold and silver, and precious stones, and food, and raiment." They would, he continued, "eat, drink, converse, think, walk, taste, smell and enjoy... all the pure delights of affection, love, and domestic felicity."⁸⁰ The afterlife of the Saints was not an incorporeal paradise in which humans eternally glorified God but one that emphasized the physicality of

⁷⁹ Richard Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995).

⁸⁰ Parley P. Pratt, "Immortality and the Eternal Life of the Body," *An Appeal to the Inhabitants of the State of New York* (Nauvoo, IL: John Taylor, 1844), 30.

Jesus' resurrection and the restoration of the earth's original paradisiacal glory. Earthly pleasures were not denied in the Mormon understandings of the divine order; instead, they were multiplied.

This expansive understanding of the cosmos became the basis for Mormon understandings of the interactions of the human body with the Holy Spirit. In 1842, Joseph Smith published an editorial in the *Times and Seasons* explaining how individuals could judge whether spiritual manifestations were the result of demonic powers or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. After detailing the ease with which false spirits appeared as manifestations of the divine, the article castigated those who would judge spiritual gifts by the "creeds of men" and instead exhorted them to measure the effects and knowledge gained through these experiences against scripture.⁸¹ The Methodists, Presbyterians, and other enthusiasts, the article argued, would often claim to have a manifestation of God—laying down with their "animation... frequently entirely suspended," but when they awoke, they could say nothing more than "Hallelujah."⁸² Because God was a God of revelation and knowledge, the author suggested, this "heterogeneous mass of confusion" could not be a result of His inspiration. The article was equally scornful of Quaker silence. It implicitly disparaged the practice because it did not allow the individual to say anything more about God than he already knew.⁸³ For early Mormons, spiritual experience could not be judged by the emotions that individuals felt or the power they believed they were imbued with. Rather, spiritual experiences and revelations had to be judged in relationship to the knowledge they produced and their relationship to the priesthood.

This understanding of revelation was important because it allowed Smith to position himself against religious enthusiasm. It also disentangled him from the long line of false prophets that represented delusion and idiocy for many in the Atlantic world. Men and women

⁸¹ "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* Vol. III, No. 11 (April 1, 1842), 743.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 744.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

who attacked the fledging religious community had long tried to place it in the company of Joanna Southcott, whose prophesy and public claims to be pregnant with the Messiah ended with a false pregnancy.⁸⁴ Smith spurned this association. The emphasis upon reason positioned Mormons not with these deluded fanatics and madwomen like Southcott and her followers but with the *philosophes* and intellectuals of the Enlightenment. In so doing, Smith drew upon a gendered epistemology in which male reason was placed against the femaleness of the ecstatic body represented by Southcott.

The emphasis upon the expansion of knowledge was important for another reason as well. Smith's understanding of the revelatory process as ongoing allowed him to imagine a world in which kinship systems, religious hierarchies, and economic systems would be remade as individuals who had been empowered by God received new insight into the way that the world should be ordered. As Smith became more confident in his abilities as a prophet, he began to receive revelations urging him to remake the community around him. He encouraged his followers to consecrate their possessions to God and to remake their families in the image of the ancient patriarchs. Eventually, this vision of a remade family became as expansive as Smith's understanding of the cosmos itself. He imagined an eternity in which bonds between brothers and sisters, friends and cousins, and husbands and wives would tie the children of God into a single family. This family would then serve as the vehicle through which individuals would be perfected and become gods. The development of this theology, however, was gradual and unforeseen by the majority of the Mormon community.

⁸⁴ See also J. Spencer Fluhman, "The Joseph Smith Revelations and the Crisis of Early American Spirituality," *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2008), 66 – 89.

The Nucleus of Heaven

The emphasis upon embodiment within Mormon theology led to a radical rethinking of the family within Mormonism. In the nineteenth century, most Christians believed that God transcended materiality and existed in what one scholar has called an “unrestrained bodiless form.”⁸⁵ Early Mormon theology, on the other hand, resisted the claim that God was an immaterial being. Mormons saw humans as being consubstantial with God. In their vision of the eternities, God had only attained his divinity after enduring a probation in which he lived as a mortal man. After his death, he was exalted and eventually attained a state in which he was given his own kingdom. Jesus, God incarnate in traditional Christianity theology, became a separate being from God the Father.⁸⁶ Contained within this vision of the divine was the promise that Mormons would go through the same progression. The early Mormon community imagined an eternity in which individuals would progress throughout the ages, becoming perfected until they eventually became gods themselves. The Mormon imagining of God as a being with human passions eventually led to questions about what sexuality, family structures, and gender would look like in the Heavens. Their answer to these questions eventually led to the practice of polygamy and the Mormons’ expulsion from Missouri.

The idea that God was a material being came from a reading of passages in the Book of Mormon describing the physical body of God. In the Book of Ether, the brother of an Israelite prophet sees the physical body of God as He reaches out His finger to touch several stones. According to the book’s author, the man “saw the finger of the Lord... it was as the finger of a

⁸⁵ Martin Pulido, “The Bodily Image of God in Eighteenth- to Mid-Nineteenth Century Christian Thought,” *Selections from the Religious Education Student Symposium 2007* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 85.

⁸⁶ Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 243 – 271.

man, like unto flesh and blood.”⁸⁷ Although most Christians interpreted references to God’s body as metaphors, Mormons literalized them. References in the Bible to God’s fingers, hands, and touch became evidence of the physicality of God. The revelations Smith received repeatedly emphasized this point. Soon after organizing the Mormon Church, Smith began work on a revised version of the Bible. When he came to the sections of Genesis where God creates human beings, he added the words “of his own body” to the description of God creating humanity.⁸⁸ In the revised version, which Smith eventually published as Moses 6:8 – 9, the passages read: “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body male and female, created he them.”⁸⁹ In Smith’s rewriting of the passages, men and women are not just created in the image of God in their ability to reason and make moral decisions. Their limbs, faces, and bodies are patterned after God’s anatomy.

In many ways, this emphasis on the physicality of God collapsed the distance between humans and the divine. Early Mormons embraced the idea that they would eventually become deified and would rule over worlds in the same manner as their Heavenly Father. The idea had its origins in Smith’s early revelations. As Smith was retranslating the Bible, he received a vision in which he saw multiple heavens, the highest of which was filled with men who were “gods, and even sons of god.”⁹⁰ By the 1840s, he interpreted this vision as meaning that individual humans could be exalted and become gods themselves. In an 1844 funeral sermon, he made these connections explicit. He told those who had assembled that “God himself was once as we are now.” If they could see through the veil they separated heaven and earth, they would see God as

⁸⁷ Ether 3:6, quoted David Paulsen, “Restoration of the Doctrine of Divine Embodiment,” *BYU Studies* 35:4 (1995): 16.

⁸⁸ Paulsen, “Restoration of the Doctrine of Divine Embodiment,” 21.

⁸⁹ Moses 6:8 – 9; *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ D & C 76:58, quoted in Terryl Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 103.

“a man... like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man.” He then told his audience that they would eventually be glorified and would progress as God had done.⁹¹

The idea that God was an exalted human led Mormons to emphasize his passions and physical desires. Terryl Givens has argued that the God of Mormonism is a “passible” God who explicitly feels emotion. He suggests that early Mormons, in contrast to other nineteenth-century Christians, saw the references to God’s emotions in the Bible and Book of Mormon as being literal references to the sorrow and anger that God felt at humanity’s sinfulness.⁹² One of these passages was Moses 7:28-40. Enoch asks God why he weeps over the remnants of humanity. The response is one of heartbreak and remorse. God tells Enoch that these men “are the workmanship of mine own hands...I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency... they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment; wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep.”⁹³ The God that is described in Moses 7 is one that weeps for sinful humanity and wishes for their redemption. He is not a god beyond humanity’s reach, but one that yearns for them. The willingness of early Mormons to accept the idea that God could be influenced by their actions collapsed the radical distance that had marked early Calvinist ideas about the divine.

God’s empathy with humanity was not limited to his emotional state. He also experienced human desires. In the *Key to the Science of Theology*, Parley Pratt described the world that Mormons would experience after they had been exalted in terms that were reminiscent of his earlier work on the immortality of the body. The godly, he wrote, would be “clothed in the finest

⁹¹ “The King Follett Sermon,” *Ensign* (April 1971) Accessed July 3, 2015, URL: <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1971/04/the-king-follett-sermon?lang=eng>

⁹² Terryl Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 74 – 102.

⁹³ Moses 7:28, 32, 39.

robes of linen, pure and white, adorned with precious stones and gold.”⁹⁴ They would “eat, drink, think, converse, associate, assemble, disperse, go, come, possess, improve, love and enjoy.”⁹⁵ His emphasis was on the materiality of the celestial worlds. Along with other early Mormons, Pratt envisioned a heavenly world that was patterned after the earthly one. He believed that individuals would still hunger, talk, and desire after they became gods. Although individual bodies would be transformed and perfected in the resurrection, they would still feel the same desires and passions that they had on earth.

His vision of heaven as earth reborn reflected the desires of early Mormons to continue the relationships that they had begun on earth in the eternities. Douglas Davies and Samuel Brown have argued that early Mormon theology focused on overcoming death.⁹⁶ Several of Smith’s family members died prematurely. When Smith was almost eighteen years old, his brother Alvin took “calomel,” a toxic salt that contained mercury, to cure a bout of severe pain and nausea. He died four days later.⁹⁷ Alvin’s death affected his brother, who was forced to exhume the body with his family after rumors spread throughout the town that grave robbers had desecrated Alvin’s grave. Some historians have suggested that seeing his brother’s corpse increased Smith’s desire to overcome death. Brown describes the likely state of the corpse in graphic detail. According to Brown, a historian and medical doctor, it was unlikely that Alvin’s body had skeletonized. Instead, he claims that the body likely “wore a ghastly mien, with missing eyes and nose but large patches of adipocere—an oily white coating—spread across his face and torso.”⁹⁸ Brown points out that this partially decomposed corpse was not the only

⁹⁴ Letter, Sarah Griffith Richards to Levi Richards, April 28th, 1849, Richards Family Collection, Box 1, Folder 7, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (BYU), Provo, UT.

⁹⁵ Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 59.

⁹⁶ Douglas Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace, and Glory* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000) and Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*.

⁹⁷ Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 55.

“remains” of Alvin that Smith would have to confront. Four years later, Emma gave birth to a stillborn child that they named Alvin. Little was said of the child except that he was “very much deformed.”⁹⁹ Smith’s prophetic abilities were in danger at the time of the child’s birth. Smith had lent the original handwritten copy of the first 116 pages of his translation of the Book of Mormon to one of his followers in spite of repeated revelations warning him not to do so. He regretted his decision. When the child died, he did not know what had happened to the manuscript. He soon learned, however, that the pages had been lost. According to Brown, Smith likely interpreted his son’s death as being the result of his failure to protect these pages.¹⁰⁰ In failing as a prophet, he had failed his son.

Alvin was not the only one of Smith’s children to die. In 1831, Emma gave birth to twins. They only lived for a few hours. Ten years later, Emma, pregnant with another child, nursed her fourteen-month-old son who had contracted malaria. He did not survive. That year, Joseph’s brother Don Carlos, Emma’s sister-in-law Mary Bailey Smith, and two of their nieces and nephews died from the same disease.¹⁰¹ The child that she bore from the pregnancy was stillborn.

The frequency of death in the Smith family highlighted the fragility of the family in the nineteenth century. Although family members formed intense bonds with each other in this period, death always threatened to dissolve familial ties. Brown and Davies see Smith’s vision of the eternities as an attempt to protect the family against dissolution. Although individual men and women still succumbed to premature death, Mormonism promised that families would be rejoined at the resurrection. In a eulogy for a Mormon missionary who had died during his labors, Smith told the man’s kin that he had received a vision in which men took “each other by

⁹⁹ Ibid, 56.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Linda King Newell and Val Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 102.

the hand” as they ascended from the grave. He assured the assembled congregation that the “first joy” individuals would receive during the resurrection was asking, “Where is my father, my mother, [and] my sister?” and discovering that “they are by my side.”¹⁰² According to Smith, families would then embrace before then living together eternally, gaining knowledge and intelligence until they were exalted.¹⁰³

Brown’s argument that Smith’s theology grew partially out of his familiarity with death is convincing. It is important to remember, however, that Mormon theology is not simply an attempt to conquer death. It promises individuals an expansive afterlife. One man described the family that he was obtaining on this life as “a Neculi of Heaven.” Using a molecular analogy, he wrote in his autobiography that Smith had taught that “Dominion & powr [sic] in the great Future would be Comensurate [sic] with the no of ‘Wives Childin [sic] & Friends’ that we inheret here.” He saw his mission on earth as to organize the nucleus of heaven that he would take with him. This small beginning would then serve as the basis for the complex family structure that would emerge through eternal adoption and childbearing.¹⁰⁴

The secrecy that shrouded polygamy in the 1830s makes it difficult to trace the development of early Mormon ideas about marriage. The records that remain from the time period were frequently reticent to fully describe the rituals in which early Mormons participated. This secrecy also meant that few Mormons knew about the practice. Until the 1840s, most Mormons believed that the rumors about sexual immorality within their communities were just that – rumor. These beliefs were partially the result of the decision of Mormon leaders to deny their participation in the practice. When they were accused of taking multiple women as their

¹⁰² Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 92.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1997), 10.

wives, Mormon leaders like Joseph Taylor, Brigham Young, and Parley Pratt decried polygamy as an abomination. Even Smith who was sealed to over thirty women before his death in 1844 publicly denied the existence of plural wives. The result was devastating for Mormon women who agreed to participate in plural marriage. In spite of the connections that Mormon theology created between these women and the men to whom they had been sealed, they were forced to deny their husbands and live as though they were still single. In a community that valued the family and valued kinship relations over all else, they were forced to lie to their communities about their status as married women.

In spite of the secrecy that surrounded polygamy, a rich theology developed about the practice. According to Brown, early Mormons saw polygamy as creating a vast kinship network that would link humanity together in the kingdom of God. Rather than accepting the collapse of kinship into the nuclear family, he argues, early Mormons sought to multiply kinship ties. They saw love as multiplying throughout the eternities.¹⁰⁵ Some women saw polygamy as their salvation. For other women, however, the practice of polygamy represented a fundamental rupture with their previous understanding of the family, God, marriage, and love. The British convert Hannah Tapfield King wrote to her close friend Elijah Larkin that when she heard about polygamy she felt “overpowered stunned as it were!” When her son-in-law tried to comfort her, she “wept like a child.”¹⁰⁶ Although she was married to Mormonism’s prophet, Emma Smith struggled just as much. Throughout the 1840s, she vacillated between accepting the practice and demanding that her husband forsake his other wives. Stories circulated later in the nineteenth century that Emma pushed one of her husband’s wives down the stairs when she saw him kiss

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 228 – 231.

¹⁰⁶ Hannah Tapfield King, “The Journals of Hannah Tapfield King,” pg. 58, *Feminist Mormon Housewives*, Downloaded October 21, 2014, URL: <http://feministmormonhousewivespodcast.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/KING-HANNAH-TAPFIELD-JOURNALS.pdf>.

her, causing her to miscarry.¹⁰⁷ Although it is unlikely that the story occurred as it has been told, it is likely based on some confrontation that occurred within Smith's home.¹⁰⁸

Sensational stories about polygamy have continued to dominate discussions of Mormonism's attempt to reimagine the family in the popular press and to some extent in academic discussions. As Joseph Stuart has pointed out, however, it would be a mistake to reduce Smith's theological innovations surrounding the family to the practice of polygamy. Early Mormon theology saw these familial relationships as creating a hierarchy. According to Stuart, individuals who had expanded their families through plural marriage and adoption saw themselves as patriarchs whose families included their servants and slaves as well as their sons and daughters. By expanding their families, Mormon men created themselves as patriarchs who would be able to rule over kingdoms in the afterlife.¹⁰⁹ As historians like Kathryn Daynes have pointed out, the majority of Mormons never practiced polygamy. The practice, however, became the centerpiece of Mormon theology and distinctiveness.¹¹⁰ By the 1850s, Mormons openly proclaimed the practice from the pulpit, admitting what had previously circulated only as rumor. As the century progressed, they would develop rationales for polygamy that moved beyond its practice in the Old Testament to defending it as a better system for domesticating sexuality that required men to take care of the women with whom they had sex.

Scholars who have examined early Mormon understandings of polygamy have tended to divorce their analysis from the racial politics of the nineteenth century. In Mormon Studies, whiteness is assumed. Early Mormons, however, explicitly imagined the family as "white." In

¹⁰⁷ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 134.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 134 – 137.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph R. Stuart, "Holy Races: Race in the Formation of Mormonism and the Nation of Islam" (Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 2014), 47-52.

¹¹⁰ Kathryn Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840 – 1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

the Book of Mormon, the men and women who chose not to follow God were physically darkened. Although the Book of Mormon was partially the story of their descent into savagery, it also promised that they would be redeemed. In the last days, the descendants of these people would gather together in the frontiers of the United States where they would be reminded of their glorious heritage and would turn once again towards God. In this moment, their skin would be miraculously whitened. Early Mormons believed that the Native American tribes that surrounded them were the people named in the Book of Mormon. Although their missionary work was primarily focused on white men and women, they also sent significant numbers of missionaries to Native American communities. Mormons believed that the family of God could only be reconstituted through the redemption of Native Americans and other racially marked people. In the nineteenth century, Mormons would focus on reuniting God's family through missionary work even as they sought to bind their own together through temple ritual.

Marrying the Daughters of the Lamanites

The Mormon emphasis on converting Native Americans has its origins in the Book of Mormon. The golden plates that Joseph Smith unearthed in upstate New York rewrote sacred history, placing the Americas at the center of God's redemptive narrative. The burial mounds that dotted the American landscape in the nineteenth century became remnants of an ancient Israelite civilization that spanned multiple centuries before its cataclysmic destruction. Early Mormons interpreted archaeological discoveries of ancient temples and literacy as evidence that the Book of Mormon was an accurate rendering of the history of the continent. In 1843, John Taylor, who was then the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, published an article lauding the discovery of ancient ruins in Central America as evidence that the people of the Americas had

enjoyed “civilization, intelligence, and learning” before the arrival of white settlers.¹¹¹ The Book of Mormon created a romantic portrait of the history of the Americas and encouraged white converts to see themselves as reclaiming an Indian past that had been lost. Early Mormon missionaries frequently traveled to Indian communities in New York, Ohio, and Missouri, in hopes of finding a remnant of the peoples described in the Book of Mormon. The dramatic baptisms at Kirtland suggest that some Mormons adopted an Indian identity in their spiritual practices by participating in the Book of Mormon through elaborate reenactments of both Mormon missionary work and Indian massacres.

The Mormon appropriation of an Indian identity, however, was ambiguous. It is possible to read Mormon sources as both rejecting *and* participating in colonial narratives. The literary scholar Jared Hickman, for example, has called the Book of Mormon “an Amerindian apocalypse” and argues that it represents a fundamental deconstruction of American colonial logics. He sees the book as creating a racial cataclysm in which the indigenous people of the Americas reclaim the continent, tearing apart white settlers who refuse to repent like “a young lion among the flocks of sheep.”¹¹² In this reading, the Book of Mormon becomes an anti-imperialist text that undermines the racial logic of Manifest Destiny. Rather than promoting the image of the vanishing Indian, the Book of Mormon creates “an Indian Israel” that arises triumphant and reclaims its status at the center of God’s redemptive narrative.¹¹³

In spite of readings of the Book of Mormon as anti-imperialist, however, early Mormon interactions with indigenous people were not necessarily more benign than those of the general American populace. Early Mormons celebrated Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal policies,

¹¹¹ John Taylor, “Ancient Records,” *Times and Seasons* 4:2 (May 1, 1843): 184.

¹¹² 3 Nephi 20:15 quoted in Jared Hickman, “*The Book of Mormon as an Amerindian Apocalypse*,” *American Literature* 86:3 (September 2014): 451.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

lauding them for helping to bring about “the happy time when Jacob shall go up into the house of Lord, to worship him in spirit and in truth, [and] to live in holiness.”¹¹⁴ For early Mormons, this gathering of Native Americans was the beginning of the New Jerusalem. It was not about indigenous cultural revival. In fact, in one pamphlet, Pratt admonished Native Americans that it was time to “lay down your weapons of war [and] to cease to oppose the Gentiles in the gathering of your various tribes.” He then told his imagined Indian readers that the United States Indian policy had been “foretold by your forefathers, ten thousand moons ago... the hand of your great God is in it.”¹¹⁵ Pratt and Phelps saw Indian Removal and American expansion as divinely ordained. Although the Book of Mormon was a story of Indian redemption, early Mormons believed that it would occur through the forced removal of Indians to the American interior. They were unable—or unwilling—to see the cultural loss, physical suffering, and political instability that Indian communities experienced as a result of Jackson’s policies.

The impetus that compelled Mormon missionaries to seek out Native American tribes also led them to begin Mormon missionary work in the Pacific. At some point, Mormons began to connect Polynesians to the Book of Mormon. They believed that the peoples of Hawai‘i, Tonga, Samoa, what is now French Polynesia, and New Zealand were descended from a small group of American Israelites who had become lost at sea while exploring the coast of California. Since at least the 1840s, they told their converts that they would eventually be called to immigrate to the United States where they would participate in the building of Zion.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ W.W. Phelps, “The Indians,” *Latter-Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* 2:4 (January 1836): 245 – 248.

¹¹⁵ Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning* (Liverpool: 1854), 174, quoted in Stan Thayne, “Indian Removal, Zion, and the Westward Orientation of Early Mormonism,” *Juvenile Instructor* November 23, 2013, URL:

<http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/indian-removal-zion-and-the-westward-orientation-of-early-mormonism/>

Accessed: October 22, 2014.

¹¹⁶ In the story, an explorer with dozens of chickens, dogs, and cattle and boats full of men, women, and children become lost at sea. In Mormon mythology, Polynesians became his descendants, and Polynesian migration myths, evidence of Mormonism’s authenticity. For explorations of Pacific Islanders and the Book of Mormon, see N. Douglas, “The Sons of Lehi and the Sons of Cain: Racial Myths in Mormon Scripture and Their Relevance in the

Ultimately, Mormon missionaries to the Pacific saw themselves as participating in the same redemptive project as men who had been sent to proselytize American Indians.

There is some suggestion that early Mormons may have seen interracial marriage as playing a role within this redemptive narrative. In 1831, an Ohio newspaper claimed Joseph Smith had told Mormon missionaries to make a “matrimonial alliance” with American Indians if possible.¹¹⁷ Although no contemporary Mormon source corroborates this claim, an influential Mormon editor named W.W. Phelps later remembered Smith telling him that Mormon missionaries would take native women as their wives just as Abraham had taken Hagar and Keturah and Jacob, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpha.¹¹⁸ Although Phelps’ remembrances were likely heavily embellished and influenced by later Mormon theology, the convergence of these two sources suggests that there was some idea within early Mormonism that missionaries would marry indigenous women and would do so polygamously. It is possible that they believed that these marriages would civilize the individual women that they married, but the evidence that remains is too scanty to do more than speculate. In the Pacific, Benjamin F. Grouard, an American shipwright who had traveled to the Tuamotus, married an indigenous woman named Tearo after his first wife failed to write him or answer his letters.

White Mormons were ambivalent about the marriages that occurred between white Mormon men and indigenous women. Tearo’s marriage to Grouard was short-lived. She died

Pacific Islands,” *Journal of Religious History* 8:1 (June 1974): 100; Jerry K. Loveland, “Hagoth and the Polynesian Tradition,” *BYU Studies* 17:1 (Autumn 1976): 59 – 60; Robert E. Parsons, “Hagoth and the Polynesians,” *Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 249 – 262; Armand Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2003), 138.

¹¹⁷ “Mormonism – Nos. VIII – IX,” *The Ohio Star* 11:49 (December 8, 1831), reprinted in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled or, A Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition* (Painesville, OH: Printed and Published by the Author, 1834), 200.

¹¹⁸ W.W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT, cited in Todd Compton, “Fanny Alger Smith Custer: Mormonism’s First Plural Wife,” *Journal of Mormon History* 22:1 (Spring 1996), 80. Armand Mauss has written about later visions of intermarriage with American Indians in Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children* 52 – 65, 116 – 127.

soon after giving birth to a daughter, presumably from complications after childbirth.¹¹⁹ When Grouard brought his second wife Nahina to the United States, he discovered that white Mormon women viewed her with suspicion and considered her uncivilized. Eventually, she decided to return to the Pacific. Rather than letting her keep all of her children, he forced her to choose between them. She ultimately chose to take the youngest.¹²⁰ When the oldest of her children saw his mother get into the carriage to go to the ships, he began to scream. Louisa Barnes Pratt described the sound as “deafening,” and the adults were forced to hold him back.¹²¹ Other Mormon missionaries who married indigenous women had similar difficulties, even if they did not ultimately choose to separate their wives from their children.¹²²

Much of the discomfort that white Mormons felt towards these marriages related to wider discourses within American culture about interracial marriage. Although Mormon theology may have encouraged white Mormons to view indigeneity as mutable, this very mutability made them uneasy. The possibility that individuals could lose their racial characteristics meant that it was possible for white men to become “Indian.” Most Americans rejected the Mormon vision of the Second Coming as a time of redemption in which Native Americans would be reintegrated into the people of Israel. They shared Mormon fears, however, about interracial marriage. According to historian Richard Godbeer, men who had sexual relationships with Indian women were “liable to stigmatization as ‘debased’ or ‘defiled.’”¹²³ The discomfort of white Americans with interracial marriage extended to the Pacific. In the nineteenth century, white men who abandoned

¹¹⁹ Ellsworth, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 439, 560

¹²⁰ Edward Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 294.

¹²¹ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt: Being the Autobiography of a Mormon Missionary Widow and Pioneer* Ed. S. George Ellsworth (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1998), 214.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Richard Godbeer, “Eroticizing the Middle Ground: Anglo-Indian Sexual Relations along the Eighteenth-Century Frontier,” *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* ed. Martha Hodes (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 93.

whaling ships to live among indigenous communities were viewed as suspect, if slightly exotic, figures when they returned to the United States. White women, in particular, had a difficult time reintegrating into American society. Their very presence in the Pacific named them as prostitutes and loose women in the eyes of many Americans.¹²⁴

The ambiguity that Mormons felt towards Native American was also the result of failed proselytization. After the passage of the Indian Removal Act, Joseph Smith commissioned four men to travel to meet with the Indian tribes being forced from their homes. In his autobiography, Pratt recreates his meeting with Delaware leaders as a moment of recognition for the Indian community as a whole. He describes approaching “the Great Grandfather, or Sachem of ten nations” who was “seated on a sofa of furs, skins and blankets.” After awhile, his companion Oliver Cowdery told the great leader about the history of the Native Americans. He claimed that “thousands of moons ago, when the red men’s forefathers dwelt in peace and possessed this whole land, the Great Spirit talked with them, and revealed His law and His will.” According to Cowdery, this history had been forgotten. He told the assembled Delaware, however, that it had been recovered in a “Book...written on plates of gold.” After Cowdery finished, the Indian leader placed his hand on his heart and tells the men that their story has made “us glad in here.”¹²⁵ The Mormon missionaries, however, were unable to convince any of the assembled men to submit to baptism. In his autobiography, Pratt blamed his failure on the American government who he claims barred them from proselytizing.

The continued indifference of American Indians to Mormon proselytizing would lead Mormons to become cynical about the possibility that they would be redeemed from what white

¹²⁴ H.E. Maude, “Beachcombers and Castaways,” *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 73:3 (1964): 254 – 293; and Ian C. Campbell, *“Gone Native” in Polynesia: Captivity Narratives and Experiences from the South Pacific* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1998).

¹²⁵ Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 41.

Mormons saw as “savagery.” Many Native Americans also found Mormon beliefs bewildering. The claim that the history of their ancestors had been recorded in a book they could not read alienated many Native American communities. They had their own origin stories that had nourished their communities for generations. Some of the Native Americans who did convert to Mormonism in the nineteenth century likely saw their conversion as a way to ally themselves with the Mormon community. They hoped that doing so would provide them with a measure of protection against the encroachment of white settlers.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, conversion rarely provided native communities with the protection they hoped to gain. White Mormon settlers frequently formed new communities on Native American land, inciting the same kind of violent encounters that marked white encounters with American Indians elsewhere.

These violent encounters only deepened Mormon uncertainties about the role of American Indians within their faith. In the sermons that he delivered in the Utah time period, Brigham Young continued to identify Native Americans as Lamanites. At times, he suggested that Mormons should adopt a different course in their relationships with American Indians than other Americans. In one sermon, he told the congregation that if they had treated the Indian communities that surrounded them with benevolence, “there never would have been a single difficulty.”¹²⁷ At other times, however, he bristled with hostility, lamenting that they were “fallen in every respect, in habits, custom, flesh, spirit, blood, desire.”¹²⁸ In response to news that the U.S. militia had executed several Indian women and children, he praised the decision. He wrote in a message to a Mormon living nearby a solemn warning for Native American peoples: “*Let it*

¹²⁶ Private communication with David Grua, Historian with the Joseph Smith Papers Project, November 12, 2014.

¹²⁷ Brigham Young, “Proper Treatment of the Indians, Etc.,” ed. George D. Watt, J.V. Long, and Others *Journal of Discourses* Vol. 6 (Liverpool: Asa Calkin, 1859), 327.

¹²⁸ Brigham Young, quoted in John Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 213.

be peace with them or extermination.”¹²⁹ The tensions found within Young’s descriptions shaped Mormon interactions with indigenous people throughout the nineteenth century. At the same moment that white Mormons placed American Indians at the center of sacred history, they expropriated Indian land and willingly killed Indian women and children.

The Figure of the Mormon in the Nineteenth Century

The idea that indigenous people were at the center of God’s redemptive narrative compelled early Mormon missionaries to travel to the American West, Latin America, and the Pacific in search of the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon. Early Mormon missionary efforts, however, were not uncontested. Their multiplication of spiritual gifts, insistence upon God’s physicality, and marital innovations challenged nineteenth-century Protestant theology. For American Protestants, Mormon theology undermined God’s transcendence, transforming Him from an exalted figure who had “laid the earth’s foundation” and “shut up the sea” into a degraded figure of flesh and blood who was bound by his passions.¹³⁰ The reactions of American Protestants to Mormonism focused on what they saw as its audacity. For them, Mormonism was a radical affront to traditional conceptions of God. The figure of the Mormon in the nineteenth century, however, was just as much about their marital practices and ideas about indigenous people as they were about their theology. Mormonism was cast as an Oriental religion that accepted sexual practices that were better suited to the streets of Calcutta than the avenues of New York City. The Civil War catapulted discussions about domesticity and marriage to greater prominence, transforming what may have been a small discussion about Mormon marriage patterns into a much larger debate about the nature of

¹²⁹ Brigham Young, quoted in Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet*, 212.

¹³⁰ Job 38:4 – 8.

marriage and its relationship to the recently solidified American nation.¹³¹ Mormonism became part of a national discussion of how marriage and sexuality should be defined.

The literary scholar Terryl Givens locates Mormonism's challenge to traditional Christianity in its willingness to collapse "the sacred and the profane."¹³² According to Givens, the idea that God is "ineffable"—beyond our understanding—is the heart of nineteenth-century Protestant Christianity.¹³³ Mormonism's fundamental heresy is its willingness to demystify God, to change Him into something recognizably human—exalted, changed, and perfected, but human nonetheless.¹³⁴ The pamphlets published by non-Mormons like T.W.P. Taylder published in the nineteenth century lamented this limited God. In *The Mormon's Own Book*, Taylder claimed that the Mormon God could not "satisfy the longings of [the human] soul, or the anxious bursting throbbings of [its] desires." He was "too little, too small, too insignificant!"¹³⁵ Another pamphlet called the Mormon conception of God "monstrous, absurd, and blasphemous in the extreme." It "revived... the old mythological conceptions in reference to the nature, passions and outrages of the now defunct Jupiter."¹³⁶ Unlike nineteenth-century Protestant theology, early Mormon theology saw the eternities as an expansive place in which individuals could eventually take on the characteristics of divinity. Although many early Mormons saw unlimited potential within this vision of the divine, many Protestants reacted to this theological innovation with disgust. For them, Mormon ideas about God limited rather than expanded the divine.

The Mormon emphasis on the active role that God played within history underscored the faith's willingness to collapse the sacred and the profane into a single category. As Givens points

¹³¹ Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 178.

¹³² Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 82.

¹³³ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* quoted in Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 82.

¹³⁴ Givens, *The Viper on the Heart*.

¹³⁵ Taylder, *The Mormon's Own Book*, 89.

¹³⁶ Henry Mayhew and Samuel Mosheim Smucker, *The Religious, Social, and Political History of the Mormons* (New York and Auburn: Miller, Orton, & Mulligan, 1856), 403 – 404.

out, Christian theology rests upon the willingness of God to enter into human history. It is God's assumption of physicality in the figure of Christ that leads to the atonement. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this foundational event had been mythologized by the centuries that passed since its occurrence. According to Givens, Mormonism "re-historicizes" and demythologizes Christianity. Early Mormons saw themselves as reenacting Biblical history. Just as Joseph Smith became a modern reincarnation of the Old Testament prophets, the expulsion of the Mormon community from Missouri became a reenactment of the Israelite exodus from Egypt.¹³⁷ The idea that Mormons were reenacting Biblical history drew ridicule from non-Mormon authors who criticized Smith's audacity in claiming to have found a record of God's dealings with the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Ironically, Puritan leaders had made similar claims centuries earlier in an attempt to reconcile the discovery of the Americas with Biblical history. The Mormon claim that the Book of Mormon was an ancient American record materialized this belief in a way that other Americans found ridiculous. The Book of Mormon was lampooned as a "golden Bible" and Smith was called a latter-day "Mahomet."¹³⁸

Early critics of Mormonism mocked the men and women who accepted Smith's prophetic claims, calling them "deluded fanatics."¹³⁹ In his history of Mormonism, Eber D. Howe claimed that Mormonism was a "more recent, more absurd, and, perhaps more extensive" delusion than "Jemima Wilkinson, the Barkers, Jumpers and Mutterers"—all of whom he saw as folly.¹⁴⁰ Charles Dickens' *Household Words* likewise called Mormonism a "homely, wild, vulgar fanaticism," filled with individuals who saw "visions in the age of railways" and sang "hymns to

¹³⁷ Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 93.

¹³⁸ Paul Gutjahr, "The Golden Bible in the Bible's Golden Age: The Book of Mormon and Antebellum Print Culture," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 12 (December 1998): 275 – 93; Fluhman, *A Peculiar People*, 32 – 36, 191.

¹³⁹ "Modern Instances of Superstition," *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* 1:3 (January 20, 1844): 44.

¹⁴⁰ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, ix.

nigger tunes.”¹⁴¹ Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormonism served as an example of the possible folly of religion. Authors pointed to it as evidence that false prophets, charlatans, and magicians could easily dupe the masses into believing their prophetic claims. Although nineteenth-century Christians believed the miraculous claims contained within the Bible, they distanced themselves from that world. One of the central claims of the Reformation was that the “age of miracles” had ceased. Many American religious leaders began to view claims to the miraculous with suspicion. They saw them not as evidence of the transformative power of the divine but of the gullibility of the masses. The idea that Mormons were credulous helped to define what Mormonism meant in the public imagination for much of the nineteenth century. Early Mormonism was seen as a religion that offered its followers a pagan god who appealed to those whose minds were too gross and untutored to understand nineteenth-century theology.

Although reactions to Mormonism initially focused on its theology, the announcement that Mormonism practiced polygamy fundamentally changed the way that non-Mormons portrayed Mormonism. Rumors circulated about sexual irregularities in the Mormon community coalescing in Missouri and Illinois. In the early 1840s, a British convert named Martha Brotherton publicly accused Brigham Young of proposing to her in spite of the fact that he already had a wife. After her accusations became public, stories about adultery and seduction became an important part of the gossip that circulated throughout Nauvoo.¹⁴² The publication of Brotherton’s accusation in John C. Bennett’s exposé the *History of the Saints* spread the rumors beyond the Mormon community and even the boundaries of the United States. Whalers,

¹⁴¹ “In the Name of the Prophet-Smith,” *Household Worlds* Vol. III (1851), 385.

¹⁴² The account has been the subject of much controversy both at the time and since. John Turner provides a full explanation of the case as does Lawrence Foster and Merina Smith. See Turner, *Pioneer Prophet*, 93 – 96; Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia*, 143 – 145, 149 – 150; and Merina Smith, *Revelation, Resistance, and Mormon Polygamy: The Introduction and Implementation of the Principle, 1830 – 1853* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2013), 84, 94, 109, 113, 141, and 143.

merchants, and sailors carried tales of Mormon infidelities to the South Pacific and Great Britain.¹⁴³ It was not until 1852, however, that the Mormon Church officially announced that it practiced polygamy. On that day, the Mormon apostle Orson Pratt admitted to what had previously circulated among non-Mormons only as rumor and sexual innuendo – the church had adopted polygamy. In his speech, he created a grandiose vision of polygamy in which the multiplication of marital ties would increase the rate at which pre-existent spirits, indeed, the very sons and daughters of God, were born into mortal bodies. The seed of nineteenth-century Mormons would be as Abraham’s, “numberless as the stars.”¹⁴⁴

In spite of the expansive beauty of early descriptions of polygamy, a cacophony of dissent, ridicule, and disbelief greeted Pratt’s announcement outside of Utah. Mark Twain famously remarked that Mormon women were so deformed and hideous that any man who married one had “done an act of Christian charity which entitles him to the kindly applause of mankind, not their harsh censure.” A man who married “sixty” deserved to find the “nations” standing “uncovered in his presence” and worshipping him in silent recognition of an “open-handed deed of generosity so sublime.”¹⁴⁵ Likewise, Artemus Ward wrote that it took Brigham Young “six weeks to kiss his wives” and described the old man’s consternation when upon falling in love with a young girl he was forced to marry her three sisters and her two grandmothers, one who had teeth and the other who did not.¹⁴⁶

Although the jibes that Twain and Ward made against Mormonism were intended to be humorous, the attacks that appeared in novels and newspapers throughout the nineteenth century

¹⁴³ Benjamin F. Grouard’s journal describes arriving in Tahiti and bearing his testimony, only to discover that Bennett’s works on Mormonism had preceded him. See, Benjamin F. Grouard, June 30, 1844, *Journal of Benjamin Grouard, June 1843 – September 1846*, 44. For Bennett’s accusations, see J.C. Bennett *History of the Saints* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842).

¹⁴⁴ Orson Pratt, August 29, 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1 (Liverpool: F.D. and S.W. Richards, 1854), 60.

¹⁴⁵ Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1872), 101.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Richard H. Cracroft, “Distorting Polygamy for Fun and Profit: Artemus Ward and Mark Twain among the Mormons,” *BYU Studies* 14: 2 (Winter 1974), 282 – 283.

were usually more biting. Appearing before the United States Congress, a representative from Nevada called Mormonism an “unbridled indulgence” and blushed that “the barbarous social practices of the Asiatic” could now be found “among a once-proud Anglo-Saxon people.”¹⁴⁷ A pamphlet published in 1884 called it the “seraglio of the Republic,” “the brothel of the nation,” and “hell enthroned.”¹⁴⁸ The descriptions often portrayed Mormonism as “foreign” or “exotic.” J.C. Bennett’s 1842 exposé of Mormonism, for example, referred to polygamy as the “blackest deeds of felony” performed by an “American Mahomet.”¹⁴⁹

In naming Mormons as racially different, such writings sought to reinforce the eroding separation between white and non-white sexualities. Anti-Mormon pamphlets suggested that the men and women who participated in polygamy were somehow already different. Two scientists at the 1861 New Orleans Academy of Sciences found the differences between pink-cheeked women and noble men who participated in proper Christian marriages and those who had forsaken such marriages for the hot, dusty deserts of Utah inscribed upon the bodies of Mormons. It described “the yellow, sunken, cadaverous visage,” “thick, protuberant lips,” and “low forehead” that had resulted from their isolation and licentious practices and marked their sins not only upon their souls but on their limbs and countenances as well.¹⁵⁰ The practice of phrenology in the nineteenth century had long inscribed difference upon the physical body. The skulls and foreheads of prostitutes, madmen, and violent criminals were said to bear their sins, showcasing their depravity in the recesses and depressions of their crania. Such a science could easily lead to racialized thinking. In the nineteenth century, a trade in the skulls of a variety of peoples, including Indian thuggee, supposed cannibals from Australia and Tasmania, and Xhosa

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Fitch, “Fitch on the Cullom Bill, A Speech by Hon. Thomas Fitch, of Nevada, Delivered in the U.S. House of Representatives, February 23, 1870,” *The Latter-Day Saints Millennial Star* 32:14 (April 5, 1870), 210.

¹⁴⁸ William Jarman, *U.S.A., Uncle Sam’s Abscess, or Hell upon Earth* (Exeter, England: H. Leduc, 1884), 169.

¹⁴⁹ Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 151.

¹⁵⁰ Terryl Givens, *The Latter-Day Saint Experience in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), xvi.

warriors, flourished. The circulation of these skulls as examples of an exotic physiology contributed to the increasing ascription of cultural difference to biology and the hardening of racial categories.¹⁵¹

Marking Mormons as physically different allowed writers to explain the conversion of men and women indistinguishable in many ways from their middle class, white brethren to a religion that seemed to embrace carnality. The identification of Mormons as racially or physically other, however, was never entirely stable. Even as non-Mormons sought to inscribe difference on the bodies of Mormon men and women, they were often forced to admit that Mormon men and women were no different from their Christian counterparts. White, middle class readers took pleasure in the descriptions of Mormons as exotic, sensual creatures. In the nineteenth century, exposés of Mormonism sold well. When Ann Eliza Young, the erstwhile nineteenth wife of Brigham Young, published a book accusing her former husband and his desert saints of murdering dissenters, seducing young girls, and sanctioning the slaughter of immigrant wagon trains, the celebrity that resulted catapulted her into a career as a lecturer in Boston, San Francisco, and New York.¹⁵² Images of Mormons as crazed, brutal people filled nineteenth-century novels, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*.¹⁵³

Even as such portrayals sought to underscore the exoticism of Mormons, and in so doing, shore up the differences between white middle class men and women and those they sought to govern, they raised the possibility of racial mixing. William Hepworth Dixon, an English

¹⁵¹ Paul Turnbull, "'Rare work among the professors': The capture of indigenous skulls within phrenological knowledge in early colonial Australia," *Body Trade: Captivity, Cannibalism, and Colonialism*, ed. Barbara Creed and Jeannette Horn (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001): 3 – 23, Kim Wagner, "Confessions of a Skull: Phrenology and Colonial Knowledge in Early Nineteenth-Century India," *History Workshop Journal* 69:1 (Spring 2010): 27 – 51, and Andrew Bank, "Of 'Native Skulls' and 'Noble Caucasians': Phrenology in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22:3 (September 1996): 387 – 403.

¹⁵² Joan Smyth Iversen, *The Anti-Polygamy Controversy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880 – 1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 102.

¹⁵³ Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*.

journalist and founder of the Palestinian Exploration Fund, made the intermingling of different races within the bodies of Mormons explicit in his book *White Conquest*. He claimed that Mormons had imbibed polygamy from the Shoshone and Ute who surrounded them and that Mormons were nothing more than white Indians.¹⁵⁴ For him, the origin of polygamy among the Mormons lay not in the drawn sword of an angel and a threatening God, as the prophet had claimed, but in the Shoshone wigwam.¹⁵⁵ The white bodies that inhabited the American West were susceptible to the contagious sexual practices of the Native American tribes that surrounded them. It was a possibility that the men and women who traveled there on foot and in wagons each year would eventually join the Mormons in becoming white savages.

Works like Hepworth Dixon's provided readers with an illicit thrill. In reading *White Conquest*, middle class readers could imagine the mingling of bodies that were supposed to be kept separate, all the while enjoying their own safety and distance. The naming of Mormons as racially and physically "other" was a complex practice. On one hand, it sought to reinforce the boundaries between white and non-white peoples that were so important to American and European understandings of empire in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, in raising the possibility that savagery lurked beneath the white skin of Mormons, it put into play the very categories against which it tried to guard. The idea that Mormons had somehow betrayed their fundamental whiteness was just as important to their image in the nineteenth century as their

¹⁵⁴ William Hepworth Dixon, *White Conquest*, vol. 2 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876), 179.

¹⁵⁵ The story of an angel appearing to Joseph Smith and threatening him with death if he did not assent to the practice of polygamy was a common one in the nineteenth century. Joseph F. Smith, a future prophet of the Mormon Church and a nephew of Joseph Smith, mentions it in Joseph F. Smith, "Plural Marriage – For the Righteous Only – Obedience Required – Blessings Required," *Journal of Discourses*, 20:29. Lorenzo Snow also signed an affidavit in 1869, testifying that Joseph Smith had told him about the appearance of an angel who threatened him if he refused to practice plural marriage after he had returned from a mission to England. H. Michael Marquardt quotes the affidavit in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816 – 1844* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 599. Likewise, the Mormon Prophet George Q. Cannon mentions this incident in his history of Joseph Smith for young people. See, George Q. Cannon, *A History of Joseph Smith for Young People* (Salt Lake City, UT: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1900), 187.

marital innovations or acceptance of spiritual gifts. Even those people who supported the Mormon community portrayed them as being uncomfortably close to Native Americans and other indigenous people. When Elizabeth Kane, a future female doctor, toured Southern Utah with her husband, she described dozens of Indians living in the town, with “the grave and dignified bearing of the Navajoes contrasting favorably with the slouching walk of the dirty Piatedes.”¹⁵⁶ In her descriptions, Mormon men and women sometimes seem to become Indians. One of Young’s wives, for example, calls herself “Bigham Squaw.”¹⁵⁷

According to Givens, much of the violence that Mormons experienced in Missouri was related to the impropriety of their relationships with indigenous people. He argues in his book *Viper on the Hearth* that white men and women feared that Mormons would join with American Indians to destroy white communities. In 1848, Catherine Lewis claimed that there were “two or three tribes of Indians” who had been ready “to go through, avenge, and destroy the people of Carthage [Illinois]” at the time of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.¹⁵⁸ He also cites a Nebraska woman who claimed that the people who lived around Mormons were “very much scared” that the Mormons would “soon be upon them and slay men, women, and children.” She cited evidence that Mormon women were “marrying in with the Indians” and were attempting to combine the two communities. The woman ended with the claim that there were “a great many women here that are almost scared to death, they are just ready to run.”¹⁵⁹

In the Pacific, fears that Mormons were becoming too close to indigenous people were articulated as fears of their “influence.” White Protestant missionaries and Catholic colonial officials both feared that Mormons would lead native Mormon converts in rebellion against the

¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah’s Dixie, 1872 – 73: Elizabeth Kane’s St. George Journal* Ed. Norman R. Bowen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁵⁷ Kane, *A Gentile Account*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 59.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 59.

authority of white men and women. According to Patrick O'Reilly and Raoul Teissier's biographical encyclopedia of Tahiti, their fears were realized in the 1850s. Native Mormons on Anaa participated in a small rebellion, killing a French gendarme and raising an American flag. Their action can partially be seen as an attempt to reject the authority of the French colonial government and claim protection from the United States. The French government ultimately decided that the presence of white Mormon missionaries was too risky and expelled them from the parts of the Pacific.¹⁶⁰ Although white Mormons never led a rebellion against the United States government, many white men and women in the United States feared that Mormons would foment discontent among Native Americans and threaten the control of the federal government over Indian Territory.

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, fears about Mormonism's racial and social politics led to tensions with the non-Mormon settlers that surrounded them. In *The Mormon People*, Matt Bowman describes Mormon history as a series of expulsions in which Mormons attempted to build a physical Zion only to be forced to relocate by repeated violence.¹⁶¹ Only a few months after he had organized the Church in Fayette, New York, Smith was arrested as a "disorderly person." He was acquitted of the charges, but was immediately re-arrested.¹⁶² The constable who

¹⁶⁰ Patrick O'Reilly and Raoul Teissier, *Tahitiens: Répertoire biographique de la Polynésie Française*, 2nd edition, Ill. J. Bouilaire, Ch. Dessirier, J. Lebedeff, J.L. Saquet (Paris: Publications de la Société des Océanistes, Musée de l'Homme, 1975), 234.

¹⁶¹ Bowman, *The Mormon People*.

¹⁶² Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Magnum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 50 – 51.

held him fed him only bread and water and did little to protect him from the anger of the local community.¹⁶³ After he was released, Smith fled.

The respite from violence did not last long. In 1832, a group of men dragged Smith from his bedroom, tore off his clothing, and then forced a vial of poison against his teeth until it broke. After they tarred and feathered him, they left him for dead.¹⁶⁴ The historian Fawn Brodie suggests that they also called for his castration.¹⁶⁵ The larger Mormon community faced violence as well. On October 27, 1838, the governor of Missouri announced that the Mormons would have to be driven out of the state or exterminated. A few days later, a Missouri militia killed at least seventeen Mormons, including two children who had been hiding under the bellows of a blacksmith. The body of one seventy-eight-year-old Mormon man was hacked apart with a corn knife. Mormons returned the violence in kind.¹⁶⁶ The Mormon apostle Thomas Marsh eventually left the church after watching Mormon men burn several non-Mormon settlements.¹⁶⁷

The escalating violence in Missouri caused Mormons to flee the state for nearby Illinois, which had promised them refuge. Once they arrived, however, similar tensions began to develop. In 1844, Joseph Smith was arrested and taken to a jail in Carthage, Illinois. He was killed on June 27, 1844, when a group of men attacked the jail and shot the men inside. Smith's death led to the final Mormon exodus. Two years after Smith's death, Brigham Young led the majority of the Saints to the deserts of Utah. One of the men who observed the Mormons on their trek to the

¹⁶³ Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 162.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁶⁵ Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1945), 119.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Spencer, "'Was This Really Missouri Civilization?' The Haun's Mill Massacre in Missouri and Mormon History," *The Missouri Mormon Experience* ed. Thomas Spencer (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2010), 100 – 118; Beth Shumway More, *Bones in the Well: The Haun's Mill Massacre, 1838: A Documentary History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

¹⁶⁷ John Hamer, "The Milk & Strippings Story, Thomas B. Marsh, and Brigham Young," *By Common Consent* (blog), July 1, 2009, Accessed: July 3, 2015, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2009/07/01/the-milk-strippings-story-thomas-b-marsh-and-brigham-young/>

Promised Land was touched by hearing a Mormon woman sing a psalm about sitting down and weeping by “the waters of Babylon.” The Mormon historians Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton describe the Mormon experience as a whole as one of exile. Throughout much of their history, they write, Mormons were “unpopular and often harassed.” As they moved from place to place, they tried “to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land.”¹⁶⁸

Much of the scholarship on Mormonism has focused on the difficulties that it faced in Missouri, Ohio, Illinois, and eventually Utah. It is important, however, not to focus too heavily on the violence Mormons experienced. At the same time that Mormons were expelled from various states, they created an expansive theology that encouraged individuals to temporarily forsake their families in order to gain worlds upon worlds. Far from being confined to the borders of the United States, early Mormons traveled to the Pacific Islands, Great Britain, France, Canada, and Chile. In 1851, there were approximately thirty thousand Mormons living in England and Wales.¹⁶⁹ Mormon missionaries believed that they would have the ability to control the seas and destroy any prisons that they tried to contain them. They blessed the sick and cast out demons. Although Joseph Smith ultimately rejected the spiritual excesses of Kirtland, they reflected the general optimism and openness that compelled thousands of people to join the Mormon community in the nineteenth century. Early Mormons who traveled to the Hawaiian Islands and what is now French Polynesia were inspired by the same emphasis upon indigenous people that compelled people in Kirtland to transform themselves into Indians through baptism. The ideas about the mutability of race, embodiment, and the importance of the family found within early Mormonism would shape its missionary work in the Pacific Islands and Great

¹⁶⁸ Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), xiii.

¹⁶⁹ Cynthia Doxey, “The Church in Britain and the 1851 Religious Census,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 4:1 (2003): 107 – 38.

Britain as well as shaping the settlement of Utah. It is impossible to understand Mormon history or its place within the American imaginary without understanding these parts of its theology.

Chapter Two

Unto the Islands of the Sea: Sexual Scandal, Millennialism, and the Politics of Mormon Missionary Work in the Pacific

Introduction

Mormon theology compelled individuals who accepted Smith's prophetic claims to temporarily abandon their families to spread the gospel. Although early Mormons believed that members of the House of Israel had been scattered among various regions of the globe, their interest in the descendants of the peoples of the Book of Mormon meant that much of their early missionary work was focused on American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and other indigenous people. Mormon missionary work, however, was equally focused on redeeming the kin of individual converts. In a letter to his aunt, the Mormon missionary Lorenzo Snow wrote that he "would willingly suffer even martyrdom if thro' that means and that only, the Lord could give unto [my family] a place in the Celestial Kingdom wher I might hereafter enjoy their society."¹⁷⁰ In an attempt to redeem their family members who had not heard the Mormon gospel, Mormon missionaries traveled across the Eastern and Midwestern United States. Their most successful mission field, however, was Great Britain where significant numbers of Mormon converts had family members. The following two chapters focus on the Pacific and Great Britain in an attempt

¹⁷⁰ Letter, Lorenzo Snow to His Aunt, February 6, 1842, Lorenzo Snow Letterbook, pg. 55, Box 1, Folder 1, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

to understand how Mormon missionary work changed as it moved through different imperial spaces. How, in other words, did Mormon missionary work in a white, metropolitan space differ from that in a more traditional missionary field?

In the Pacific, preexisting religious and political tensions shaped the reception of Mormon missionary work. The Mormon mission began at a turbulent time in Tahitian history. In 1821, two influential men named Tehoata and Taataino announced that they no longer wanted to be in fellowship with the Protestant Church in Tahiti. Five years later, a man named Teao began to prophesy that God was going to destroy many of the people of Papeete for their sins. At the same time, he encouraged those who accepted his prophetic claims to reject the teachings of the London Missionary Society (LMS). At one point, he ascended the pulpit during the missionary's absence to warn the people about the destruction that was to come. The Protestant missionaries claimed that his teachings centered on the idea that the Millennium had already begun and that men could commit adultery and drink with impunity.¹⁷¹ Pomare IV was initially sympathetic to these movements. According to the historian Colin Newbury, her companions were mostly young men who "made cider from fermented mangoes, and slept and ate with the royal couple." It was an "open question" at her ascension whether all of the chiefs would accept her position as Tahiti's monarch.¹⁷²

In spite of her initial distance from the LMS, court politics caused Pomare to realign herself with the LMS missionaries in the 1830s.¹⁷³ By the mid-nineteenth century, the Calvinist theology that the LMS preached had become thoroughly entrenched in Tahitian society. Pomare

¹⁷¹ Niel Gunson, "An Account of the *Mamaia* or Visionary Heresy of Tahiti, 1826 – 1841," *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 71:2 (1962): 208 – 243.

¹⁷² Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: Change and Survival in French Polynesia, 1767 – 1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1980), 60.

¹⁷³ Karen Stevenson, "Aimata, Queen Pomare IV: Thwarting Adversity in Early 19th Century Tahiti," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 123:2 (2014): 133.

employed policemen called *mutoi* to enforce compliance with the missionaries' standards of morality.¹⁷⁴ When two French missionaries tried to establish a Catholic presence on the islands, Pomare had them expelled.¹⁷⁵ She used members of the LMS as her advisors and gave them influence over matters of state. In spite of their influence, the LMS missionaries saw their position in the islands as fragile. They feared that the populace would gladly revert to their previous religious faith if given the opportunity. The establishment of a French protectorate in 1842 only confirmed their fears. The French had ostensibly arrived to ensure the safety of its citizens after the earlier expulsion of French priests. In 1843, the French officially deposed the Queen. Her exile shortly thereafter led to the formation of a Tahitian independence movement on the island of Tahiti Nui. The Queen, and some semblance of peace, only returned in 1847.¹⁷⁶ As the LMS watched the unfolding war, they worried that the disorder that resulted would destroy the Christian civilization they had created.

Tahitian politics shaped local responses to Mormon missionary work. In 1843, Joseph Smith called on Addison Pratt, an American whaler who had lived as a beachcomber in the Hawaiian Islands before converting to Mormonism, to travel to the Pacific Islands as a missionary. Pratt would travel with three other men: Noah Rogers, a New York physician; Benjamin F. Grouard, a young man who had run away from his family to work in the New England shipyards; and Knowlton F. Hanks, whose body was wracked with consumption. Grouard had likely converted just two years earlier. The mission was a difficult one: Hanks died at sea, and the outbreak of war between Tahitian loyalists and the French made missionary work almost impossible. Rumors circulated that the native Tahitians would kill every white person on

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 134.

¹⁷⁵ Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 136.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 135 – 142.

the islands if the hostilities continued.¹⁷⁷ Grouard complained that his sermons were “drowned out amidst the roll of the drum & [the] shrill notes of the fife.”¹⁷⁸ Addison was also required to leave his wife and children behind to spread the gospel. He knew that he would likely not hear from them for several months at a time because of the difficulty of communication.

Their departure from Nauvoo also coincided with a period of increased violence against the Mormon community. Just months after they arrived in the Pacific, a group of armed men killed Joseph Smith in a Carthage jail. The missionaries received multiple reports of Smith’s death before they finally believed that he had been killed. On November 26, 1844, for example, a ship arrived in Tahiti with a “vague report of the assasination of Joseph Smith.” There were “no particulars whatever given,” but there was “somthing [sic] in it wich caused [him] much uneasiness.”¹⁷⁹ A few months later, they received more “contradictory & improbable [sic]” paragraphs claiming that Smith was dead. Grouard still couldn’t quite believe the reports but knew that again that “there was somthing [sic] the matter.”¹⁸⁰ They waited anxiously to see whether the news would be confirmed or denied. On February 25, 1845, a ship arrived in Tahiti, carrying newspapers with confirmation of Smith’s death. The men finally believed the reports that Smith was dead. In his journal, Grouard wrote a stern warning to the perpetrators: “You have placed a stain upon your countrys fame that nothing but the ruthless blood of every villain who in any way aided or abeted in the consumeting of that disgrace full deed can wash out.”¹⁸¹ Uncertainty about his family’s fate in the wake of Smith’s death eventually caused Rogers to

¹⁷⁷ These rumors are recorded in the letters that members of the London Missionary Society sent to their directors in London during the war. See, for example, Letter, Alexander Simpson and William Howe to the Directors of the LMS, February 8, 1843, Council for World Missions/London Missionary Society (hereafter, CWM/LMS), South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 23, Folder 4, Jacket C, School for Oriental and African Studies (hereafter, SOAS), London, UK.

¹⁷⁸ Benjamin F. Grouard, “Journal, June 1843 – September 1846,” pg. 37, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

¹⁷⁹ Grouard, “Journal, June 1843 – September 1846,” 55.

¹⁸⁰ Grouard, “Journal, June 1843 – September 1846,” 61.

¹⁸¹ Grouard, “Journal, June 1843 – September 1846,” 65.

leave the mission. He may have feared that the Mormon community would face further violence. Although they had baptized a few people, the mission's future was anything but certain.

Grouard eventually decided to abandon Tahiti Nui for the Tuamotus, a chain of coral atolls that was part of Pomare's kingdom. His decision to shift the mission's geography was a turning point. On the island of Anaa, he served as a spiritual teacher, teaching individuals about the gospels and healing the sick. His emphasis on spiritual gifts and willingness to accept spirit possession resonated with people dissatisfied with the spiritual leadership of the LMS.¹⁸² The Tuamotus were far removed from Tahiti Nui and had been considered too insubstantial by Protestant missionaries to warrant the presence of a full-time, white missionary. His success there, however, worried the LMS who saw his missionary work as reminiscent of the visionary practices of earlier Tahitian prophetic movements. They feared that the adoption of Mormon beliefs would lead to sexual immorality. For them, only proper Christian theology could prevent individuals, and especially indigenous people who had only been exposed to Christianity for a few decades, from descending into sin.

Mormon ideas about missionary domesticity only intensified their concerns. Unlike members of the LMS, early Mormon missionaries believed that the social, spiritual, and physical transformation of indigenous people would only occur after the millennium. The Mormon rejection of the role that domesticity had played in earlier visions of Christian missionary work played into LMS concerns about the potential seductiveness of the Pacific. The belief among Mormon missionaries that their missionary work would be temporary led them to momentarily abandon their families in imitation of the New Testament apostles. Instead of bringing their

¹⁸² Laurie Maffly-Kipp has argued that the success of Mormon missionary work in Tahiti and the South Pacific was partially the result of the consonance between his belief in spiritual healing and native religious practices. See Maffly-Kipp, "Assembling Bodies and Souls: Missionary Practices on the Pacific Frontier," *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630 – 1965* ed. Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Leigh E. Schmidt, and Mark Valeri (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 68 – 69.

families with them in an attempt to recreate the white domesticity they had enjoyed at home, early Mormon missionaries lived in the homes of indigenous men and women.

The daily intimacy that resulted worried members of the LMS who saw the Mormon willingness to live among indigenous communities as reminiscent of their own earlier decisions, which they believed had led to sexual immorality and apostasy. Although LMS missionaries had initially embraced marriages between white men and indigenous women as a means of spreading the Christian gospel, early sexual indiscretions among the white men they initially sent to the Pacific convinced them that the only way to contain male sexual desire was through the presence of white women. Grouard's decision to marry an indigenous woman only solidified the society's concerns. It was ultimately the intimacy between white Mormon men and their indigenous converts, not Mormon polygamy, that worried members of the LMS. Although Joseph Smith had already started practicing polygamy by the early 1840s, it was a secret that remained hidden from both the outside world and much of the Mormon community. For Grouard and Pratt, Mormonism was probably a monogamous faith. Their diaries and letters suggest they believed that the rumors that circulated about sexual irregularities within Mormon community were unfounded lies. They also did not teach Pacific Islanders about polygamy and indeed opposed the practice.¹⁸³

This chapter explores how the Mormon willingness to live in indigenous communities affected the way they were perceived among white men in the Pacific. The American identity of Mormon missionaries initially accorded them a position of power within the French colonial government. Unwilling to impose Catholic missionaries on Tahiti out of a fear that they would be seen as a theocracy, the French colonial government saw Mormons as a welcome alternative to the British LMS. The imperial competition between France and Britain over the Pacific

¹⁸³ *Dear Ellen: Two Mormon Women and their Letters* Ed. S. George Ellsworth (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1974), 12.

manifested itself in debates over who would control New Zealand, Tahiti, and Vanuatu. As Mormons and members of the LMS began to vie for influence within the French colonial government, sex became a space through which each laid claim to moral authority.

In many ways, the themes that animate this chapter are those that have animated much of the work on the Christian missionary project. The vast majority of this work, however, has focused on Protestant missionaries, infusing its studies of the family and sex with assumptions based on Protestant theology, culture, and morality. Focusing on Mormon missionary work unsettles some of the assumptions that scholars have made about the role of domesticity, sexuality, and marriage in the Pacific. Unlike Protestant missionaries, Mormon missionaries temporarily abandoned their wives and children to spread the gospel. Their decision to do so placed them at the margins of white society and undermined their status as white, middle class men. It also raised questions about their religious piety and authority as missionaries. As I point out in the last section of the chapter, accusations of sexual immorality became part of the language of power in the Pacific. Spreading rumors about the sexual exploits of white men discredited their standing among white and indigenous communities.

“Voluptuous Attractions:” Early LMS Experiences in the Pacific

The concerns of the London Missionary Society grew out of the sexual scandals that had accompanied its early missionary efforts in the Pacific. When the society’s first group of missionaries arrived on the island of Tahiti Nui in 1797, its directors imagined that some of the single, white missionaries would marry indigenous women, creating a mixed raced society that

would serve as the beginnings of Christianity in the Pacific.¹⁸⁴ They emphasized that white men who married indigenous women would not separate themselves from the community as a whole. Instead, they were instructed to “build a little house near their brethren.” Their wives far from being separated from the other missionaries’ wives would associate “with our believing women.” They would “live in daily communion and worship under the same roof.”¹⁸⁵

In this vision of missionary work, Christian conversion and marriage to white missionaries would create new domesticated roles, and new domestic spaces within which indigenous women would learn proper skills of the home and motherhood and eventually become “civilized.” This vision was part of a larger emphasis within the early LMS on the promise of interracial Christianity. According to Elizabeth Elbourne, the society initially had a similar dream for its missionary in the Cape of Africa – black and white church leaders would minister to an interracial congregation.¹⁸⁶ The LMS expected its missionaries to enact the scenes found within the New Testament in which individuals mingled together in Christian society regardless of their skin color or class position.

It is important to remember, however, that the marriages the LMS condoned were implicitly gendered. Assumptions about the nature of familial relationships meant that the directors of the LMS assumed that indigenous women would adopt the customs and religious beliefs of their husbands, not vice versa. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, men were to

¹⁸⁴ Emily Manktelow, “Missionary Families and the Formation of the Missionary Enterprise: The London Missionary Society and the Family, 1795 – 1875” (Ph.D. Dissertation, King’s College, 2010), 34 – 76 and Nicolas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 37 – 40.

¹⁸⁵ Directors of the London Missionary Society. “Counsels and instructions for the Regulation of the Mission,” quoted in Robert Lansdown, *Strangers in the South Seas: The Idea of the Pacific in Western Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 128.

¹⁸⁶ Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799 – 1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 344.

serve as the public faces and heads of their families.¹⁸⁷ As a result, it was assumed that women would accept their husbands' leadership and, as a result, their faith. These beliefs meant that it was difficult for members of the LMS to imagine a world in which white women would marry native Tahitians. According to Rosemary Seton, the longtime archivist and historian of the London Missionary Society, the LMS only sent one unmarried woman to serve as a missionary before 1864—Maria Newell, who worked as a teacher in Malacca.¹⁸⁸

The idealized world that the LMS imagined was one in which mixed raced marriages would transform society first on Tahiti Nui and eventually the rest of the Pacific. The LMS hoped that the children that resulted from these marriages would be proficient in indigenous languages and well equipped to proselytize Pacific Islanders. After these children had converted their mothers' family, the LMS hoped they would travel to other islands, converting the men and women they found there and spreading the Christian faith throughout the region. The society, however, soon found itself embroiled in sexual scandal. The single missionaries that the LMS initially sent to the Pacific were notoriously indiscrete. Francis Oakes and John Cock slept with prostitutes while in New South Wales. They were also among the men who had sexual relationships with Polynesian women.¹⁸⁹ Similar indiscretions occurred in the Cape Colony.¹⁹⁰

Perhaps the most famous indiscretions, however, happened in Tonga. George Vason had been among the earliest missionaries that the LMS sent to the South Pacific. Before his

¹⁸⁷ See Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825 – 1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* No. 25/26 (1990): 56 – 80; Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993): 383 – 414; Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780 – 1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹⁸⁸ Rosemary Seton, "'Open Doors for Female Labourers': Women Candidates of the London Missionary Society, 1875 – 1914," *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* ed. Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), 51.

¹⁸⁹ Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 142.

¹⁹⁰ Elbourne, *Blood Ground*, 217 – 223, 231, 314.

conversion to evangelicalism, he had worked as a bricklayer. While living in Tonga, he renounced Christianity and lived under the patronage of the influential chief Mulikiha‘amea.¹⁹¹ His public apostasy made him a symbol of the Pacific’s imagined seductiveness. In his writings, he describes taking off his European clothing and donning native dress before he succumbed to the “voluptuous attractions” of the islands.¹⁹² His marriage to a Tongan woman marked the climax of his apostasy. He wrote that the idea of marrying such a woman—a “heathen” who would be “destitute of every mental, as well as religious endowment”—had initially disgusted him.¹⁹³ He decided, however, to discard his inhibitions and marry her.

It is difficult to reconstruct his reason for doing so. Although his writing provides important insight into his experiences, it also serves as an apology for his decision to abandon white society and live among the indigenous people of Tonga. In the nineteenth century, Vason came to represent the worst outrages of the early LMS missionaries and the possibility that white men who traveled to the Pacific would lose their connections to white society and would be debased to the level of Polynesian men and women. The physical transformations that occurred to Vason seemed to represent how fragile racial identity could be. Vason had tattooed his skin, permanently marking his body. His adoption of Tongan culture suggested that whiteness could ultimately be undone by an individual’s decision to shed their clothing or to marry multiple women. The habits of “civilization” were not so robust that they could not be discarded.

Ultimately, the LMS worried that white missionaries were degrading themselves rather than elevating indigenous women. The society feared that male sexuality was ungovernable. The

¹⁹¹ See Ian C. Campbell, “*Gone Native*” in *Polynesia*, 47 – 51; George Vason, *An Authentic Narrative of Four-Years Residence at Tongataboo* ed. S. Piggot (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1810).

¹⁹² Vason, *An Authentic Narrative of Four-Years Residence at Tongataboo*, 110. Michelle Elleray has explored the importance of clothing in Vason’s narrative, which comes to represent civilization and respectability in his narrative. See Michelle Elleray, “Crossing the Beach: A Victorian Tale Adrift in the Pacific,” *Victorian Studies* 47:2 (2005): 164 – 173.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 111.

white missionary wife, once spurned as an unnecessary expense, seemed to offer an ideal solution.¹⁹⁴ Her body provided an appropriate outlet for white, male sexual desire and would bind men to the domestic sphere through the children that it bore. Through this process, white women's bodies became a way of disciplining the sexuality of white men. As a result, the body became a site of cultural work. The ways that individuals dressed, the people with whom they had sex, and their willingness to tattoo their bodies became markers of their adherence to cultural norms of sexuality. The presence of white women and children was to prevent the sexual indiscretions that had initially plagued the LMS by protecting white men from the Pacific's seductiveness. In 1811, the directors of the London Missionary Society underscored their rejection of their earlier missionary policy through a letter informing its members that "none but married" missionaries should be sent from now on.¹⁹⁵ In the Pacific, then, questions of sexuality, domesticity, and the family became intertwined, as marriage became a way of maintaining the racial identity of white men.

Sexual sin continued to plague the society even after the establishment of the figure of the white missionary wife. Stories about the escapades of the children of the LMS circulated throughout the nineteenth-century Pacific. Missionary daughters were found to have had dalliances with indigenous men, and their brothers sometimes ran away to be circumcised in the native fashion.¹⁹⁶ Alexander Simpson, the schoolmaster assigned to teach the white missionary children, was accused of "improper" conduct with his female students. One girl accused him of climbing into a female student's bed and drawing her back before beginning to "pull her about

¹⁹⁴ See Manktelow, "Missionary Families and the Formation of the Missionary Enterprise;" Laurie Maffly-Kipp, *Religion and Society in Frontier California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 148 – 180.

¹⁹⁵ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 142.

¹⁹⁶ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, 159 – 160; Letter, J.M. Orsmond to the Directors of the LMS, January 1, 1829, CWM/LMS/South Seas/Incoming Correspondence/Box 7, Folder 1, JACKET A.

and... feel her bosom.” He then “attempted to violate her person.”¹⁹⁷ The debate that ensued focused as much on the girls’ reputations as on the schoolmaster’s. Members of the LMS saw it as an example of their inability to control male sexuality.

It is important to view these events with some suspicion. Historians of the Pacific have often played upon the salaciousness nature of the accusations made against the missionary families. Although the missionary’s daughters were sometimes found with native men in or under their beds, the testimony of Alexander Simpson’s wife Sarah suggests that these instances should be read with caution. Sarah writes that she honestly believed at the time that the girls had been terrified when the men were discovered under their beds.¹⁹⁸ Although some of the girls likely consented to the activities that occurred in their bedrooms, we should also entertain the possibility that the reality may be more complex in other cases. Labeling the instances in which missionary daughters were found with native men “sexual assaults” plays into the longstanding trope that non-white men are unable to control their sexual desires and dismisses the idea that white girls could have found native men attractive. Rejecting the stories as mere fabrications, however, is equally problematic. It threatens to deny the girls’ own stories, the fear that was recorded at the time, and the equally longstanding history of ignoring the claims of rape victims.

It is also important to note that several of the missionaries’ sons were accused of immorality as well. Samuel Crook and Charles Wilson were accused of escaping the South Seas Academy grounds to receive a native circumcision, and a few others were expelled for sexual misconduct. Like those of the missionary daughters, these sins are not necessarily as titillating as

¹⁹⁷ For the correspondence concerning Mr. Simpson’s case, see Boxes 16 – 18A, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, SOAS, London, UK. Manktelow has also written an article about the case. See, Emily Manktelow, “Rev. Simpson’s Improper Liberties: Moral Scrutiny and Missionary Children in the South Seas Mission,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40:2 (June 2012): 159 – 181. For these particular quotes, see C. Wilson, Testimony, March 21, 1843 and Elizabeth Darling, Testimony, June 20, 1843.

¹⁹⁸ Letter, Sarah Simpson to William Howe, July 23, 1843, CWM/LMS/South Seas – Incoming Correspondence, Box 16, Folder 3, Jacket A

they may seem at first. Although they scandalized people at the time, they can also be interpreted as the children of the missionaries partially rejecting the morality of their parents. Premarital sex, tattooing, and circumcision did not have the same meaning within Tahitian society. If we were all judged by the standards of nineteenth-century Congregationalists, most of us would come short of being labeled exemplars of morality.

The rumors that spread about sexual immorality within the mission worried the LMS missionaries. David Darling, for example, threatened to resign if something was not done. He feared that his children would become “ignorant, debauched, [and] ruined” – his sons would be forced to become “sailors” and his daughters “a disgrace to their sex” if he did not leave.¹⁹⁹ He was not alone in his fear. Descriptions of the children in missionary correspondence emphasized their affinity with indigenous people. One letter advised the directors of the LMS not to be too harsh with a missionary’s daughter because “she had been brought up from her Infancy with the natives—They were the same to her as her own people.”²⁰⁰ The letter uses her position within Tahitian society to explain her sexual liaison. It portrays her as having white skin but being culturally indigenous. The fluidity of her racial identity is used to explain her sexual misbehavior and her inability to accept white standards of domesticity.

This emphasis upon the unstable racial identity of white missionary children can also be seen in the responses of LMS missionaries to the accusations that one of their colleagues had molested their daughters. Despite the fact that only white individuals were involved in the scandal, the sexual transgression was seen as the result of the proximity of white missionaries to indigenous bodies. After hearing of the sexual scandals concerning the white missionary children

¹⁹⁹ Letter, David Darling to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, September 29, 1818, quoted in William H. Tagupa, “Missionary Lamentations: Early Educational Strategies in Tahiti, 1800 – 1840,” *Journal de la Société des océanistes* 36:68 (1980): 168.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Niel Gunson, “The Deviations of a Missionary Family: The Henrys of Tahiti,” *Pacific Island Portraits* Ed. J.W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 36.

in Tahiti, many of the American Protestant missionaries living in the Hawaiian Islands decided to send their children to the United States to be educated.²⁰¹ The LMS missionaries tried to separate their own children from indigenous society, creating a separate school where they could be closely monitored and prevented from interacting with native children. The LMS saw its children as being in need of grace. Its members worried that too much contact with indigenous people would play upon their children's sinful natures, leading them away from salvation and towards a life of sin.

Beachcombers, the French, and Other Profligates

In spite of their influence in the Pacific, the LMS was afraid that the Christianity it had established was fragile and could be undone at any moment.²⁰² In the 1840s, it seemed as though their fears might be realized. The French extension of a protectorate over Tahiti Nui and several other islands in 1842 led to acts of routine violence. The French cut down fruit trees, burned houses, and killed wounded Tahitian soldiers. In spite of these acts, the French sought to portray themselves as a benevolent force in the islands. Although Polynesia was an important source of sandalwood and whale oil, the distant governments of France and Britain worried about the consequences of being drawn into extended conflicts in the region.

The naval officers who engaged in skirmishes in the Pacific tried to justify their actions as necessary to protect the liberty of white men and indigenous communities. Instead of directly imposing French rule, French Admiral Du Petit-Thouars pressured the Queen into signing a document asking France to protect her from white men who wanted to seize the islands. The

²⁰¹ Letter, Mercy Whitney to Mrs. Ely, Nov. 24, 1832, cited in Mary Zwiep, "Sending the Children Home: A Dilemma for Early Missionaries," *The Hawaiian Journal of History* Vol. 24 (1990), 46 – 47.

²⁰² Patricia Grimshaw has traced how this decision on the part of the LMS affected Protestant missionary work in Hawai'i. See Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

necessities of “imperial benevolence” required the French to tread carefully in the area of governance; they particularly feared the potential fallout of deposing the British Protestant missionaries.²⁰³ Doing so might extend sympathy for the Pacific Islanders in Britain beyond the evangelical communities whose financial support of the Congregationalist missionaries had encouraged their interest in the islands. French control of the primarily Protestant islands was often complicated. As J.P. Daughton has pointed out, the French colonial government did not “officially endorse its own Catholic missionaries.”²⁰⁴

The chaos that accompanied the establishment of a French protectorate made it difficult for members of the LMS to maintain their congregations. Unwilling to surrender their nation’s independence, thousands of Tahitians had built trenches and retreated into the mountainous interior, engaging in periodic warfare with the French forces.²⁰⁵ Fearing for their safety, several LMS missionaries fled the islands, returning to England to plead the case of Tahiti to Parliament. Others remained, hoping their presence would provide a conciliatory effect and protect indigenous communities from French massacre. Rumors also circulated in the islands about the possibility of a general uprising against the white populace if the hostilities were not stilled. When Pomare reluctantly signed a paper asking for French protection, effectively forfeiting her sovereignty and the independence of her country, it was claimed that she had done so to prevent her subjects from falling “upon the white population of all countries,” and “murder[ing]” them.²⁰⁶ Although the French were unwilling to depose the British missionaries, the LMS worried that the French presence signaled the end of their power in the islands. French colonial

²⁰³ The term “imperial benevolence” is born from Jane Samson’s work. See, Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making British Authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998).

²⁰⁴ J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Catholicism, 1880 – 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 126.

²⁰⁵ Letter, Ebenezer Buchanan to the Directors of the LMS, April 22, 1844, CWM/LMS/South Seas/Incoming Correspondence, Box 17, Folder 1, Jacket D, SOAS, London, UK.

²⁰⁶ Letter, Alexander Simpson and William Howe to the Directors of the LMS, February 18, 1843, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16, Folder 1, Jacket A, SOAS, London, UK.

officials rejected the LMS vision of morality, reintroducing alcohol to the islands and reviving indigenous forms of dancing. Although the former was theoretically for the consumption of white residents, it frequently found its way into indigenous hands.

They were not the first threat to the authority of the LMS. By the early nineteenth century, racially mixed communities had formed on the beaches of Tahiti that boasted grog shops, billiards, and prostitutes. Comprised of beachcombers, indigenous laborers, and merchants of various types, these communities challenged both traditional social structures and the moral claims of the LMS. Pomare's decision to place her authority behind the LMS in the 1830s was partially an attempt to control the circulation of the bodies of indigenous women. According to Karen Stevenson, these communities had high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, public drunkenness, and disorderly conduct. Although Pomare policed public standards of morality using the *mutoi*, the beach remained a place where ideas about sexuality and the family were constantly in flux.²⁰⁷ White merchants, beachcombers, and sailors resented the power of the LMS and critiqued their understandings of morality. They flaunted expectations concerning the separation of white and indigenous bodies by engaging in short- and long-term relationships with indigenous women. These relationships sometimes resulted in what LMS missionaries would recognize as marriage but frequently did not. The existence of white communities in the Pacific who offered an alternative vision of colonial sexuality heightened the LMS sense of embattlement.

White beachcombers were not the only ones to challenge the LMS vision of Christianity. Although Queen Pomare's decision to ally herself with the LMS in the 1830s solidified their power, the extension of Christianity over the islands was never complete. Even after Queen Pomare began to enforce Christian morality with fines and state power in the form of the *mutoi*,

²⁰⁷ Stevenson, "Aimata, Queen Pomare IV," 134.

individuals opposed the extension of Christian ideas about the family and the insistence that they abandon their former religious practices. The *Mamaia* movement of which Teao had been a part appealed to young men and women who found their political influence curbed by Pomare's alliance with the LMS missionaries. These individuals also saw their opposition to Queen Pomare as religious. The LMS missionaries had eliminated important aspects of Tahitian religious life, including faith healing, spirit possession, erotic dancing, and prophetic announcements with the support of Queen Pomare. When the *Mamaia* movement emerged in the 1820s, it sought to revive these elements. Claiming that God had dispensed with the idea of sin, they revived elements of Tahitian religious life that the LMS had pronounced an anathema. In other words, they remade Christianity, rejecting the Protestant civilizing mission and accepting the elements of the gospel that resonated with their own experiences.

The constant challenges to LMS authority meant that the establishment of particular forms of domesticity became a political as well as social question. Both the French colonial government and the LMS saw themselves as having a salutary effect on the lives of indigenous Tahitians. Beachcombers, on the other hand, critiqued the pretensions of white men who claimed to provide indigenous people with a moral example while sleeping with indigenous women and building themselves opulent houses. The language that white missionaries used to defend their right to intervene in indigenous communities meant that questions about domesticity, sexuality, and the nature of the family were already in play when Mormon missionaries arrived in the Pacific. Their presence, however, intensified concerns about sexual immorality.

Mormon missionaries rejected the emphasis that white Protestant missionaries had placed on the separation between white and indigenous bodies, placing themselves with the inhabitants of the beach rather than with the white missionaries of the LMS. Their willingness to live in

indigenous communities was based on their understanding of the relationship between the millennium and missionary work. Although the Book of Mormon included scenes in which indigenous people would be physically transformed into Israelites, the idea that these transformations would take place only after indigenous people had moved to a physical Zion affected the tenor of Mormon missionary work. Mormons were less interested in establishing long-term missions that would provide a model of white domesticity for converts than other Christian missionaries. They were more willing to live in indigenous homes and to accept the possibility of intermarriage. The experiences of the LMS with sexual indiscretion meant that they interpreted the decision of white, male Mormon missionaries to live in the homes of indigenous people as an act of sexual libertinism. For members of the LMS, the presence of white Mormon male missionaries threatened to undo the fragile Christian society that they had created in the Pacific Islands. Mormon missionaries, however, saw themselves as calling forth the children of God and initiating the events that would eventually lead to the Second Coming. For them, Christian missionary work would be temporary. They expected the spiritual and physical transformation of indigenous people to occur after the millennium.

The arrival of Mormon missionaries in the Pacific rekindled LMS concerns about miscegenation and sexual sin. The debates that occurred between the two groups focused on the proximity of Mormon men to indigenous people. The LMS feared that Mormon missionaries, in disregarding the standards that the LMS had created to govern its agents, would repeat the mistakes that had marked its early history. Mormons, however, had their own understandings of interracial marriage and missionary work that were shaped by fundamentally American context. In the next section, I consider how Mormon ideas about indigenous people, the millennium, and sexuality affected the missionary work that Addison and Grouard undertook in the Pacific. The

ideas that Mormons brought with them to the Pacific are just as important to understanding the interplay between domesticity, sexuality, and religious piety in the Pacific as the experiences of the LMS.

Teaching the “Daughters of the Lamanites”

The ideas that Grouard and Pratt had about domesticity were born out of their dual identity as Mormons and as seamen. As a result, understanding their interactions with the LMS requires understanding how Mormon theology and their experiences in maritime communities shaped their own understanding of the family and sex. Mormon ideas about the role that domesticity should play in missionary work were grounded in their beliefs about the role that indigenous people would play in the millennium.

Early Mormons associated the radical transformations they believed would occur in the lives of indigenous people with the millennium. In their vision of the millennium, Native Americans would remember their divine heritage as part of the unfolding of the end of days and would gather together with the white men and women who had accepted the gospel to help build a physical Zion. It is important to note Mormons did not believe that indigenous people would be unchanged as a result of their acceptance of the gospel. Indeed, the blessings that Mormon men and women received often included references to their role as white men and women in this undertaking. John Lytle’s patriarchal blessing, for example, told him that he would have “the gift of tongues” so that he could speak “to the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent, the wonderful works of God in their own tongue by the power of the Holy Ghost.”²⁰⁸ One woman was likewise

²⁰⁸ Patriarchal Blessing of John Lytle, estimated date May 1836, cited in Marquardt, H. Michael Marquardt, *Patriarchal Blessings by Joseph Smith Jr.*, 86 Accessed: June 29, 2015. <http://user.xmission.com/~research/family/blessingsbyjssr.pdf>

promised that she would “be called to instruct many of the women amongst the Lamanites in the principles of this world.” Her name, she was told, was “written in the lamb[’]s book of life.”²⁰⁹

Although Mormons did not completely discard the idea that it was their duty to instruct indigenous people in the habits of industry, they believed that these dramatic events would occur as part of the unfolding of the millennium. American Indians would be transformed spiritually, politically, and socially after they gathered to the Mormon community forming on the banks of the Mississippi. There, they would help build the physical Kingdom of God and would learn about the heritage of their people. The patriarchal blessings Mormons received attached the instruction of indigenous people to the millennium, giving it an almost fantastic quality. One woman’s blessing told her that she would “teach the daughters of the Lamanites” how to speak English just a few sentences before telling her she would “be instrumental in peopling the new earth” and would “stand when Jesus Christ shall come in clouds of heaven.”²¹⁰ Another woman was told that the Spirit had testified that she would “instruct the Lamanites in needle work.”²¹¹

The emphasis within Mormonism on the nearness of the millennium meant that early Mormons initially expected these events—no matter how fantastic they seemed—to occur within their lifetimes. The timing of these events, however, was hazy. Mormon attempts to teach indigenous people were sporadic. As a result, the blessings that early Mormons received had a sense that the transformation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Pacific from a barbaric to a civilized people would occur at a future, unspecified date—perhaps after the millennium. Mormon missionaries proselytized indigenous people throughout the Pacific and the

²⁰⁹ Patriarchal Blessing of Louisa Rappleye, estimated date May 1836, cited in Marquardt, “Patriarchal Blessings by Joseph Smith, Sr.,” 89.

²¹⁰ Patriarchal blessing of Lucia Louisa Leavitt, June 20, 1836, in Marquardt, “Patriarchal Blessings by Joseph Smith, Sr.,” 100.

²¹¹ Patriarchal blessing of Martha Jane Knowlton, January 21, 1840, in “Patriarchal Blessings by Joseph Smith, Sr.,” 205.

United States—their message, however, was one of gathering. Mormon missionaries believed that indigenous people had to submit to baptism and move to the Mormon Zion before they would be fully transformed socially and physically.

As suggested in the previous chapter, early Mormons saw the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Pacific as being intimately connected. The Mormons who traveled to the Pacific eventually came to believe that the people who lived on Tahiti Nui, the Tuamotus, and the rest of the Pacific Islands were descendants of the peoples of the Book of Mormon. It is difficult to know when the idea first developed. Pratt's wife Louisa told the indigenous people she encountered in the Pacific that the Nephites were “the ancient fathers of the Tahitians.” This statement occurred in 1851.²¹² It is possible, however, that Pratt and Grouard had not conceived of this idea when they first arrived in the Pacific. Later Mormon missionaries used the story of Hagoth from the Book of Mormon to lend further weight to the idea that Polynesians were descendants of the Lamanites. In the story, an explorer becomes lost at sea with a boat full of women, children, and men, and provisions. In Mormon mythology, Polynesians became his descendants, and Polynesian migration myths, evidence of Mormonism's authenticity.²¹³ The Mormon men who traveled to the Pacific eventually came to see themselves as participating in the same redemptive project as those who had been sent to American Indians.

The connections that Mormons made in their patriarchal blessings between the millennium and the conversion of indigenous people affected Mormon missionary work in other ways as well. Unlike other Christian missionaries, Mormons did not see their mission as being

²¹² Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 149.

²¹³ See, for example, Jerry K. Loveland, “Polynesian Origins and Migrations: Aspects of the Mormon View and Contemporary Scholarship,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Society* 4:1 (1983): 17 – 22; Kurt Richter, “Origins of the Polynesians,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Society* 4:1 (1983): 25 – 30; Simon G. Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004); and Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Chosen Land*, 31 – 54.

one of long-term transformation and decades of sacrifice. They believed that God had initiated a dramatic series of events that would radically transform the world and end in the creation of God's kingdom on earth. Their missionary work would not involve the establishment of decades-long missions that would cultivate Christian families and lead to the Christianization of entire peoples. Instead, they would call forth the people of God from the nations, encouraging them to be baptized and to immigrate to the United States. Although they never completely abandoned the idea that indigenous people should learn domestic skills, they believed that the ultimate transformation of Native Americans and Polynesians would only occur at the millennium. In the meantime, Mormon missionaries enacted an itinerant ministry modeled on the New Testament. They imitated the early apostles, temporarily forsaking their wealth to spread the gospel. Rather than using their own wealth to fund their missionary work, they left behind their fortunes, their clothing, food, and money, and relied on the generosity of others for their shelter.

The intimacy that early Mormon missionaries adopted in regards to indigenous people extended beyond a willingness to eat in their homes to include sexual intimacy. Early Mormons flirted with the idea of marrying indigenous people in the United States. Phelps' claim that Smith had commanded men to take Indian women as their wives is not the only evidence of intimacy between Native Americans and Mormons in the nineteenth century. In 1846, Orson Hyde baptized William McCarey, an African American man who claimed to be of Choctaw ancestry. McCarey played on his imagined Indian identity, claiming to be a Lamanite prophet. Around the same time, he married a white woman named Lucy Stanton. The willingness of the Mormon community to accept the marriage when they rejected marriages between white women and black men may have been the result of McCarey's claims to be a member of the House of Israel. When questions arose about McCarey's background, he clung to an Indian identity, demanding

that others see him as a “red man.”²¹⁴ His identity as a Lamanite marked him as a member of the Mormon community and allowed him to participate in a marriage that otherwise would have been unimaginable for early Mormons.

Mormon ideas about the role that indigenous people would play in the millennium fundamentally shaped the interactions that Addison and his companions had with Pacific Islanders. Their understandings of marriage and interracial sexuality, however, were as much shaped by their backgrounds in the whaling industry as they were by their Mormonism. Before his conversion to Mormonism, Addison had raised a Congregationalist and bemoaned the behavior of his fellow whalers.²¹⁵ In an attempt to escape the violence endemic on nineteenth-century American whaling vessels, he abandoned his ship and lived as a beachcomber in the Hawaiian Islands. The treatment he received from local Congregationalist missionaries made him suspicious of Protestant missionaries for the rest of his life.²¹⁶

Grouard’s experience as working in the New England shipyards also made him familiar with the Pacific Islands. As he worked, he would have heard stories of Fiji, Samoa, and Tahiti from men who had visited there on previous voyages and would have been familiar with the coconuts, sandalwood, and other products that merchants harvested from their shores. Although their presence was always few, he also would have encountered Native Hawaiian whalers who entered into contracts with white captains and became stranded in Boston, New Bedford, and other New England port cities. There are also some stories that he may have worked as a sailor himself. Although the LMS dismissed interracial relationships, a variety of relationships formed between white men and indigenous women in the Pacific. The crews of whaling ships frequently

²¹⁴ Angela Pulley Hudson, "Okah Tubbee and Laah Ceil among the Saints: A Mormon Detour on the Path to Indianness," Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, April 10-13, 2014.

²¹⁵ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 36.

²¹⁶ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 36.

had sex with indigenous women during their stays in the Pacific. The commercial traffic that occurred between whalers and Polynesian communities included sex as well as yams and breadfruit. Whalers and other white men in the Pacific also engaged in longer term relationships with indigenous women. Caroline Ralston's descriptions of beach communities include descriptions of white men who supported indigenous women and sometimes even formalized their relationships with them as marriages. The children that were born from these unions played an important part in developing trading relationships in the Pacific.²¹⁷ The American men engaged in the Pacific whaling industry were familiar with the variety of sexual relationships that could develop between white men and indigenous women. They did not see them as delegitimizing individual authority in the same way as the LMS did.

The flexibility within nineteenth-century ideas about the family among whaling communities was partially the result of the long absences that voyages to the Pacific required. Their sheer length disrupted family structures within whaling communities. Men could be absent for several years and depended upon the owners of the ships on which they sailed to provide enough credit to their wives and families to support them.²¹⁸ As a result of these long absences, men often felt justified in developing sexual relationships with women in port cities. Even those who were married frequently had sex with indigenous women and may have engaged in homosexual relationships with other sailors. It is important, however, not to minimize the affective ties that developed between husbands and wives in whaling communities. One woman shared the sorrow she felt at her husband's absence in her journal. She only had a small, 2½ by 3¾ inch notebook in which to express her thoughts. In spite of its small size, she wrote about her

²¹⁷ Caroline Ralston, "The Beach Communities," *Pacific Island Portraits* ed. J.W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 77 – 95. See also Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2014).

²¹⁸ Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab had a Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishery, 1720 – 1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Books, 2000), 29.

husband almost daily, marking how long he had been gone, and in one revealing comment, simply asking, "Oh, where is my dear Husband?"²¹⁹ The frequency of her writing suggests the intimate relationship that sailors sometimes maintained with their wives.

This flexibility played a role in the differences between Grouard and Pratt's understanding of the role that the family should play in missionary work and that of the members of the LMS. For the white men who worked for the LMS as missionaries, white domesticity was essential to maintaining their moral authority. Mormon missionaries, on the other hand, saw family relationships as flexible and temporarily abandoned their wives while they served as missionaries. After they were called to the Pacific in 1843, the men arranged their family affairs and left for Boston where they hoped to raise enough money to finance their voyage to the South Pacific. Both Grouard and Addison left behind wives. When Addison was initially called on a mission, his wife Louisa had hoped that it would be to the Eastern states so that he could carry the gospel to their evangelical relatives.²²⁰ His calling to travel to the Pacific meant that she would now have to live as though she were a single woman and would be forced to deal with these circumstances on her own. When the time came for him to depart, she accompanied him to the steamboat with their children who watched as their father wiped the tears from his eyes. Their second daughter was inconsolable.²²¹ Grouard arranged for his wife to go to Philadelphia to visit family.²²² Both found leaving their families behind difficult. Their Mormon beliefs required, however, that they be willing to temporarily abandon their families in order to bind them together in the afterlife.

²¹⁹ Julia Fiske Diary, March 6, 1859, quoted in Norling, *Captain Ahab had a Wife*, 182.

²²⁰ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 65 – 66.

²²¹ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 65 – 66.

²²² Grouard, June 1, 1843, *Journal of Benjamin Grouard, June 1843 – September 1846*.

Mormon missionaries were also far more willing to live in proximity to indigenous people. Men like Addison and Grouard lived in the homes of indigenous converts, eating food prepared by their hands and sleeping in beds that they had made. Their presence challenged LMS ideas about the relationship of white domesticity to the missionary project. As we will see in the next section, Mormon missionaries arrived at the same time that the French colonial government was undermining the power of the LMS through the extension of a protectorate over many of the islands under the Pomare dynasty's control. Initially, the French government saw Mormon missionaries as a potential alternative to the LMS. As Americans, they represented a religious faith and community that was neither French nor British. The French unwillingness to fully accept Mormon missionaries, however, gave the LMS an opportunity to regain some of its influence. The differences between the LMS vision of the role of sex in the colonial project and that of the Mormons meant that it became a contested space in which both groups tried to assert their moral authority.

Sex and Power in the Pacific

Debates over Mormon ideas about sexuality and the family began as soon as Mormon missionaries arrived in the Pacific. The establishment of the French protectorate represented a real alternative to LMS missionary work, and the LMS found itself in the position of having to prove its ability to govern the Ma'ohi people. The presence of Mormon missionaries meant that they had to do so against another group. The debates that ensued over who could best ensure morality on the islands centered on the willingness of Mormon men to marry indigenous women, their adoption of alternative understandings of masculinity, and the sexual exploits of both LMS

and Mormon missionaries. The fodder for these debates was found in the sexual encounters of Mormon missionaries and their Christian counterparts in the Pacific.

When Addison and Grouard arrived in Tahiti, they discovered that the rumors and sexual innuendo that circulated about the Mormon community in the United States had preceded them to the islands. The popularity of Mormonism in Great Britain and the eastern United States meant that they were a frequent topic of conversation within newspapers, books, and pamphlets in the Atlantic world. American and British sailing ships brought anti-Mormon pamphlets such as John C. Bennett's *History of the Saints* and carried news about the popularity of the sect. Bennett's book would be passed around the Congregationalist missionary community. Salacious in tone, it accused Joseph Smith of trying to seduce married women, of commanding men to commit murder, and of promoting prostitution.²²³ Grouard accused the British missionaries of circulating these stories among the native communities in an attempt to discredit Mormonism.

The stories contained within these packets would have concerned the LMS. For them, the suggestion that Joseph Smith had discovered a new golden Bible, claimed to be able to heal the sick, and encouraged his followers to marry indigenous women was troubling. The behavior of the Mormon missionaries when they arrived in Tahiti only confirmed their suspicions. The first Mormon converts were not men and women living on Tubuai, Tahiti Nui, or Anaa; they were beachcombers who like Addison had abandoned whaling and merchant ships in search of a less brutal life. In associating with such men, the Mormon missionaries marked themselves as morally suspect. LMS missionaries constantly remarked in their letters about the conversions that Grouard and Pratt had made among the white men resident on the islands.

²²³ Grouard's journal describes arriving in Tahiti and bearing his testimony, only to discover that Bennett's works on Mormonism had preceded him. See Grouard, June 30, 1844, *Journal of Benjamin Grouard, June 1843 – September 1846*, 44. For Bennett's accusations, see J.C. Bennett (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842).

Some of the Mormon converts were John Hawkins, Alexander Ambrose, and John Layton.²²⁴ The reports that the British missionaries filed referred to these conversions matter-of-factly. In one of his reports, George Platt wrote that “A number of white men have joined [the Mormons] on different Islands... One who had a Paumotuan wife, is now going among them from Island to Island as an authorized teacher.”²²⁵ At times, however, their placid language belied a deeper anxiety. The British missionaries sometimes referred to the white men who had converted to Mormonism as having been “captivated” by them. Such language suggested fraud or seduction rather than genuine spiritual conversion.²²⁶ This seduction was made more dangerous by the influence such men had in the Pacific. White men who abandoned whaling ships had long served as an alternative locus of power in the islands. They brokered trades between whaling ships and native communities, married indigenous women, and wielded enormous influence over Tahitian political figures. The LMS worried that their conversion to Mormonism would further undermine the fragile hold of Christianity in Tahiti.

The Mormon missionaries also adopted a fundamentally different vision of masculinity than the LMS missionaries. The LMS embrace of the white missionary wife as a way to discipline male sexuality led them to adopt an understanding of manliness that was thoroughly grounded in the family. Although Mormon theology created a literalized, earthly vision of the heavens in which kinship ties would be multiplied, the practicalities of Mormon missionary work required that men temporarily abandon their wives to spread the gospel. Their lack of financial

²²⁴ For Hawkin’s life, see F. Edward Butterworth, *The Adventures of John Hawkins, Restoration Pioneer* (Independence, MO: Herald House Publishing, 1963). Butterworth’s account is highly fictionalized and has few, if any, footnotes. It remains, however, one of the few accounts of missionary work in the Tuamotus and Austral Islands in the nineteenth century and contains information gleaned from Butterworth’s own missionary work and research. Although historians of Mormonism in the Pacific sometimes use it as a source, it must be treated cautiously.

²²⁵ George Platt to the Directors of the LMS, January 16, 1849, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 22, Folder 1, Jacket A, SOAS, London, UK.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

resources led them to live with indigenous converts. They also adopted a rough masculinity that reveled in their proximity to indigenous people. In their letters and memoirs, they described themselves as embracing an impoverished existence. One man named James Stephens Brown who had arrived in the Pacific in the 1850s described the food that he was expected to eat—jellyfish, sea snails, little black bugs, and snakes—in a tone that suggested joy as well as disgust.²²⁷ He recalled taking snakes by the head and stripping the flesh from their bodies in long strips with his teeth.²²⁸ His descriptions relied on the exoticism of the Pacific for their power. It allowed him to draw in his audience and emphasize his own courage.

For his part, Pratt enjoyed hunting wild boars. When he returned from the Austral Islands and the Tuamotus, it was rumored that he “could catch fish in a cow track.”²²⁹ In these adventures, native men served as guides, showing men like Pratt and Grouard where to find fish, how to hunt wild game, and which foods were edible. Theirs was a rough, homosocial vision of masculinity. It was also far closer to British visions of the working classes than would have made the Protestant missionaries comfortable. The creation of a politics of domesticity in the nineteenth century had required a displacement of sexuality from the home of white, middle class men and women onto those of the working class and the colonized. Popular depictions of members of the working class and colonized became sexualized and bawdy as middle class men and women were portrayed as increasingly moral and chaste.²³⁰ In celebrating the rough and tumble, Pratt and Grouard seemed to position themselves closer to the working classes. It was a

²²⁷ James Stephens Brown, *Life of a Pioneer, Being the Autobiography of James S. Brown* (Salt Lake City: G.Q. Cannon and Sons, 1900), 156 – 161.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

²³⁰ Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives*, 1st ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

theme that the Protestant missionaries drew upon in their depictions of their Mormon counterparts. They constantly remarked upon the untutored manner of the Mormon arrivals.²³¹

Grouard's decision to marry a Paumotuan woman in 1846 only deepened the suspicion that the LMS had of the Mormon missionaries.²³² In marrying a Paumotuan woman, he placed himself on the margins of white society. There was no uniform reaction of Mormon missionaries to his marriage. When his companion Pratt initially heard about Grouard's plan to marry an indigenous woman, he told him to do as Judas had done, "What thou doest, do quickly."²³³ His quotation of scripture implicitly called Grouard a traitor to his own religion. In his diary, Pratt worried about the reaction of white Mormon women to Grouard's marriage. He thought they would think that he had made a "rude choice."²³⁴

Historian F. Edward Butterworth's accounts of the Pacific, on the other hand, suggest that local white members of the church who had lived as beachcombers for years may have celebrated the marriage. Although his decision to write the story of John Hawkins as a fictionalized story without footnotes makes it difficult to use his work, other sources confirm Butterworth's analysis.²³⁵ Pratt's descriptions of the marriage, for example, suggest that the local indigenous communities rejoiced in the marriage. He describes them as "delight[ing] in excitement" and making a "great noise" about the match.²³⁶ The difference between Pratt's response to the marriage and that of the white beachcombers suggests a division within Mormon society in the Pacific. Although the Mormon faith placed indigenous people at the center of its

²³¹ See, for example, E.R.W. Krause and G. Platt to the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, September 29, 1845, Box 18A, Folder 4, Jacket C, Council of World Missions/London Missionary Society Archive (CWM/LMS), School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, UK.

²³² The precise date of the marriage is unknown.

²³³ Addison Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt: Being a Narrative of Yankee Whaling in the Eighteen Twenties, a Mormon Mission to the Society Islands and of Early California and Utah in the Eighteen Forties and Fifties* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1990), 276 – 277.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

²³⁵ Butterworth, *The Adventures of John Hawkins*.

²³⁶ Pratt, 276 – 277.

redemptive narrative, individual Mormons often felt uncomfortable with the presence of native peoples. Grouard's marriage may have been fully recognizable within a Mormon theology that imagined a future in which Native Americans would participate in building a literal Zion. It sat awkwardly, however, with the day-to-day experiences of individual Mormons. Most American Mormons continued to distrust Native Americans and anyone who allied themselves with them. Similar tensions existed over interracial marriage in the Pacific. Although the LMS had rejected interracial marriage as the foundation for a Christian society, white men continued to marry indigenous women. White Mormons had to navigate Tahiti's racial landscape.

The LMS used Grouard's marriage and other rumors that circulated about the sexual impropriety of Mormon leaders to discredit the Mormon missionaries with the French colonial government. The French feared the potential fallout of installing French Catholic missionaries at the expense of members of the London Missionary Society. The actions of the British missionaries, however, made it difficult for the French to support their continued presence in the islands. Although the British missionaries remained officially neutral in the conflict, British Protestants constantly tried to use their influence to pressure Parliament into interfering with the French protectorate. The University of Birmingham, for example, contains pieces of correspondence concerning petitions from the supporters of the London Missionary Society in Tahiti.²³⁷ Even after the British government refused to intervene, the presence of the British missionaries allowed dissident Tahitians to maintain hope that the British would eventually aid them in their struggle for independence. The British missionaries also openly critiqued the French, suggesting that the Protectorate had brought moral dissolution rather than the arrival of benevolent imperialism. One missionary accused the governor of attending licentious dances

²³⁷ See, for example, Letter, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice to A. Tidman, July 1843, Letters Additional Collection, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.

where the participants were common prostitutes and concubines.²³⁸ Another wrote that the removal of Queen Pomare had also removed “all restraint & religion” from the islands.²³⁹

Mormon missionaries offered the French an alternative to the troublesome British Congregationalists. Because they were neither French nor British, the French colonial government could favor their ministry and undermine the authority of the British missionaries without appearing to zealously promote Catholicism.

As a result, the Mormon missionaries initially found themselves welcome in the French governor’s office. When its incumbent received a copy of the Book of Mormon, he told the British missionaries who had brought it to him that they would be better men if they lived up to the morals it contained.²⁴⁰ The LMS missionaries, however, refused to cede their positions easily. The establishment of a French protectorate did not end the contest for power between the Congregational and Mormon missionaries; instead, the 1840s saw the two groups constantly jockeying for power and attempting to discredit each other in the eyes of government officials. Their quest for supremacy ultimately occurred through the language of sexuality. The Congregationalist missionaries responded to the governor’s initial favor with rumors that had circulated about sexual irregularities in the Mormon community. They hoped to discredit the Mormon missionaries and their ability to serve as models for native Tahitian Christians.

In 1845, Grouard recorded that the Congregationalist missionaries had accused the Mormon missionaries being a “sedicious [sic] persons” who would only be “detrimental” to French interests on Anaa. The accusations were accompanied by an attempt to show the licentiousness of the Book of Mormon and the demoralizing influence it had had on the Mormon

²³⁸ Letter, John Barff to the Directors of the LMS, June 27, 1845, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 18A, Folder 3, Jacket B, SOAS, London, UK.

²³⁹ Letter, John Orsmond to William Ellis, copy sent to the LMS, July 30, 1845, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 18A, Folder 2, Jacket D, SOAS, London, UK.

²⁴⁰ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 263.

community. Although the Congregationalists failed in their initial attempts to discredit Grouard, their use of rumors about sexuality to try to discredit him had a long history in the Pacific. The suggestions that an Anglican missionary in New Zealand had developed sexually intimate relationships with young men led to his marginalization within the Church Missionary Society and eventual return to Britain.²⁴¹ Likewise, Thomas Kendall's affair with a Maori woman had combined with his unwillingness to stop trading muskets to undermine his position as a missionary with the CMS.²⁴² Rumors about sexuality, even when ungrounded, eventually became a way to weaken a person's position in the islands.

Although early Mormon missionaries rejected rumors about Joseph Smith as "morsels" sent by Satan to impede the progress of the Saints, they were no less willing to gossip about sexual immorality than Protestants. Addison scoffed at the pretensions of the British Congregationalist missionaries in his letters to the Mormon leaders in the United States. One of their daughters, he wrote, kept a brothel for sailors and had been tattooed "from her shoulders to her heels, missing no intermediate portions."²⁴³ The son of another Congregationalist missionary was "one of the most brutish libertines among the islands." Although Pratt did not mention his expulsion from the South Seas Academy, he accused the man's wife of "carous[ing] at a public house."²⁴⁴ In Pratt's eyes, the missionaries were no better than their children. He accused one of them of using the sacrament as an opportunity to survey the islands' young women, choosing one to visit his bed.²⁴⁵ He claimed that the missionaries had told their church members that it was "no harm for them to have adulterous intercourse with each other." "They must not," however, "do it

²⁴¹ Judith Binney, "Whatever Happened to Poor Mr. Yate? An Exercise in Voyeurism," *New Zealand Journal of History* 38 (2004): 154 – 168.

²⁴² Judith Binney, *The Legacy of Guilt: A Life of Thomas Kendall* (Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press, 1968).

²⁴³ Addison Pratt to Willard Richards, 20 September 1844, Addison Pratt Family Collection, Folder 4A, microfilm, Church History Library, Salt Lake City Utah.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 169 – 170.

with the people of the world.”²⁴⁶ Although Pratt described many sexual indiscretions in his letters and diaries, he claimed to be practicing restraint. When describing the infidelities of the missionary son who he called a “brutish [libertine]”, he wrote that “decency forbids that I should tell some of the specimens of his conduct.”²⁴⁷

Rumors did not just circulate among the European community; they were part of discussions about sexuality and morality among native Tahitians as well. In the early 1840s, Congregationalist missionaries confronted the suggestion that Alexander Simpson, a member of their society who had once roundly denounced children of the missionaries, may have molested the daughters of his fellow missionaries during his tenure as schoolmaster. The inquiry that followed was difficult. Some of the Congregationalist missionaries felt that the evidence undeniably pointed to Simpson’s guilt; yet, the directors of the LMS felt that they could not fairly convict him with the hearsay and gossip they had collected.²⁴⁸ As a result, they allowed him to maintain his position in spite of their sense that girls’ accusations were not warrantless.

Rumors continued to circulate for years afterwards about his drunkenness and sexual immortality. LMS missionaries and their associates continued to write down stories of his exchanging money for sex with native women, and in one instance, being found him bathing with a native Tahitian woman with bottles scattered around him.²⁴⁹ In 1847, William Henry wrote that he had been unable to bring himself to attend religious services led by Simpson and had begun preaching himself. He blamed the “most deplorable” behavior of the indigenous people in the area on the other man’s behavior. He called Simpson’s a “hypocritical farce,”

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Addison Pratt to Willard Richards, 20 September 1844.

²⁴⁸ Letter, LMS Foreign Secretaries to T. Joseph, March 5, 1844, and Letter, LMS Foreign Secretaries to A. Simpson, March 5, 1844, CWM/LMS/South Seas/Western Outgoing Letters, Box 3, 1843 – 1846.

²⁴⁹ Letter, Mr. Henry to Mr. Buzacott, June 8, 1846, appended to a letter from William Henry to the directors of the LMS, January 15, 1847, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 20, Folder 1, Jacket A. See also Manktelow, “Rev. Simpson’s Improper Liberties: Moral Scrutiny and Missionary Children in the South Seas Mission,” 159 – 181.

before crossing out the first word and writing “religious” instead.²⁵⁰ The stories that were told about Simpson and indigenous women sometimes contained an element of sexual coercion. During the original 1843 investigation, for example a servant girl named Medua was reported to have complained, “Mr. Simpson is a very annoying or giddy man he will not cease pulling me about, my sowing will not be well done.”²⁵¹ In the 1850s, Simpson was finally dismissed from service—for drunkenness, not sexual immorality.

It was partially the unwillingness of the directors of the LMS to accept the testimony of native men and women that forced the local committee to acquit Simpson. In addition to the evidence that Simpson had been molesting the daughters of the white missionaries, several rumors had been circulating about his dalliances with indigenous women. In his descriptions of the illicit sexual behavior of the LMS, Pratt also explicitly relied on the narratives of native Tahitians. His stories quoted their testimony and used them to discredit the English missionaries. It is important to remember that these stories were more than mere gossip. In the nineteenth century, individuals throughout the Pacific laid claim to moral authority by demonstrating their ability to cultivate proper domestic relationships. In portraying the British missionaries as immoral, Pratt implicitly questioned the propriety of granting them authority over the lives of indigenous people.

He may have been nervous about Grouard’s marriage partially because of the effect that it would have on the position of Mormon missionaries in the Pacific. In a world in which sexual irregularities could discredit individual missionaries, Grouard’s decision to marry an indigenous woman was a dangerous move. It aligned Mormon missionaries not with white respectability but

²⁵⁰ Letter, William Henry to the directors of the LMS, January 15, 1847, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 20, Folder 1, Jacket A.

²⁵¹ Letter, T. Joseph to the Directors of the LMS, June 24, 1843, CWM/LMS, South Seas, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16, Folder 1, Jacket C.

with beachcombers and whalers who had lived on the margins of white society. In many cases, these men had married indigenous women and had chosen to live among native Tahitians rather than in the white domestic spaces LMS missionaries had created. Pratt had actually performed several of these marriages. According to the church records he compiled while on Tubuai, he married a man named William J. Bowen to Poti on July 14th, 1844. That same year, he married Orman Clifford to Vaiho, George McLain to Paahaaho, and George Prescott to Metua.²⁵² The names of these people suggest that they were white, though it is possible that some of them were mixed raced. His records contain no special notations that indicate he felt any of the anxiety that marked his response to Grouard's marriage to Tearo.²⁵³ Why, then, did he respond to Grouard's marriage with trepidation?

It is possible that his concerns about Grouard's marriage arose from the latter's status as a missionary. As a white American Mormon missionary, Grouard was to be an exemplar of the community in ways that the beachcombers and whalers who converted to Mormonism were not. As far as I have been able to locate, white Mormon missionaries who traveled to Hawai'i in the 1850s did not marry indigenous women, although several of their converts were involved in interracial marriages.²⁵⁴ In marrying an indigenous woman, Grouard raised the possibility that he would be assimilated into Paumotuan society rather than teaching his congregation about their destiny as Israelites. His marriage also attracted the interest of the LMS missionaries. Although Grouard's marriage grew out of a specifically Mormon understanding of the role that indigenous people would play in the millennium, the LMS placed it within their own worldview. They saw Grouard's marriage as being part of a much larger history in which white men frequently

²⁵² The race of the individuals involved in these marriages is not noted, but it is likely that the men were either white or partially white.

²⁵³ "Mehaho – Marriages," The Records of the Church... at Tooboai [sic], LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

²⁵⁴ Edward Leo Lyman mentions some of these marriages. See Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 154.

succumbed to the seductions of the Pacific, committing sexual sin and falling into apostasy. Although Pratt did not marry an indigenous woman, his willingness to live in indigenous communities raised questions about his morality and chastity. The LMS, wearied by its inability to contain the sexual desires of single male missionaries, worried about the decision of Mormon men to temporarily abandon their wives and travel unhindered by marital ties.

The questions that the presence of Mormon missionaries like Grouard and Addison raised in the Pacific were similar to the questions that had arisen in the wake of the sexual indiscretions of earlier LMS missionaries. Focusing on Mormon missionaries reminds us of the ways that questions of sexual desire, domesticity, and religious piety became entwined in the Pacific. In choosing to live in indigenous communities without white women to restrain their sexuality, Mormon missionaries classed themselves in the eyes of the LMS with indigenous revival movements, beachcombers, and white men who married indigenous women. Their decisions seemed to highlight the fluidity of racial identity. Even though they saw themselves as bringing gospel to the islands of the sea, their willingness to live in indigenous communities placed them in a marginal position. In the Pacific, they were viewed as being akin not to white, middle class Christian missionaries but to beachcombers, whalers, and other miscreants. For members of the LMS and early Mormons, racial identity was not fixed. The LMS feared that too much contact with indigenous people lead their children to adopt indigenous customs and to become part of native Tahitian society.

Although these children remained physically white, they occupied a liminal space within Tahitian society. Born in the Pacific, they first began to babble in Tahitian and were frequently favored by the Pomare family.²⁵⁵ LMS missionaries worried that their children were becoming Tahitian and tried to separate them from indigenous society. For Mormon missionaries, the

²⁵⁵ Tagupa, "Missionary Lamentations," 170.

fluidity of race involved physical as well as social transformations. Early Mormon theology imagined an eschaton in which indigenous people would be physically whitened. Although this emphasis on the literal transformation of indigenous people into white men and women might have led Mormons to be more emphatic about the importance of indigenous people adopting white standards of domesticity, their millennialism caused them to delay any attempts to transform indigenous society until after Christ had established his Kingdom.

The world that I have described in this chapter was short-lived. By the 1850s, Mormon missionaries brought their wives to live on the islands of Tahiti Nui and Tubuai. Their decision to do so was born out of a fear that their wives and children would live in destitution if their husbands continued as missionaries. The arrival of white women and children also allowed them to buttress their whiteness. It is important, however, to understand the earliest experiences of Mormon missionaries. They provide us with a window into the ways in which white domesticity served as a disciplinary force in the Pacific, determining who would be accepted into the white community and offered as a model of religious piety for the indigenous communities who served as the object of proselytization.

Chapter Three

A White Mission to a White People: The Fieldings and the Mormon Mission to Great Britain

Introduction

On June 22, 1837, Joseph Fielding sat on a New York City harbor while he waited for a ship to take him to Liverpool. He was excited, delighted even, but perhaps also a little bit nervous. A few months earlier, he and his sisters had embraced a new gospel that told of the restoration of God's church and the opening of the heavens. Joseph and his sisters had written to her family members still living in England to tell them of the new dispensation. God was again speaking to the earth, and men had the power to heal the bodies of the sick.²⁵⁶ The news was well received. Their brother James found her missives so edifying that he read them aloud to his congregation who then prayed to "the Lord" to "send them the word of his servants." The letters, however, did not necessarily foretell a joyous reception. Fearing to say too much and thus poison the well, they held back the most radical parts of the Mormon gospel.²⁵⁷ Absent presumably was anything more than a few lines about the discovery of an important new testament or the revival of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Fielding's mission was radically different from the one that Addison Pratt and Benjamin F. Grouard undertook to the Pacific. When Addison and Grouard travelled to the Pacific in the

²⁵⁶ Diary of Joseph Fielding, March 1797 - December 19, 1863, pg. 4, LDS Church History Library, MS 15214.

²⁵⁷ Joseph Fielding to Mary Fielding Smith, October 2, 1837, Mary Fielding Smith Collection, MS 2779, Folder 5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

1840s, their missionary work mirrored the expectations of white, middle class men and women that the subjects of proselytization would be non-white and working class. Fielding's work, however, inverted assumptions about the relationship between race, class, and missionary work. As such, it provides an explicit counterpart to the Mormon mission in Tahiti and allows us to explore how imperial discourses about race, class, and domesticity shaped responses to Mormonism. Joseph Smith's prophetic visions rejected Protestant claims to spiritual and moral authority. By the mid-nineteenth century, this denial was at the center of a Mormon theology that scorned the moral authority of other Christian churches and insisted that all men and women must be re-baptized in order to enter the Kingdom of God. In proselytizing both to members of the middle and working classes, Mormonism challenged the imperial logics that governed both metropolitan Britain and its colonies. They were enormously successful, however, within Great Britain. By 1851, there were roughly thirty thousand Mormons living in England and Wales.²⁵⁸ Their successes, however, were limited to particular areas of the British Isles. Although Mormons managed to garner converts in Scotland, Wales, and Southern England, the majority of Mormon converts came from the industrial cities of Northern England. It is possible that the faith's emphasis on spiritual gifts, the material prosperity of the afterlife, and its promise of an American Zion, appealed to an English working class beset by poverty.

The same aspects of Mormonism that appealed to the English working class resulted in distrust among English society as a whole. Its embrace of spiritual gifts, for example, drew ridicule from the middle classes. Early Mormons in Great Britain existed in a world in which demons wracked the bodies that they inhabited and in which Mormon women prophesied and spoke in angelic tongues. In British Mormonism, demon possession and ecstatic religious experience flourished to an even greater degree than they had in the United States. Mormon

²⁵⁸ Doxey, "The Church in Great Britain and the 1851 Religious Census," 107 – 138.

pronouncements about spiritual gifts were interpreted within English discourses about the gullibility of the working classes. The British Mormon acceptance of an ecstatic embodied religious experience placed it with other radical sects that claimed the ability to heal the sick and receive heavenly messages. English newspapers and other media connected Mormonism to a long tradition of false prophets who had preyed upon the uneducated and the easily deceived. In the popular press, Joseph Smith became another Joanna Southcott or Richard Brothers.²⁵⁹

Britain's status as an imperial power also affected interpretations of Mormonism. Smith's claim to have discovered a new sacred history placed him in the same category as Muhammad in the minds of white, middle class English subjects. In claiming prophetic status, he undermined the propriety of his religious movement. Rumors of sexual impropriety further undermined the status of Mormonism within England. Early English reactions to Mormonism focused on its relationship to working class prophetic movements. The announcement in 1852 that Mormonism had adopted the practice of polygamy, however, refocused criticisms of the faith around its sexual practices. In nineteenth-century England, sexual restraint, moral propriety, and religious respectability defined what it meant to be white and middle class.²⁶⁰ According to the literary theorist Felicity Nussbaum, the establishment of middle class morality in the nineteenth century required the displacement of sexual desire from the bodies of white, middle class women.²⁶¹ The idea that male sexuality could never be completely contained required that other women be sexualized even as their white counterparts were portrayed as chaste. In Victorian England, non-

²⁵⁹ Most Mormon proselytizing occurred in Northern England among the working classes. Although Mormons traveled to other sections of Great Britain, including Scotland and Ireland, they had less success there. Different understandings of the relationship between class and religion in these regions also meant that responses to Mormonism had a slightly different tenor in England than they did in the other parts of the British Isles. In this chapter, I have tried to be conscientious of how I use the terms "England" and "Britain"

²⁶⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

²⁶¹ Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 18, 96.

white women and members of the working class were portrayed as sexually voracious, overly fleshy, and in need of moral reform.

Of course, the description of white, middle class women as virtuous did not necessarily reflect reality. The white, middle classes had premarital sex, took multiple lovers, and frequented prostitutes just as frequently as other classes. Their wealth, however, allowed them to do so clandestinely. Illicit sexual liaisons were not foreign to the middle classes in Britain; they just existed at the fringes of society.²⁶² In entering into polygamous marriages, Mormon men and women seemed to challenge the marginalization of such relationships by taking what had been illicit and bringing it into the very heart of marriage. The sexual dynamics of Mormonism dominated discussions of Mormonism throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. This chapter tracks both early discussions of Mormonism centered on its class dynamics and the shift towards a sexualized vision of Mormonism dominated by images of the harem and polygamy.

The imperial logics that affected the reception of Mormonism within England also affected Fielding's reception among his family. When he first arrived in Liverpool in mid-July, he met with a cordial reception. His brother James offered to let him and his companions use his chapel as a place to preach. Few Mormon sermons were ever preached in that chapel. Although his brother James could rejoice in the revival of spiritual gifts and the appearance of a new record of God, the Mormon insistence that new members be baptized angered him. He insisted that the Mormon missionaries be cast out from his chapel.²⁶³ He was not the only English minister to be troubled. In challenging the validity of the previous baptisms of their converts, Mormon missionaries rejected the spiritual authority of both dissenting and Anglican ministers. The debate over baptism between Fielding and his brother was more than a debate about the

²⁶² Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones*, 73 – 94.

²⁶³ See Joseph Fielding to Mary Fielding Smith, October 2, 1837; Diary of Joseph Fielding, 12; and Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, and Willard Richards, "Mission to England," *Millennial Star* 12:1 (April 1841), 290 – 292.

form of a particular ritual; it was a debate about the nature of salvation and the power of British churches to save individuals from their sin. Orson Whitney identified the debate over infant and adult baptism as one of the key difficulties that James had in accepting the faith.²⁶⁴ It was a problem for other British Christians as well.

Fielding's mission to England in 1837 provides a window into the reactions of the English population to the presence of Mormon missionaries. His mission to Great Britain was not just a movement across a vast geographic space. It was a movement between imperial borders. The racial and class formations of England shaped responses to Mormonism differently than tensions of empire had in Tahiti and the South Pacific. In focusing their missionary work on white, middle class men and women as well as on the working classes, Mormonism upended assumptions about missionary work and propriety. The men and women who converted to the faith in Liverpool, Manchester, and Preston saw Mormonism as a religion that offered them renewed access to God and the ability to heal the bodies of the sick and cast out demons. They converted because they believed that it was closer to the religion of the New Testament than the religion offered by Methodists or the Church of England. Although Fielding did not convert to Mormonism in England, he was at the center of English Mormonism in many ways. In addition to being one of the first missionaries in the country, he served as mission president for two years. His life opens up the world of early English Mormonism, casting light not only on the ways in which individual families negotiated the politics of conversion but also on the intersection of race, religious propriety, and sexual restraint in nineteenth-century England. It also, however, serves as an explicit contrast to the missionary work explored in Chapter One, demonstrating

²⁶⁴ Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, An Apostle; The Father and Founder of the British Mission* (Salt Lake City: The Kimball Family, 1888), 142.

how the movement of Mormon missionaries between and through imperial spaces affected reactions to their message.

Casting Out Devils in the New Jerusalem

Mormonism was part of a much larger religious tradition in the United States and England that combined an acceptance of spiritual gifts, dramatic prophesies, and millenarianism with an alternative political vision. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England was filled with men and women who claimed to receive revelation from God and be imbued with the Holy Spirit. In 1706, for example, the French Prophets created a kind of “sacred theater” in London, in “terrifying Hiccups” that racked their bodies.²⁶⁵ One of its members Dorothy Harling whipped her followers and then urinated on their bodies.²⁶⁶ They were not the only religious group that challenged white, middle class ideas of the divine. A little under a century later, an English naval lieutenant named Richard Brothers heard angelic voices announcing the destruction of Babylon. Brothers believed that he had been chosen to be the apostle of the new religion and would lead the people of Israel out of England.²⁶⁷ Within decades, a Scottish clergyman Edward Irving gave apocalyptic lectures and claimed that spiritual gifts had been revived.²⁶⁸

These prophetic movements were linked in the minds of many Britons as instances of mass delusion and folly. Hundreds of men and women flocked to see the spectacles offered by the French prophets. Their popularity led their names to become bywords for the credulity of

²⁶⁵ Clarke Garrett, *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Old World to the New; Origins of the Shakers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 5. The term “terrifying Hiccups” comes from Samuel Keimer, who had supported many sectarian religious movements and described his memories of the French Prophets. Keimer is quoted in Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 26.

²⁶⁶ Juster, *Doomsayers*, 26.

²⁶⁷ Deborah Madden, *The Paddington Prophet: Richard Brothers' Journey to Jerusalem* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

²⁶⁸ Margaret Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving: Minister of the National Scotch Church, London* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1862).

working class men and women. A Devonshire woman who claimed to be the “Woman Clothed with the Sun” joined them.²⁶⁹ Books published in Edinburgh, London, and Liverpool classed them together as “False Messiahs” and “Religious Impostors.”²⁷⁰

The derision that the prophetic claims of the French Prophets, Southcott, and others met belied the degree to which their movements offered hints of a wider political project. It is easy to dismiss Southcott, Brothers, and the French prophets as deluded individuals who attracted naïve, credulous individuals. The British government, however, had explicit evidence connecting Brothers to a wider democratic project. He was not the only religious figure whose spiritual experiences pointed to a broader politics.²⁷¹ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the attempts of reformers to imagine radical, communitarian communities were often overlaid with religious language and concerns. Owenite lecturers referred to the world they hoped to create as “the New Jerusalem” and the “Promised Land,” and sang Advent hymns.²⁷² They created an alternative vision of the millennium and of the possibility for change within Britain itself. Other communities went beyond appropriating Christian language and infused their movements with a deep faith in Christianity. The founders of the Chartist movement in Scotland, for example, were deeply pious men who felt that no one should be appointed to leadership positions without “the

²⁶⁹ James Hopkins, *Woman to Deliver Her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in the Era of Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

²⁷⁰ See, for example, M. Aikin, *Memoirs of Religious Impostors from the Seventh to the Nineteenth Century* (London: Jones and Co., 1823); *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in Connection with the Calendar, Anecdote, Biography, & History, Curiosities of Literature and Oddities of Human Life and Character* ed. Robert Chambers (London & Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1832); and Richard Alvin Davenport, *Sketches of Imposture, Deception, and Credulity* (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837).

²⁷¹ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, 61.

²⁷² Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago Press, 1983), 158, and J.F.C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Question for the New Moral World* (London, 1969), 92 – 139. Note: Robert Owen himself rejected the religious language that his followers used, seeing Socialism as a rational religion that would replace superstition and delusion. Many of his followers, however, rejected his characterization of millenarianism and popular religion, choosing instead to adopt the language of the Book of Revelation and the New Testament to describe the world that they wished to create.

fear of God before their eyes.”²⁷³ The millennium that these radical movements described was in-breaking. In this worldview, the Kingdom of God refused to be contained within the distant future, and instead, threatened to break into the present and remake British industrialism. Some Chartists were undoubtedly religious skeptics. For others, however, their politics grew out of their religious faith. One Chartist newspaper claimed that Chartism was a “holy and sacred principle” that “must be engraved on the heart of any man who loves justice, who loves humanity, [and] who loves the Christian religion.”²⁷⁴

Iain McCalman has argued that these movements were not isolated incidents. Instead, they were part of an underground subculture that rejected the idea that mystical experience and religious language were unsuited to democratic politics.²⁷⁵ These radical prophets chose to imbue their political visions with images of religious rebirth and used the language of religious transformation to describe the world that they hoped to create. The laughter and scorn that greeted their claims in newspapers and political pamphlets were partially attempts to undermine their influence and moral force. In a world in which several thousand men and women gathered in 1839 to present the People’s Charter to the House of Commons, the world-transforming visions of millenarian thinkers could seem ominous and threatening.²⁷⁶

The problem with radical religious movements, however, was not just their association with the working classes. Although historians like Anna Clark, E.P. Thompson, and Iain McCalman have focused on the politics of class in their histories of millenarianism within Great Britain, Britain was also an imperial metropole. As a result, descriptions of working class people

²⁷³ Alexander Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1970), 138.

²⁷⁴ Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland*, 138.

²⁷⁵ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*.

²⁷⁶ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 161 – 167; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 109 – 110. Ruth Bloch has made similar arguments about the transformative potential of millenarianism in the United States in Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756 – 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

as deluded and degraded were overlaid with concerns about race. Mary Poovey has argued that working class men and women were seen as being debased by their labor in the nineteenth century. English anatomists believed that the intense physicality of their work prevented them from developing the refinement that was necessary to participate in public life. They were “less civilized” and somehow more barbaric than their middle class counterparts.²⁷⁷ As a result, descriptions of working class people often blurred their racial identities. In the famous sketches of Arthur Munby, the features of the white, female ironworkers and maids are darkened until they become black and apelike. Race appears not as a scientific endeavor but as a fetish.²⁷⁸ Although few middle class men and women would have argued that the working classes constituted a race apart, they described the bodies of working class men and women in ways that etched their labor upon their bodies. The assumption that working class men and women were degraded affected perceptions of working class religious movements. Their willingness to accept the prophetic announcements of “madwomen” and “disreputable” men was seen as being akin to the religious enthusiasm and foolishness of indigenous people.

In the nineteenth century, a series of prophetic movements in the United States and the Pacific Islands sought to revitalize indigenous religion and separate Christianity from the authority of white missionaries. The Manava movement in Samoa, for example, combined messages about the God of Heaven with dramatic prophecies, miraculous healings, and traditional prayers.²⁷⁹ In the United States, Tenskwatawa led a purification movement designed

²⁷⁷ Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830 – 1864* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 81.

²⁷⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 101 – 103.

²⁷⁹ Matt Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 148 – 149; Damon Salesa, “When the Waters Met: Some Shared Histories of Christianity and Ancestral Samoan Spirituality,” *Whispers and Vanities: Samoan Indigenous Knowledge and Religion*, edited T. Suali’i et al. (Wellington, New Zealand: Huia, 2014), 143-158.

to cleanse American Indian communities of European influence.²⁸⁰ Although these movements were far removed from each other geographically, the conflation of indigenous identities in the nineteenth century linked them in the popular imaginary. Indigenous people, in spite of vast differences in culture, religious belief, and political structure, were seen as being uniformly drawn to religious fervor and enthusiasm. The racialization of the working classes within England meant that middle class men and women were willing to draw connections between the religious movements that they encountered in the colonies and those that had occurred in metropolitan Britain. When the millenarian movement *Mamaia* broke out in Tahiti, one of the missionaries derided it as being “a good deal of something like Joanna Southcott nonsense.”²⁸¹

Although the humble origins of Mormonism alienated many people in Missouri, its appeal to the lower classes resonated with Fielding. It imagined a world in which God actively intervened—healing the bodies of the sick, speaking through heavenly tongues, and dictating new revelations. The world of Mormonism was similar to his family’s previous faith. Mary and her siblings were born in Bedfordshire in central England in the early nineteenth century. Although it was still relatively rural, the dislocations and shifts in production that transformed nineteenth-century England had not left the county unaffected.²⁸² The enclosure of fields and introduction of intensive farming techniques contributed to what some historians have termed “the industrious revolution.”²⁸³ Rural counties like Bedfordshire shifted from a semi-communal system of land ownership to commercial management and private ownership.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Greg Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745 – 1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1993).

²⁸¹ Cited in Gunson, “An Account of *Mamaia*,” 223.

²⁸² Nigel Agar, *The Bedfordshire Farm Worker in the Nineteenth Century* (Bedford: The Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1981).

²⁸³ The term “industrious revolution” was originally coined by Akira Hayama to describe the changes in spending habits and consumption that accompanied the Industrial Revolution. It also explains the transformations that occurred within agriculture and cottage industry in this time period. It is perhaps best explained in Jan de Vries, *The*

The Fieldings found their lives profoundly affected by these transformations. Their father John abandoned his native Yorkshire as a youth in order to live as one of his uncle's tenants.²⁸⁵ When he first visited his potential farm, he felt that the land was unsuitable. When he opened his family Bible, however, his eyes fell upon a verse so appropriate that he came to believe that God had ordained their move to Bedfordshire.²⁸⁶ Rachel initially opposed the move. In becoming tenant farmers, however, the Fieldings had the opportunity to become relatively prosperous. Rural, agricultural counties boasted well-to-do families as well as agricultural laborers and small tenant farmers. The class position of the Fieldings would have depended on the size of their holdings. It is difficult to determine their exact standing.²⁸⁷ Don Cecil Corbett, a descendant and historian of the Fieldings, describes their tenure in Bedfordshire as one of hardship. He calls their house a "small, inconvenient cottage" and depicts their lives as "hard work, soiled hands, animals to care for.... [and] seasonal income [spread] over months with no returns."²⁸⁸ John's descriptions of the land reinforce his portrayal of their lives. There are hints, however, that they might have enjoyed a higher social standing. While she was living in Yorkshire, John's wife Rachel had at least one servant and seems to have enjoyed at least a small amount of prosperity. It is possible that she brought some of the wealth she had enjoyed with her to Honidon.²⁸⁹ What seems most likely is that John's decision to become a tenant farmer represented a descent in terms of class status for his wife, if not for John himself. Rachel's opposition to the tenancy and

Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁸⁴ *Western Civilizations: Their History & Culture*, 17th edition, Vol. 2, ed. Judith Coffin, Robert Stacey, Joshua Cole, and Carolyn Symes (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 581.

²⁸⁵ Don C. Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith: Daughter of Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1966), 7 – 9.

²⁸⁶ Ann Fielding Matthews, "Memoir of Mrs. Rachel Fielding of Honidon, Bedfordshire," *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* (August 1830), 516.

²⁸⁷ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830 – 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 100.

²⁸⁸ Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith*, 10 – 11.

²⁸⁹ Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith*, 9.

John's unfavorable description of the land suggest that it was not an ideal situation and that the family would have found difficult to sustain themselves at a comfortable level.

John also prayed sometimes when he should have been working. By the time they moved to Honidon, he served as a Methodist preacher.²⁹⁰ Although Methodism began as a radical critique of the Church of England in the eighteenth century, it was calcifying by the time that John bought his farm in Bedfordshire. The movement, which had once embraced female preaching and allowed working class men and women a space within church governance, was becoming a more respectable and less responsive church. Primitive Methodism originally appealed to those who saw the Methodism's increased institutionalization as a loss. It tried to recapture the radicalism of the early movement, embracing female spirituality and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. According to the historian Deborah Valenze, its members were often laborers, artisans, and farmers who felt that industrialization had destroyed their communities and led to the loss of cottage-based industry. Intense, emotional meetings evoked an extinct world and critiqued the current one.²⁹¹ The Fieldings were the type of people who tended to be attracted to these types of religious movements, and it is possible that their father became a Primitive Methodist. As the conversion of Mary, Mercy, and Joseph suggests, their children were engaged in a search for a primitive Christianity that would accept the renewal of spiritual gifts.

When they heard of Mormonism, then, Fielding and his sisters felt that the faith resonated with what they believed about God. They first heard of the Mormon Church in Toronto, Canada, where they had moved a few years earlier. At the time, the town boasted several churches, a

²⁹⁰ Matthews, "Memoir of Mrs. Rachel Fielding of Honidon, Bedfordshire," 3.

²⁹¹ Deborah Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

hospital, a royal theater, a college, post office, and meeting places for parliament.²⁹² By 1841, it would house over fourteen thousand residents.²⁹³ In 1836, Parley P. Pratt arrived in the city with plans to warn its residents the true gospel had been restored to the earth and that those who did not heed its warnings would be destroyed. Although Pratt's audiences were small, rumors began to spread about the existence of a new charismatic preacher who claimed the ability to heal the sick.²⁹⁴ Fielding initially responded to Pratt with coolness, but when he heard him preach, he found himself fascinated by Pratt's explanations of the prophecies contained within the Scriptures. In his journal, he wrote that Pratt had "the Spirit and Power of God," and "such Wisdom as none but God himself could have given."²⁹⁵ He likely spoke about the renewed presence of God on earth, the possibility for performing healings, and the destruction those who opposed the gospel would soon meet. Fielding was not the only one who was attracted to Mormonism. Many early Canadian converts to Mormonism belonged to the same study group as Fielding. One of the most influential was John Taylor, who served as President of the Church in the late nineteenth century.²⁹⁶

Like many other Canadian converts, Fielding participated enthusiastically in the spiritual gifts that early Mormonism claimed. One of the most dramatic ways that he did so was in casting out devils. Just over a year after his conversion, Fielding participated in the exorcism of one of his friends who had been tormented with "devils" for two or three years. In his diary, Fielding

²⁹² Alpheus Todd, *Plan City of Chicago, Capital of Upper Canada, No. 35 Newgate Street, Toronto, Opposite the Brewery, 1834*, Toronto Public Library, Toronto, Ontario. Available:

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDMDC-MAPS-R-53&R=DC-MAPS-R-53>

²⁹³ Terry Givens and Matthew Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 84.

²⁹⁴ Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 84.

²⁹⁵ Joseph Fielding, *Diary of Joseph Fielding, March 1797 – December 19, 1863*, pg. 3, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

²⁹⁶ Richard E. Bennett, "Plucking Not Planting: Mormonism in Eastern Canada, 1830-1850," in *The Mormon Presence in Canada*, ed. Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990), 23-24. See also G. St. John Stott, "John Taylor's Religious Preparation," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19:1 (Spring 1986): 123-28.

wrote, “It seemed plain to me that the Devil designed to destroy him if possible.... His Family were in great trouble; his Wife was near being confined, and he himself attending to no Busyness and in such a state that his Mother at one time proposed putting on him a strait waistcoat.”²⁹⁷ The man believed that he could “void” the devils inside him by putting his head as low as it could go.²⁹⁸ Even after he converted to Mormonism and was appointed to go to Great Britain as a missionary, the man was afflicted with demons that would scratch him at night. Eventually, Fielding and the other Mormon missionaries decided to perform an exorcism. At first, Fielding did not participate in the ritual. Instead, he watched as two Mormon men placed their hands upon his friend and began to pray. As they did so, one of the men’s voices began to falter, as he did not completely believe in the veracity of the possession. As that happened, the possessed man “was thrown down on the Floor, and was in great Agony, so that the Sweat ran down his Face.”²⁹⁹ Later that night, they laid the possessed man in bed. They could hear the “gnashing of the devils’ teeth” as they watched over him.³⁰⁰ A few nights later, they tried the exorcism again. Shapes and forms appeared to one of the men—“some like naked Women, misshapen and ugly, some like Cats with half a head,” and some “half a Creature and half another.” They were “the most miserable and disgusting appearances one could possibly imagine.”³⁰¹ The men became convinced that the same spirit that had afflicted the French Prophets and Edward Irving afflicted their friend.

Fielding’s acceptance of exorcism as a legitimate spiritual practice was widespread in early Mormonism. One man described rebuking the evil spirits in two people who had confronted him during the middle of the night to demand that he prevent their son from courting

²⁹⁷ Diary of Joseph Fielding, 10.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Diary of Joseph Fielding, 11.

³⁰¹ Diary of Joseph Fielding, 11.

a young woman. Within the woman he found as many evil spirits “as any woman possibly could possess in any ancient or modern time.”³⁰² Another man described casting evil spirits out of two women who “were smitten to the floor” and “thrown into fits” during a church meeting.³⁰³ For these individuals, the ability of Mormon men to cast out evil spirits was evidence of its truthfulness. Others, however, saw it as evidence of Mormonism’s folly. Dozens of people in Toronto opposed Mormonism and sought to disrupt Pratt’s sermons.

In spite of this opposition, Fielding eventually became convinced that his family “could not reject the testimony but to our own condemnation.” “The Word preached,” he wrote in his diary, “came with great power.”³⁰⁴ He was not using figurative language. He believed that accepting the gospel and submitting to baptism gave individuals new access to God and new abilities to control the elements. In the early nineteenth century, patriarchal blessings given to men as they departed for their missions promised them the ability to calm the seas with their hands and open prison doors. In his previous description of the exorcism he participated in, he wrote that the man “had been for a long time grievously afflicted by the Devil.”³⁰⁵ For Fielding, the man’s affliction was as real as the crops that he farmed on the outskirts of Toronto. He believed that the claims that Mormonism made about the existence of angels and devils were not evidence of their poverty but of their righteousness.

After he converted to Mormonism with his sisters, they were anxious to share their newfound faith with their brothers and sisters who still lived in England. By the time that Fielding arrived in northern England, however, his family seems to have increased in social

³⁰² Letter, Lorenzo Snow to Heber C. Kimball, October 22nd, 1841, pg. 39, Lorenzo Snow Letterbook, Box 1, Folder 1, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

³⁰³ Alfred Young, “Life of Alfred D. Young” (Original: 1888, Recopied: Dec. 27, 1832 by Leola Y. Hansen), *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM: A Comprehensive Resource Library* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Book, 2009)

³⁰⁴ Diary of Joseph Fielding, 3.

³⁰⁵ Diary of Joseph Fielding, 10.

standing. The idea that Mormonism was evidence of the delusion of the English working classes shaped the responses of Fielding's family to his decision to convert to Mormonism. English class politics also influenced Mormon perceptions of England. Confronted with the poverty of the English industrial city, Mormon missionaries saw the indifference of the middle classes as evidence of their depravity. English class politics not only shaped responses to the presence of Mormon missionaries; they shaped the way that Mormons perceived their converts and the message they preached.

A Working Class Zion

When Mormon missionaries initially entered Great Britain, they were appalled by the vast disparities in wealth between the working and middle classes. Although men like Brigham Young and Parley Pratt had grown up in penury, they were shocked by the living conditions that beset thousands of working class people in Britain. Mormon missionaries arrived in Great Britain during the 1840s, a period that has been remembered in historical discourse as “the Hungry Forties.” Economic depression and catastrophic crop failures combined with the notorious protectionist legislation of the Corn Laws to politicize class difference in England.

The activism created around working class rights in this time period partook in a new type of storytelling that had developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to promote humanitarian causes. Thomas Laqueur has claimed that this new “humanitarian narrative” used the repetition of details and a focus on individual bodies to evoke sympathy from middle class readers.³⁰⁶ In 1848, for example, Elizabeth Gaskell published *Mary Barton*, the first of her industrial novels that were to inspire middle class readers to try to ameliorate the conditions of

³⁰⁶ Thomas Laqueur, “Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative,” *The Cultural History* ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 176 – 204.

the English working classes. After a mill burns down in the novel, Gaskell describes working class living conditions in Manchester. In the homes of the poor, she claims, there were “no wages to pay for the bread the children cried aloud for in their young impatience of suffering. There was no breakfast to lounge over; their lounge was taken in bed, to try and keep warmth in them that bitter March weather, and, by being quiet, to deaden the gnawing wolf within. Many a penny that would have gone little way enough in oatmeal or potatoes, bought opium to still the hungry little ones, and make them forget their uneasiness in heavy troubled sleep.”³⁰⁷ Although the passage is long, the rhythm of its details is meant to pull the reader into the text. It uses domestic imagery to evoke sympathy from the reader and, hopefully, provoke them to action.

The response to the poverty of the 1840s was not limited to humanitarian efforts designed to ameliorate the living conditions of the English poor. Working class men and women were attracted to radical movements that demanded political reform. In 1832, Parliament passed an act that extended the franchise to include property owners. Although it was lauded as a piece of progressive legislation, it failed to enfranchise most working class men and to introduce a secret ballot. The historian James Vernon has argued that the 1832 Reform Bill actually represented “the closure of democratic political forms” and “the stifling of radical libertarian tradition.”³⁰⁸ Rather than extending the ability of the working classes to participate in politics, it discredited the forms by which they had traditionally done so. The public protests, meetings, and handbills that formed the substance of working class politics in the early modern period were recast as hostile, subversive actions to be policed. The working class men who had supported the Reform Act felt betrayed by its contents. In response, they organized a movement that called for the passage of a People’s Charter that would extend the franchise to any man over the age of twenty-

³⁰⁷ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1848), 86 - 87

³⁰⁸ James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815 – 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7.

one, institute a secret ballot, and eliminate the property requirement for members of Parliament. Throughout the 1840s, the Chartists staged massive protests, which culminated in a meeting of a hundred and fifty thousand people demanding the Charter's passage. Millions of people had signed their petition.³⁰⁹

Most of the Mormon missionaries who traveled to Great Britain had little experience with England's massive industrial cities. Although many early Mormon converts had grown up in poverty, the poverty they endured had tended to be rural. Brigham Young, for example, was born on a farm in Whitingham, Vermont, in 1801. His father, unable to sustain a profit, had been forced to hire out his labor, clearing other men's farms of stumps and boulders in an attempt to feed his family. The children helped with the labor instead of going to school. Young remembered chopping logs and plowing the land barefooted. "If I had a pair of pants that would cover me," he later wrote, "I did pretty well."³¹⁰ The poverty that they experienced in the United States, however, did little to prepare American Mormons for the realities of industrial cities. The crowding of people led most nineteenth-century cities to struggle with sanitation. The historian Patrick Joyce has described nineteenth-century London as a place filled with "blood, excrement, secretions, rotting and dead matter." "The middle of London," he writes, "was likened to a mediaeval charnel house, the dead piled high upon one another, and constantly present to the living, in the most disturbing forms."³¹¹ When the Mormon apostle Heber C. Kimball later remembered the scenes of poverty he encountered in nineteenth-century English cities, he wrote

³⁰⁹ David Goodway, *London Chartism, 1838 – 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Gareth Stedman Jones, *Rethinking Chartism: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832 – 1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90 – 178; Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists* (London: Pantheon Books, 1984); and Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

³¹⁰ Quoted in Turner, *Brigham Young*, 9.

³¹¹ Patrick Joyce, "Maps, Blood and the City: The Governance of the Social in Nineteenth-Century Great Britain," *The Social in Question: New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), 107.

that he felt “to weep and mourn and lament... they are starving to death, and there [were] scores and hundreds of my brethren in the poor-houses of the country.”³¹²

In many ways, Fielding was better prepared for missionary work in England than his brethren. Unlike many of the other Mormon missionaries, he had not been born in the United States and was not surprised by the poverty of working classes in England. The same processes that led his family to become tenant farmers in Bedfordshire had led to the scenes of poverty in London, Manchester, and Liverpool. He still remarked upon the living conditions of the working classes in England, comparing them to “the Children of Israel” who had escaped from Egypt in the time of Moses. He believed that the emigration of Mormon converts from English cities would require just as much of the “power and Wisdom” of God as had the emancipation of the Israelites had.³¹³ Fielding’s understanding of Mormon theology reflected a utopianism that was common among the English working classes. As Barbara Taylor pointed out in *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, “the vision of a perfect, and perfectly harmonious, community of equals had been a persistent subtheme within Christian thought for centuries.” In England, it manifested itself in “Thomas More’s *Utopia*” in the sixteenth century, in “the communist Digger communities of the mid-seventeenth century,” and the “eighteenth century utopian sects like the Shakers.”³¹⁴

In his sermons, Fielding and other Mormon missionaries played upon this strand of British thought. According to an Englishman named James Harwood, the Mormon missionaries who converted him told him “a beautiful story of the Valley of Salt Lake, and the opportunity for the poor man, his chance to make him a home of his own.”³¹⁵ Most individuals who converted to Mormonism in Britain were overwhelmingly working class. According to the historian Malcolm

³¹² Heber C. Kimball, October 6, 1854, *Journal of Discourses* 7:40, cited in LeRoy Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856 – 1860* (Salt Lake City: Arthur Clark Foundation, 1960), 25.

³¹³ Diary of Joseph Fielding, 15.

³¹⁴ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 8.

³¹⁵ “James Harwood Autobiography,” pg. 1, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

Thorp, the number was at least seventy-one percent. In his analysis of the spiritual autobiographies of British Mormons, Thorp argues that it was the “plainness” of Mormonism’s doctrine and its emphasis upon the possibility of miracles that led them to convert.³¹⁶

The abundance found within Mormon ideas about the afterlife may have been another reason that the British working classes were drawn to Mormonism. In his descriptions of the millennium, the Mormon theologian Parley P. Pratt emphasized the sumptuousness of the world-to-come.³¹⁷ He argued that individuals would be “clothed in the finest robes of linens” in the afterlife. Their bosoms would “[glow] with all the confidence of conscious innocence,” as they bathed “in the crystal waters of life,” sat “neath the evergreen bowers and trees of Eden,” and inhaled “the healthful breezes, perfumed with odours,” which “wafted from the roses and pinks of paradise.”³¹⁸ The material benefits Mormonism promised likely appealed to the English working classes. For people beset by poverty in the 1840s, the prosperity that Mormonism offered in the present world and in the next was alluring. The *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General* quoted one of its correspondents in its lament that “‘hundreds,—‘nay, thousands—of our best artizens are shipped off, by this society, to perish in the pestilential swamps of New Orleans.’” It bemoaned that so “many simple-minded people” were being “seduced by this bald and impious delusion” to “sell their little property and place themselves

³¹⁶ Malcolm Thorp, “The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837 – 52,” *Journal of Mormon History* Vol. 4 (1977): 62 – 63.

³¹⁷ Although Christian descriptions of the afterlife included utopian images, Mormon missionaries insisted that their vision of the afterlife was more deeply embodied than that of Christians. In an 1845 essay, for example, Parley Pratt wrote that “‘Immateriality’ is the modern Christian’s God, his anticipated heaven, his immortal self—his all.” His tone was accusatory. In the next few sentences, he equated the belief in an immaterial afterlife with atheism. “Who,” he asked, “can perceive the nice shades of difference between the one and the other? They seem alike all but in name.” See Parley P. Pratt, “Materiality (1845),” Reprinted in Benjamin E. Park and Jordan T. Watkins, “The Riches of Mormon Materialism: Parley P. Pratt’s ‘Materiality’ and Early Mormon Theology,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 11:2 (Fall 2010), 162.

¹⁰ Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Technology* (Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1855), 81.

and their fortunes at the disposal of the sect.”³¹⁹ Inherent in their critique was the suggestion that the claims Mormonism made about the prosperity of their American Zion were false. The *Preston Chronicle* published negative descriptions of American Mormon communities from Mormon converts who had immigrated to the United States. One man warned that the Mormon houses were “mostly like English cow pens.” Another told potential Mormon converts that he had met “one poor woman” whose children had not even “tasted of wheat bread” in four months. Although her husband worked as a stonemason on the temple, he was seldom paid in anything but “Indian corn meal, or pickled pork.”³²⁰

For English journalists, Mormon missionaries were hucksters, who played upon the poverty of the English working classes to convince them to move to the United States. The faith’s acceptance of miraculous healings only deepened the distrust that many English people felt towards it. In 1838, a Mormon woman died after discharging her doctor who had been treating her for inflammation after childbirth. She believed in the claims of Mormon missionaries to be able to heal believers through prayer and blessings. According to local newspapers, she drank “ginger tea” mixed with “cayenne pepper” while members of the faith “rubbed her body of rum.”³²¹ The woman died shortly thereafter, and two of the people who had been involved in her treatment after he left were arrested. *The Blackburn Standard* wrote that it had to “blush to name the blasphemous profanation” but that a “walking stick” had been placed in bed with the poor woman out of a belief that it would heal her. They referred to her willingness to participate in

³¹⁹ “Mormonism,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, Issue 892 (January 22, 1842), pg. 4, *19th Century British Library Newspapers*

³²⁰ “The Mormonite Delusion Exposed,” *Preston Chronicle* Issue 1575 (November 5, 1842) *19th Century British Library Newspapers*

³²¹ “Serious Charge against a Mormonite Priest,” *Preston Chronicle*, Issue 1362 (October 6, 1838) *19th British Library Newspapers*.

these rituals as a “humiliating prostration of human intellect.”³²² Newspapers throughout Great Britain ran the story, warning their readers of the “shocking imposture” that was becoming popular among the working classes in the Manchester area.³²³

Mormon missionaries, for their part, tried to distance themselves from the charges of delusion. In his writings, Parley Pratt frequently insisted that theology was a science. In the *Key to the Science of Theology*, for example, he describes an expansive present in which “the railroads and the steam-boats, with their progressive improvements in speed, safety, and convenience” marked the beginning of a “new era.” For him, only Mormonism is suited to the present age. He sees older theologies as being too feeble to meet humanity’s current needs. Cast “in the mould of other ages,” they are adapted to a more narrow sphere of intellectual development.³²⁴ Only Mormonism offers “the key to the science of theology,” which will grant humanity “lawful access... to the treasures of wisdom and intelligence” and unlock “the science by which worlds are organized, sustained, and directed.”³²⁵ Pratt sees the theological innovations of Mormonism as being no less a product of science and rational thought as the construction of the railroad or the discovery of the laws of physics.

Positioning Mormon theology as a science implicitly rebuked the suggestion that Mormonism was a simple delusion. Although Parley was one of the most influential Mormon theologians, he was not the only one. His brother Orson also published a number of pamphlets emphasizing the reasonability of Mormonism and served as an equally important influence on

³²² “The Registration,” *The Blackburn Standard*, Issue 197, (October 10, 1838) *19th Century British Library Newspapers*.

³²³ The quote comes from “Shocking Imposture,” *Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin) (October 13, 1838) *19th Century British Library*. For examples of newspapers that carried the story, see “Multiple News Items,” *The Standard* (London), Issue 4464 (October 11, 1838), pg. 1, *19th Century British Library Newspapers* and “Country News,” *The Champion and Weekly Herald* (London) Issue 23 (October 14, 1838) *19th Century British Library Newspapers*.

³²⁴ Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, xi – xii.

³²⁵ Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 1.

Mormon thought. In a pamphlet published in 1851, Orson uses the philosophy of John Herschel, Scottish materialism, and contemporary atomic theory to argue for Mormon conceptions of the divine.³²⁶ These explorations in Mormon theology were an honest attempt to grapple with the faith's implications for modern philosophy but they had a similar effect as Smith's revelations in response to the spiritual experiences at Kirtland. In emphasizing reason, philosophy, and science, they distanced Mormonism from ecstatic religious experience. Smith's revelations, however, served to separate Mormonism from a specifically female religious body. In England, Mormonism's claims to rationality were overlaid more heavily with ideas about class.

In addition to trying to separate themselves from claims of delusion, Mormon missionaries working in English cities sought to separate themselves from other working class movements. The popularity of Chartism among the English working classes meant many of the debates in which Mormon missionaries engaged would be with Chartists. Socialists in England had long sought to remake the family. Robert Owen, for example, had rejected the family as an individualistic measure that undermined the communal spirit he was trying to foster.³²⁷ The rejection of the female franchise as a legitimate social aim, however, meant that Chartists offered a much more conservative vision of the family. Chartists tended to praise female domesticity, explicitly contrasting it with the dehumanization men experienced in the factories.³²⁸ They also critiqued the effects that factories had on working class families. The demands of factory life, in which labor was regimented and took place outside of the home, led to the fragmentation of individual families. This dissolution of the family was no less real to Chartists than the dissolution of the family that animated Smith's revelations. Just as Smith's theological innovations sought to bind the family together, protecting it against the vagaries of death, the

³²⁶ Orson Pratt, *Great First Cause, or the Self-Moving Forces of the Universe* (Liverpool: R. James Printer, 1851).

³²⁷ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 15 – 21.

³²⁸ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 269.

vision that the Chartists created of the family sought to protect it against the constant threat of fragmentation represented by the factory. Early Mormons, however, sought to distance themselves from Chartists. The *Millennial Star*, a Mormon newspaper that the American missionaries published in Liverpool, classed Chartism with “abdications of crowned heads, daring *emeutes*, conspiracies, riots, [and] confederations.”³²⁹ One Mormon missionary working in Wales decried attempts to compare Mormonism to the Chartist movement. He considered it an attempt of the “iron masters” to banish Mormonism.³³⁰

The debates that arose between Mormons and other members of working class movements could be deadly. Some of the latter man’s venom could have been the result of the anger that he felt directed towards him as he walked the streets of Wales. He complained in the *Millennial Star* that an angry crowd had surrounded the hall in which he had been preaching, “gnashing their teeth, and threatening everything, besides throwing stones through the windows.”³³¹ Occasionally, these threats erupted into violence. In January 1842, a group of men attacked a Mormon meeting, throwing rocks through the windows and pounding on the doors. Although a Mormon man was able to frighten them by firing a gun, one of the women in attendance received a gash on the side of her nose.³³² Mormon missionaries sometimes found themselves pelted with stones and eggs as they labored in English streets. Their meetings were interrupted by the jeers of the audience. In the industrial centers of nineteenth-century England, debates about religious faith and class politics could often turn violent. Unaccustomed to the raucousness of English politics, the Mormon missionaries attributed the actions of English

³²⁹ Untitled, *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 10:13 (July 1, 1848): 201.

³³⁰ Daniel Jones, “Letter to Elder Orson Spencer,” *Millennial Star* 9:20 (October 15, 1847): 319.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² Diary Entry, January 27th, 1842, Charles Smith Reminiscences and Diary, pg. 4 – 5, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

crowds as the work of devils. They saw themselves as being in a very real battle with Satan, who used unruly crowds to prevent the spread of the gospel.

The Mormon critiques of the English class system were real. They were horrified by the stratification they encountered in major English cities. Although they shared many of the concerns of radical working class movements like Chartism, Mormon missionaries rejected their emphasis on political solutions. Instead, they couched their criticism of the English government in the terms of repentance and prophecy. In a public letter addressed to Queen Victoria, Parley P. Pratt warned her that “the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” and that “the fulness of the wrath of God” would soon be “poured out upon all the children of men.”³³³ Only repentance, which he defined as giving “bread to the hungry” and “clothing to the naked,” could assuage the wrath of God.³³⁴ Although Pratt published the letter under his own name, he served as the mouthpiece for the Mormon Church within Great Britain, publishing the pamphlets and articles that other missionaries carried in their pockets to be sold to potential converts. In addition to publicly addressing the monarch, Mormon missionaries presented two copies of the Book of Mormon to the royal family—one for Queen Victoria and one for Prince Albert.³³⁵

The Mormon missionaries were marginalized within British society as a whole. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert did not take the apocalyptic warnings of the Mormon missionaries seriously, nor were they likely to take notice of the bound volumes of Mormon scriptures that arrived on their doorstep. The American men who traveled to Great Britain to spread the gospel, however, were enormously influential within the British Mormon community, perhaps even more so than the Mormon prophet himself. It was often the words of Parley P. Pratt or his

³³³ Parley P. Pratt, *A Letter to the Queen Touching the Signs of the Times and the Political Destiny of the World* 2nd Edition (Manchester: P.P. Pratt, 1841), 7, 10.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

³³⁵ Eliza R. Snow, “Stanzas on the Presentation of the Book of Mormon To Queen Victoria,” *The Latter-day Saint Millennial Star* 4:12 (April 1844):184 – 185.

brother Orson that first introduced potential converts in Great Britain to the new faith. Fielding, the Pratts, and the other Mormon missionaries also served as spiritual leaders within the British Mormon community. British men and women who converted to Mormonism learned about Mormon theology and life in the American community through the letters of their friends and the stories that the American missionaries told. As a result, they placed their faith in the truthfulness of men like Parley Pratt as surely as they did the Book of Mormon.

Implicit in the Mormon imagery of judgment was a criticism of both the English middle classes and their working class counterparts. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was increasingly common for white, middle class men and women to be involved in a culture of philanthropy that emphasized moral reform and uplift. Mormon critiques of the British class system rejected the claims of the middle classes to moral authority and their claim to be improving the lives of the poor. At the same time that Mormon missionaries rejected the middle class claims to moral authority, they distanced themselves from English working class politics. They saw themselves as an alternative to the reform movements of the 1840s. They encouraged Mormon converts to abandon their communities by immigrating to the United States. In physically removing themselves from England's poverty, these individuals would leave the servitude they had experienced there. Escaping from Babylon, they would live the life of the redeemed in the Mormon Zion that was being built on the banks of the Mississippi. Mormonism's emphasis on immigration placed them at odds with other English reform movements at the same time that their visions of plenty appealed to people living in poverty.

Class, however, was not the only thing that placed Mormonism at odds with English society. Although influential Mormon men had practiced polygamy since the 1830s, it circulated within England and the rest of the English-speaking world only as rumor. As suggested in the

last chapter, many Mormons rejected the insinuations that church leaders were taking multiple wives as crass rumors designed to discredit their faith. Even those men who participated in polygamy denied the practice when asked about it by converts in Lancashire, Manchester, and Preston. In 1852, however, Orson Pratt publicly announced that Mormons had accepted plural marriage as a revelation from God from the tabernacle. The announcement would change the face of Mormonism within Great Britain.

Even before Orson made the announcement, however, rumors had circulated about sexuality immorality within the Mormon community. The rumors affected how the British perceived Mormonism. For individual families, it was often difficult to accept that a family member had converted to a faith that required them to move to the United States and that was rumored to be rife with sexual immorality. This section has largely focused on Great Britain as a whole. In the next section, we return to the Fieldings. It is difficult to know how much they knew about the decision of their sisters to participate in polygamy and when. If they found out about polygamy before Mary's death, it would have been difficult for them to accept her decision to remain the wife of Joseph Smith's brother. If they found out afterwards, it would have spared them the knowledge during Mary's lifetime but also would have placed a wedge between them and her descendants. The Fieldings were not the only people within Great Britain to be shocked by the Mormon practice of polygamy. Its announcement in 1852 would change the way Mormonism was perceived within Great Britain as a whole.

The Patriarch's Tent

The practice of polygamy challenged English conceptions of middle class respectability. Although they had initially struggled as farmers in Bedfordshire, the Fieldings seem to have been

relatively prosperous by the mid-nineteenth century. James had a congregation of his own in northern England, and their sister Ann had married Timothy Matthews, a clergyman in the Church of England. Both men were attracted to religious reform movements. This attraction should have marginalized them within British society. Edward Tullidge, an English Methodist who converted to Mormonism in the 1840s, however, described both men as prominent figures within their community. He called Matthews in particular “a very able and learned man.”³³⁶

There are other suggestions that the two men were considered respectable figures within English society. When James cast the Mormon missionaries from his pulpit, they blamed his decision to do so on avarice. They believed that he only did so to protect the money that he received from his church and his position within society.³³⁷ In order for James to protect his social standing, he had to have some measure of respectability to begin with. Finally, James does not appear to have supported himself by farming as his father did.

Mary’s conversion to Mormonism troubled many of her family members. It is difficult to know whether part of their discomfort was related to Mormonism’s sexual practices. James does not mention polygamy in his early objections to Mormonism. By the time that his sister’s shared husband died in 1844, however, stories had likely begun to circulate within Great Britain about sexual irregularities within the Mormon community. It is possible that these rumors began with the publication of John C. Bennett’s exposé of the Mormon Church in 1842. Bennett, a Mormon apostate who had once served as Assistant President of the Church, accused Joseph Smith of adultery and murder.³³⁸ Networks of men who visited New England on whaling and merchant ships carried his pamphlets far beyond the United States. When Mormon missionaries arrived in

³³⁶ Edward Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), 251.

³³⁷ Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, and Willard Richards, “Mission to England,” *Millennial Star* 12:1 (April 1841), 290–292.

³³⁸ John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints, or, An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), passim.

Tahiti in 1844, they discovered that rumors about Joseph Smith's marital infidelities had preceded them. British sailors had already carried copies of Bennett's tracts to the islands.³³⁹ It is uncertain when Bennett's publication first arrived in Great Britain. In 1844, however, the *Millennial Star* reprinted an article from the *Times and Seasons* suggesting that Bennett was an agent of Satan and that his name would ultimately be "blotted out from the generations to come."³⁴⁰ A year later, Parley Pratt addressed some of the stories that circulated about the doctrine of Spiritual Wifery and church's involvement in it.³⁴¹

The newfound status of Fielding's family meant that accusations of sexual immorality would have been particularly upsetting for them. The ability of James and his siblings to portray themselves as middle class relied partially on their ability to claim respectable domestic relations. The obituary that Ann wrote after her mother's death is reflective of the stories that circulated about the family's past as they attempted to shore up their newfound social position. Although they had initially struggled on the tenancy their father claimed, the Fieldings were relatively prosperous by the time that Joseph returned to Britain. Ann emphasized their mother's extreme piety and religious faith in a way that posthumously claimed for her a sense of middle class respectability. In one section, she refers to her mother's skill at "domestic affairs," in which "frugality and benevolence were admirably united." She suggests that her mother practiced "economy in all her arrangements," and yet, was "always ready to yearn" over "the sons and daughters of affliction and distress."³⁴² In stressing these aspects, the obituary created her mother as an admirable woman whose respectability and propriety were beyond reproach. In doing so,

³³⁹ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 263; Grouard, June 30, 1844 Entry, *Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard*, 42.

³⁴⁰ J.C.S., "The Mormons or Latter-day Saints, with Their Persecutions," *The Latter-day Saint Millennial Star* Vol. 5:4 (September 1843): 72.

³⁴¹ Parley P. Pratt, "Fragment of an Address," *The Latter-day Saint Millennial Star* 6:2 (July 1, 1845): 22.

³⁴² Matthews, "Memoir of Mrs. Rachel Fielding of Honidon, Bedfordshire," 517.

Ann shored up her own respectability and social standing while claiming a similar position for her mother. In Ann's writing, her mother had not lost the standing that she had in Yorkshire.

The Mormon adoption of polygamy was a direct affront to this middle class ideal. Mormon ideas about polygamy stressed its expansive nature and the possibility that it would allow individuals to multiply their number of the kin, creating links between men and women that would eventually unite the kingdom of God into a single family network. This vision, however, did not captivate the British masses. For them, the Mormon acceptance of plural marriage was evidence of the faith's depravity. In the mid-nineteenth century British imaginary, non-white men and women entered into polygamous marriages, not middle class men and women. Romantic novels, travel narratives, and Protestant missionary magazines eroticized the cultures and religious beliefs of non-white people. According to the literary theorist Anne McClintock, "travelers' tales abounded with visions of the monstrous sexuality of far-off lands, where, as legend had it, men sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes, feminized men's breasts flowed with milk and militarized women lopped theirs off."³⁴³

Understandings of polygamy as non-white affected responses to Mormonism within Great Britain. Stories circulated within Great Britain for years before the official announcement of polygamy, but Mormon missionaries had denied the accusations. When the Mormon Church finally decided to admit that it practiced polygamy, the British press responded with indignation and derision. In 1853, the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* printed a copy of the Mormon Church's official announcement concerning polygamy and wrote sarcastically that they wished all sinners would be so honest.³⁴⁴ One pamphlet accused Mormons of creating a "new Sodom" that would

³⁴³ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 22.

³⁴⁴ "Progress of the Mormons," *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, Issue 391 (September 8, 1853): 3. *19th Century British Library Newspapers*

ruin “innocence” and spread “the darkest of crimes” throughout the earth.³⁴⁵ Another accused Brigham Young of glorying “in his shame.”³⁴⁶

The stories that circulated about Mormonism often combined descriptions of polygamy with the supposed violence of life within the Mormon frontier. In 1854, *The Bradford Observer* printed a letter from a British convert describing his trip to the United States. The letter had originally been printed in *The Edinburgh News*. After detailing the privation he experienced on his journey to Utah, he described the marriage of an elderly man of seventy-six to a young girl of fourteen. The girl, he claimed, had frequently visited the house where he boarded and “would sit and cry for hours.”³⁴⁷ Her sorrow angered him. He described Brigham Young as a spiteful, vengeful man who lusted after women. The man who claimed to be a prophet of God had “fifty-seven wives or concubines” – many of whom “had sucking children.” Although the man claimed to be writing from an objective stance, his sentences sometimes read like spitting—the anger, palpable in each phrase. “This is he that says he stands as the mediator between God and man,” the author writes. “This is the prophet of the Lord. He says he is the mouthpiece of God unto man. He preaches Jesus Christ one minute, and cuts your throat the next.”³⁴⁸

Many of the English women who participated in polygamy were of working class origin, a fact that only deepened concerns about possible seduction. One woman who converted to Mormonism had been born in Liverpool in 1818. She was orphaned as a young woman and worked as a housekeeper for one of the Mormon missionaries. He married her just one year after

³⁴⁵ Craig L. Foster, *Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain, 1837 – 1860* (Master’s Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1989), 140.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁴⁷ “The Mormons at the Salt Lake,” *The Bradford Observer* Issue 1073 (September 28, 1854), pg. 7, *19th Century British Newspapers*,

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

she began her employment.³⁴⁹ Matt Bowman has argued that the woman's story was far from atypical. Many of the women who agreed to enter into polygamy initially entered their husbands' households as servants and only later became their wives.³⁵⁰

The willingness of Mormon men to marry their servants was part of a larger history. As historians ranging from Sharon Block to Joanna Bourke have pointed out, servants were in a sexually vulnerable position.³⁵¹ Middle class men often took advantage of assumptions about the sexual willingness of servants to force them into intercourse that they did not want. These girls were often unable to prosecute their employers, and if they became pregnant, were out of work. In marrying their servants, Mormon men participated in a long history in which employers had access to their servants' bodies. At the same moment that the English middle classes winked at sex between employers and their servants, they also created an industry that evinced concern about the destruction of English girls who went into service and became sexually active.³⁵² The frequency with which Mormon men married young female servants played into English fears about the sexuality of the servant class. According to the historian Michael Harrison, there was a widespread fear that Mormons "stole English servant-girls, to spirit them out of the country and to make them White Slaves in a Mormon harem."³⁵³

The themes that dominated these early pamphlets about Mormonism continued to be a part of the debate about the faith's sexual practices for the rest of the nineteenth century. British

³⁴⁹ "Mary Ann Jackson," narrated by Lindsey Hansen Park, *Year of Polygamy* (Feminist Mormon Housewives), December 5, 2014 <http://www.yearofpolygamy.com/year-of-polygamy/year-of-polygamy-mary-ann-jackson-episode-66/>

³⁵⁰ Bowman, *The Mormon People*, 131.

³⁵¹ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Joanna Bourke, *Rape: Sex, Violence, History* (London: Virago, 2007), 230 – 231.

³⁵² Frances Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Carolyn Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Alison Light, *Mrs. Woolf and the Servants: An Intimate History of Domestic Life in Bloomsbury* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2008).

³⁵³ Michael Harrison, *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Cassell, 1958).

writers frequently tried to distance themselves from Mormonism. Emily Faithfull and Theresa Longworth Yelverton traveled to the United States after their own sexual scandals.³⁵⁴ Yelverton, for example, described Wales as the “hunting-ground” of the Mormons, suggesting that British people who converted to Mormonism had been captured rather than freely choosing their new faith.³⁵⁵ Faithfull agreed. She explained that Mormons drew their converts from “English hamlets, [and] the rural districts of Scotland, Wales, Sweden, and Germany.”³⁵⁶ Her emphasis on the poverty and rural background of Mormon converts suggested that well-educated, prosperous Britons would not convert to Mormonism. The monstrous, polygamous Mormon missionary who seduced English and Welsh girls into immigrating to the United States became a trope within British travel writing in the nineteenth century and haunted those men who traveled throughout the British Empire trying to convince others of the truth of the Mormon gospel.

In the 1890s, Rudyard Kipling described traveling through Salt Lake City on his journey from India to London where he hoped that he would make his fortune as a writer. In-between shopping at ZCMI and strolling through Main Street, he spoke with a young woman whose dropped “h’s” betrayed her English origins. He asked her when she had left England. She replied that she had left Dorset just a several years earlier and had found Utah a fulfillment of the missionaries’ promises. Her Englishness would form the crux of Kipling’s story.³⁵⁷ Like many other British authors, he disliked Mormonism. At one point, he wrote about the spectacle of observing sexual practices among English women that had previously been limited to the streets and hearths of Bengal. In India, he wrote, women had been accustomed to polygamy for hundreds of years and yet, within their homes, jealousy often bubbled and fizzed until it

³⁵⁴ Emily Faithfull, *Three Visits to America* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1884) and Theresa Longworth Yelverton, *Teresina in America*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1875).

³⁵⁵ Yelverton, *Teresina in America*, 35.

³⁵⁶ Faithfull, *Three Visits to America*, 151.

³⁵⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *American Notes* (New York: Frank F. Lovell Co., 1890), 187.

“culminate[d] sometimes in the poisoning of a well-beloved son.” In his writings, he implicitly invited his audiences to think about what the homes of white men and women must be like since they had only endured it for a few decades.³⁵⁸ It was only their fanaticism, he argued – “a fantastic jumble of Mahometanism, the Mosaic Law, and imperfectly comprehended fragments of freemasonry” – that allowed Mormon women to suppress their natural feelings and live as plural wives.³⁵⁹

The writings of Kipling, Faithfull, and Dixon were popular with the British reading public. They provided readers with an illicit thrill. In reading their works, British readers could imagine a world in which white men and women participated in sexual acts usually denied to them. They could imagine white bodies intermingling with brown ones, all while enjoying their own safety and distance. The ubiquity of Mormon missionary work, however, meant that this distance was impossible to maintain. In 1881, a member of parliament forwarded a message that he had received from one of his constituents asking why Mormon missionaries were allowed to preach in the streets while hawkers and other street merchants were constantly arrested.³⁶⁰ Newspapers reported stories about young English and Welsh women who had been ripped from their fathers’ arms and then traveled to Utah to join a Mormon harem. Descriptions of Mormons as American managed reinforced the separation between British and native sexualities, but the presence of Mormon missionaries in Britain and the participation of the nation’s subjects in polygamy, meant that that separation was always threatened. In Britain, however, the authorities

³⁵⁸ Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea: Letters of Travel* (Norwood, MA: Norwood Press, 1899), 111.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁶⁰ Letter, Charles Oldham to the Rt. Hon. Sir: W.V. Harcourt, M.P., December 28, 1881, HO 45/9584/87022 – Mormon Emigration to the United States (1879 – 1885), British National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom.

were unwilling to intervene. Narratives about the importance of religious freedom in Britain protected Mormon missionaries even as people asked for their arrest.³⁶¹

Although the works of Kipling, Yelverton, and Faithfull had yet to be published when Fielding's family first learned of their siblings' conversion to Mormonism, the rumors that circulated about the practice of polygamy gave them no reason to mitigate their feelings. It is difficult to know when the Fielding family first heard rumors about sexual irregularities among early Mormons or about their sisters' marital arrangements. Mary and Mercy, however, were intimately involved with polygamy. In 1837, Mary married Joseph Smith's brother Hyrum. Mercy married him six years later. The second marriage coincided with the growth of rumors circulating about polygamy. The letters that survive between Mary and her siblings, however, never mention polygamy. Had they known, it would have only furthered the distance between the sets of siblings. As it was, James showed little compassion for his sisters or brother. In 1844, Hyrum was killed in a shoot-out in a jail in Illinois. James wrote Mary a letter telling her that he sympathized her in her "affective bereavement" but could not "look upon it in any other light than a special dispensation of Divine Providence." He assured her, however, that he was "far from intending to insinuate that it was by the appointment of God that the murder of the Smiths was perpetrated."³⁶² Mormonism split the family apart.

The overdetermined emphasis of Mormonism on the family made their alienation more difficult to bear. Mormon theology promised individuals a way to solidify family relationships in the face of death. Although individual men and women still died, members could ensure that familial bonds would be restored in the resurrection and made eternal. The rites that Mormons

³⁶¹ For concerns about placing limitations on Mormon proselytism and religious freedom in Britain, see Edward Thornton to the Marquis of Salisbury, September 22, 1879, Home Office Records, National Archives, London, England, HO 45/9584/87022.

³⁶² Letter, James Fielding to Mary, Mercy, and Joseph Fielding, January 14, 1845, Mary Fielding Smith Collection.

performed in the temple belied the reality of the body moldering in the tomb. For Mormons, it was not decay and death that was a reality but the resurrection.³⁶³ At the same time, these rites depended on the willingness of family members to convert. The refusal of mothers, sisters, fathers, and brothers to accept the gospel severed family bonds not only in this life but also in the next. Although historians like Richard Bushman and Samuel Brown have pointed to the importance of family within Mormon theology, it is easy to forget the emotional toll that the refusal of their relatives to embrace the Mormon faith had on individual men and women.³⁶⁴ As a result of his conversion to the Mormon gospel, Fielding was alienated from his natal family. He found himself cast out of his brother's house and physically separated from his sisters. The family that he had hoped to bind together with his conversion to Mormonism was torn apart.

Stories like these were repeated throughout Great Britain. When Hannah Tapfield King converted to Mormonism at the age of forty-four, for example, one of the only people who was willing to support her decision was her husband. Her parents were livid when they discovered that she was considering immigrating to Utah.³⁶⁵ Another woman named Hannah Cornaby felt that her conversion to Mormonism turned her friends into her enemies. "If we walked along the streets," she wrote in her autobiography, "we met no kindly greeting, but were pointed out as 'Saints,' and sometimes stoned."³⁶⁶ Although she had wanted to be baptized for some time, the birth of her child delayed the ordinance. After the child's birth, she rented a house near the seaside to prepare to receive baptism. A mob surrounded the house and began to threaten them with what might happen if they went through with the ritual. The violence grew so heated that

³⁶³ Brown, *In Heaven As It Is On Earth*, 203 – 218.

³⁶⁴ Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth*, 203 – 218; Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Random House, 2007), 440 – 441.

³⁶⁵ Leonard Reed, "'As a Bird Sings:' Hannah Tapfield King, Poetess and Pioneer," *BYU Studies* 51:3 (2012): 101 – 118.

³⁶⁶ Hannah Last Cornaby, *Autobiography and Poems* (Salt Lake City: J.C. Graham & Co, 1881), 24 – 25.

they were eventually forced to petition the police for protection to help them avoid a ducking. The police, of course, did nothing.

The violence that greeted the conversion of many British men and women to Mormonism suggests the depth of the challenge that Mormonism offered to white, middle class understandings of domesticity, religious piety, and respectability within Great Britain. Although British Mormons like King and Cornaby saw themselves as embracing a religion that more closely resembled the Kingdom of God than the other sects that existed within nineteenth-century Britain, their decision to do so troubled those who saw Mormonism as an instance of fanaticism and temporary madness. Their conversion to Mormonism challenged white, middle class understandings of religion and domesticity.

Although reactions to Mormonism on Tahiti, the Austral Islands, and the Tuamotus had not been kind, the presence of Mormon missionaries there was rarely met with violence. Instead, the French government saw them as an alternative to the power of the London Missionary Society and initially welcomed their presence on the islands. Mormon ideas about domesticity, race, and religious faith eventually alienated them from the white communities on the islands. Mormons allied themselves not with other white missionaries but with beachcombers and other men who had abandoned whaling ships to live in indigenous communities. Although the presence of Mormon missionaries was contested in both spaces, their differing racial and class dynamics changed responses to Mormonism. Fears about the unruliness of sexuality in the Pacific Islands meant that Mormon missionaries like Pratt and Grouard used the language of sexual restraint and morality to legitimate their position within the islands. They argued that they were more adept at controlling male sexuality than the members of the LMS. Similar narratives were found within Great Britain. They were dwarfed, however, by the importance of class and by

Mormon critiques of the British middle class as uncaring and bloated. Mormon missionaries were horrified by the disparities of wealth within Great Britain and tried to create plans to allow British converts to escape from the poverty in which they lived.

Fielding is important not because of his place within the early Mormon community in Great Britain but because his life opens up the world of British Mormonism and provides an explicit contrast to Mormon missionary work in the Pacific. He allows historians to ask how differences within the imperial systems that spanned Great Britain and its colonies in India, Africa, and the Pacific affected responses to Mormonism and the attempts of men like Grouard, Pratt, and Fielding to spread the faith they had embraced. Within the Pacific Islands, it had been the willingness of Mormon missionaries to live with indigenous converts that led to their alienation from other Christian missionaries. Within Great Britain, it was their acceptance of spiritual gifts and sexual practices that placed them outside the pale of respectable Christianity. The different reactions to Mormonism were the result of differences within the imperial formations in which individuals traveled and lived. The responses that Mormonism garnered—whether it was the violent reactions that led to gashes on women's foreheads in Northern England or rumors circulating in the Pacific—marginalized it within the mainstream Christian community. For those who responded to its message, however, it was the voice of God and they ignored it at their own condemnation.

Chapter Four

A Missionary Widow: The Effects of Mormon Missionary Work on the Family

Introduction

When Addison Pratt left for the Pacific in 1843, he left his wife Louisa behind to care for their two daughters and the household. She had prayed that his mission would be to the Eastern United States so that he could carry the gospel to their Protestant relatives. She had not imagined that her husband might be sent on a foreign mission and wondered how she would find money to educate their daughters and provide them with food.³⁶⁷ It was difficult. Although the Mormon leaders expected Mormon men to temporarily abandon their families to spread the gospel, they did not provide Mormon women with alternative means for supporting their families. It was not only their poverty that prevented them from doing so. Mormon leaders encouraged women to rely on Providence and each other for support.

Louisa's story is emblematic of the difficulties that Mormon women faced in early Mormonism. Its emphasis on imitating the apostles' poverty and peripatetic movements meant that Mormon men frequently left their wives behind to spread the gospel. The violence that harried the Mormon community in the mid-nineteenth century only made the lives of these women more difficult. This was certainly true in Louisa's case. Just five years before Addison's

³⁶⁷ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 65.

departure, a militia had ridden into Mormon settlements in Caldwell County, Missouri. Most of the male settlers gathered in a blacksmith's shop to stage a defense of the town while their wives and children ran into the woods. The militia hacked apart the body of a seventy-eight year old man with a corn knife and left several other bodies naked and mutilated in the October mud.³⁶⁸ Addison's decision to travel throughout the Pacific Islands as a missionary, proclaiming the gospel to the "islands of the sea" and the "nations of the earth," meant that Louisa had to deal with the violence that beset the Mormon community on her own. She lived as though she were a widow, subsisting on whatever money she could obtain or earn.

When the time came for Addison to depart, Louisa accompanied him to the steamboat with their children. In her memoir, she remembered the scene. She wrote that one of their daughters was "inconsolable." The more that they "tried to soothe her, the more piteous were [the child's] complaints." The girl believed that "her father would never return."³⁶⁹ His call to the Pacific seemed like a call to the grave. Unlike the families whose fathers had been sent to the Eastern United States, they would receive few letters and those that did arrive would be spaced by years, not months. The length of Addison's calling was also uncertain. He might labor for a few years or for decades. Addison's family feared that his call to the Pacific would mean a burial in a shroud weighted with rocks at sea or in an unmarked grave on an unknown island.

Other Mormon women shared the difficulties that she faced. Louisa was not the only Mormon woman who watched as her family was broken apart by her decision to convert to Mormonism. Fielding's decision to travel to Great Britain meant that his sister Mary was forced to rely on others for food and kindness. Joseph Smith's wife was asked to share her husband with other women, discovering after multiple miscarriages and stillbirths that several of her friends

³⁶⁸ Spencer, "Was This Really Missouri Civilization?" 105.

³⁶⁹ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 65 – 66.

had secretly married her husband. Their experiences reveal one of the fundamental tensions within Mormonism: The practicalities of Mormon missionary work frequently threatened to undo the solidification of familial bonds within Mormon theology. At the same time that Mormonism offered women an opportunity to ensure that familial relationships would extend beyond death, conversion disrupted the lives of individual families. As individuals gathered with the Mormon community, they often left behind their mothers, fathers, siblings, and sometimes, even spouses to do so. Mormon missionary work meant that even those whose families had joined the Mormon community experienced periods of separation.

In a recent meeting of the Mormon History Association, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich argued that Mormon faith offered women an opportunity to leave behind failed families and create new ones in an age in which divorce was difficult to obtain.³⁷⁰ In this way, Mormonism remade families, providing the opportunity to become valued as wives to women who otherwise would have been marginalized by their existence outside of familial networks. At the same time that it offered women the opportunity to create new families, however, it often broke existing ones apart. As Ulrich's own research has shown, many early Mormon converts worried about family members who refused to accept the Mormon gospel.³⁷¹ Mormon women also frequently found their husbands absent on missionary tours or in jail.

This chapter explores how Mormon women navigated the tensions between Mormon theology and missionary work. I argue that Mormon women dealt with the difficulties that their husbands' absences created by forming alternative kinship networks that allowed them to rely on their female family members and friends for support. My research also suggests, however, that the secrecy surrounding the practice of polygamy undermined the ability of Mormon women to

³⁷⁰ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Runaway Wives, 1840 – 1860" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, Provo, Utah, June 4 – 7, 2015).

³⁷¹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Worthy to be Recorded Upon the Archives of Heaven."

form meaningful relationships with each other. Although polygamy eventually became an important part of Mormon identity in the nineteenth century, the practice was not public within Nauvoo. Individual women who married Mormon leaders were expected to keep their marital status secret. Instead of publicly claiming their husbands, they frequently continued to live with their parents. Mormon women often did not know the names of all of the women whom their husbands had married. This secrecy undermined the relationships between women by encouraging jealousy and preventing women from fully trusting each other.

In examining these stories, this chapter shifts its focus from the Pacific and Great Britain to the experiences of Mormon women living in Missouri and Illinois. The way that I have chosen to write their stories raises questions about the history of emotion. In an essay published in the *American Historical Review*, Barbara Rosenwein pointed out that how emotions are “elicited, felt, and expressed depend[s] on cultural norms as well as individual proclivities.”³⁷² Even though the ability to have emotions is universal, she argues, the experience of them is not. Instead, societies “bend, shape, encourage, and discourage the expression of various emotions,” determining how individuals interpret the emotions that they feel and how they communicate them to others.³⁷³ William Reddy has called the religious rituals, prescriptive manuals, sentimental novels, and everyday social practices that determined how emotions could be articulated within a society its “emotional regime.”³⁷⁴ Studying the theological prescriptions for the emotional lives of families and the reactions Mormon women recorded to their husbands’ absences in their diaries, personal correspondence, and public speech allows me to imagine how Mormon women might have felt about their husbands’ frequent absences.

³⁷² Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *The American Historical Review* 107:3 (June 2002), 836 – 7.

³⁷³ Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” 837.

³⁷⁴ William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

This chapter explores how conversion to Mormonism at once created opportunities for Mormon women and foreclosed them. Deprived of the economic support that their husbands would have offered them, Mormon women created societies for each other's relief, nursed each other's children, and cared for each other's bodies. The intimacy that resulted sustained them in difficult times. Mormonism, however, also limited the ability of women to form close relationships with each other. Emphasizing the complex experiences of Mormon women in this period recasts our understanding of Mormon missionary work. Addison Pratt and Joseph Fielding were only able to preach throughout the world because their female relatives were willing to endure poverty.

Family and Conversion in Nauvoo

The Mormon investment in the family was part of a wider shift in American understanding of the family in the nineteenth century. The rise of the domestic novel, shifts within religious language, and the intensification of labor as part of the industrial revolution led to an increased prominence of emotional bonds within families.³⁷⁵ Although descriptions of good wives in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had portrayed them as affectionate, the understandings of marriage that developed among white, middle class Protestants in the early nineteenth century emphasized the importance of love in forming suitable matches. Descriptions of Protestant marriages interwove about Christ's love, morality, and religious faith with images of the family. White, middle class children were to first learn about Christ within their families.

³⁷⁵ See, for example, Mary P. Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790 – 1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Cott, *Public Vows*; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking Press, 2005); and Anna Lawrence, *One Family Under God: Love, Belong, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Although it is easy to caricature the Victorian family as a sexless place, nineteenth-century American understandings of marriage centered on romantic love. In a letter to his fiancée, Eldred Simkins wrote that he could not think of a better way to spend Sunday evening than “speaking to her whom I love more than all the world.”³⁷⁶ Another man told his girlfriend that “my heart craves the sound of your voice tonight and will not be satisfied.” A final man wrote after reading a letter from his beloved that if he “could... then have taken a delicious kiss from your lips I should have been almost too happy.”³⁷⁷ Karen Lystra has argued that the descriptions these men offered of their relationships with their fiancées and wives were not uncommon. Instead, they represented a more general American understanding of love.

This marked emphasis on intense emotional relationships threatened to cause American couples to turn inward and focus their emotional energy on each other rather than on their wider community. American understandings of love, however, emphasized its transformative quality. The emotions couples experienced drew them closer to God and expanded their charity and intellect. Simkins told his fiancée in their letters that thoughts of her had made his mind “finer and brighter.” It had also turned him towards God as he became “happy and grateful to the Great Creator for his many, but most undeserved, blessings.”³⁷⁸ Instead of causing him to become more self-centered, the love that Simkins experienced enlarged his sense of charity.

Mormon theology drew upon this image of marriage in wider American culture as inherently elevating. In his descriptions of the material afterlife, the Mormon intellectual Parley P. Pratt emphasized the role that the family would play in creating new worlds. He described the godly as being “radiant with the effulgence of light,” and bosoms “glowing with all the confidence of conscious innocence.” “Prompted by eternal benevolence,” they would then “fill

³⁷⁶ Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, 53

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 25.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 53.

countless millions of worlds” with “begotten sons and daughters” and “bring them through all the gradations of progressive being, to inherit immortal bodies and eternal mansions.” This vision of the eternities was based in the unions of men and women, whose eternal bonds provided opportunities for other beings to be born and then exalted.³⁷⁹

Individual Mormons adopted this imagery to describe their own marriages. The English convert Sarah Griffith Richards wrote to her husband that their marriage was “the commencement of a love as enduring as eternities” that would “not tire of its object.” Instead, they would “become more sacredly and strongly united as the countless ages of eternal lives [rolled] on in succession.”³⁸⁰ For her, marriage was fundamentally about establishing a relationship that would allow its participants to progress intellectually and become more godlike as they shed their earthly cares. Early Mormons believed that individuals would not achieve godliness unless it was through the bonds of marriage. Men had to be sealed to their wives before they could fully partake in the blessings God had set apart for them. Although many Mormons had been married before entering the LDS Church, they often sought to consecrate their marriages in the temple or Endowment House. They believed that doing so was the only way to ensure that they would participate in the glories that Mormon theology promised them. Civil marriages would be rendered invalid in the afterlife unless a Mormon leader sealed husband and wife in a temple ceremony.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ Letter, Sarah Griffith Richards to Levi Richards, April 28th, 1849, Richards Family Collection, Box 1, Folder 7, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (BYU), Provo, UT.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ The importance of sealing rituals to early Mormonism meant that some women whose husbands were not members of the faith felt free to remarry without first seeking a divorce or waiting for their spouses to die. Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders occasionally proposed to Mormon women whose husbands were still living but were unwilling to convert to Mormonism. One such woman was Sarah Granger Kimball. Joseph Smith proposed to her in 1842, but she refused to marry him in what would have been a polygamous marriage. See Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* Vol. 6 (July 1887): 232.

The Mormon emphasis on the relationships between husbands and wives became part of its emotional regime. Encouraging Mormon women to view their relationships as eternal fostered a deep investment in the heterosexual family. Although this emphasis was not unique in American culture, the weight that Mormonism placed on the family amplified themes already presented in the nineteenth-century United States. Mormon women saw the family not simply as a reflection of divine love but as a mechanism through which they would be saved and eventually perfected.

The theological musings in Richards' letters reflect the deeper emotional weight that Mormon women were asked to place upon their relationships with their husbands. It is important, however, to remember that Mormon conceptions of the family did not focus solely on marital bonds. Some Mormon historians have argued that the purpose of sealings in the first half of the nineteenth century was as much on creating bonds between men as well as it was on expanding marital relationships. In early Mormon theology, it was possible for individuals whose biological kin had not converted to the church to be adopted into families that had. According to the historian Jonathan Stapley, the Nauvoo temple listed sealings to biological children separately from adoptive sealings. Winslow Farr and Olive Hovey Freeman adopted eight people into their family, while John Taylor and Leonora Cannon adopted twenty-seven.³⁸² Although these adoptions expanded Mormon notions of kinship, they did not completely undo the emphasis on marriage. If an individual wanted to join a family, they could do so only by being bound to a married couple as a child or by coming a plural wife. Individuals also created kinship ties by agreeing to have their daughters sealed to a leader within the Mormon community. There was no mechanism, however, through which same sex relationships could be made eternal without the

³⁸² Jonathan Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37:3 (Summer 2011): 64 – 66.

family intervening as a disciplinary mechanism. In order for relationships to be incorporated into the kingdom of God, they had to be translated into familial terms.

The ability of individuals to remake their families through the sealing ordinance did not lessen the importance of missionary work. Instead, the emphasis that the faith placed on family bonds impelled members to seek out their family members in an attempt to convince them of the truth of the gospel. Mormon ideas about the family had grown out of their millennialism. As part of the creation of God's Kingdom, men and women who rejected the gospel would be subject to God's judgment. Visited by earthquakes, plagues, and wars, they would come to regret their decision not to embrace the God's messengers and be baptized into his church.³⁸³ Early Mormons believed that it was their duty to warn their family members and communities about the impending judgment. If they did not, their garments, as they would have put it, would be stained with the blood of those they had failed to reach out of their willfulness.³⁸⁴ Phebe Peck exhorted her friend not "to reget annother call[.] You have been called to repent of your sins and obey the gospel."³⁸⁵ They also longed to be reunited with those who would form the nucleus of their families in the eternities.

The longing that Mormons felt to reunite their families in the afterlife as well as in this world can be seen in the material artifacts that they created. Wilford Woodruff, who would later become the Prophet of the Mormon Church, used elements drawn from the genealogical registries of nineteenth-century Family Bibles to decorate his diary. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has argued that his use of this motif was not unreflective doodling. It was suggestive of Woodruff's

³⁸³ Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 11 – 23.

³⁸⁴ Daniel Belnap, "'Those Who Receive You Not: The Rite of Wiping Dust Off the Feet,'" *International Journal of Mormon Studies* V5 (2012): 81 – 127.

³⁸⁵ Letter, Phebe Peck to Anna Pratt, August 10, 1832, quoted in Janiece L. Johnson, "Testimony and Exhortation in Early Mormon Women's Letters, 1831 – 1839," *BYU Studies* 41:1 (2002): 93.

concern about the unrepentant state of many of his family members.³⁸⁶ As Woodruff aged, he became more and more concerned with baptisms for the dead. Eventually, he extended the concept beyond his own family to include the redemption of “choice spirits,” including those of George Washington, Christopher Columbus, and Benjamin Franklin.³⁸⁷ Woodruff had these men ordained to the priesthood and believed that they would enjoy the same blessings that he did.

The autograph books that Mormon women created also served this purpose. The autograph album of Woodruff’s wife Phebe is filled with poems reminding her that “in our world of sin and sorrow,” “joys are fleet.”³⁸⁸ The emphasis on death and the ephemeral nature of life, however, is frequently accompanied by an admonition to look forward to the day individuals would “meet at least... On heavenly Canaan’s shore.”³⁸⁹ Historians such as Catherine Allgor and Erica Dunbar have highlighted the role that autograph books played in fashioning a white, middle class identity in the nineteenth century.³⁹⁰ They were equally important for marginalized groups who sought to claim respectability for themselves by demonstrating their ability to enact a particular form of womanhood.³⁹¹ In reading and writing admonitions to remember the fleeting nature of joy and the importance of looking towards a heavenly reunion, Mormon women taught each other how to think about their relationship to God at the same moment that they reminded their friends not to forget absent loved ones. Although the men and women that Phebe remembered were not as grandiose as the figures that her husband chose to baptize, her

³⁸⁶ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Worthy to be Recorded Upon the Archives of Heaven: Ornamentation in the Diaries of Wilford Woodruff,” Plenary Session, Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Independence, Missouri, May 29, 2010.

³⁸⁷ Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, ed. Scott Kenney (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1984), 369.

³⁸⁸ Ezra, August 1838, Phoebe Whittemore Carter Woodruff, Autograph Book, 1838 – 1844, no pg., LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2000); Erica Dunbar, “Writing for True Womanhood: African-American Women’s Writings and the Antislavery Struggle,” *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*. Ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James B Stewart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 299 – 318.

³⁹¹ Dunbar, “Writing for True Womanhood” 299 – 318.

autograph book is as important to understanding how early Mormons thought about their families in light of their conversion to Mormonism. It is important to remember that in stressing the future re-creation of the family, Mormonism did not lessen the importance of family bonds in this life. Instead, it encouraged its members to rejoin and remake families so that the composition of the families in which they lived on earth would mirror those that would be created at the resurrection. The autograph book created a physical representation of the familial and friendly ties that had an individual had created in this life and hoped to enjoy in the next.

Louisa and Mary were not immune from these concerns. The two women had both converted with family members, being baptized with their siblings in one case and husband and children in the other. In both cases, however, members of their family remained unconverted. Although Louisa was baptized in the waters of Lake Erie, significant portions of her family remained outside of the faith.³⁹² Henry Pratt wrote Addison and Louisa a letter admonishing them after he heard that they had been “confounded” by Mormonism: “I thought you were both so well established in the doctrines revealed in the word of God that you would not hesitate to reject the doctrines of all who pretend to a new revelation of heaven.”³⁹³ Louisa also received a letter from three of her family members telling her that they did not wish to see her as long as she was a member of the Mormon faith, and asked not to be troubled with her “fanatical absurdities and heart sickening fooleries.”³⁹⁴

Louisa had initially imagined Addison’s mission as an act that would recreate a family unity that had been lost with her conversion to Mormonism. When Addison was called to the South Pacific, the possibility that he would be the instrument that God would use to restore her

³⁹² Caroline Barnes Crosby, *No Place to Call Home: 1807 – 1857: Life Writings of Caroline Barnes Crosby, Chronicler of Outlying Mormon Communities* ed. Edward Leo Lyman, Susan Ward Payne, and S. George Ellsworth (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 51.

³⁹³ Letter, Henry Pratt to Addison and Louisa Pratt, May 20th, 1838, Addison Pratt Family Papers.

³⁹⁴ “Correspondence,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Mar. 5, 1845.

family was lost. The severing of the bonds with her family was made permanent rather than temporary, as she had hoped. The lack of family ties made it more difficult for Louisa to deal with her husband's absence. Except for her sister Caroline, Louisa did not have any of the networks that would have typically provided her with financial and emotional support.

In many ways, Mary and Louisa's stories are very different. Unlike Louisa, Mary was a single woman when she converted to the Mormon Church. She had immigrated to Canada a few years earlier and lived with her brother Joseph and her sister Mercy. The deep, affectionate relationship she had with her siblings allowed her to cultivate an intimate domesticity that would have otherwise been denied to her. As a middle-aged woman in her mid-thirties, Mary was well past the age where she would have been expected to marry and create a household of her own. In living with her brother and sister, she created a family based not on sexual intimacy but on longtime fondness and filial responsibility.³⁹⁵ It was within this household that Mary first heard the Mormon gospel in 1836. Mary submitted to the waters of baptism not as a single woman but as part of the household that she had created with her siblings.

Like Louisa, however, Mary discovered that her conversion to Mormonism was as likely to tear her family apart as it was to reunite them. Just one year after his baptism, her brother Joseph was called on a mission to Great Britain. That same year, her sister Mercy married a man named Robert Thompson. Although Mary hoped that her brother's mission would bring the rest of her family into the fold and was likely happy that her sister had finally gotten married, their joy left her alone. Mercy's husband was soon called as a missionary. He took his wife with him to Canada, leaving Mary to provide for herself as a single woman for the first time. She found it

³⁹⁵ This type of relationship was not unknown in the nineteenth century either in the United States or in Great Britain. See C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780 – 1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

a difficult task. In 1837, the Mormon community faced an economic crisis. The growth that had sustained the community throughout the 1830s was not sustainable, and in 1837, the economy collapsed leading to widespread discontent. As much as a third of the Mormon leadership became discontented with the church.³⁹⁶ Mary struggled to survive in this climate. She worked for a short while as a tutor in the home of Mary Dort but when her employment there ended she found she had few prospects. In a letter to her sister Mercy, she wrote: “I have no doubt but you have many trials, but I am inclined to think you have not quite so much to endure as I have.”³⁹⁷

Part of her difficulty lay in her status as a single woman and in the fact that her brother and sister had left her. In the nineteenth century, unmarried women relied on kinship networks to provide them with access to resources and employment.³⁹⁸ In moving first to Canada and then to Kirtland, Mary and her siblings had severed the relationships that usually would have provided them with support in times of need. The demands that Mormonism placed upon its members for missionary work further alienated Mary from her family, calling them from home to labor in distant lands while she struggled to find work in an already taxed labor market. Mary’s plight was similar to that of other single women in the United States and Great Britain. The creation of a white, middle class identity in the early nineteenth century had relied upon elevation of motherhood as an ideal form of femininity. Women who remained unmarried and childless were marginalized both financially and socially. Medical discourses emphasized the fragility of their bodies, suggesting that their wombs had shriveled and limbs weakened, even as such women

³⁹⁶ Ronald K. Esplin, “Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Crisis,” in *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 261–90.

³⁹⁷ Letter, Mary Fielding Smith to Mercy Fielding Thompson, ca. August – September 1837, Mary Fielding Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

³⁹⁸ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850 – 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1 – 4.

were forced to rely on their husbands and brothers for support.³⁹⁹ Although Mary found comfort in a gospel that offered the opportunity to reunite her family and mirrored her understanding of the scriptures, it placed her in a precarious financial position. Louisa's position was no easier. Although she was married, her husband's missionary work had left her with no obvious means of supporting her children and demanded that she survive as a single mother.

The experiences of Louisa and Mary highlight one of the fundamental tensions within Mormonism. Although the faith promised to solidify family ties both in this life and the next, its emphasis upon missionary work demanded that families be temporarily broken apart. Mormon leaders offered little support to the women that had been left behind. Instead, Mormon women were expected to rely on whatever kinship networks remained after their conversion to Mormonism and the charity of others for support. Mary and Louisa were not the only women who struggled to survive without their husbands. When her husband Orson was sent on a mission to Europe, Sarah M. Pratt (no relation to Addison) was living in what one historian has called "a fourteen-by-sixteen-foot 'shanty.'" Her daughter Lydia died just eleven days before her husband left her with a toddler son and no viable income.⁴⁰⁰ Brigham Young also left his wife in dire circumstances. When he left for a mission in the British Isles, he worried that she would find it difficult to pay their bills or provide food for their family. He was forced to settle their debts, and it was unlikely that she could perform much labor. She had, after all, given birth just ten days earlier to a little girl they called Alice.⁴⁰¹

In addition to poverty, Mormon women were subject to sexual assault. Rumors of rape accompanied the stories of Mormon men being torn to pieces by non-Mormon mobs. According

³⁹⁹ Eileen Janes Yeo, "Virgin Mothers: Single Women Negotiate the Doctrine of Motherhood in Victorian and Edward Britain," *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single* ed. Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 39 – 40.

⁴⁰⁰ Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of An Apostate," *Dialogue* 19:2 (Summer 1986), 70.

⁴⁰¹ Turner, *Brigham Young, Pioneer Prophet*, 66.

to historian Andrea Radke-Moss, women experienced a kind of gendered violence during the Missouri period of Mormon history.⁴⁰² Although some of the stories contained within Mormon petitions for redress may have been exaggerated, there are suggestions that Mormon women were sometimes sexually brutalized during attacks on the Mormon community. Although she is unnamed in many accounts, family histories suggest that a woman named Hannah Kitty Johnston bore a child out of wedlock nine months after being violently raped in Missouri.⁴⁰³ It is only possible to reconstruct Johnston's story because of the memories of her family members and their descendants. The unwillingness of some family to share the diaries of their ancestors, however, has sometimes made it difficult to reconstruct the histories of individual women. There are some suggestions, for example, that Eliza R. Snow was rendered infertile when she was raped by a group of non-Mormon men in Missouri. Much of the evidence, however, is not currently unavailable to historians. The story is based on the writings of woman who knew Eliza as a child, but the woman's family has been unwilling to make them available to historians.⁴⁰⁴

Mormon men frequently included references to these assaults in their writings. One man, for example, claimed that the people of Missouri had "outrage[d] and shamefully abuse[d] some of our most worthy and virtuous females."⁴⁰⁵ Hyrum Smith likewise claimed that one woman had been bound to a post while sixteen men "abused her as much as they had a mind to."⁴⁰⁶ As with the stories of sexual indiscretion in the Pacific in Chapter Two, it is important to treat these stories carefully. The language these men used was political. It was meant to evoke the sympathy of other Americans and cast the Missourians as lawless aggressors. As a result, the stories they

⁴⁰² Andrea Radke-Moss, "'I hid [the Prophet] in a corn patch': Mormon women as Healers, Concealers, and Protectors in the 1838 Mormon-Missouri War," *Mormon Historical Studies* 15:1 (Spring 2014), 25 - 40.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Autobiography of William Draper, 1807 – 1886.

⁴⁰⁶ Brent M. Rogers, "To the 'Honest and Patriotic Sons of Liberty': Mormon Appeals for Redress and Social Justice, 1843 – 4," *Journal of Mormon History* 39:1 (Winter 2013), 58.

told were likely exaggerated. Although it is impossible to know how many women were sexually violated in Missouri, however, it is likely that at least some were. Rumors that circulated about rape also created a climate of fear regardless of the frequency with which actual sexual assaults occurred.

It is impossible to read the accounts of early Mormon women and not sense this fear. While Mary's husband Hyrum was in prison in Missouri in 1838 after being charged with treason, a group of armed men broke into her house and ransacked her furniture. It was only after the ordeal was over that Mary discovered that heavy quilts had been thrown onto her newborn son Joseph F., almost suffocating him. When they found him, his body was beginning to turn blue from lack of oxygen.⁴⁰⁷ His death would have been only one of a number of losses that Mormon women experienced. Women were just as affected by the violence that threatened their children as they were by the gendered violence that they experienced as women.

Many historians who have explored the lives of Mormon women emphasize the empowerment that they found within Mormonism. They point to evidence that Mormon women continued to find solace within Mormonism even as they were called to "pass through... many trials and afflictions."⁴⁰⁸ A woman named Olive Boynton Hale, for example, wrote a letter to her mother telling her that in spite of the difficulties she had encountered she continued to "rejoice with those who do rejoice in the latter day kingdom."⁴⁰⁹ Hale's descriptions of her life serve as a reminder that Mormon women did not necessarily see the poverty and violence that they experienced as evidence that Mormonism was not the work of God. Instead, they believed that God would ultimately redeem the Mormon community from its suffering. It is also important,

⁴⁰⁷ Bruce A. Van Orden, "Joseph F. Smith," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 1349.

⁴⁰⁸ Johnson, "Give All Up and Follow Your Lord," 81.

⁴⁰⁹ Johnson, "Give All Up and Follow Your Lord," 81.

however, not to pass too lightly over the difficulties white Mormon women faced in the early Mormon community. Although Mormonism offered women a vision of the eternities in which they would be reunited with their husbands and watch as ever expanding worlds unfolded, it also required their husbands to temporarily abandon them to spread the gospel to the “islands of the sea” and the “nations of the earth.” Left without the men who typically would have provided for them, Mormon women struggled to support their children. In an attempt to feed their families, Mormon women like Louisa and Mary turned to their female relatives for support. These alternative kinship networks made Mormon missionary work possible by providing for the families Mormon men left behind. They also, however, undermined the emphasis within early Mormon theology on heterosexual couplehood by providing Mormon women the opportunity to forge bonds with other women outside of those the Mormon hierarchy sanctioned. The development of polygamy within Nauvoo further complicated the relationships between Mormon women. The secrecy with which early Mormon polygamy was practiced eventually foreclosed the very relationships that had initially sustained Mormon women in their husbands’ absences. The next section explores the development of female relationships within the early Mormon community and the tension that resulted from their intimacy.

Bonds Between Women in Early Mormonism

The foundation of the Relief Society in 1842 was one method through which women created alternative systems of support. It was to provide aid not only for Mormon women struggling to feed and clothe their children but also to help the poor more generally. When Ellen Douglas became so ill that she could not tend to her children after her husband’s death, a member of the Relief Society went to her and asked what they could do. A few days later, a

woman named Ann came to her door with “such a present as I never received before.”⁴¹⁰ Ellen estimated that the supplies that they were brought her “were worth as much as thirty shillings.”⁴¹¹ The support that Mormon women offered each other extended beyond the temporal world. Although Mormon men would later claim the exclusive right to bless the bodies of the sick, Mormon women initially blessed each other’s bodies for childbirth, healed their sisters of diseases, and laid hands upon their children’s heads when they were taken ill. Brigham Young’s niece Persis administered healings to a woman who had recently given birth to a stillborn child and afterwards developed an infection. According to the woman’s remembrances, Persis shook as though she had palsy as she laid her hands on the woman’s head and demanded that “every disease that had been, or was then, afflicting me [to leave], and commanded me to be made whole, pronouncing health and many other blessings upon me.”⁴¹²

Mary’s relationship with her sister Mercy is perhaps one of the best examples of the relationships women developed in the early Mormon community. Mary finally married in December 1837. A few months earlier, a woman named Jerusha Smith had called her children to her bedside to kiss them goodbye before she died. Jerusha was the wife of Joseph Smith’s brother Hyrum. She was expecting their fifth child when her husband was called to travel to Missouri. No details describing the birth remain but it must have been a difficult one. Afterwards, Jerusha slipped into an illness from which she never recovered. When her daughter was just eleven days old, Jerusha died.⁴¹³ According to the official history of the church, her last

⁴¹⁰ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1992), 34 – 35.

⁴¹¹ Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 35.

⁴¹² Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 67 – 68.

⁴¹³ Newell and Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 61.

act was to tell her child to tell their father “when he comes that the Lord has taken your mother home and left you for him to take care of.”⁴¹⁴

Mary and Hyrum’s marriage came only a few short months after Jerusha’s death. Members of the Kirtland community may have been upset at the short amount of time that passed between the two events. Jerusha’s body had only been recently laid in the Smith family plot and her daughter was less than three months old.⁴¹⁵ According to stories that circulated within the Smith family, however, the marriage was the result of divine revelation. At the time of Jerusha’s death, Hyrum had recently been called to the First Presidency. The responsibilities his calling placed upon him were enormous. According to family histories, Joseph told Hyrum that he needed a wife to care for his children and to help shoulder the responsibilities of the church. Mary was thirty-six years old and childless. In marrying her, Hyrum found a mother for his children. The marriage also offered a woman who otherwise would have lived alone and outside of the kinship networks that usually sustained single women, a home. It is important to note, however, that no contemporary record of the revelation exists. There are two possible reasons for this: First, it is possible that the stories about a divine revelation arose only after the marriage to assuage some of the unease that people felt because of Jerusha’s all-too-recent death. It is also possible, however, that Smith chose not to record what would have been a very personal revelation for his brother or that the manuscript of the revelation was lost. Whatever the ultimate reason for their marriage, Mary and Hyrum were married on December 24, 1837.⁴¹⁶

The marriage should have brought Mary into the heart of the Mormon community. In marrying Hyrum, she had married into the family of the prophet. The economic difficulties that

⁴¹⁴ Quoted in Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith*, 43.

⁴¹⁵ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 62.

⁴¹⁶ Lavina Fielding Anderson, “Mary Fielding Smith: Her Ox Goes Marching On.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Winter 1981): 91 – 100.

Kirtland was experiencing, however, would only be one of the obstacles that she encountered in her marriage. Hyrum's position within the church required him to frequently be absent. In spite of their success at building a physical Zion and creating the Kingdom of God, the presence of Mormon men and women in Missouri excited locals who resented the presence of a millenarian, theocratic community in their midst. Local Missouri farmers, politicians, and businessmen often hounded Mormon farms and houses, threatening Mormon men with physical violence. On August 6, 1838, the tensions between Mormons and local Missourians broke out in a skirmish. Afterwards, rumors spread that there were casualties on both sides. Other outbreaks of violence occurred. To prevent further bloodshed, Smith surrendered to the Missouri militia. Hyrum agreed to accompany him to prison and would remain in jail in Liberty, Missouri, for several months.⁴¹⁷

Hyrum's absences placed a great strain on his relationship with Mary and eventually led to misunderstandings between the two. When he agreed to accompany his brother to jail, Mary was several months pregnant. Like Jerusha, she became quite ill after the birth of her son. As she lay in bed, her body was racked with a fever. Her sister Mercy, who had returned with her husband from their mission by this time, nursed her sister and took her newborn child to her breast.⁴¹⁸ She nursed the boy along with her own daughter who was just five months old. Hyrum knew little of his wife's difficulties and began to wonder why she had not written him. He told her that he greatly desired to know how she prospered. Eventually, his despair at not having heard would turn to anger. In March 1839, he wrote to her, saying that even if she had no feelings for him as a husband she could have sent "some information concerning the little babe

⁴¹⁷ Stephen LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 1987); Alexander Baugh, *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri* (Salt Lake City: BYU Studies, 2000); and Leland Homer Gentry and Todd Compton, *Fire and Sword: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836 – 39* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2010).

⁴¹⁸ Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith*, 80.

or those little children” that lay near his “hart.”⁴¹⁹ He also felt that if she had decided to forsake him she could at least let him know so that he could know on what he could depend.

The miscommunication between the two denied Mary the solace she could have found in the Mormon community after her natal family abandoned her. Hyrum’s constant imprisonment and the distance between them also denied Mary the position of wife and mother. His comments made her feel isolated and alone. In response, she wrote she could not “bear the thought of [his] having any such suspicion” and that he must be “misacquainted with the principles of [her] heart.”⁴²⁰ “Reason, religion, and honor and every feeling of [her] heart” forbade her to even entertain “such a thotgt” of her abandoning her poor husband. A few years later, she discovered rumors circulating about her abilities as a mother had come from the lips of her husband, who accused her of being too strict with his children. Mary felt that she was far from “an oppressive Step Mother” and had always acted as she thought best.⁴²¹ In her letters to her husband, she tried desperately to fix their relationship and reassert her position as wife and mother.

Mary’s sister supported her throughout her difficulties. When Mary decided that she wanted to visit her husband Hyrum during his imprisonment in the Liberty jail, Mercy and Hyrum’s brother Don Carlos placed her on a warm bed in a wagon. She held her son Joseph F. in her arms. Mercy, however, nursed the child and her daughter who was now eight months old throughout the journey.⁴²² The intimacy that developed between the two women sometimes made the Smith family uneasy. Just over a month after he helped Mary visit her husband, Don Carlos wrote a letter telling Joseph and Hyrum about his concerns. After a few sentences about

⁴¹⁹ Letter, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, March 20, 1839, Mary Fielding Smith Collection, MS 2779, Folder 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴²⁰ Letter, Mary Fielding Smith to Hyrum Smith, April 11, 1839, Mary Fielding Smith Collection, MS 2779, Folder 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴²¹ Letter, Mary Fielding Smith to Hyrum Smith, September 14, 1842, Mary Fielding Smith Collection, MS 2779, Folder 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴²² Mercy F. Thompson Autobiographical Sketch, 1880, MS 4580, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

Mary's health, he wrote that, although he did not want to disrespect Mercy, he felt "the family would do better without her than with her."⁴²³ The phrasing of the sentence left its meaning ambiguous. Read with the appositive phrase, it sounded like an indictment of Mercy. Without it, it was Mary whom he blamed. The ambiguity of this phrasing seems to have caused some misunderstandings between Hyrum and Mary. In a later apology, Don Carlos clarified that he had "no fault to find with Mary." He believed that if had she been well and "had her own way, there in all probability would have been no call for the observations I made in my letter to you."⁴²⁴

Regardless, Mary and Mercy's relationship seems to have troubled the Smith family. Initially, it is unclear why. Mid-nineteenth century American culture idealized relationships between women, seeing the willingness of women to sacrifice for each other as evidence of a nobility of character. Girls were encouraged to develop close emotional relationships with other women. As a result, the letters that they wrote each other were filled with declarations of their love. Jeannie Field Musgrove, for example, began a letter to her friend Sarah with the appellation: "Dear darling Sarah!" She continued the letters with pronouncements of her eternal affection. "How I love you," she wrote, "& how happy I have been! You are the joy of my life.... I cannot tell you how much happiness you gave me, nor how constantly it is all in my thoughts."⁴²⁵ Another woman told her friend to imagine herself "kissed a dozen times." She wanted to put her arms around her and loved her as "wives do their husbands."⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Letter, Don Carlos and William Smith to Hyrum and Joseph Smith, March 6, 1839, Joseph Smith Papers, Accessed 25 February 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-from-don-carlos-smith-and-william-smith-6-march-1839?p=1>

⁴²⁴ Letter, Don Carlos Smith to Hyrum Smith, April 11, 1839, Joseph Smith Papers, Accessed 25 February 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-hyrum-smith-with-agnes-coolbrith-smith-postscript-11-april-1839?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=1&s=undefined&sm=none>

⁴²⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1:1 (Autumn 1975): 4.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

Rather, what seems to have bothered the Smith family is that the two women sought to create an alternative family structure that challenged the authority of the Smiths over the household. Hyrum's frequent absences meant that Mary was often left to care for her children alone. She was also expected to maintain the household expenses and make important decisions surrounding the family's possessions. Her position was not uncommon within the Mormon community. The practicalities of missionary work and the frequent arrest and harassment of Mormon men meant that their wives often found themselves alone. They superintended family businesses and managed their expenses. They did so, however, with the frequent advice of their husbands, writing to them with questions about how to best discipline their children and what items should be sold or bought.

Few of Mary's letters, however, reached Hyrum. He interpreted her silence as evidence of her lack of affection for him. In this light, Mercy's willingness to nurse her sister's children and to help her maintain the family economy may have seemed like an intrusion. After marriage, women were to transfer their affections to their husbands. American and British novels often suggested that the intense emotional relationships that women developed with other women helped prepare for the expectations of marriage. They learned to love through loving their sisters and female friends.⁴²⁷ In the eyes of the Smith family, Mary may have failed to transfer her affections to her husband. Later in the nineteenth century, the realities of polygamy caused Mormons to celebrate the ability of women to love each other more than their husbands. In this time period, however, female friendships that surpassed the love that they had for their husbands still seemed transgressive.

⁴²⁷ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 15.

Other Mormon women also drew upon the history of female friendship. The relationship that Louisa developed with her sister Caroline was never as intimate as the one between Mary and Mercy. As a result, it should have placed her more firmly within the bounds of Mormon propriety. Louisa, however, struggled just as much with her husband's absences as Mary had. After Joseph Smith's death, no men appeared at her door to make sure that she was fit to travel to Winter Quarters or that her children were provided for. Instead, she was told that she was expected to care for herself.⁴²⁸ The remark made her determined to be self-reliant. At other times, however, the lack of care she received from the community sometimes made her feel despondent. "There has been seasons in my life when had I not believed that the angels above knew and pitied me," she wrote in her memoirs, "I should have sunk down in despair!"⁴²⁹ Although Louisa maintained a deep faith in the gospel, she occasionally wondered what value marriage had for her if she could not depend on her husband for protection or comfort. When Brigham Young announced that her husband would go on a second mission to the Pacific, she laughingly told the woman next to her, "If I am left again I shall choose another man."⁴³⁰ She was only half-joking.

Like Mary, Louisa took comfort in the presence of her sister. Caroline had joined the Mormon faith before her older sister. Although Caroline had initially feared that her sister would never accept the gospel, Caroline's husband Jonathan gave a public sermon so powerful that it convinced Louisa that Joseph Smith's claims to have unearthed a new gospel might be true. She remained unwilling to be baptized until she interviewed Martin Harris, a man who had once been a close confidante of Joseph Smith but had recently been disfellowshipped. He had seen the golden plates and testified to the veracity of the Book of Mormon. Louisa was baptized soon

⁴²⁸ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 78.

⁴²⁹ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 360.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

thereafter.⁴³¹ Her decision to do so rejoined part of Caroline's family, solidifying the family bonds that Caroline hoped would survive death and the resurrection.

The two women, however, had endured their husbands' absences and struggled to survive. When her husband was sent on a mission to the Eastern United States in 1842, Caroline was forced to open a small schoolhouse to support her six-year-old son.⁴³² The two sisters likely helped each other in their husbands' absences. Louisa's relationship with Caroline, however, remained firmly within nineteenth-century understandings of the family, which emphasized the importance of the relationship between husbands and wives over that between siblings. Caroline and Louisa never fully combined their households, and both chose to live in nuclear families.

Indeed, Louisa eventually decided that she would rather travel to the South Pacific than be separated from her husband. Addison briefly returned from his mission in 1848 to recruit additional men to serve as missionaries in Tubuai and the Tuamotus. She hoped that her decision to remove her family to the Pacific Islands would allow her to recreate the white, middle class domesticity that she had enjoyed before her conversion to Mormonism. She soon discovered, however, that the distances between different Mormon communities in the Pacific required her husband to spend several days traveling between them. Although her sister had accompanied her to the Pacific, she sometimes felt lonely. She recalled one time in which she had retreated to a garden to pray and meditate on her experiences. After sitting down, she "gazed up into the sky and thought of the bright world where our Saviour dwells... I thought of the dear sisters in the valley of the mountains, and longed to commune with them."⁴³³

Her melancholy suggests the importance of female relationships. When she was living on the island of Tubuai, Louisa sometimes longed to be reunited with the women with whom she

⁴³¹ Crosby, *No Place to Call Home*, 50.

⁴³² Crosby, *No Place to Call Home*, 4, 60.

⁴³³ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 138 – 139.

had formed deep, intimate relationships in her husband's absence. Her inability to speak indigenous languages well and her cultural distance from Polynesian women made it difficult for her to enjoy the same closeness that she had experienced with women in Nauvoo. She described the indigenous women that surrounded her as knowing "nothing about housekeeping" and "wild."⁴³⁴ Her descriptions place her at a distance from the Polynesian women she met. Like many other female Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century, Louisa saw her role in the community primarily as being a model of proper understandings of domesticity and decorum. She brought three indigenous children into her home in hopes that she could teach them the English language and the habits of civilized people. She believed that they would soon "become domesticated," sitting "at the table" with "a knife and fork" and behaving "quite becoming[ly]."⁴³⁵ The daughters of the white Mormon missionaries were assigned to watch over the indigenous children that Louisa took into her care.

Although the incorporation of indigenous children into her household could have brought Louisa closer to the people of Tubuai, she continued to hold herself at a remove. Even the presence of her sister Caroline did not fully assuage the loneliness that Louisa felt. Instead, her husband's frequent absences, her alienation from indigenous communities, and the distance from the South Pacific to Utah left Louisa just as alone at times as she had been in Nauvoo. Without her husband or the female networks that Louisa had created in the United States, the middle-aged woman was unable to create a sense of community or sisterhood.

⁴³⁴ Pratt, *The History of Louis Barnes Pratt*, 141, 143.

⁴³⁵ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 139.

Polygamy and the Bonds between Mormon Women

It is impossible to know when Joseph Smith first received the revelations commanding him to practice polygamy. Polygamy would eventually upend many of the assumptions Americans made about the importance of relationships between men and women. Although relationships between women were still theoretically mediated by men, the absence of Mormon men from plural households meant that many women spent more time with their sister wives than they did with their husbands. The primary relationship for some Mormon women was not with their husbands but with his wives. Mormons later pointed to the relationships that developed between women as one of the benefits of polygamy.

These relationships, however, were not possible within the Mormon community in Nauvoo. In spite of the potential theological richness of polygamy, Smith was reticent to publish his ideas about marriage. Initially, knowledge about plural marriage circulated only as rumor and innuendo. Joseph Smith probably married his first plural wife in either 1832 or 1833. Only a few people were present at the wedding or knew of its existence.⁴³⁶ The women that Smith married continued to live with their families and interacted with him only sporadically. The secrecy with which Smith and other Mormon leaders practiced polygamy prevented the development of deep, meaningful relationships between sister wives.⁴³⁷ In the 1840s, polygamy was not yet seen as an emancipatory form of marriage that would allow women increased access to education by freeing them from the necessities of childcare and household labor. Instead, it emphasized the importance of creating links between influential men in the community.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 66; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 325; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 28.

⁴³⁷ Smith, *Revelation, Resistance, and Mormon Polygamy*, 58 – 101.

⁴³⁸ Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia*, 128.

The bonds that women developed with each other had the potential to undo these links. Although many influential Mormon women embraced polygamy when they learned of it, others opposed it. Emma Smith, for example, used her influence within the Relief Society to try to ferret out which men were practicing polygamy and whom they had married. Her attempts to do so at a moment when many men and women in Nauvoo did not know that Smith and other Mormon leaders had adopted polygamy made her a dangerous woman. Merina Smith has suggested that the secrecy that surrounded polygamy in the 1840s was essential to its successful introduction. If the majority of Mormon men and women had known about its existence, they would have revolted in disgust. The revelations that Smith received warned Emma that she would be “destroyed” if she did not accept polygamy.⁴³⁹ Her husband’s marriages marginalized her within the Mormon community. Emma, aware that her husband had been involved in some polygamous marriages but unaware of the extent of polygamy or how many women her husband had married, was forced to try to marshal support from other sympathetic women. She asked other women to investigate the rumors that she heard about polygamy, not realizing that some of the women she asked had entered into polygamous relationships themselves.⁴⁴⁰

In spite of the efforts of Mormon leaders to conceal the practice of polygamy, rumors circulated about the sexual practices of Mormon leaders. After Joseph’s brother Don Carlos died from malaria, it was suggested that Joseph had secretly married his brother’s wife Agnes.⁴⁴¹ Public protests of innocence did little to quell the gossip. In meetings of the Relief Society, in parlors throughout the city, and in short, stolen conversations, men and women discussed the possibility that Joseph Smith and other influential Mormon men had taken multiple wives.

⁴³⁹ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 153.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁴¹ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 108 – 110; Turner, *Brigham Young*, 91.

The rumors meant that women who did agree to polygamous marriages had to be circumspect about their relationships with their husbands. Mercy was not the only woman that Hyrum married in 1843. It is likely that he took two additional women as wives—Catherine Phillips and Lydia Dibble Granger. Mercy’s relationship with her sister provided her with a respectable reason for living in the household of a married man.⁴⁴² Hyrum’s other wives found it difficult to maintain their relationships with him. In an affidavit describing their relationship, Catherine wrote that she “lived with [Hyrum] as his wife” but was forced to move to St. Louis with her mother to avoid animosity of those who opposed polygamy.⁴⁴³ Although Catherine considered herself to be Hyrum’s wife, she was forced to live apart from him.

Mormon leaders attempted to quell the growing suspicions of many within the Mormon community by bringing those who made accusations about polygamy to court for slander. After William Law accused Smith of trying to seduce his wife into a polyandrous marriage, he was stripped of his position as a high counselor and excommunicated on grounds of apostasy.⁴⁴⁴ Law’s high position within the church did not protect him from prosecution, and indeed, may have made other Mormon leaders feel as though his punishment was inevitable once he made accusations about Smith. The expulsion of Mormon leaders from the church for accusing their brethren of polygamy made the issue of sexuality and marriage an explosive one within Nauvoo. Accusations of sexual immorality threatened to undo the bonds that held the community together and to expose its leaders as potential frauds. Although some men and women saw polygamy as a divine institution, many Mormons at this time rejected the idea that men should have more than one wife and considered the practice of polygamy to be evidence of depravity.

⁴⁴² Corbett, *Daughter of Britain*, 153.

⁴⁴³ Catherine Phillips Affidavit, November 7, 1902, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴⁴⁴ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 539.

The church sought to control marriage and portray itself as a respectable institution. At the same time that Mormon leaders were contracting polygamous marriages, the city council disciplined white Mormons who could not maintain order within their households. Wives who would not submit to their husbands' authority and men who used undue violence to subdue their wives were threatened with disfellowshipment. Just a little over a year before Law was excommunicated, Aidah Clements was brought before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for refusing "to abide the advice of her husband" in "some of his views of... temporal concerns."⁴⁴⁵ In spite of previous court appearances suggesting that Albert was physically abusive, the court counseled her to submit to her husband.⁴⁴⁶ She ultimately agreed to submit to the ruling and "be in subjection to her husband according to the Scriptures." The court then gave her husband "instruction relative to his duty towards his wife."⁴⁴⁷

Aidah was not the only woman to be reprimanded for not submitting to her husband. According to court records, Mary Cook was charged with adultery after she abandoned her husband and married another man. Court testimony reveals a tempestuous relationship in which Mary told her husband that she would "be governed by no man." According to Cook's husband, she "shamefully misuse[d] his children" and threatened to "use violence on him." For his part, he admitted to whipping her "pretty sevearly" in an attempt to control her. Eventually, he sold her to another man who agreed to act as her husband and care for her. According to the court, Mary "held it as a bargain" as did the man who purchased her.⁴⁴⁸ Although the court publicly reprimanded him for whipping his wife, it was judged that he had done as well as possible under

⁴⁴⁵ John S. Dinger, *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 446.

⁴⁴⁶ "Nauvoo vs. Albert Clements and Nathan Tenner, December 17, 1842" and "Nauvoo vs. Albert Clements, Henry Tener, and Albert Tener, December 20 and 22, 1842," *Nauvoo Records: Judicial Proceedings: Mayor's Court Box 4*, Folder 37, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴⁴⁷ Dinger, *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, 446.

⁴⁴⁸ Dinger, *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, 440.

the circumstances. The court also tried to curtail extramarital sex. Elizabeth Rowe was brought before the High Council for her “unchristian-like conduct” which consisted of “having been caught in bed with a man not her husband two different times.”⁴⁴⁹ Theodore Turley, on the other hand, was charged with “romping and kissing the females and dancing” while traveling to Nauvoo.⁴⁵⁰ Because he confessed his sins, he was allowed to remain a member of the church.

The trials of men and women who failed to maintain order within their homes or who had had sex outside of marriage were attempts to control domesticity and sexuality within Nauvoo. They allowed the High Council to portray an image of respectability and decorum at the same time that the authority of the leaders of the Mormon Church was being undermined by rumors circulating about the practice of polygamy. In an environment in which sexuality and domesticity seemed to be unstable and particularly charged, the relationships between women were particularly important. The rumors that circulated within Nauvoo about polygamy threatened to undermine the power of Mormon men; individual women could gain power and influence by suggesting that powerful men had transgressed the boundaries of monogamous marriage and were now seducing young girls and married women. The city council attempted to shore up the boundaries of marriage and ensure that individuals acted appropriately. Women who refused to follow their husband’s council were brought to court and instructed in their duties. If they refused to submit to their husband’s authority, they could be disfellowshipped or fined. In a community that was based on religious authority, ecclesiastical discipline could threaten their livelihood as well as their position within the community as a whole.

This emphasis on disciplining families created tension in the Mormon community. In addition to finding themselves subject to violence by non-Mormons, women whose husbands left

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 465.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 389.

on missions could be subject to overtures from Mormon leaders. When Sarah Marinda Bates Pratt's husband Orson went on a mission, she claimed she was pressured by Joseph Smith to become one of his plural wives. When she refused, she later maintained that he had threatened to ruin her reputation. Her sexual propriety was questioned throughout the Mormon community. Smith and others circulated rumors that she was having an extramarital affair. When her husband returned, she was forced to explain why she had been accused.⁴⁵¹ Marinda Johnson Hyde faced similar pressure. When her husband left on a mission to Jerusalem, she was forced to live "in a little log house" with "greased paper" for windowpanes.⁴⁵² A few months later, Smith claimed to have received a revelation commanding him to provide a better place for her. She was sealed to him the following spring.⁴⁵³ Although Mormon leaders saw polygamy as divinely inspired and rejected the idea that it created disorder, others saw it as a form of sexual coercion. The secrecy and tension surrounding polygamy undermined the bonds that Mormon women created in the absences of their husbands. In Mormon theology, polygamy was a way to weld individuals together through the creation of an expansive kinship network. In practice, however, polygamy could destroy as well as create connections.

The overtures of Mormon leaders also marginalized Mormon women who became the object of their desires. If the women they propositioned refused, they risked being sidelined within the Mormon community. Rumors circulated within the Mormon community about the women that church leaders propositioned. Women who decided to participate in polygamy fared no better. Unable to openly lay claim to their husbands, they were forced to lie to their friends about their relationships and constantly feared exposure. Ultimately, the position of women

⁴⁵¹ Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 30, 92 – 95.

⁴⁵² Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 235.

⁴⁵³ Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 235.

within the early Mormon community was uneasy. In the end, the practice of Mormon polygamy combined with the absence of Mormon men from the home to make it difficult for women to sustain the family bonds at the heart of their faith.

It is important to remember that the strains that Mormon women experienced within early Mormonism were emotional as well as physical and financial. The promise made in the introduction, however, is still somewhat unfulfilled. Although I have made efforts to show how Mormon theology influenced the emotional lives of Mormon women and the ways in which they expressed their feelings in letters, autographs, and diaries, we only now turn fully to the question of what their anger, loneliness, and despair meant for Mormonism's emotional regime. The Mormon belief that their experiences in the eternities would be constructed through kinship networks meant that Mormon women initially invested much of their emotional energy in their relationships with their husbands. The men that they bound themselves to at the altar were more than their protectors, they served as the nucleus of the eternal relationships that would open worlds to Mormon women.

The frequent absences of Mormon men from the home, however, eventually caused Mormon women to shift their primary allegiances from their husbands to the relationships that they created with other women. As the historian Kathryn Daynes argues, Mormon leaders frequently discouraged their followers from becoming too heavily invested in ideas about romantic love. Brigham Young, she points out, preached that Mormon men should "never love your wives one hair's breadth further than they adorn the Gospel." He then further encouraged them to "never love them so but that you can leave them at a moment's warning without

shedding a tear.”⁴⁵⁴ For their part, Young told women that wives who clung “round a husband’s neck” too tightly were “dead weight.”⁴⁵⁵

Nor was Young the only person to encourage spouses not to become too attached to each other. As polygamy became more entrenched within Mormon society, Mormon women encouraged each other not to focus too much on their love for their husbands. An important Mormon leader named Zina Young explained that “love [Mormons] regard as a false sentiment” that would only lead to jealousy. Within polygamy, she told readers, a woman “must regard her husband with indifference.”⁴⁵⁶ She might have known the difficulties that love could bring within polygamy. Zina had only been married to her husband Henry a few months when Smith sent her word that “an angel with a drawn sword” had told him that he must “establish the principle” of plural marriage or lose his life.⁴⁵⁷ Although she was pregnant with Henry’s child, she consented to being sealed to Smith in the temple. In spite of the sealing, her first husband continued to proclaim his love for Zina. He told her that his feelings would “continue to grow stronger and stronger to all eternity, worlds without end.” He assured her, “all will be made right.”⁴⁵⁸ After Smith’s death, however, Zina became Brigham Young’s wife, not Henry’s.

The delegitimizing of love within Mormonism in the nineteenth century overturned the assumptions that white, Protestant Americans made about marriage. Whereas white, middle class Americans emphasized the importance of love in creating companionate marriages, Mormons minimized the role that the emotion should play in sustaining relationships between husbands and wives. Instead, they emphasized godliness and respect.

⁴⁵⁴ Quoted in Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 64.

⁴⁵⁵ Brigham Young, August 28, 1852, *Journal of Discourses* 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854 – 1886), 6:276.

⁴⁵⁶ Zina D.H. Young, *New York World* November 17, 1869, quoted in Iversen, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women’s Movements, 1880 – 1925*, 66.

⁴⁵⁷ Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000), 113.

⁴⁵⁸ Letter, Henry B. Jacobs to Zina D. Jacobs, August 19, 1846, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

It is important to note, however, that this understanding of marriage also upended the assumptions that many Mormon women had about their relationships when they initially converted to Mormonism. The descriptions of Sarah Griffith Richards' relationship with her husband, which are mentioned in an earlier chapter, are infused with love. She describes their marriage as "the commencement of a love as enduring as the eternities."⁴⁵⁹ In spite of Zina's admonitions, these are not the words of a woman who was indifferent to her husband. Richards obviously loved her husband. The distance between Richards' description of her relationship with her husband and the ideal relationship Zina describes is partially the result of the shifts that occurred over time within Mormon understandings of the family. The expectations that Mormon women had for their relationships with their husbands had been created under the emotional regimes of white, Protestant nineteenth-century American culture. Like other American women, they had been encouraged to write emotive letters that expressed their desire for their husband and to invest deeply in their feelings for their spouses. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, Mormonism encouraged female converts to change their understandings of the family.

In this chapter, I have argued that the frequent absences of Mormon men as a result of missionary work, imprisonment, and poverty meant that Mormon women had to create bonds outside of the nuclear family in order to support their children. They initially did so by turning to their siblings and members of the Relief Society. Their decisions to do so, however, upset Mormon assumptions about the necessity of containing female relationships within the bounds of the heterosexual family. Women used the language of female friendship to express the emotional connections that they developed with each other. As they nursed each other's children, healed each other's bodies, and cared for each other when they were sick, Mormon women developed

⁴⁵⁹ Letter, Sarah Griffith Richards to Levi Richards, April 28th, 1849, Richards Family Collection, Box 1, Folder 7, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (BYU), Provo, UT.

close affective ties that at times threatened to overwhelm their relationships with their husbands. The Mormon community would eventually deal with the ties between women by celebrating the relationships between sister wives. The degree to which women became independent in polygamy as a result of the female spaces it created was one of the arguments that Mormon women made for its superiority as a marital system. Mormon women were encouraged to express their devotion to their sister wives in their letters, poetry, and public speeches. They would also describe women to whom they were not related as “Mothers in Israel” and as “Relief Society sisters.” In this period, however, the Mormon community had not developed language to deal with the affective ties that women created with each other. Instead, they appeared as relationships that sometimes threatened to upend Mormon patriarchy.

Chapter Five

Polygamous Domesticities: Disciplining White and Native Bodies on the Mormon Frontier

Introduction

As the Mormon community of Nauvoo rose from the banks of the Mississippi to challenge Chicago for the title of Illinois' largest city, they weathered repeated scandals about their sexual practices, periodic outbreaks of violence, and internal dissent. Fears of theocracy led non-Mormons in Missouri and Illinois to view the Mormon community with suspicion. On June 7, 1844, a group of Mormon men who had become disillusioned with Smith's leadership published the *Nauvoo Expositor*, a newspaper which sought to publicize its editors' claims that Smith had "introduced false and damnable doctrines into the Church, such as a plurality of Gods above the God of this universe, and his liability to fall with all his creations; [and] the plurality of wives, for time and eternity."⁴⁶⁰ The Nauvoo City Council responded by ordering the destruction of the press and all copies of the newspaper. The newspaper's demolition confirmed non- and ex-Mormon fears that Smith had established a theocracy. Shortly after the *Expositor's* original publication, Smith used his powers as general of the Nauvoo Legion to declare martial law in an attempt to protect the city from outside threats. The Illinois governor Thomas Ford guaranteed Smith's protection if he agreed to be tried in a court of law. Smith agreed and was arrested for inciting a riot. Despite the governor's promises, a group of armed men, their faces blackened to

⁴⁶⁰ "Resolutions," June 7, 1844, *Nauvoo Expositor* (Nauvoo, IL) Vol. 1, no. 1, 2.

hide their identities, gathered outside of the jail where Smith was held.⁴⁶¹ By sundown, the thirty-eight year-old Mormon prophet and his brother's lifeless bodies lay on the back of a wagon being transported back to Nauvoo.

For months afterwards, the Mormon community mourned their deaths. In a letter to friends living in the East, one woman described the event “as one of the most horrible crimes comited that ever history recorded!”⁴⁶² Businesses closed while Mormons turned inward to reflect on the fact that God had not intervened to save their prophet. Their deaths were particularly hard on Joseph and Hyrum's wives. According to B.W. Richmond, a non-Mormon man who had been boarding at the Mansion House, Mary “trembled at every step, and nearly fell,” when she tried to walk to her husband's body. Their blood-soaked clothing had been removed and their bodies washed. When she reached Hyrum, she knelt down and put her arms around his head. She wailed, “Oh! Hyrum, Hyrum! Have they shot you, my dear Hyrum—are you dead? O! speak to me, my dear husband.” The image of his father lying in state would become one of her son (and future Mormon Church President) Joseph F. Smith's first memories. According to the historian Scott Kenny, Hyrum's face had become so mangled and distorted that it was almost unrecognizable when his son first saw it.⁴⁶³

Although Smith and Hyrum had not publicly recognized their plural wives, their deaths seem to have been just as difficult for these women as they were for their legal spouses. Richmond described one of Joseph's plural wives standing by his head with “her face covered, and her whole frame convulsing with weeping.”⁴⁶⁴ The secrecy surrounding her marriage meant

⁴⁶¹ James Bicknell, *America 1844: Religious Fervor, Westward Expansion, and the Presidential Election that Transformed the Nation* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press Incorporated, 2015), 171.

⁴⁶² Sally Randall to My Dear Friends, Letter, July 1, 1844, reprinted in Jordan Watkins and Steven C. Harper, “‘It Seems That All Nature Mourns’: Sally Randall's Response to the Murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,” *BYU Studies* 46:1 (2007): 97.

⁴⁶³ Kenney, “Before the Beard,” 21.

⁴⁶⁴ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*.

that her grief had to be private, but the woman felt her widowhood deeply nonetheless.

Joseph and Hyrum's deaths were a turning point for the church as a whole. In the year after their deaths, the Mormon community continued to experience frequent outbreaks of extralegal violence. Although many Mormons were reluctant to abandon their city and temple, the church's leadership quickly agreed to accept the congress's dictates and abandon their homes.⁴⁶⁵ In 1846, the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo began. Two years later, an arsonist set fire to the Mormon temple, destroying the building where Mormons believed they had spoken in heavenly tongues and been watched by angels. Their decision to leave Nauvoo for what was then Mexican territory was painful but it would also provide them with the physical distance they needed from the United States to create the godly kingdom they had once envisioned arising in Missouri.

Historians like Amy Kaplan have argued that many people in the nineteenth century saw the domestication of the American West as something that occurred through the home. It was the establishment of domestic spaces—the presence of white women, the education of children, and the transformation of indigenous sexualities—that ultimately transformed a space from a 'wilderness' into 'civilization.'⁴⁶⁶ Domesticity was no less important to white Mormons than it was to other white Americans. When Mormons entered the Salt Lake Valley, they knew that they would need to recreate white family structures. This, however, would be more difficult for Mormons than it was for other white Americans. As indicated in the previous chapter, Mormon family structures were in transition in this period. Brigham Young had to convince his followers of the divinity of plural marriage and establish how it was to be practiced correctly. Although the

Illinois Press, 1984), 196.

⁴⁶⁵ Flanders, *Nauvoo*, 330.

⁴⁶⁶ See, for example, Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* and Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in the Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

majority of Mormons never practiced polygamy, the practice was an important part of how the faith was perceived by members and outsiders. Young's family, in spite of the fact that it did not represent other Mormon families accurately, became the focal point of discussions about polygamy. Young's wives and daughters served as models of how polygamy should be lived.

The importance of Native Americans to Mormon theology meant that their interactions with American Indians were also important. In the 1840s, Utah was a colonial borderland. In the wake of Spanish colonialism, mounted Utes had begun to raid Shoshone and Paiute communities for slaves to sell in the markets of Spanish New Mexico.⁴⁶⁷ The resulting violence was highly gendered, focusing on adolescent girls. According to the historian Ned Blackhawk, the rape of female captives served as "ritualized public spectacles" in which both Spanish and Ute men participated.⁴⁶⁸ White Mormon settlers frequently remarked on the sexual violence they encountered. Just a year and a half after Mormons entered the Valley, Ute Indians brought two Paiute girls to trade to the white settlers. When a group of Mormons refused to barter for the children, one of the Utes reportedly grabbed one of the girls by her heels and killed her by dashing her head against the ground. The man then "threw the body" towards the gathered Mormons and told them they "had no hearts" or they would have "bought it and saved its life." Charles Decker, one of Brigham Young's brothers-in-law present that day, traded a rifle and pony for the second child to prevent the Utes from killing her as well. Brigham Young's family raised the four or five year old girl and called her Sally. Known throughout Utah for her culinary skill, she became a symbol for white Mormons of the possibility of redeeming the 'savagery' of the American Indian communities that surrounded them in their Great Basin Kingdom.⁴⁶⁹

The stories that proliferated about her life played into Mormonism's theological and

⁴⁶⁷ Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 111.

⁴⁶⁸ Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 77.

⁴⁶⁹ Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 150.

racial narratives about the coming redemption of American Indians. As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the patriarchal blessings that early Mormons had received in Nauvoo promised them that they would one day be able to instruct “the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent... in their own tongue.”⁴⁷⁰ The promises contained within these blessings caused Mormons to envision the millennium as a time in which they would teach American Indian women needlework and other domestic tasks.⁴⁷¹ The revelations that Smith received confirmed their vision of the eternities, wherein all of God’s children would be redeemed and live together in peace. In a meeting on July 2, 1843, Smith met with several representatives of the Pottawattamie nation who had come to see him in Nauvoo. After speaking with the men about their dispossession at the hands of the U.S. government, Smith assured them that God had told him that they “would be blessed again.” He cast their redemption in terms of assimilation into white society. “It will not be long,” he told them, until “you will cultivate the earth & build good houses like white men.”⁴⁷² Mormons adopted a racial paradigm in which American Indians and other indigenous people would willingly adopt white understandings of domesticity as they began to remember their godly heritage.

The emphasis upon Sally’s cooking skills played into this paradigm. Stories about her ability to bake pies and other dishes suggested that American Indians could adopt white Mormon understandings of domesticity and do so happily. Her story also had other uses. Its brutality allowed white Mormons to displace the violence of their colonialism. Mormons had been partially responsible for the frequent raiding they lamented. In buying Indian children, they

⁴⁷⁰ Patriarchal Blessing of John Lytle, estimated date May 1836, quoted in Marquardt, “Patriarchal Blessings by Joseph Smith, Sr.,” 86.

⁴⁷¹ Patriarchal Blessing of Martha Jane Knowlton on January 21, 1840, quoted in Marquardt, “Patriarchal Blessings by Joseph Smith, Sr.,” 205.

⁴⁷² “History Draft [1 March-31 December 1843],” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-draft-1-march-31-december-1843#!/paperSummary/historydraft-1-march-31-december-1843&p=117>.

raised the price for captives. Instead of alleviating the suffering of Indian children who became captives, they exacerbated it by encouraging Utes to capture even more children.⁴⁷³ Their decision to settle on Ute fishing lands forced Indian communities to seek out other sources of food.⁴⁷⁴ Utes relied on the income from slave raiding to sustain themselves in a difficult economy. Although Mormons frequently lamented the poverty they encountered in American Indian communities, they were reluctant to admit the role that they played in causing it.

This chapter places Young's attempt to establish a white, polygamous domesticity against Mormon interactions with Native Americans. It first examines Mormon attempts to establish a polygamous domesticity in Winter Quarters before exploring the initial years of Mormon settlement in Utah. The chapter then analyzes Mormon attempts to subdue native peoples in Utah. In explicitly juxtaposing the attempts of Mormons to discipline white and native bodies, it attempts to re-envision Kaplan's arguments about domesticity. Mormons sought to distance themselves from American Indian polygamy at the same moment that they incorporated them into white families through intermarriage and the adoption of Indian children. Their understanding of indigenous people in the United States also drew heavily on the missionary work they had done in the Pacific Islands. In the 1840s and 1850s, Mormonism witnessed the development of a polygamous domesticity, the growth of Mormon missionary work, dramatic confrontations with American Indian communities, and the consolidation of power in the figure of Brigham Young. By the mid-1850s, Mormonism was palpably different than it had been under the leadership of Joseph Smith. This chapter examines how white Mormons sought to discipline white, polygamous families and transform the domestic habits of American Indians in their attempt to create a Mormon kingdom centered on the Great Basin.

⁴⁷³ Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 240.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 237.

The Mormon Succession Crisis and the Establishment of Polygamy

The changes that occurred in Mormon theology and family life had their origins in the uncertainty that the Mormon community experienced in Nauvoo after Smith's death. The martyrdom as it came to be known exposed a power vacuum within the Mormon community. After Smith's death, the community faced the difficulty of routinizing his charismatic authority through the offices of the priesthood and the designation of a successor. Although some members of the Mormon community hoped for a dynastic succession in which prophetic power would reside in individual members of the Smith family, most believed that God would anoint a successor. Several men arose to claim Joseph Smith's mantle. A man named James Strang claimed that an angel had appointed him to be Smith's successor and managed to cultivate a following that included several prominent members of the church including Smith's brother William. His total following may have numbered over twelve thousand at its height.⁴⁷⁵

Sidney Rigdon, an influential theologian and orator within the Mormon community who had once been Smith's confidante and counselor in the First Presidency, also represented an important claim to power within the Mormon community. As an early convert to Mormonism, he had baptized many men and women into the faith. Rigdon and his followers rejected polygamy and disciplined any members who had more than one wife.⁴⁷⁶

Individual families were frequently split apart as husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters chose to follow different claimants to Smith's prophetic authority. One of these families was that of Aidah and Albert Clements who

⁴⁷⁵ See D. Michael Quinn, "The Succession Crisis of 1844," *BYU Studies* 16:2 (1976): 194-196; Roger Van Noord, *King of Beaver Island: The Life and Assassination of James Jesse Strang* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia*, 170-92; Vickie Cleverley Speek, "God Has Made Us a Kingdom:" *James Strang and the Midwest Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006).

⁴⁷⁶ D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," 188-193; Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994); and Ronald Walker, "Six Days in August: Brigham Young and the Succession," in *A Firm Foundation*, 161-196.

appeared before the Nauvoo High Council in the previous chapter. According to family histories, Aidah joined the church while she was living in Fort Ann, New York. Her husband Albert met Sidney Rigdon during a business trip and brought home a copy of the Book of Mormon. After Smith's death, Albert decided to follow the man who had initially introduced him to the gospel. Aidah, on the other hand, followed Brigham Young to the deserts of Utah where two of her daughters eventually married the same man as polygamous wives.⁴⁷⁷

On the day the Smith Brothers died, Addison was proselytizing in the Pacific. His distance from Nauvoo meant that he did not learn about the event for several months. Just over a year after Smith's death, a schooner arrived with a long letter detailing the death of the Mormon prophet and his brother. Addison wrote in his journal that the accounts caused his "blood to chill in my veins."⁴⁷⁸ Thousands of miles and an ocean away, he was unable to help his family or even know if they were safe. The separation, however, was harder on Louisa. Like Aidah, she decided to follow Young from Nauvoo to the American West. During the journey, she contracted scurvy and was forced to live in a sod cave in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. At one point, she claimed that she could feel "my flesh waste away from off my bones!"⁴⁷⁹ As a result of her illness, she lost her "upper front teeth," which caused her to speak with an "unnatural" voice before she obtained false teeth decades later.⁴⁸⁰ Her altered appearance became a marker of the pain and suffering she had experienced as a Mormon woman. Her difficulties distanced Louisa from her husband in

⁴⁷⁷ Andrea G. Radke, "We Also Marched: The Women and Children of Zion's Camp," *BYU Studies* 39:1 (2000): 151. Radke spells Aidah's name "Ada." Both spellings of Aidah's name appear on documents from the nineteenth century. Family histories, however, tend to spell the name "Aidah." As a result, I have chosen to retain the family spelling. I should note here that I am a descendant of Aidah Clements and have copies of the family histories that members of the Clements family have written about both Aidah and Albert. For an example of these family histories, see <http://ancestry.smithplanet.com/documents/Albert%20Clements%20and%20Aidah%20Winchell%20Clements.pdf>. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers has also collected several family histories as a result of its attempt to document the ancestry of people descended from the initial white Mormon settlers of Utah.

⁴⁷⁸ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 238.

⁴⁷⁹ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 88.

⁴⁸⁰ Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 359.

addition to marring her face. Although they had been married for years by the time she traveled to Utah, he provided her with little financial help and failed to protect their family. When she referred to him in her journal, she put the word “father” in quotation marks.⁴⁸¹

Louisa’s experiences suggest that the divisions that wracked the Mormon community after Smith’s death were partially caused by the distance that Mormon missionary work created between families. The way that Mormons remembered this time period in family histories certainly supports this argument. In a short story written about Aidah and Albert Clements in the twentieth century, Albert’s defection from the Mormon community is blamed on his absence from Nauvoo at the moment when Brigham Young’s face was transfigured into Joseph Smith’s. Unable to hear Young speaking in Smith’s voice, Albert followed Sidney Rigdon, the man from whom he had originally heard the Mormon gospel.⁴⁸²

The succession crisis, however, was a theological crisis as well. As Benjamin Park and Robin Jensen have argued, Smith’s thought was not a fully “coherent worldview.” Instead, it was fragmentary—“pregnant with possibilities, saturated with inherent tensions and paradoxes, and capable of several trajectories.”⁴⁸³ The various claimants to Joseph Smith’s prophetic vision offered fundamentally different understandings of the nature of revelation. Although many early Mormons emphasized the expansiveness of early Mormon theology, some Mormons believed that the revelations that Smith had received served as a corpus to which they could turn to judge the prophetic claims of others. They believed that past revelation bound prophets, maintaining a sense of order and stability within the Mormon prophetic tradition. When John E. Page was confronted with the claims of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to authority, he lamented the

⁴⁸¹ Pratt, *The History Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 99.

⁴⁸² Lulu Greene Richards, “Faith and Faithfulness Triumphant,” *The Relief Society Magazine* 17:1 (January 1930): 252 – 254.

⁴⁸³ Benjamin E. Park and Robin Scott Jensen, “Debating Succession, March 1846: John E. Page, Orson Hyde, and the Trajectories of Joseph Smith’s Legacy,” *Journal of Mormon History* 39 (Winter 2013): 182.

fact that the revelations that the body had received did not seem to be in concert with Smith's earlier pronouncements. He ultimately rejected the authority of the Quorum even though he had previously been ordained a member of it.⁴⁸⁴ Park and Jensen argue that the difference was partially geographic. Members who lived within Nauvoo experienced the multiplicity of revelations offered by Smith and others as expanding their knowledge of the Kingdom of God, while those who lived outside of its boundaries did not have immediate access to new revelation. As a result, their understanding of Mormon theology was more static and resistant to change.⁴⁸⁵

The theological crisis within early Mormonism was compounded by the existence of what the historian Ron Esplin has called "private gnosis" within early Mormonism.⁴⁸⁶ Smith claimed that he had taught all of his doctrines publicly as well as privately. The explanations he gave of his "strongest doctrines," polygamy, the multiplicity of Gods, and the eventual fate of the priesthood, however, were often fuller when given to members of his inner circle.⁴⁸⁷ Brigham Young's task was to bring Smith's more private teachings into public. He sought to introduce the Mormon community as a whole to knowledge that had previously been accessible to only a few.⁴⁸⁸ While some Mormons accepted the new knowledge, others saw the revelations as unwarranted innovations upon Smith's Mormonism. One of the most difficult practices for members of the Mormon community to accept was polygamy. Some Mormon leaders saw Smith's death as an opportunity to disavow the practice. Just three and a half months after Smith's death, Sidney Rigdon wrote in a letter eventually published in the *Messenger and Advocate* "that there could be found a set of men and women, in this age of the world, with the

⁴⁸⁴ Park and Jensen, "Debating Succession, March 1846," 189–191.

⁴⁸⁵ Park and Jensen, "Debating Succession, March 1846," 190–191.

⁴⁸⁶ Ronald K. Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity," *BYU Studies* 21:3 (1981), 304.

⁴⁸⁷ Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve," 304.

⁴⁸⁸ Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham and the Twelve," 304.

revelations of God in their hands, who could invent and propagate doctrines so ruinous to society, so debasing and demoralising as the doctrine of a man having a plurality of wives.”⁴⁸⁹

Others within the Mormon community, however, continued to encourage the practice. As early as 1844, non-Mormon newspapers reported that Mormon leaders continued to preach the “spiritual wife doctrine.”⁴⁹⁰ The Mormon exodus to Utah began on February 4, 1846, when thousands of Mormons fled the state of Illinois because of continued fears of state and federal harassment. Groups of Mormons crossed the Mississippi River using flat-bottom boats, rafts, and then their feet when the river froze on February 24.⁴⁹¹

The relative paucity of sources from that time period makes it difficult to trace the precise shifts in Mormon theology that occurred as people began to openly claim their polygamous spouses. The documents that do survive, however, allow us to make some sense of the changes that occurred. Although individual families were broken up as the realities of the journey west forced husbands to travel apart from their wives and children, it was also the first time that wives were allowed to openly claim their husbands. Some plural wives traveled with each other so that they could support their children in the absence of their husbands. The demands that women sometimes travel alone to better distribute individuals among the traveling companies and the continued absence of some men due to missionary work meant that women often headed families. According to the historian Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, women led almost half of the households in one of the Mormon wards created in Winter Quarters.⁴⁹²

For some women, however, the transition from monogamy to polygamy was difficult.

⁴⁸⁹ Van Wagoner, *Polygamy*, 72.

⁴⁹⁰ See, for example, “Mormon News,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (September 20, 1844), 2. <http://www.newspapers.com/image/50252922/?terms=%22spiritual%2Bwife%22%2BMormon>

⁴⁹¹ James Allen and Glen Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 229–230.

⁴⁹² Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” *Sunstone* 8 (July/August 1983): 12.

One of the most famous diaries from the period is that of Patty Bartlett Sessions, a midwife who converted to the church in 1833. When she in her early fifties, her husband married Rosilla Cowan. Although she was only thirty-two years old, Rosilla refused to submit to the older woman's authority. In her diary, Patty wrote that Rosilla "fil[li]ed" their husband's "ears full."⁴⁹³ The younger woman also refused to share the household duties. Instead of cooking meals with her sister wife, she insisted on preparing her own food and eating it alone. Patty wrote simply: "She can eat with the rest of us."⁴⁹⁴ Although the tension between the two women was difficult for Patty to bear, her husband's response made it even more difficult. Initially, he blamed Patty for the differences between the two women. In one diary entry, Patty wrote "Mr. Sessions has had said many hard things to me," only to blot it out.⁴⁹⁵ Several of her entries from the time period are stricken out, including ones where she admitted that she slept alone.⁴⁹⁶ Eventually, Rosilla decided that the marriage could not be salvaged and left the company. She returned to Nauvoo to join the few dozen Mormons who still remained there.

There were other difficulties as well. The decision of the Mormon community to flee Nauvoo before they had finished their preparations meant that they had little food for the journey. The lack of food, the constant physical demands upon individual bodies, and the cold weather led to hundreds of deaths from consumption, malaria, and scurvy. One historian has estimated the infant mortality rate to be approximately 35%.⁴⁹⁷ When the Mormon community reached Winter Quarters, they were forced to hastily build whatever they could—which meant the proliferation of log cabins, lean-tos, and dugouts.⁴⁹⁸ Pregnant women were expected to bear

⁴⁹³ Patty Bartlett Sessions, *Mormon Midwife: The 1846 – 1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, edited by Donna Toland Smart (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 61.

⁴⁹⁴ Sessions, *Mormon Midwife*, 62.

⁴⁹⁵ Sessions, *Mormon Midwife*, 58.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Beecher, "Women at Winter Quarters," 16.

⁴⁹⁸ Richard E. Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, Winter Quarters, 1846-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma

their children in wagons, and then after they gave birth, continue on the trail. When Eliza Lyman arrived at Winter Quarters, she complained that fever and “scorching sun” had reduced her to “a skeleton so much so that those who have not been with me do not know me.”⁴⁹⁹ The lack of fresh fruit led many in the camps to develop scurvy. The ankles of the people who had been inflicted would begin to ache and their legs would then swell and, finally, become almost black.

According to one resident of Winter Quarters, “the flesh would rot and drop off some to the bones.”⁵⁰⁰ The descriptions that women offered of this time period in their later reflections were bleak. Eliza R. Snow, an important Mormon poet who was sealed first to Joseph Smith and then to Brigham Young after the former’s death, referred to it as “a growling, grumbling, devilish, sickly time.”⁵⁰¹ Jane Snyder Richards reflected on her experiences with the simple sentence: “I only lived because I could not die.”⁵⁰² She had given birth on the trail. Although her son died immediately, she refused to part with him and carried his body with her for a week and a half in late July so he could be buried in a proper cemetery. Her two-year-old daughter Wealthy Lovisa died later that same year in mid-September, laying by her mother’s side in a wagon.

Other women’s experiences were difficult, if less horrific. Mary Fielding Smith had a complicated position in the Mormon community as the Latter-day Saints traveled west. Although she had been married to one of the leaders of the community, Hyrum’s death made Mary just one of several women who found themselves widowed after the martyrdom. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball divided the brothers’ wives. Mary ultimately decided to cast her lot with Kimball, but her marriage to him was not as intimate as the one that she had with Hyrum.

Press, 1987) 133.

⁴⁹⁹ Journal of Eliza Maria Lyman, July 14, 1846, quoted in Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 133.

⁵⁰⁰ Diary of John Pulsipher, 13, quoted in Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 135.

⁵⁰¹ Eliza R. Snow, *The Diaries of Eliza R. Snow*, June 1, 1847, HM 27522, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (hereafter Huntington Library).

⁵⁰² Quoted in Bettie McKenzie, “Mormon Women on the 1846 Iowa Trail,” *Nauvoo Journal* 8 (Fall 1996): 50.

Although she traveled with eighteen people, including a handyman, three hired men, Hyrum's children from a previous marriage, and her brother Joseph Fielding, during the journey west, her son remembered her as being alone.⁵⁰³ Instead of connecting her to Kimball, he calls her "the widow" and describes her being forced to apply to a local agent of the church for help in crossing the plains. According to her son Joseph F., she was turned away and told, "You will prove a burden to your company."⁵⁰⁴ There is no description of Kimball, her brother Joseph, or any of the hired men offering her assistance. In her son's portrayal of her life, she is utterly alone.

A letter that Kimball sent to Mary after she decided to travel across the plains belies Joseph F.'s descriptions of her as completely without resources. Kimball tells her that he hopes that she "will overtake us and winter with us in some good place." He then provides her with specific information about which articles will be useful to her and which will only make her journey more difficult, telling her to leave behind any "heavy articles" or "furniture that is of no use" but bring "all the oxen" she could and "any breeding mares."⁵⁰⁵ Although Kimball's letter lacks any emotive language or sense of intimacy with his new wife, his letter suggests that he considered Mary to be his responsibility and that she was not entirely without help or friends as she embarked on the journey across the Great Plains.

Emphasizing the support that women like Mary received does not mean the journey was easy. Mary, like other Mormon women, would have endured the hardships of Winter Quarters, as well as shared in some of its joys. In spite of the physical hardships that Mormons endured, experiences at Winter Quarters also provided many Mormons spiritual renewal. In her diary, Patty Sessions records visiting dozens of Mormon women and laying her hands upon them to

⁵⁰³ Anderson, *Mary Fielding Smith*, 95.

⁵⁰⁴ Joseph F. Smith, "How One Widow Crossed the Plains," *Young Woman's Journal* 30:3 (March 1919): 165.

⁵⁰⁵ Letter, Heber C. Kimball to Mary Fielding Smith, ca. 1846, Mary Fielding Smith Collection, Box 1, fd. 8, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

bless their bodies.⁵⁰⁶ Another woman recalled a prayer meeting in which one man “spoke in tongues in an Indian language, and prophesied of the destruction of this nation before the coming of the Savior.” She claimed “the power that rested upon him was so great as to produce such an intense sympathy with those in the room, that they were all wonderfully affected.” After he finished, Eliza R. Snow who had been pacing the room spoke “in the pure language of Adam.”⁵⁰⁷ In the six months they camped at Winter Quarters, the Mormon community held frequent prayer meetings. Although they began slowly in December with just one meeting that month, by May, services were held bi-weekly and by early June, twice daily.⁵⁰⁸ This spiritual flowering was partially a result of the freedom that Mormons felt in their distance from the rest of the United States. They saw their trek across the American West as reenacting the exodus of the Israelites and believed that they would soon come upon the Promised Land.

This revival resulted in a dichotomy between the descriptions that survive of Winter Quarters. As Beecher has pointed out, the diaries written during the time period are generally more optimistic than the reminiscences written later.⁵⁰⁹ Eliza R. Snow, who bemoaned Winter Quarters, wrote at another time that the Mormon community felt for the first time “as tho’ we could breath more freely and speak one with another upon those things where in God had made us free with less carefulness than we had hitherto done.”⁵¹⁰ At the same time that Mormons lived in Winter Quarters, they found a sense of freedom even as they lived in poverty and experienced disease and death. As time progressed, however, the memories of their poverty likely became stronger than their initial sense of freedom. The freedom they enjoyed was also double-edged. At the same time that Mormons celebrated their freedom with the overflowing of heavenly tongues,

⁵⁰⁶ Sessions, *Mormon Midwife*, passim.

⁵⁰⁷ *Woman’s Exponent* Vol. 12 (July 15, 1883): 26, quoted in Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” 17.

⁵⁰⁸ Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” 17.

⁵⁰⁹ Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” 12.

⁵¹⁰ McKenzie, “Mormon Women on the 1846 Iowa Trail,” 50; Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 81.

Mormon leaders worried about their ability to control marriage and sexuality. The open, if still unspoken acceptance of polygamy during the Mormon trek west, had opened up marriage for ordinary members of the faith. What had been a closely regulated practice in Nauvoo became one in which dozens of men participated. At Winter Quarters, men began to claim their right to have multiple wives and did so without seeking the permission of the church leadership. Henry Davis preached at Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, that “it was the privilege of every Elder, Seventy, etc. to have as many wives as he could get and that he had the right to marry them.”⁵¹¹ A man named Conyers had already taken a young woman as his wife after embracing the doctrine by a “pretended authority.” The man who reported the case to Brigham Young considered it “the strongest case of adultery” and told the man’s first wife that he should repent and ask forgiveness for his sins.⁵¹² If he continued to have sex with the young woman, he would be damned.

Young agreed. During the journey from Illinois to Winter Quarters, he routinely condemned men for telling women that they could not be saved without being sealed to a husband and that it was not a sin “to sleep together” before they were married. Such men often followed their promises with hasty visits to a “clod head of an elder” who sealed the couple—“all done without the knowledge or counsel of the authority of this church.”⁵¹³ For Mormon leaders, these marriages represented a challenge to their authority. Young told his followers that he worried that many Mormons would be “cut off for whoredom” if the “strict letter of the law” were followed.⁵¹⁴ The couples that engaged in these relationships, however, likely saw them as lawful marriages. Although the United States government had long tried to bring marriage under

⁵¹¹ Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 198.

⁵¹² Jonathan Wright to Brigham Young, February 11, 1848, Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological book of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830 – present), Vol. 24, LDS Church History Library.

⁵¹³ John D. Lee, *Journals of John D. Lee, 1846 – 1847 & 1859* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), 80, quoted in Bennett, *Mormons in Missouri*, 197.

⁵¹⁴ Bennett, *Mormons in Missouri*, 197.

its control, many men and women living in sparsely settled regions married each other without publishing bans or contacting a public official. They believed that simply living as married individuals legitimized their union.⁵¹⁵ The opening of marriage symbolized by the introduction of polygamy into the church likely solidified their belief that these were righteous marriages rather than whoredoms or evidence of adultery.

Young's statements about marriage represented not so much an indictment of illicit sexuality as a desire to bring marriage under the control of the church. Mormon men like Phelps erred by not submitting their marriages to the priesthood; they insisted on their ability to marry individual women by gaining their consent and finding someone to perform the religious ceremony. Young recognized that the establishment of polygamy had created a space for people to challenge many of the assumptions of monogamous marriage. Individuals saw the announcement of polygamy as being representative of a greater openness to alternative sexualities. Young, however, believed that it was important to exert control over marriage within the Mormon community. Displaying proper understandings of domesticity was important because of the attacks on Mormonism that had arisen in the wake of polygamy. Although the practice only circulated outside of the Mormon community as rumor and innuendo, non-Mormons had accused Smith and his followers of condoning sexual immorality, prostitution, and adultery. Young's assumption of the leadership had not stemmed these accusations. The attempt to establish polygamy and to control other forms of sexuality would be an important part of establishing the Mormon community in Utah.

⁵¹⁵ See, for example, Cott, *Public Vows*, 27-76; Richard Godbeer, *The Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 227-263.

Creating a Polygamous Domesticity

Life in early Utah was no easier than that in Winter Quarters. During their first year in the valley, the Mormon community struggled with food shortages caused by meager crops, a short growing season, and animal depredations. According to one pair of historians, they were forced to eat “crows, wolf meat, tree bark, thistle tops, sego lily bulbs, and hawks.”⁵¹⁶ The memoirs and autobiographies that Mormon men and women composed in the late nineteenth century often mention the time period as one in which they were free from the violence of Missouri and Illinois but were forced to constantly confront starvation. One man wrote that he “lived by faith.”⁵¹⁷ He frames the statement so that faith supplements the meager food he could find, nourishing the body when he could not find enough nutrition to otherwise sustain it. Another man remembered blessing the moldy cornmeal that he spooned into a bowl of strained milk every night. Although the meal was sparse, he preferred it to boiled rawhide and thistle roots.⁵¹⁸

In the books that they have written about this time period, most Mormon historians have focused on the way in which the Mormons used irrigation, communal ranching, strict city planning, and planned emigration to create an orderly community in what they saw as a wilderness. In his influential *Great Basin Kingdom*, for example, Leonard Arrington argues that the centralized economic planning that Mormons adopted in the nineteenth century allowed them to create a prosperous community in Utah’s harsh climates.⁵¹⁹ Early Mormons, however, saw the transformation of Utah as being as much about domesticity as economics. In this way, Mormon understandings of colonialism mirrored that of other nineteenth-century Americans. Although Mormon women had begun to live openly as polygamists during the Mormon trek west, Winter

⁵¹⁶ Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 104.

⁵¹⁷ William Leany, “Autobiography of William Leany,” Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁵¹⁸ Aroet Lucius Hale, “Diary of Aroet Lucius Hale,” Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University

⁵¹⁹ Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*.

Quarters and the trail to Utah were transitional spaces. They represented a moment in which the rules that governed sexuality, domesticity, and marriage expanded. The difficulty that Mormon leaders had in controlling the sexual behavior of their members is suggestive of the way in which rules about marriage loosened during this time period.⁵²⁰

Brigham Young's fulminations about "whoredoms" suggest that he was concerned about his ability to control the sexuality of white church members and recognized the importance of establishing white families as part of the settlement of Utah. Young would do so primarily through the establishment of his own family, which served as a model of polygamous relationships throughout the nineteenth century. Young had initially converted to Mormonism in upstate New York. Like many other Mormons, the faith that he originally embraced was monogamous. In 1842, however, Smith told Young that it was time for his friend and apostle to enter into plural marriage. Young claimed that he initially felt that "the grave was better for me" than polygamy but quickly became reconciled – if not excited – by the principle.⁵²¹ By November 1844, he had taken fourteen additional wives. By the end of the following year, he added five more wives to his family. Over the course of his lifetime, he fathered fifty-seven children. Young's ascension to the top leader of the Mormon Church after Joseph Smith's death meant that his family would serve as the public face of Mormonism for non-Mormons. In 1877, the *Charlotte Democrat* referred to Young's wives as a "harem" and claimed that he had "wives by the dozen."⁵²² Newspapers frequently reported on his family as though they were

⁵²⁰ The policies of the LDS Church History Library concerning its holdings prevent easy access to data about adultery, rape, and premarital sex. Any records containing information about individual sexual transgressions are typically closed to research, though some have been made available. As a result, it is difficult to know how much marital expectations loosened in this time period.

⁵²¹ Turner, *Pioneer Prophet*, 91.

⁵²² "Brigham Young's Harem," *The Charlotte Democrat* (June 22, 1877), 1, Column 5. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020713/1877-06-22/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=1850&index=1&rows=20&words=Brigham+wives+Wives+Young&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1890&proxtext=Brigham+Young+wives&y=11&x=17&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>

representative of Mormonism as a whole.

It is important to remember, however, that Young's family was comprised of elite, well-educated women within the Mormon community. Although they surely suffered with the rest of the Mormon community, their stories are not representative of the experiences of Mormon women as a whole. By the 1860s, Brigham Young's family enjoyed a fairly prosperous lifestyle. Susa enjoyed "music masters, school teachers, French masters, and short-hand instructors," and her clothes for the Fourth of July and Pioneer Day included "white muslin dresses," "dainty pink ribbons, "tartletan sashes of blue," and blackened shoes.⁵²³ Mormon men and women who lived in the outer settlements, however, frequently struggled to provide their families with even the basics of survival. In the reminiscences she wrote of her life, Melissa Jane Caldwell Adams remembered the deprivations that she had experienced as a Mormon woman in Utah in the late nineteenth century. She and her husband "washed & combed & carded wool" that they pulled off old sheep that they found lying in the woods to provide their clothing and frequently ate nothing more than "salt onions" for dinner. When her husband received a mission call, he asked her, "What would you do?" Although there was no satisfactory answer to the question, she told him that he could not refuse the call. Even after he returned, he would "take sink for spells," forcing Melissa to follow him "whair ever... for [she] never knew what might happen to him."⁵²⁴ During this same period, Young's children received educations at the University of Deseret.

The structure of Young's family relationships was also markedly different from the majority of people living in the Utah Territory. Although Mormon theology emphasized the

⁵²³ Susa Young Gates, "Polygamy As It Was. Susie Young Gates in the New York Sun. Pleasure of Women and Children in the Early Days. A Daughter of Brigham Young Passionately Defends Her Creed," *The Utah Enquirer* 13:99 (December 13, 1889), no pg., photocopy, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁵²⁴ Melissa Jane Caldwell, "History of William Henry Adams," Melissa Jane Caldwell Family Papers, Box 1, fd. 4, Special Collections and Archives, University of Utah, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT (hereafter Marriott Library).

necessity for men and women to enter into polygamy if they wanted to enter the celestial kingdom, the majority of Mormons did not practice polygamy. The ability of man to take multiple wives was a sign of spiritual authority and frequently temporal wealth. Individual men were required to submit to polygamy if they wanted to advance within the church hierarchy. Although some Mormon polygamists lived in poverty, others, especially the larger polygamous families in Salt Lake City, lived in relative comfort. Young's family was not the only one who provided its children with music lessons and frequent visits to the theater.

In spite of the differences in the lives of Young's family and those of the Mormon community as whole, however, the family of Brigham Young still serves as a useful lens through which to view polygamy. Young's wives and daughters held influential positions within the church's women's association. Eliza R. Snow, a poet who had also been a wife of Joseph Smith, served as the President of the General Relief Society from 1866 until her death in 1887. Another one of his wives helped to establish the Deseret Hospital, studied obstetrics, and served as the vice president of the Utah chapter of the National Council of Women. His daughter Susa Young Gates edited two official church publications, attended five meetings of the International Council of Women as a delegate and speaker, and served on the boards of both the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association and the Relief Society.

Their prominence meant that they served as models of how to live in polygamy for those inside of the faith as well. Brigham Young explicitly saw his family in this way. In 1869, he announced that he had grown tired of the desire of Mormon women to "outdo each other in all the foolish fashions of the world."⁵²⁵ He told his wives and daughters that since "all Israel" was looking to them that the reformation in clothing and manners that he sought would begin with

⁵²⁵ Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1911), 8.

them.⁵²⁶ He desired “to organize my own family first into a society for the promotion of habits of order, thrift, industry, and charity; and, above all,” retrenchment from “extravagance in dress, in eating, and in speech.”⁵²⁷ According to Young’s daughter Clarissa, Eliza R. Snow was the one who led retrenchment within the family. In one instance, she insisted that the girls remove “the beautiful grosgrain ribbon” sashes from their dresses. Clarissa accused the older woman of wearing fancy clothing but being unable to bear “a like extravagance in the younger generation” to a point that it almost amounted “to fanaticism.” The juxtaposition of this paragraph with a description of the “yards and yards of material” that went “into her skirts” and her desire to trim “her gowns as elaborately as possible” sharpened the accusation of hypocrisy.⁵²⁸

The establishment of Brigham Young’s family as a model of domesticity within the Mormon community was not foreordained. When Young and the rest of the Latter-day Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, it was unclear what the Mormon family would look like. If Young and the other members of the Quorum of the Twelve were to establish polygamy, they had to create permanent structures for its replication. For Young, this meant establishing his own family as a single unit. The dozens of women he had married by 1847 lived in scattered groups and did not fully see each other as kin. Establishing them as a single family meant calling them together to live, if not around a single hearth, then as an extended kin group.

To some extent, this process had begun on the plains. During the trek from Illinois to Utah, six or seven of his wives had lived together in a single tent.⁵²⁹ This arrangement allowed them to develop close, loving relationships with each other. Part of their affection for each other may have been based on their age. In a history that she wrote of her mother, Susa Young Gates

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Clarissa Young Spencer, *Brigham Young At Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1940), 83–85.

⁵²⁹ Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” 13.

emphasized their childlike natures of the women her father had married. She describes them as “girl-wives” in the first blush of womanhood, eager to please their shared husband.⁵³⁰ Many were living apart from their families for the first time. The result was the formation of quick friendships. Denied the company of their husband who was supposed to sustain them and provide them with spiritual nourishment, these women turned towards the other model of femininity available to them—the world of female friendship.

In her biography of her mother, for example, Susa described Clara Decker, a young woman who had married Young at the age of fifteen, as one of her mother’s “truest and best loved friends.”⁵³¹ The two women had shared a bedroom together while living in a log house that Young initially built for some of his wives when he arrived in Utah. Although Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s classic description of female friendship emphasized the importance of letter writing and visiting in sustaining female friendships, Susa’s descriptions of the life of Brigham Young’s wives in early Utah focused on the hard work that they performed. According to Susa, there was “cooking to do; the primitive fireplace offered hot coals for the hanging pots of meats and vegetables, and with closed iron bake-ovens.”⁵³² There was also candle dipping with “beef tallow, melted and run in tin candle molds” and cows to milk.⁵³³ Although these chores were similar to those of other housewives, the sheer number of Young’s wives multiplied the amount of work that was required. Candles had to be produced to light twenty bedrooms, and enough milk, for a large, expanding family that often had several small children at a time. Although the printed narratives concerning Young’s family emphasized its gentility and removal from the world of commerce, it was run as though it was a small business. Women were assigned to

⁵³⁰ Susa Young Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 36, LDS Church History Library.

⁵³¹ Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 30.

⁵³² Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 33.

⁵³³ Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 34.

perform certain tasks. Susa's mother was given the task of milking cows and churning butter.⁵³⁴

The relative absence of Mormon polygamous husbands meant that the relationships between wives were often stronger than those between husbands and wives. One Mormon woman, for example, wrote that she had been unable to “assure my family that my marriage was gotten solely up on the foundation of love for the man.... I could not say that I really loved the man as lovers love.”⁵³⁵ In her writings, she imagined an eternity in which she and her sister wives would be bound together. She wrote that “we three who loved each other more than sisters, children of one mother love, will go hand in hand together down through all eternity.”⁵³⁶ In spite of the emphasis in Mormon theology on the importance of the relationships between men and their wives, her husband was absent from this vision of eternity. The letters and diaries that Young's wives wrote were not as explicit about the fact that their relationships with their sister wives were stronger than those with their husband, but many of them had similar feelings about their husband.

In most of the descriptions that remain of life in his household, Brigham Young is strangely removed. Susa's descriptions, for example, focus on the domestic relationships between her father's wives. She lists the women and children that she remembered from her childhood. “The Lion House,” she wrote, “was to be the home of ten girl-wives, some of them already with one or two children. Mother herself had her beautiful four-year old, blue-eyed Dora, while Aunt Clara had sparkling-eyed Janet, or Net, as we called her. Aunt Emily had stately Emily, and lovely Carlie. Aunt Zina had darling, upright, little Zina, and she was also a stepmother to little motherless, gentle-souled Marie, Willard, and happy Phoebe, who was an

⁵³⁴ Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 38.

⁵³⁵ Paula Harline, *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club: From the Diaries of Mormon Pioneer Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 113.

⁵³⁶ Harline, *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club*, 116.

infant; Aunt Clara Chase had died leaving three little ones.”⁵³⁷ Nowhere in this description is her father. In spite of the fact that she later wrote a biography of him, he appears only fleetingly in her personal correspondence, private writings, and sketches of her mother’s life. In the papers collected after her death, there is one letter from her father. Scrawled on it in Susa’s handwriting is the note: “Only Letter I ever had from father.”⁵³⁸ Susa’s descriptions of her relationship with her father are tense. At the same time that she describes him as loving, she bemoans his absence from her life. He appears as the object of her longing, not as a man who frequently cuddled and loved his children.

Many people draw a contrast between the Brigham Young that Susa portrays and the descriptions of Young contained within the exposé of his ex-wife Ann Eliza Young. In spite of the differences in tone, however, their descriptions of the Lion House overlap in meaningful ways. Like Susa, Ann Eliza’s narrative separates Young from her descriptions of his family. He is strangely absent from her portrayal of life in the Lion House. She describes him as a distant man who enters his home only at dinner. His wives and children then gather around him at the family table. The food is simple, and Young begins each meal with prayer. After this short meal, the women do not see their husband again until it is time for evening prayer.⁵³⁹ Ann Eliza describes his children as being “almost strangers to him.” “They know nothing of fatherly affection,” she claims, “and while they feel that they have, socially, a sort of prestige, by being so closely related to him, they feel, personally, only a dread and fear of him. He never invites their confidences, nor shows himself interested in their affairs; all this would be quite

⁵³⁷ Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 36.

⁵³⁸ Letter, Brigham Young to Susa Young Gates, August 13, 1877, Susa Young Gates Collection, Box 1, fd. 10, LDS Church History Library.

⁵³⁹ Young, *Wife No. 19*, 527.

incompatible with his ideas of prophetic dignity.”⁵⁴⁰

In describing Young in this way, Ann Eliza discredits him as both as a father and as a leader. In the nineteenth century, American understandings of government emphasized the intimate connection between familial and political governance. The domestic sphere became the place where a sense of responsibility, decorum, and propriety were cultivated. Fathers who improperly presided over their family failed in their responsibility to society as a whole and were unfit leaders. In portraying Brigham Young as a tyrannical, distant father, she portrayed him as unfit to be a spiritual or political leader.

Mormon historians have often dismissed Ann Eliza’s writing as a possible source for information about Mormon family. In spite of the venom in her text, however, her writing emphasizes many of the things as other Mormon women. In her writing, for example, she frequently underscores the importance of relationships between women. The vitriol that she reserved for Young did not extend to all of his wives. She begins her expose with a plea to the women that had once been her sister wives to try to understand her position. “Should this book meet your eyes,” she writes to her fellow wives, “I wish you most distinctly to understand that my quarrel is not with you. On the contrary, the warmest and tenderest feelings of my heart are strongly enlisted in your favor.... Some of you I have dearly loved. I have respected and honored you all.”⁵⁴¹ She describes Young’s wives variously as “intelligent,” “very sweet,” “benevolent,” “good-looking,” “amiable,” “quiet, and “resolute.”⁵⁴²

Although Ann Eliza felt her husband had neglected her, she appreciated the community of women that polygamy had created. In her exposé, she wrote, “I was always treated very kindly by the other wives, with one or two exceptions, and I have the pleasantest and kindest

⁵⁴⁰ Young, *Wife No. 19*, 530.

⁵⁴¹ Young, *Wife No. 19*, 11.

⁵⁴² Young, *Wife No. 19*, 486, 491–492.

recollections of them all.”⁵⁴³ For some women, the relationships that they were able to create with other women were more important than the relationship they sacrificed with their husband. The historian Paula Harline has argued that polygamy provided women who did not naturally feel attracted to men a way to enter into intense, emotional relationships with women while still enjoying the benefits accorded to married women in American society.⁵⁴⁴ For these women, polygamy was deeply satisfying. Ann Eliza, however, was unable to accept the distance that many polygamist men had from their wives. Although she had been raised as a Mormon woman, she rejected its emphasis upon relationships between women for the idealization of romantic love portrayed within popular American culture.

As time progressed, the emphasis upon female relationships would become a key element of Mormon culture. In 1866, Young asked his wife Eliza R. Snow to reorganize a church-wide General Relief Society. The reasons behind his decision to do so are unclear. After Joseph Smith’s death, he had publicly dismissed the Relief Society, announcing that he would “summon them to my aid” if he needed them. “Until that time,” he warned, “let them stay at home.”⁵⁴⁵ His opposition to the Relief Society stemmed from Emma’s decision to use the organization to oppose polygamy before and after her husband’s death. Her investigations of the sexual irregularities within the Mormon community threatened to expose the fact that several male church leaders had begun to practice polygamy in spite of their wives’ protests to the contrary. Under Emma’s leadership, the Relief Society became an alternative locus of power within the Mormon community. The relationships that developed between women in Nauvoo threatened to become more important than those between polygamous husbands and their wives. Although Smith told the Relief Society that he had turned “the key to you in the name of God,” Young felt

⁵⁴³ Young, *Wife No. 19*, 465.

⁵⁴⁴ Harline, *Polygamous Wives Writing Club*, 107–122.

⁵⁴⁵ Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 174.

that the organization was too dangerous to be allowed to continue.⁵⁴⁶

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, understandings of polygamous domesticity within the Mormon community had changed. As women began to live openly as plural wives, their relationships with their sister wives became more intimate and began to displace those with their husbands. The intimate relationships that resulted became increasingly important to the functioning of polygamy. As women blessed each other during childbirth, sang together in tongues, and laundered each other's clothing, they began to see each other as kin in ways that had not been possible in Nauvoo. The resurrection of the Relief Society recognized the increasing importance of women's relationships to the Mormon community. Young, however, had initially resisted this development. Although Mormon women had participated in ecstatic religious experiences in Winter Quarters and continued to form smaller, less formal women's groups, he had been unwilling to recognize the Relief Society on a community level. After Young decided to resurrect the society, however, his wives played important roles in its administration. His wife Zina served as Eliza's first counselor and became the society's president after her death. His daughter Susa later edited the *Relief Society Magazine*, which printed sample lessons for the society and served as its official magazine for decades.

The emphasis of the Relief Society on the relationships between women was supposed to create a model for how women should live their own lives. Throughout the *Woman's Exponent*, which served as the society's official newspaper until Susa founded the *Relief Society Magazine*, articles encouraged women to deemphasize romantic love and be rational in their courtships. Placing too much emphasis on the emotions that men and women felt for each other as they courted, they argued, risked tying women to men who were unworthy of their affections. In spite of the emphasis on rational choice and female friendships, however, Mormon definitions of

⁵⁴⁶ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 447.

marriage still focused on sex. Newspapers constantly wondered how many wives Brigham Young held in his “harem.” In her biography of her mother, Susa sought to answer the question. Although she did not explicitly detail her father’s sex life, she suggested that it was ultimately sex that determined whether or not a particular woman was considered a wife. In one section of her biography of her mother, she adds detail to existing sketches of several of her father’s wives. She wrote that Emmeline Free and Margaret Alley had both been married to her father in Nauvoo. She then adds that they were “really his wives, both bearing children.”⁵⁴⁷ She implicitly contrasts their status to other women who were his wives in name only.⁵⁴⁸

In determining who counted as her father’s wife, Susa focused on *this* life rather than the next. Her definition played upon the distinction within Mormon theology between those who had been sealed for “time and eternity,” and those who would only become a man’s wife in the latter. Other Mormons recognized this distinction, emphasizing the practical aspects of marital life in their definitions of who counted as a wife and who did not. The affidavit that Catherine Phillips Smith wrote at eighty-three testifying that she had been married to Joseph’s brother Hyrum included a statement that she had lived with him as his wife.⁵⁴⁹ This definition of marriage blended Mormon theology with wider American ideas about domesticity. For Mormon women, it mattered whether or not a woman had born her husband children and had physically lived with him as his wife. Although Mormon theology held that all the women a man had sealed to him would be his in the next life, they recognized that the ties that individuals created on this earth mattered. The deep, affective ties created through sexual intimacy and the rearing of children were important to Mormon women in determining who was a “real wife” and who was not.

By the mid-1850s, Young had managed to establish control over territorial Utah. This

⁵⁴⁷ Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 29.

⁵⁴⁸ Gates, “Lucy Bigelow Young,” 29.

⁵⁴⁹ Catherine Phillips Affidavit, November 7, 1902, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

control allowed him to create a Mormon Zion that accepted polygamy and saw it as an ideal form of marriage. Not everyone, however, saw it as a gain. For Addison Pratt, the acceptance of polygamy represented a fundamental change in the religion as he saw it. When he returned from the Pacific Islands, he felt alienated from the Mormon community. He eventually left the Mormon Church. Mary Fielding's relationship with polygamy was complicated. Her marriage to Heber C. Kimball had solidified her position at the center of the Mormon community. Many of Kimball's wives became important figures in the Relief Society. Mary, however, decided not to live on the plot in the city that had been assigned to her. Instead, she chose to live on a forty-acre farm in Mill Creek with her children. Her brother Joseph lived nearby. Young was ultimately successful in creating a polygamous domesticity within Utah. Kaplan's work, however, has demonstrated that domesticating the frontier was about more than establishing white homes; it also involved taming Native American communities. This task proved far more difficult.

Disciplining Native Bodies

The first Mormon encounters with Native Americans after Smith's death did not occur in Utah. The Mormon community left Nauvoo in early February when the Mississippi River was covered in a thick sheet of ice.⁵⁵⁰ Their poverty and lack of preparation made the trip grueling. Mormon men had to travel the countryside looking for work. As a result, it took the Mormon community over a month to travel a distance that should have taken ten days.⁵⁵¹ By September 1846, they had only traveled 300 miles, placing them in Nebraska. Young decided that the community should winter there rather than continue their trek. In this time period, Nebraska was

⁵⁵⁰ Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 60.

⁵⁵¹ *National Historic Trails Auto Tour Route Interpretative Guide: The Mormon Pioneer Trail Across Iowa in 1846* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, April 2007), 10.
http://www.nps.gov/mopi/planyourvisit/upload/IA_MOPI_Web_ATG01_07.pdf

considered Indian land. In spite of federal laws forbidding white settlement on the land, Young negotiated extralegal treaties with the Omaha and Otoes that would allow Mormons to build a temporary settlement in the area.⁵⁵² Local Indian agents were understandably concerned about the presence of the Mormon community, which numbered in the thousands. Although Mormons saw their trek across the Great Plains as a religious exodus, American officials saw the Mormon community as squatters, not as a re-embodiment of ancient Israel.⁵⁵³ Throughout the two years that Mormons lived in the area, Indian agents encouraged the community to abstain from contact with American Indians and leave the area as soon as possible.

For his part, Brigham Young faced the difficult task of holding the white Mormon community apart from their Omaha, Lakota, and other Native American neighbors. The Book of Mormon cast American Indians as a once-godly people who had temporarily forgotten their divine heritage but would one day be redeemed. Many early Mormons hoped that this redemption would occur within their lifetimes. Wilford Woodruff, an important early Mormon leader and apostle who eventually became the prophet of the Mormon Church, wrote that he hoped “that 1847 may not pass away until the Lamanites with their chiefs may begin to receive the gospel which the gentiles rejected and cast out of their midst.”⁵⁵⁴ In spite of the place of American Indians within Mormon theology, Young emphasized the importance of not proselytizing to the Indian communities on whose land they lived. Instead, he forbade his followers from trading with the Native Americans who visited them. He also forbade intermarriages between white Mormons and American Indians in spite of suggestions that Smith

⁵⁵² Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 59.

⁵⁵³ Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*, 59.

⁵⁵⁴ Journal of Wilford Woodruff, 31 December 1846, LDS Church History Library, quoted in Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 92.

may have earlier encouraged such unions.⁵⁵⁵

Young's decision to keep the Mormon community apart from American Indians on the Great Plains was partially an attempt not to become involved in the intense rivalry between American Indian communities. According to the historian Richard Bennett, Mormons tried to avoid becoming involved with disputes between Indian communities. The agreements that Young made with the Omaha, for example, promised that the Mormons would assist them in growing crops but explicitly refused to "interfere in any of their difficulties with other tribes."⁵⁵⁶ Young's goal in Nebraska was not to make Indian converts but to exist as peacefully as he could while he prepared for the continued Mormon exodus to Utah.

Young no longer sought to hold the Mormon community apart from American Indians when he reached the Salt Lake Valley. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Young would attempt to enact policies that would encourage American Indians to adopt white customs and permit white settlement in their midst. For Young and other Mormons, the truthfulness of Mormonism rested partially on the idea that American Indians would accept Mormonism as reflecting their own sacred history. In reality, however, Mormon interactions with indigenous people in Utah frequently turned violent. The historian Ned Blackhawk has argued that the history of the Great Basin in the decades before European contact is only legible through "analyses of the shifting relations of violence" that "remade" the region in the wake of Spanish colonialism.⁵⁵⁷ In 1781, a smallpox epidemic decimated the Shoshone population at the same moment that the nearby Blackfeet gained access to French firearms.⁵⁵⁸ At the same time,

⁵⁵⁵ Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 91 – 103.

⁵⁵⁶ Nauvoo High Council Minutes, August 27 – 28, 1846, LDS Church History Library, quoted in Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri*, 94.

⁵⁵⁷ Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 6.

⁵⁵⁸ Kass Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 2004), 6.

mounted Utes raided Shoshone and Paiute communities for slaves to sell in the markets of Spanish New Mexico. The establishment of an independent Mexican state in the early nineteenth century weakened the New Mexico-Ute alliance.⁵⁵⁹ Ute raids on Shoshone and Paiute communities, however, continued.

More than sending cascading waves of violence throughout Indian communities in the Great Basin, the establishment of the Spanish colonial empire also transformed the region in other ways. Ute communities probably gained access to horses sometime in the late eighteenth century. The new acquisition provided them with the ability to range across a territory stretching from the Platte River to what is now California.⁵⁶⁰ The Bannock and some groups of Shoshone also obtained access to horses. The adoption of horses by some Indian communities in the Great Basin established type of class hierarchy between tribes. Equestrian Indian communities such as the Ute, Bannock, and some Shoshone would become “rich Indians” whose diet of buffalo and ability to travel vast distances somehow placed them above other Indian communities. Native Americans who had not adopted an equestrian lifestyle were denigrated as “Digger” Indians and described by white Americans as some of the poorest Indians that they had encountered.⁵⁶¹ In describing a band of Goshute Shoshone, for example, Mark Twain famously claimed that they were “manifestly descended from the self-same gorilla, or kangaroo or Norway rat.”⁵⁶²

The violence that Mormons encountered in the Salt Lake Valley shaped their attempts to remake Indian domesticities. Mormons bought the American Indian children that local Utes held as captives. Frequently, violence motivated these purchases. In 1920, Brigham

⁵⁵⁹ Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 88 – 89.

⁵⁶⁰ Stephen P. Van Hoak, “Waccara’s Utes: Native American Equestrian Adaptations in the Eastern Great Basin, 1776 –1876,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 67:4 (Fall 1999): 309 – 310.

⁵⁶¹ Gregory Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 15 – 47.

⁵⁶² Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, quoted in Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 11.

Young's nephew John published a memoir in which he described bartering for Sally Kanosh (whose story began this chapter). The words that he used to represent the purchase were incredibly violent. He described Indian men cutting "the fleshy parts of her body legs and arms with knives" and sticking "fire brands... into the wounds."⁵⁶³ Although the memoir was published several decades after the incident, the violent descriptions represent Mormon interpretations of the event. White Mormons remembered exchanges for Indian children as disturbing events. In addition to buying them from Ute men, they bartered for Indian children with destitute parents who could no longer care for them and abducted them during raids on Indian communities.⁵⁶⁴ Mormons viewed their decision to adopt Indian children into their families as a form of benevolence. In 1855, Ezra T. Benson told a Provo audience that it was their duty as Mormons "to work bring to these natives to an understanding of the principles of civilization, to teach them to till the earth and earn their bread by the sweat of their bows." He then used two children that he had taken into his own home as evidence of how Native Americans could be transformed. When Benson had initially adopted them, he had found it "repugnant... to have to put up with their dirty practices." Knowing the "duties" of Latter-day Saints, however, he had taught them habits of cleanliness – in his words, to "wash their bodies with pure water." Although the boy that he had adopted still had "some of Indian traits," Benson believed that he would "soon be quite bright, his mind [was] becoming clear and perceptive."⁵⁶⁵

The adoption of Native American children was part of a larger Mormon policy surrounding Native Americans. Although Mormon interactions with American Indians were frequently violent and led to the dispossession of Indian peoples throughout the American West,

⁵⁶³ John R. Young, *Memoirs of John R. Young: Utah Pioneer, 1847* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1920), 62.

⁵⁶⁴ Michael Kay Bennion, "Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity: Native American Children in Mormon Homes, 1847-1900" (PhD dissertation, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, 2012), 76 – 86.

⁵⁶⁵ Ezra T. Benson, July 13, 1855, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854 – 86), 3:64.

they still viewed themselves as participating in the redemption of American Indians. Mormon millennialism had waned by the 1850s, but many Mormons still ultimately believed that the bodies of American Indians would be dramatically transformed as part of the redemption of the earth. According to Mormon theology, American Indians had to be gathered together before the Second Coming could occur. The missionary work that Mormons undertook among indigenous communities in the Americas and Polynesia were part of an effort to call forth the Nation of Israel from the places where it had been scattered.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormons engaged in missionary and humanitarian work among indigenous people. In 1853, for example, Parley Pratt urged Mormons to offer assistance to Indian women and children. Although Mormons had struggled during their first year in the Valley to feed their families, they had had abundant harvests for the last four years.⁵⁶⁶ A few months later, a group of women that included Amanda Barnes Smith and Mary Hawkins met to form a society to make blankets and clothing to distribute to Indian communities. The women met over the next four months. As the historian Richard Jensen has pointed out, the hymns that they chose at their meetings reflected the work in which they were engaged. One example is Parley Pratt's "Oh, Stop and Tell Me, Red Man." This hymn reminded Mormons of the day when indigenous people "all your captive brothers/ from every clime shall come,/ And quit their savage customs,/ To live with God at home."⁵⁶⁷ The work in which the women were engaged allowed them to participate in the redemption of American Indians.

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, Mormon efforts to redeem indigenous peoples

⁵⁶⁶ Richard L. Jensen, "Forgotten Relief Societies, 1844 – 1867," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16:1 (Spring 1983): 108.

⁵⁶⁷ Amanda Barnes Smith lists the hymns that the society sang in her minutes of the society's meetings. See Amanda Barnes Smith Notebook, 1854 – 1866, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT. For the text of "Oh, Stop and Tell Me, Red Man," see David Ware Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 81.

extended beyond the boundaries of the United States to include the Pacific Islands, India, and Latin America. When Louisa traveled to the island of Tubuai to live with her husband Addison, she enacted a similar redemptive narrative as white Mormon women in the United States. Before her arrival, Mormon missionaries in Tubuai had lived in indigenous communities. The arrival of white Mormon women, however, changed the dynamic of the mission. Louisa, her sister Caroline, and their daughters sought to model a white, middle class domesticity to the people of Tubuai and the Tuamotus. They even threw a party with the explicit purpose of teaching one of the white missionary's native wives "our method or habits of waiting on company." Afterwards, she wrote happily that they had a "merry time." "Mr. Grouard," she remarked with some pleasure, "seemed quite proud that his wife had acquitted herself so much to the satisfaction of her visitors."⁵⁶⁸ In general, Louisa felt that her daughters "set an example of industry and sobriety before the native females." She hoped that "the effect may be good."⁵⁶⁹

The Mormon desire to transform indigenous people went beyond instructing them in the domestic arts to include sexual intimacy. Interracial marriages remained just as contested, however, as they had been in the Pacific Islands in the 1840s. When the Mormon apostle Orson Hyde encouraged members of the Green River mission to marry indigenous women in 1854, one of the missionaries wrote that he felt Hyde "Should set the example" and take "a Squaw to wife." He noted, perhaps wryly, "The example from that Source was never Set."⁵⁷⁰ One reason for the discomfort of some Mormon missionaries with the idea of taking a native wife was widespread ideas about Native Americans in American popular culture. Although Mormons believed that American Indians were descendants of the peoples of the Book of Mormon, they also retained

⁵⁶⁸ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 152.

⁵⁶⁹ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 146.

⁵⁷⁰ Henry Weeks Sanderson, *Diary of Henry Weeks Sanderson*, 97, quoted in Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 82.

images of American Indians as degraded, dirty, and stupid. In 1855, Joseph Young gave a sermon in Provo encouraging local Mormons to be lenient towards American Indians. Even as he identified Native Americans as the descendants of the peoples of the Book of Mormon, he described them as “a dark, loathsome, and forbidding people” and reminded his listeners that American Indians were like the “little children” who came to Jesus. The man was willing to see American Indians as chosen people within Mormonism’s theological narratives, but he still saw them as “uncultivated” and “wild.”⁵⁷¹

The marriages that Mormon missionaries contracted in the Pacific only exacerbated the distrust that many Mormons had of interracial marriage. Grouard was not the only man who served in the Pacific Islands who had married an indigenous woman. John Layton and Thomas Whitaker had also married indigenous women. When the three men they brought their Polynesian wives to live with them in California, the women found it difficult to exist within the Mormon community. Louisa saw the Polynesian women who lived near her in San Bernardino as being beneath her station. At one point, she wrote that she had been dismayed to see white men “eating their food from the ground without knife or fork, isolating themselves from the world, [and] raising a posterity they can never be proud of.”⁵⁷² Her feelings did not necessarily change in over time, and many white Saints shared her perspective. A Native Hawaiian woman who lived in San Bernardino felt that the white women there treated her like a “negress.”⁵⁷³

The prejudice that the Polynesian women encountered often made their marriages difficult. Sometime after Grouard left the Pacific Islands, he entered into polygamy, marrying a white woman from Salt Lake City. Although Nahina originally consented to the marriage as long

⁵⁷¹ Joseph Young, July 13, 1855, *Journal of Discourses*, 9:230 – 231.

⁵⁷² Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 307.

⁵⁷³ Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 298.

as the woman her husband chose to marry was “not proud,” the marriage proved difficult.⁵⁷⁴

Grouard eventually sent Nahina back to the Pacific. He would not allow her to take all of their children with her. Asked to choose between them, she took the youngest.⁵⁷⁵

The stories of the American Indian children who were adopted into Mormon families were often just as difficult. Michael K. Bennion who has done significant work reconstructing the lives of American Indians who were adopted by white families as children suggests that only 28% of the male children that Mormons adopted from American Indians were able to find spouses. Forty-four percent of the female children that they adopted were able to do so.⁵⁷⁶ Even when they did marry, American Indian adoptees sometimes found their marriages as difficult as Nahina’s. Bennion tells the story of Janet Smith, a Navajo woman who was adopted into a white Mormon family as a child. After a man named Dudley Leavitt stayed at her parents’ home while he was selling molasses and dried fruit in the area, Janet told one of her family members that she wanted to marry the young man. Her father, a Mormon apostle, approached her intended spouse. Although he said he had not previously considered marrying an Indian woman, Dudley agreed. He already had three wives, however, who were not as accepting of the marriage as he was. In a fit of anger, his youngest wife Thirza packed her things and returned to her parents. Their reminders of her duty as polygamous wife were the only things that kept her from leaving him.⁵⁷⁷

White parents, however, were not always amenable to interracial marriages. In the special collections at Brigham Young University there is a typewritten biography of an Indian woman named Mary Mountain. Undated and written anonymously, it tells the story of an Indian girl who was adopted into a white Mormon family when she was about nine years old. According to the

⁵⁷⁴ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 211.

⁵⁷⁵ Lyman, *San Bernardino*, 294.

⁵⁷⁶ Bennion, “Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity,” 156.

⁵⁷⁷ Bennion, *Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity*,” passim.

anonymous author, the girl loved her white family and happily tended the babies and young children within the family. When it came time for her to marry, she spurned “Indian braves [that] came courting.” Her adoptive white father, however, also turned away the white men who asked about her, advising them against “taking an Indian maiden for a wife.”⁵⁷⁸ Mary ultimately died of consumption around the age of thirty – unmarried and without children of her own.

Although the lack of details about the provenance of this document makes it impossible to use Mary’s biography as hard evidence of Mormon feelings about interracial marriage in the nineteenth century, it does suggest that some Mormons felt uncomfortable with the practice.

The importance of American Indians to nineteenth-century Mormon theology led white Americans to lump Mormons and Indian communities with one another. As the historian Paul Reeve has pointed out, Mormons were frequently imagined as “white Indians.” An 1858 cartoon published in *Harper’s Weekly* depicted Brigham Young as an Indian chief.

Although Young is portrayed as a portly man with a flaccid expression, the caption underneath marking him a “Chief” makes clear that the white American man depicted in the cartoon with Young should be afraid to leave his wife under the Mormon leader’s care.⁵⁷⁹

Nor were these depictions limited to the 1850s. In 1872, Elizabeth Kane, the wife of a white abolitionist who had befriended Brigham Young almost three decades earlier, toured Utah’s southern settlements. Her descriptions of the Mormon communities focused on the ubiquity of American Indians within Mormon towns. “There are Indians lounging about as in the other Mormon settlements,” she wrote while visiting the town of St. George, Utah. She felt that she would see little of her husband while they were there, since he enjoyed “the society of these

⁵⁷⁸ Mary Mountain Biography, ca. 1900, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

⁵⁷⁹ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 84.

new pets.”⁵⁸⁰ Kane’s descriptions of the relationship between American Indians and Mormons could be just as sexualized as *Harper’s Weekly*. She was asked if she was “Brigham[‘s] squaw,” and told stories of Mormon girls who had been forced to hide diggers in their clothes to fend off the unwanted advances of Indian men. According to Kane, the Mormons who had traveled across the plains learned that red-haired women were especially “prized” and had to be careful never to wander out of camp.⁵⁸¹ In her writing, Kane blurred racial boundaries just as other American newspapers and purveyors of popular culture had. Unlike *Harper’s Weekly*, however, her descriptions of the possibility of sex between Mormons and Indians contained the possibility of sexual coercion. Although she sometimes saw Mormons as inhabiting a space between whiteness and indigeneity, Kane also occasionally played upon the idea of endangered white womanhood.

Mormons resisted the tendency of other white Americans to associate them with indigenous people. Mormon newspapers, sermons, and magazines constantly pointed out the differences between the polygamy that Mormons practiced and that of Native American communities. The July 15, 1872 issue of the *Woman’s Exponent*, a Mormon-owned newspaper, described the life of Miss Barber of Milford, Massachusetts, who had conceived a “romantic idea of carrying civilization and refinement to the Indians” through marriage.⁵⁸² In her ardor, she married a chief of the Brule Sioux, only to discover he was immune to her entreaties for civilization and that there were “several other Mrs. Squatting Bears occupying [his] lodge.”⁵⁸³ She found herself treated “like the other squaws, compelled to do the usual drudgery of an Indian’s wife, beaten like a dog, and compelled to witness the murder of one of his squaws by

⁵⁸⁰ Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah’s Dixie, 1872–73*, 5.

⁵⁸¹ Kane, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah’s Dixie*, 13, 22.

⁵⁸² “News and Views,” *Woman’s Exponent* 1:4 (July 15, 1872): 25, Column 3.

⁵⁸³ “News and Views,” 25, Column 3.

her savage husband.”⁵⁸⁴ Although Mormon theology venerated polygamy, the Exponent portrayed Native American polygamy as a violent institution in which women worked in hard conditions while their husbands looked on. *The Exponent*’s portrayal of Indian polygamy suggests a wider ambivalence within the Mormon community surrounding the place of indigenous people in Mormon theology. Mormon attempts to “civilize” indigenous people were frequently coupled with violent confrontations with American Indians over access to material resources. Throughout the nineteenth century, Ute Indians raided Mormon livestock and attacked Mormon communities. For their part, white Mormon settlers frequently disregarded Young’s advice to treat American Indians with compassion.

The historian John S. Peterson argues that some of the Ute Chief Black Hawk’s rage against Mormon settlers stemmed from a harrowing stay in a Mormon fort where he was surrounded by the severed heads of his family and friends. White Mormon settlers had collected the heads, using their knives to remove them from the frozen bodies of the American Indian dead when a local surgeon proved too slow, in hopes of selling them for educational uses to museums in the Eastern United States. The heads, however, were not shipped out of the fort in time and instead grew rancid.⁵⁸⁵ Brigham Young’s calls for Mormons to treat “the Indians with kindness” were as much an attempt to remind settlers of their obligations towards American Indians as they were a straightforward reflection of Mormon Indian policy.⁵⁸⁶ Much of the violence that Mormon settlers perpetuated on American Indian communities, however, was more mundane. The presence of white Mormon settlers, for example, disrupted the animal herds and fisheries that local Native American communities had traditionally relied upon for sustenance. As a result,

⁵⁸⁴ “News and Views,” 25, Column 3.

⁵⁸⁵ Abner Blackburn, *Frontiersman: Abner Blackburn’s Narrative*, ed. Will Bagley (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 170, quoted in John Alton Peterson, *Utah’s Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 56.

⁵⁸⁶ Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet*, 211.

many Indian tribes found it difficult to provide for their families through traditional means. The Ute raids on livestock in the initial years of Mormon settlement were likely the result of hunger.⁵⁸⁷ It was only during the Blackhawk War that revenge served as the primary motivation for Ute attacks on Mormon communities.

The cascading violence between American Indian and Mormon communities marked one of the central tensions of the Mormon experience in Utah. Although their theology identified American Indians as descendants of the nation of Israel, Mormons found themselves often engaged in violent confrontations with American Indian communities. The American Indian children whom they adopted into their homes often struggled to assimilate into white society. Viewed with suspicion, they were unable to find spouses at the same rate as their white family members. The ambiguity of Mormon relations with American Indians can be seen in their reaction to the Bear River Massacre of 1863. On January 29th of that year, the United States Army attacked a group of Shoshone who had camped near the Bear River. Although the engagement may have begun as a battle, it quickly became a massacre. American troops killed at least two hundred and fifty Shoshone that day.⁵⁸⁸ Stories circulated afterwards about white soldiers picking up Shoshone children by their braids before dashing them against boulders.⁵⁸⁹

Mormons in the Cache Valley celebrated the massacre. They saw the deaths of the Shoshone Indians who had camped on the Bear River's shores as their deliverance. In the years that preceded the massacre, they had had frequent encounters with the Shoshone over their residence in the Valley and use of its resources. Peter Maughan, one of the area's founders and a local ecclesiastical leader, told Young that he felt that his "skirts clear of their blood." After all,

⁵⁸⁷ Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War*, 16 – 41.

⁵⁸⁸ Brigham Madsen, *The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1985), 193.

⁵⁸⁹ Mae Parry Interview, quoted in Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History*, 202.

“they had rejected the way of life and salvation which had been pointed out to them from time to time... and thus have perished relying on their own strength and wisdom.”⁵⁹⁰ The minutes of the Logan First Ward are even more explicit. “We, the people of Cache Valley,” it reads, “looked upon the movement of Colonel Connor as an intervention of the Almighty, as the Indians had been a source of great annoyance to us for a long time.”⁵⁹¹ The rhetoric they adopted was not uncommon in Utah. Young himself admitted that the Mormons had been prepared to “meet all the Indians in these mountains, and kill every soul of them” if they “had been obliged so to do.”⁵⁹² He frequently reminded his followers that they had “suffered nothing from [Native Americans]” in comparison to what they had suffered from “white men.”⁵⁹³ The fact that he had to do so is a reminder of the tension that many Mormons felt over the presence of American Indians in Utah. Mormons in Cache Valley were not the only ones who celebrated Indian deaths.

At the same time, Mormon descriptions of the massacre recognized its inherent violence, including accusations that American soldiers had raped Indian women as they lay dying from their wounds. In her book on the Bear River Massacre, Kass Fleisher views the reports of rape that emerged from the massacre as a historical problem. She asserts that rape is rarely recorded in historical records and that the Mormon community as a whole did not view the massacre as a tragedy. If the people of the Cache Valley truly “looked upon the movement of Colonel Connor as an intervention of the Almighty, why did they choose to include the rape of Shoshone women in their letters and historical accounts of the massacre?”⁵⁹⁴ Her answer is that accusations of rape served as a rebuttal of the claim that Mormons abused women. As Fleisher points out, the memories of Mormon women being raped in Missouri “were only two decades old. The

⁵⁹⁰ Quoted in Fleisher, 64.

⁵⁹¹ Fleisher, 64.

⁵⁹² Brigham Young, May 8, 1853, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:105.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁴ Quoted in Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History*, 64.

Mormons of 1863 Utah knew better than most the military effectiveness of such brutality.” They were willing to use stories of Shoshone women being raped as a political tool to implicitly counter claims that polygamy was inherently brutal or that white Protestants were somehow inherently more moral than Mormons were.⁵⁹⁵

Several descendants of the Shoshone community that were slaughtered at Bear River also became Mormon. In 1873, a Shoshone elder had a vision telling him that “the ‘Mormons’ God was the true God, and that he and the Indians’ Father were one.” The vision compelled several of the Shoshone leaders to seek out the Mormon missionary George Washington Hill and asked to be baptized. They sought to follow the command within the vision that they “be baptized... and learn to cultivate the earth and build houses, and live in them.”⁵⁹⁶ The historian Gregory Smoak has argued that we should understand the conversion of the Shoshone and so many of the survivors of the Bear River Massacre through traditional Shoshone religion. He argues that the Shoshone saw resonances in Mormonism’s acceptances of visions, prophesying, and faith healing their own religious beliefs. Conversion to Mormonism also provided them with an opportunity to incorporate that community’s religious power into their faith life.

After the Bear River Massacre, many of the Lemhi-Shoshone were in a difficult position. In adopting Mormonism, they adopted a religious faith that offered them a way forward and provided them with an opportunity to learn white methods of agriculture. For their part, Mormons saw the Shoshone embrace of their faith as evidence of its veracity. They hoped that the Lemhi-Shoshone would only be the first of many American Indians to adopt agriculture and the beginning of white standards of domesticity. Mormons, however, obtained few Indian

⁵⁹⁵ Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History*, 248.

⁵⁹⁶ George Washington Hill, “An Indian Vision,” *Juvenile Instructor* 10 (December 25, 1875): 309. See also Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 126 – 127, and Scott R. Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822–1887* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1999), 88–90.

converts. As a result, they remained conflicted about the place of American Indians in their theology. Although they believed the American Indians that surrounded their settlements in the desert were the children of God, they frequently had violent confrontations with them. The Shoshone who adopted Mormonism continued to be the exception to the general pattern of their relationships with American Indians. Although white Mormons were able to create an orderly polygamous domesticity, they found it more difficult to control the American Indian communities among whom they lived.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormon relationships with Native Americans remained strained. Even as Mormons evangelized indigenous people in the Tuamotus, Chile, and the Hawaiian Islands, the American Indians, who were the first object of their missionary work, remained frustratingly recalcitrant. There were few lasting Indian conversions in the mid-nineteenth century. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, however, fundamentally changed the dynamics within Utah. The collapse of the space between Utah and the rest of the United States increased anxiety over the power of the Mormon Church within the territory and the practice of polygamy. Non-Mormon businessmen eager to take advantage of the area's mineral deposits flooded the area.⁵⁹⁷ By the 1880s, a significant portion of Utah's population consisted of Gentiles.⁵⁹⁸ The result shifted Mormon concerns. Although the Mormon community was still concerned about American Indians, they increasingly feared the power of the United States government. Mormon leaders were forced to live in hiding as federal officials sought to incarcerate Mormon men who had defied federal law by marrying multiple women. For a while, it appeared that Mormons would fail at both aspects of the white, civilizing mission: they were unable to create white, middle class families or to transform the lives of indigenous

⁵⁹⁷ Bowman, *The Mormon People*, 152–153.

⁵⁹⁸ Daymon M. Smith, "The Last Shall Be First and the First Shall Be Last: Discourse and Mormon History" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 32.

people. It was at this moment, however, that the mission fields became especially important. In the late nineteenth century, the mission spaces that had once broken Mormon families apart as their husbands traveled to the “nations of the earth” and “islands of the sea” became spaces where white Mormon families could be reconstituted. Hundreds of men traveled to the Hawaiian Islands, Mexico, Great Britain, and Canada to escape prosecution for polygamy. Often, they were able to take one of their wives with them. As a result, missionary work took on new meanings within Mormonism. Although it continued to separate families, it now offered to reunite them as well. It also provided the Mormon community with powerful examples of their skill at civilizing indigenous people and disciplining sexuality.

Chapter Six

Mormons, Polygamy, and Exile in the South Pacific

Introduction

In 1885, Susa Young Gates arrived in the Hawaiian Islands at the small Mormon community of Lā‘ie. Her husband Jacob had served as a missionary there a decade earlier, working on the church plantation and traveling with native Hawaiian missionaries to spread the gospel. Susa’s experiences in the Hawaiian Islands were far different from the earliest Mormon missionaries. Early Mormon missionaries like Pratt and Grouard lived in indigenous communities during their missions. By the time that Susa arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, however, Mormon missionary work was more regularized. In 1865, the Mormon Church purchased 6,000 acres on the north shore of Oahu in hopes of creating a gathering place for native Hawaiian converts. They structured the land they purchased as a sugar plantation. There was enough arable land to produce one thousand tons of sugar cane a year, but the mill could only process three hundred tons a year. The missionaries also demarcated pastures for sheep, goats, and cattle, and land for Hawaiian families to build homes.⁵⁹⁹

The creation of the plantation provided a space for Native Hawaiian families to build a godly community where they would be protected from the persecution they had experienced. It also allowed white Mormon men and women who had traveled to the islands as missionaries to create a space where they could re-establish a white domesticity threatened in Utah by federal

⁵⁹⁹ Dale Berge, “Laie Plantation Sugar Mill (1868 – 1900): Archaeology and History,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Society* 7:1 (1986), 44.

anti-polygamy raids. After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, plural marriage became a frequent topic of conversation within the United States Congress and was paired with slavery as one of the “twin relics of barbarism.”⁶⁰⁰ In 1882, the Congress passed the Edmunds Act, which declared the act of cohabitation illegal, revoked the right of polygamists to serve on juries, and made it illegal for any man who practiced polygamy to vote. It also initiated a wave of arrests of polygamous men and sent the leaders of the church into hiding. Between 1884 and 1895, over nine hundred Mormon men were convicted of charges ranging from adultery to incest.⁶⁰¹ Lā‘ie became a refuge for both polygamous and monogamous Mormons. For polygamous, it served as a place where white women who had been forced to deny their husbands—to lie under oath about the whereabouts of their spouses, to hide in attics while pregnant, and to deny that they knew who had fathered their children—could openly speak about their marriages and be identified as wives to their husbands.

In order to explore the meaning of Lā‘ie for white Mormons, I focus on the experiences of two individuals in this chapter: Joseph F. Smith and Susa Young Gates. As Hyrum’s son, Joseph F. was one of the closest relatives to the martyred Mormon prophet who had remained within the church. Emma’s children had stayed with her in Illinois, firmly outside of the mainstream Mormon community. His lineage allowed him to rise through the church hierarchy. On July 1, 1866, Brigham Young ordained him an apostle and sustained him as a counselor to the First Presidency. His ordination placed him in line to become prophet and gave him tremendous authority. Throughout the late nineteenth century, his position within the church

⁶⁰⁰ Republican politicians frequently used this term to refer to polygamy in the nineteenth century. The best analysis of this term is Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 55 – 84.

⁶⁰¹ Stan Larson, “Introduction,” *Prisoner for Polygamy: The Memoirs and Letters of Rudger Clawson at the Utah Territorial Penitentiary, 1884 – 1887* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 6.

made him the target of federal prosecution. His house was under frequent surveillance by federal agents. Lā‘ie allowed him to live without the constant fear of arrest.

Susa was also influential in the Mormon community. For her, the islands offered a space of convalescence and self-invention. She had left her first husband Alma Dunford several years earlier after a marriage that she referred in her journal simply as those “black horrible five years.”⁶⁰² Even after she remarried, Susa doubted her ability to be a good wife and struggled to regain her sense of self-competence. Susa’s experience was slightly different than the other white Mormons living in Lā‘ie. For most white Mormons, Lā‘ie served as a space where they could recreate a white domesticity that had been made impossible in Utah. Unable to claim their husbands in Utah, Mormon women saw the Hawaiian Islands as a place where they could live without harassment and fear. Susa, however, was not a polygamist. For her, Lā‘ie represented a chance to recover from the emotional abuse that she had experienced in her first marriage and to develop herself as a writer. In the Hawaiian Islands, Susa wrote about the lives of Native Hawaiian women, casting herself as a civilizing force to degraded, ignorant natives.

Susa was not the only one who did not share in the vision white Mormons had for Lā‘ie. The plantation also had a different meaning for Native Hawaiian Mormons. In the mid-nineteenth century, the connection between native Hawaiian communities and the land had been severed in a process known as the Māhele. Native Hawaiian understandings of the land as an elder sibling were replaced by the ideas of white Protestants who saw the land as a commodity.⁶⁰³ Although some native Hawaiians were able to maintain possession of the land,

⁶⁰² September 14th, 1888 Entry, Laie Journal, Vol. 1, Susa Young Gates Papers, 1870 – 1930, Box 105, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁰³ See, for example, Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promise Land*, 58 – 60; Haunani-Kay Trask, *Notes from a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 140 – 142, 65 – 86, 113 – 122; and Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance in American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 39 – 44.

many more were dispossessed and forced to live as laborers.⁶⁰⁴ For Native Hawaiian men and women dislocated by the changes of the nineteenth century, Lā‘ie offered the opportunity for them to re-establish their “Hawaiianess.” It also provided them with the opportunity to create a gathering place that would serve as a temporary Zion. Queen Kapi‘olani visited the plantation several times, praising the community for its fertility.⁶⁰⁵ In a time period in which many believed that the Hawaiian race would slowly fade into obscurity, their ability to reproduce—both biologically and culturally—represented hope for Native Hawaiians.⁶⁰⁶

When Native Hawaiians remembered Lā‘ie decades later, they remembered it as a “Hawaiian” space. Although white missionaries like Joseph F. Smith were important figures within the Mormon community in Hawai‘i, the oral interviews also emphasized the spiritual power of Native Hawaiians. One man described Jonah Wahinepee, a Native Hawaiian Mormon missionary, whose gift of healing was so strong that all he had to do was “lay hands and call the sick to rise, to get up and walk.”⁶⁰⁷ Another woman remembered her aunt as an extremely religious woman: “Hawaiians are accustomed from the time of our forefathers to walk with God. My tutu always walked with God. She was always praying. She did not work otherwise. Everything she seemed to know.”⁶⁰⁸ Kanahale added in one interview, “We Hawaiians are a

⁶⁰⁴ Sydney Lehua Iaukea, *The Queen and I: A Story of Dispossessions and Reconnections in Hawai‘i* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

⁶⁰⁵ Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Mormon Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Polynesia,” *Journal of Mormon History* 13 (1986): 84, Note 79.

⁶⁰⁶ Kathy Ferguson and Monique Mironesco, *Gender and Globalization in Asia and the Pacific: Method, Practice, Theory* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 2008), 40.

⁶⁰⁷ Paul and Carrie Eli, Interview with Clinton Kanahale, June 27, 1970, pg. 4, Clinton Kanahale Collection, Brigham Young University, Hawai‘i, Digital Collections and Archives, Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, URL: <https://library.byuh.edu/sites/library.byuh.edu/files/archives/img/Clinton%20Kanahale%20Interview%20PDFs/Paul%20&%20Carrie%20Eli%20Interview.pdf> (Accessed: December 3, 2013).

⁶⁰⁸ Luka Kinolau, Interview with Clinton Kanahale, June 29, 1970, pg. 26, Clinton Kanahale Collection, Brigham Young University, Hawai‘i, Digital Collections and Archives, Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, URL: [https://library.byuh.edu/sites/library.byuh.edu/files/archives/img/Clinton Kanahale Interview PDFs/Luka Kinolau Interview.pdf](https://library.byuh.edu/sites/library.byuh.edu/files/archives/img/Clinton%20Kanahale%20Interview%20PDFs/Luka%20Kinolau%20Interview.pdf) (Accessed: December 3, 2013).

God-fearing people; we are a God-observing people.”⁶⁰⁹ The descriptions that these men and women offered interwove Christianity with the fabric of life in the Native Hawaiian Mormon community. They saw themselves not as a colonized people who had lost their traditional religious customs but as a people who had reclaimed their ancient religious heritage through Mormonism and were naturally drawn to God.

In this chapter, I juxtapose the meaning that Lā‘ie had for white Mormon missionaries who sought to recreate families that had been torn apart in Utah against the ways in which native Hawaiian converts contested and created their own meanings for community. Although white Mormon missionaries and native Hawaiians both labored in the plantation’s sugar mills, cooked in its kitchens, and celebrated the Sabbath in the same churches, they did not understand the community in the same way. White Mormons frequently failed to engage with the meanings that the plantation held for Native Hawaiians. Instead of recognizing its importance to the Hawaiian nation, they read Queen Kapi‘olani’s excitement over the community as evidence of the truth of the Mormon gospel. In focusing on Lā‘ie, this chapter brings us full circle to the questions about the relationship between missionary work and the family that opened this dissertation. In the mid-nineteenth century, Mormon missionary work required men to temporarily abandon their families. By the 1880s, however, the meaning of Mormon missionary work had shifted. It no longer broke apart Mormon families. Instead, it created a space where they could be reconstituted. Places like the Hawaiian Islands, Mexico, and Canada became spaces of refuge for white Mormon men who faced imprisonment in Utah. Women who just months earlier had been forced to lie about their pregnancies could openly admit to practicing polygamy.

⁶⁰⁹ Rose Manu and Mary Malo, Interview with Clinton Kanahēle, July 10, 1970, pg.12, Clinton Kanahēle Collection, Brigham Young University, Hawai‘i, Digital Collections and Archives, Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, URL: <https://library.byuh.edu/sites/library.byuh.edu/files/archives/img/Clinton%20Kanahēle%20Interview%20PDFs/Rose%20Manu%20&%20Mary%20Malo%20Interview.pdf>

The lives that they established in Lā‘ie, however, were not without their ironies. The domesticity white Mormons established in the Hawaiian Islands was monogamous rather than polygamous. The Mormon missionaries who traveled to Hawai‘i in the nineteenth century only took one of their wives with them. They did so both to avoid suspicion while they were traveling and to ensure enough adults were available to maintain their households in Utah. For some women, traveling with their husbands as missionaries was their first opportunity to be the public wives of their husbands. Most women, however, saw the time spent away from their sister wives as a sacrifice. The open practice of polygamy in Utah had allowed many women to develop close, affectionate relationships with their sister wives which had been impossible in Nauvoo. For Mormon women to be apart from their sister wives was difficult, especially since the farewells frequently included long-term separations from children.

They also, however, valued the relationships that they formed with their husbands and longed to be able to live the domestic lives that they had envisioned as being an important part of marriage. The familial theology of Mormonism, which saw marriage as an ever-expanding relationship that would eventually tie individuals to multitudes and allow them to attain vast sums of knowledge, imbued marital relationships with even more importance. For Native Hawaiian Mormons, the importance of Lā‘ie lay not in the recreation of white families but in their ability to re-establish some of the connections to the land that they had lost. In placing the desires of Native Hawaiian and white Mormons against each other, this chapter shows how ideas about the family, missionary work, and religious faith were interrelated.

Living on the Underground

Understanding the dynamics of the Mormon community in Lā‘ie means understanding the difficulties that the Mormon Church had experienced in the 1870s and 1880s. The church’s removal to the arid landscapes of the American West after the death of its prophet provided church members with a temporary respite from the scourgings they had endured in Missouri, Ohio, and Illinois. They established a university, built dozens of small settlements stretching from San Bernardino, California, to Paris, Idaho, and began the work of building temples. Many Mormons found the work of settling the Utah territory and the American West difficult, lonely work. The completion of the transcontinental railroad and the resulting influx of Gentiles into Utah ended that isolation, initiating a wave of arrests of polygamous men and sent the leaders of the church into hiding. Although men from all backgrounds faced arrest, the federal government was particularly interested in arresting church leaders.

One of the men on whom they focused was Mary’s son Joseph F. He had not dealt with the death of his father and mother well. In his teens, he was known as an angry young man who likely drank and smoked.⁶¹⁰ It was rumored he had been sent to his first mission to the Hawaiian Islands as punishment for “lick[ing]” a teacher who had threatened to discipline his sister Martha Ann with a leather strap.⁶¹¹ After he returned from his first mission to the Hawaiian Islands, Joseph F. married his cousin Levira. Their tempestuous relationship led to a semi-public dispute in which they both wrote letters to Brigham Young to defend their actions. In her letter, Levira accused Joseph F. of striking her with a rope for disobeying him by looking out of the blinds of their house. Even though she had just peeked from the windows to hear a band playing in front of their house, he immediately came into her room with the rope. Perhaps hoping to evoke pity

⁶¹⁰ Scott Kenney, “Before the Beard: Trials of the Young Joseph F. Smith,” *Sunstone Magazine* Vol. 120 (2001): 23.

⁶¹¹ Charles W. Nibley, “Reminiscences of President Joseph F. Smith,” *Improvement Era* (January 1919): 191 – 192.

among her readers, she described what happened next in great detail: “He doubled [the rope] four or five times, and struck me five or six times across my back notwithstanding I begged of him not to strike me and said I was sorry that I had disobeyed him.”⁶¹² Her letter also claimed that he had used “cruel expressions” when they spoke. He told me, she wrote, that “I ought to have a hole, bored in the tope of my head and some manure put into it for brains.”⁶¹³ In Levira’s descriptions, Joseph F. was a cruel man who had bullied her emotionally and then used physical force that was as unnecessary as it was hard and unforgiving.

The letter that Joseph F. sent to Young to vindicate his actions emphasized his wife’s frail condition and mental illness. He claimed that she was clearly “possessed” or “insane” and that his physical responses to her infractions were necessary to keep her from hurting herself. “I had to treat her,” he explained, “as I would a willful and disobedient child.” He claimed “she would jump out of bed” and “more than likely run out of doors in her night clothes... at the least noise she did not understand, and often at imaginary noises.” He admitted that he had hit her when she had peered out of the blinds with the branch of a peach tree to force her back into bed but claimed that its circumference was smaller than the “butt of an office pencil” and that doing so had been necessary to prevent her from harming herself.⁶¹⁴ In Joseph’s descriptions of their life together, the physical violence he used was regrettable but necessary to keep his wife safe.

In spite of the difficulties in their marriage, Joseph F. took a young woman named Julina Lambson as a plural wife. Levira used this information to sue for divorce on the grounds that he had taken a concubine. Although she filed the papers in California, such divorces were not uncommon in Utah where church leadership routinely granted divorces to women who found

⁶¹² Levira Annette Smith to Brigham Young, n.d., Brigham Young Incoming Correspondence, Reel 74, quoted in Kenney, “Before the Beard,” 30 – 31.55aa

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Joseph F. Smith to Brigham Young, August 25, 1867, Brigham Young Incoming Correspondence, Reel 74, quoted in Kenney, “Before the Beard,” 31.

their marriages unbearable.⁶¹⁵ Joseph F. married three other women within five years. In spite of the volatility of his first marriage, his marriages to these women seem to have been happy ones. In one letter, he told his wife Sarah Ellen Richards that his happiness had been “unbounded from the day God gave you to me.”⁶¹⁶ In an article she published in the *Relief Society Magazine*, his second wife Julina described the relationship between her husband and his remaining wives as a “triangle of happiness,” in which Joseph was the “center controlling bond of love,” binding the three women together in a mutually satisfying relationship.⁶¹⁷

Joseph’s multiple marriages and position within the church, however, made him a target of federal prosecution. Although the cost of the Civil War and the physical distance between Utah and the rest of the United States had made it unlikely that polygamists would be prosecuted in the 1860s, the United States was sending federal marshals to Utah in the 1870s and 1880s to arrest and indict polygamists. The federal marshals focused on the leadership of the church. In 1874, George Q. Cannon, a member of the church’s First Presidency who had been recently

⁶¹⁵ According to Eugene and Bruce Campbell, Brigham Young granted 1,645 divorces during his presidency. Although there is a lack of concrete evidence proving the divorces were granted to polygamists, they argue that most of them probably involved polygamists since Young had no authority to dissolve monogamous marriages but did have the authority to dissolve polygamous marriages that had been authorized only by the church. They also suggest that the rate of divorce for polygamous marriages was significantly higher than the national divorce rate. It is likely that well over 2,000 divorces were granted to Mormons in the nineteenth century. There were only 2,400 men who were participating in polygamy in Utah at the time. In 1890, there was approximately one divorce for every 1,000 marriages. They partially attribute this higher than average divorce rate to Mormon millennialism, which emphasized the importance of being married over the likely stability of prospective unions and the scarcity of available women during times of heightened Mormon religiosity. In the 1850s, for example, a spiritual revival among Mormon communities led to such an increase in plural marriages that there were few unmarried women over the age of fourteen after the revival had past, decreasing the ability of Mormon men to find compatible mates. In spite of the fact that this study was published nearly forty years ago, it is one of the few studies to undertake a statistical analysis of divorce in Utah. See Eugene and Bruce Campbell, “Divorce among Mormon Polygamists: Extent and Explanations,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (Winter 1978): 4 – 23.

⁶¹⁶ Joseph F. Smith to Sarah Ellen Richards, May 3rd, 1887, Sarah Ellen Richards Smith Collection, 1868 – 1895, Box 1, Folder 23, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶¹⁷ Julina Smith, “A Loving Tribute to Sarah Ellen Richards,” *The Relief Society Magazine* 2:5 (May 1915): 215. Note: Julina is often referred to as Joseph’s first wife and was treated as such by his other wives and by Utah society as a whole. For clarity, however, I have referred to her as Joseph’s second wife since he was already married when they were wed.

elected as the territorial delegate for Utah, was arrested for unlawful cohabitation.⁶¹⁸ Other members of the church's hierarchy found their houses and families constantly under surveillance. Wilford Woodruff, a senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote that his house was frequently watched by men who had agreed to spy on him for federal marshals. At one point, two particularly aggressive spies knocked on his door.⁶¹⁹ In 1885, officers ransacked John Taylor's house in search of his wives whom they hoped to force to testify against him.⁶²⁰

Although federal officials focused much of their attention on influential men within the church, no man who practiced polygamy was safe from prosecution. The use of spies to ferret out information about the location of polygamists intensified the anxiety that many people felt. Women and men who lived in polygamy in the late nineteenth century lived in a climate of fear. Inquisitive neighbors, men visiting from other communities in Utah, and even bishops sent to oversee settlements could be potential spies. Polygamists responded by creating an underground network that protected the identities of polygamists and constantly moved men, women, and children from location to location to make it difficult to track the whereabouts of any one individual. One woman who had posed as the housekeeper of her husband's first wife while she was pregnant moved seven times in the year after she gave birth.⁶²¹ Even these frequent moves did not ensure the safety of the men and women within the Mormon community. Another woman who was living on the Underground remembered having to lie completely still in her room when the bishop came to visit the family with whom she was staying. When her baby cried, she had to

⁶¹⁸ Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 113.

⁶¹⁹ Wilford Woodruff, *Journals 1833 – 1898*, 9 Vols, ed. Scott Kenney (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1984), 8: 298, 379 quoted in Smith, *The Last Shall Be First*, 76.

⁶²⁰ *Deseret News* and *The Salt Lake Herald* March 14, 1885, quoted in Smith, *The Last Shall be First*, 58 – 59.

⁶²¹ Emma Hoth McNeil Interview, 1938, Kimball Young Collection, Garrett Theological Collection, Chicago, Illinois, quoted in Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 20.

try to comfort it and suppress its cries. In an interview conducted years later, she remembered simply, “There was no one you could trust in those days.”⁶²²

Like many leaders within the Mormon community, Joseph F. went into exile some time in the 1880s. At first, he took sanctuary in small Mormon communities around Salt Lake City, using code names like “Serene Plentiful” and “Solitude Gloria” to hide the location of his exile. Eventually, however, President Taylor sent him on a three thousand, seven hundred mile journey throughout Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona to visit various Mormon settlements and provide him with a more secure refuge. He traveled with the elderly Erastus Snow, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Andrew Jensen accompanied them as far as Price, Utah. Joseph F. and Snow each brought one of their wives with them. Joseph’s wife Edna carried their ten-month-old son Robert in her arms. Wherever they stopped the men led worship services and meetings with local church leadership.⁶²³

Joseph’s absences were hard on his family. By 1884, he had a total of four wives and approximately seventeen children. He married another wife at the beginning of the year. Julina and Sarah Ellen were also pregnant and gave birth while he was in hiding. His absence meant that his wives were left to manage his business affairs while clothing their children and fielding questions from federal officials about his whereabouts.⁶²⁴ Sarah wrote Joseph F. letters telling him how much she missed him. “I long for you to be at home,” she told him as her pregnancy drew to a close, “though I have made up my mind to get a long without you, and to make the best of it.” Later in the letter, she wrote that she could not “help looking on the gloomy side

⁶²² Annie Gardner Interview, n.d., Kimball Young Collection, Garrett Theological Collection, Chicago, Illinois, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁶²³ Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith: Patriarch and Preacher, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 131.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*

sometimes.”⁶²⁵ Edna’s letters were less beseeching than Sarah’s but she often expressed her love and told him of the difficulties she had managing their affairs. In a letter she wrote after Joseph had left for the Hawaiian Islands, she told him about a maid that she had been forced to dismiss. She described in great detail watching the girl throughout the day and forcing her to open her satchel where she found “handkerchiefs, velvet, and gloves.” She forced the girl – “a notorious thief and liar” – to leave their house.⁶²⁶

Joseph F. tried to lessen the burden of his absence by sending them frequent letters, reassurances of his affection, and presents of woolen blankets, but he found that his attempts were meager compared to his wives’ responsibilities. At one point, he begged Julina not to work so hard for the sake of her health. “You have long – long since became as much a part of me – as inseparable from my soul as my life or thought or any part of my being,” he told her, and as a result, could not bear the thought of her being overworked.⁶²⁷ Joseph F. also frequently reminded his wives of how much he loved them and asked them to write about their health and the welfare of his children. After he heard about the difficulties that his wives were having with federal officials even after he had went into hiding, Joseph told Sarah that his “only consolation” was his “faith and hope that the merciful Father would continue to watch over and protect [them].” He wrote to the President of the Church, begging him to do something to release them from “bondage.” He almost hoped that the leadership of the church had decided to let him turn himself into the federal officials. “I would gladly do the latter to relieve you,” he wrote. “I think I could enjoy more contentment of mind in the Pen knowing you were at home and comfortable than I

⁶²⁵ Sarah Ellen Richards Smith to Joseph F. Smith, October 2nd, 1884, Joseph F. Smith Papers, 1854 – 1918, Box 7, Folder 15, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶²⁶ Edna Lambson Smith to Joseph F. Smith, October 24th, 1884, Joseph F. Smith Papers, 1854 – 1918, Box 7, Folder 18, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶²⁷ Joseph F. Smith to My Dear Mamma (Julina Lambson Smith), October 22nd, 1884, Sarah Ellen Richards Smith Collection, 1868 – 1895, Box 2, Folder 1, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

possibly can do, under present circumstances.”⁶²⁸ Unfortunately, Joseph F.’s position within the church meant that it was unlikely that it would ever be decided that he should willingly present himself for arrest and trial.

The separations Mormon women experienced during the anti-polygamy raids were even harder to bear than those caused by Mormon missionary work earlier in the nineteenth century. Although Mormon theology had shifted slightly by the late nineteenth century, focusing less on abstract understandings of the divine and more on the gritty realities of building a kingdom in the desert, it continued to deify and exalt the family. The men who ascended the steps of the tabernacle in the mid- to late-nineteenth century emphasized the role that marriage played in God’s plan for humanity and the role that it would play in elevating the status of women. At one conference in 1869, Orson Pratt, an apostle with a thick, white beard who had been one of the first men to enter the Salt Lake Valley twenty years earlier, told the assembled congregation that “kings, priests, and Gods” populated the heavens. Those who endured persecution and yet maintained their faith would belong to the “highest order and class of beings” that existed “in the eternal worlds.” These men and women would exist forever as “husbands and wives.” They alone would have the “privilege of propagating their species,” creating numberless “intelligent, immortal beings” that would populate the celestial realms.⁶²⁹ Although any Latter-day Saint could theoretically be numbered among these beings, some Latter-day Saints believed that only those who participated in the covenant of plural marriage would be able to do so. The ability to procreate in the eternities required men and women to be bound together, either physically or by

⁶²⁸ Joseph F. Smith to Sarah Ellen Richards Smith, May 6th, 1885, Sarah Ellen Richards Smith Collection, 1868 – 1895, Box 1, Folder 16, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶²⁹ Orson Pratt, October 7, 1869, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854 – 1886), 13:185.

proxy, in an earthly temple. As a result of these doctrines, many men and women who participated in the Mormon marriage covenant saw in their spouses a “god in embryo.”⁶³⁰

Although some nineteenth-century Mormons de-emphasized the importance of love in polygamous relationships, many men and women developed close, affectionate relationships with their spouses. Sarah Ellen, for example, found herself troubled with nightmares during Joseph’s absences. One night she dreamed that he was looking “very pale and sick.” She couldn’t sleep for some time afterwards.⁶³¹ In her letters, she told him to write as often as possible because she never tired of reading them.⁶³² Even those women whose relationships with their husbands lacked affection longed for the closeness missing from their relationships. Emmeline B. Wells, for example, was a prominent advocate for women’s suffrage who participated in polygamy. In her public writings, she wrote that love could serve to bind women to abusive husbands and was not a necessary ingredient for a successful marriage. In her private writings, however, she lamented her husband’s lack of affection for her. “O, if my husband could only love me a little,” she wrote, “and not seem so perfectly indifferent to any sensation of that kind... He is surrounded with loved ones on every side, and I am cast out.”⁶³³

The anti-polygamy persecutions were difficult for both types of women. For the first, it meant being separated from a man they cared for desperately and deprived of material and emotional support. For the second, it exacerbated their sense of loneliness and abandonment. In exalting and deifying the family, Mormonism placed the relationships between husbands and

⁶³⁰ This term was used frequently in nineteenth-century Mormonism. See, John Taylor, February 19, 1860, *Journal of Discourses*, 8:1, Brigham Young, April and May 1863, *Journal of Discourses*, 10:223, Orson Pratt, January 27, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 16:367, Erastus Snow, March 3, 1878, *Journal of Discourses*, 19:271, Erastus Snow, October 1879, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:24, and John Taylor, April 9, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, 23:65

⁶³¹ Sarah Ellen Richards Smith to Joseph F. Smith, July 4, 1875, Sarah Ellen Richards Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 30, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶³² Sarah Ellen Richards Smith to Joseph F. Smith, January 17, 1875, Sarah Ellen Richards Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 27, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶³³ Emmeline B. Wells, September 30th, 1875, Diary 1874 – 1875, Emmeline B. Wells Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.

wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters at its center. Mormon men felt that capitulating to the demands of the federal government and abandoning some of their wives would mean risking their salvation. Yet, remaining faithful meant temporarily abandoning their families to live in hiding in small outposts in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. It meant hiding in ditches and visiting some of their wives for no more than a few days. Mormon women were forced to deny the fathers of their children and pretend as though they were not married. In trying to save their families, Mormon men and women tore them apart. In many ways, their decision to do so mirrored the decisions they had made earlier in the nineteenth century to temporarily forsake their families for the sake of the gospel.

By 1884, Joseph's wives had been living in fear of the federal marshals for months, if not years. Although the danger had not abated, Joseph F. returned to Utah in October to see his wives and children. The moment he arrived in Salt Lake City he went into seclusion. Even with these precautions, the stay was brief. On November 29th, he received a message from George Q. Cannon telling him that he had been called on a mission to the Hawaiian Islands.⁶³⁴ Joseph had already served a mission there in the 1850s and may have looked forward to his return to the Hawaiian Islands with some excitement. Returning, however, would also mean leaving several of his wives and children behind for an uncertain amount of time at a time when federal marshals constantly watched his house and hoped to force his wives to admit they were living the principle of polygamy.

Establishing Lā'ie

Susa Young Gates' experiences in Utah in the late nineteenth century were different from Joseph's. Her experiences in the 1870s and 1880s were shaped by a powerful tradition of female

⁶³⁴ Gibbons, *Joseph F. Smith*, 133.

spirituality and activism within the Mormon Church. In 1870, thousands of Mormon women gathered in the tabernacle in spite of the rainy weather to protest the enforcement of the Cullom Bill. From the domed buildings' pulpit, the elderly Mormon women who had been present at the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith rallied their sisters to defend polygamy. Bathsheba W. Smith, whose father died after a mob had ransacked their home and forced the family to walk to Quincy, Illinois, from Far West, Missouri, reminded the audience of the "mangled forms" of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The two men, she told the assembled women, "had sealed their ministry with their blood."⁶³⁵ Another woman took the stand, pointing to a young man who had been "wounded worse than death" as a boy but had survived and stood among them now. She told the women assembled that they must "stand by the truth if we die for it."⁶³⁶ The meeting ended with a woman claiming that the "daughters of Zion" needed "no champion" and that they had "found Utah a desert," and if required, they would "have the courage to leave it so."⁶³⁷

This meeting was not the only one that Mormon women held. Mormon women organized similar mass protests in in 1878 and 1886. In each of these meetings several thousand women assembled to protest what they saw as the destruction of Mormon families and the defamation of Mormon women. Mormon women also began to publish newspaper and magazine articles in an attempt to refute accusations that Mormon women had been deluded into joining the church and made into slaves and concubines by their husbands.⁶³⁸ In 1872, Louisa Lula Greene worked with the editor of the *Salt Lake Daily Herald* to establish a newspaper dedicated to defending women's suffrage and polygamy. Called the *Woman's Exponent*, it became the institutional voice of Mormon women.

⁶³⁵ "Proceedings in Mass Meetings of the Ladies of Salt Lake City, to Protest against the Passage of Cullom's Bill, January 14, 1870" (Salt Lake City, 1870), 1 – 8, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶³⁶ "Proceedings in Mass Meetings of the Ladies of Salt Lake City," 3.

⁶³⁷ "Proceedings in Mass Meetings of the Ladies of Salt Lake City," 8.

⁶³⁸ Iversen, *The Antipolygamy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880 – 1925*.

In many ways, Susa Young Gates was at the center of the controversy surrounding polygamy. As one of the daughters of Brigham Young, she knew many of the women who had stood on the steps of the tabernacle to defend polygamy and those who had published exposés of Mormonism. Her stepsister Charlotte Godbe had spent significant time in the Lion House where the majority of Young's wives lived.⁶³⁹ Likewise, Fanny Stenhouse's daughter Clara was the wife of one of Susa's brothers. When Susa read Stenhouse's descriptions of the violence of the Mormon home, she was reading the writing of a woman that she knew intimately. Susa was also close with many of the women who defended polygamy. She had known Eliza R. Snow since she was a child and had gone with her mother to anoint and bless the bodies of the sick. Stories of female healing, of visions given to women, and of the importance of polygamy in elevating women to the status of goddesses had been part and parcel of her childhood.⁶⁴⁰ For Susa, the debate over polygamy was as much a family as a political affair.

Unlike her sisters and aunts, however, Susa did not participate publicly in the defense of polygamy in the 1870s. She was a relatively private figure in this period and focused mainly on her family. At the age of sixteen, she married a local dentist named Alma Dunford. Their marriage left her emotionally and financially devastated. Years later, Susa wrote that she had been completely unprepared for the demands of being a wife at the time that she married.⁶⁴¹ After her husband left on a mission, she felt unable to support herself. Her father offered her a hundred pounds of flour to use to feed her children. The dependence she felt on others left her

⁶³⁹ Iversen, *The Antipolygamy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880 – 1925*, 25.

⁶⁴⁰ Jonathan Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37:1 (Winter 2011), 1 – 85.

⁶⁴¹ Susa Young Gates, "Polygamy As It Was. Susie Young Gates in the New York Sun. Pleasure of Women and Children in the Early Days. A Daughter of Brigham Young Passionately Defends Her Creed," *The Utah Enquirer* Vol. 13:99 (December 13, 1889), no pg., photocopy, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

despondent. “How gladly would I support myself if I could,” she wrote in a letter to her sister Dollie.

But what can I do with two children....What shall, what can I do? In the midst of friends and relations, and I feel as though I was shut up in a sea of ice. Curses on the way of bringing up children to be forever in school and never to do the first thing for themselves. What good does their fine education do them, when thrown on themselves[?] ... If I was a washerwoman I might be independent.⁶⁴²

In spite of her feelings of helplessness, she divorced Alma at some point during his mission. It was only in the 1880s—when she was served as a missionary in the Hawaiian Islands with her second husband—that she would begin to regain the confidence that she needed to become a public advocate for polygamy. In many ways, the Hawaiian Islands were a perfect place for her to become an advocate for polygamy and Mormonism. The stories that she wrote there played into the narratives that Mormon women wove to counteract the idea that they were not white and were in need of redemption. In her stories, she described the acts that Mormon women undertook to civilize and domesticate the native Hawaiian women with whom they lived and worked.

Like many white Mormons, she understood the plantation in terms of the Book of Mormon and American civilizing narratives. In her public writings, she emphasized the work that she was doing with Native Hawaiian women—teaching them how to sew, cook, and clean—as redemptive work that would “civilize” them. It is important to understand Lā‘ie within these terms. The ideas that white Mormons had about the Hawaiian Islands shaped the church’s policies in the islands and their treatment of Native Hawaiians. It is also important, however, to understand it within the context of the Māhele. As Hokulani Aikau has argued, the Māhele of

⁶⁴² Susa Young Gates to Dollie, June 13, 1877, Susa Young Gates Papers, 1870 – 1930, Box 1, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

1848 shifted Hawaiian understandings of land from a sacred object that formed part of an individual's identity into a commodity to be bought and sold.⁶⁴³ As part of this transformation, thousands of native Hawaiians were removed from the land and forced to become laborers.

Native Hawaiian scholars such as Aikau, Huanani-Kay Trask, and Noenoe Silva have argued that this transformation fundamentally altered the lives of native Hawaiians who had seen the land as being embedded in their familial relationships. Hawaiians saw the land or the 'āina as an elder sibling. The reciprocal relationships between siblings required that native Hawaiians care for the land in exchange for its promise to provide them with nourishment. The Māhele severed this relationship, replacing language about responsibility and nourishment with land deeds.⁶⁴⁴ In a poignant memoir about her childhood and its intersections with the history of Queen Liliuokalani, Sydney Iaukea describes the trauma still present in the twentieth century in the native Hawaiian community. Although Iaukea was related to several important figures within Hawaiian history, including a man who served as a secretary to the Department of Foreign Affairs under Liliuokalani and a famous pro-wrestler, she had grown up in poverty and felt disconnected from the land and from her history. This dual estrangement forced her to ask what it meant to be Hawaiian when she had no connection to the 'āina.⁶⁴⁵ Iaukea sees the alienation that she felt as one that she shared with the Native Hawaiian community as a whole.

Native Hawaiians who lived through the Māhele felt a similar sense of dislocation. In the nineteenth century, American commentators believed that the native Hawaiian community was slowly disappearing. The Hawaiian birthrate was below the national average of the United States, and cholera, smallpox, and sexually transmitted disease had decimated the population.

⁶⁴³ Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promise Land*, 58 – 60.

⁶⁴⁴ Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land*, 57 – 60; Huanani-Kay Trask, *Notes from a Native Daughter*, 140 – 142, 65 – 86, 113 – 122; Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 39 – 44.

⁶⁴⁵ Sydney Lehua Iaukea, *The Queen and I*.

Whereas Oahu and Maui once had a teeming population, they now seemed depopulated, left with only the remnants of a once great civilization.⁶⁴⁶ Although this idea was located in a reality of disease and death, this narrative had a political edge. If native Hawaiians no longer existed as a people, it became easier for white businessmen and the descendants of Protestant missionaries to justify the claiming of the islands as an American space.⁶⁴⁷

This language of erasure was also used to justify intervention in native lives. Using language that mirrored humanitarian concerns about Native Americans, advocates for native Hawaiians argued that the only way to elevate the Hawaiian race was to dissolve their sense of communal responsibility and introduce private property.⁶⁴⁸ The establishment of Lā‘ie can be seen as part of this conversation. Mormon missionaries believed that the gathering of native Hawaiian converts in a single place would offer the opportunity to install a sense of industry in their converts. Mormon missionaries had long complained about the domestic habits of native converts. When Joseph F. Smith had first been a missionary in the islands in the 1850s, he had written with bitterness about the animals that had lived in Hawaiian homes – their flesh covered with “running sores and scabs” standing over the food that he was expected to eat in a few moments. He had seen “whol families who ware one sollid mass of scabies” and shuddered to think that he had “eaten food mixed up like unto batter with such hands.”⁶⁴⁹ Other Mormon missionaries had similar complaints. When Harvey Cluff first arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, he

⁶⁴⁶ J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 67 – 98.

⁶⁴⁷ Patrick Wolfe has developed the idea that the erasure of native peoples was necessary for white settlement and the assumption of governance by colonial authorities in his work on settler colonialism. Using language like “elimination” and “genocide,” he connects attempts to silence or erase native peoples with atrocities in the twentieth century like the Holocaust. Lorenzo Veracini has built upon Wolfe’s ideas about the “logic of elimination” in his own work on settler colonialism, arguing that it is the desire to erase native populations rather than permanently exploit their labor that distinguishes settler from traditional colonialism. See Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (December 2006): 387 – 409 and Lorenzo Veracini, “Introducing *settler colonial studies*,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1:1 (2011): 1 – 12.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 82.

⁶⁴⁹ Joseph F. Smith, July 4, 1856, Sandwich Islands Mission Journal, March 30, 1856 – August 29, 1856, Joseph F. Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

admitted that he had misgivings about sitting in a chair after a native Hawaiian.⁶⁵⁰ Although most Mormon missionaries later regretted their early mistrust of native Hawaiians, they still hoped to transform the domestic habits of islanders. The presence of white Mormon missionary families offered a model for native Hawaiians. Six years after the church initially purchased the land at Lā‘ie, one hundred and twenty-five native Hawaiians and roughly thirty-five white Mormons lived on the plantation.⁶⁵¹

In many ways, it is possible to read the establishment of Lā‘ie as a Mormon colony as part of a larger American imperial project. When Mormon missionaries originally traveled to the Hawaiian Islands, they positioned themselves in opposition to American colonialism and the power of the American Congregationalists already resident in the islands. Mormon missionaries saw the degradation of the Hawaiian people as being the result of their lengthy contact with the white men and women who had fallen into sin and flagrant immorality.⁶⁵² They offered the Mormon religion as a church that had been shorn of the hypocrisy of American Protestantism and would offer native Hawaiians a return to the former greatness of their civilization. In addition, Mormonism relied on dozens of native Hawaiians to serve as missionaries of their faith. Although their names are not as famous within the general membership of the church in the United States, these men, Jonathan Napela, Nihipali, Uaua, J.W.H. Kauwahi, and others, were leaders within the Mormon Church in the Hawaiian Islands. Many were also influential within the Hawaiian community as a whole. J.W.H. Kauwahi and Uaua were both members of the Hawaiian legislature and Napela had been educated at Lahainaluna School and served as a judge

⁶⁵⁰ Harvey H. Cluff, *Journal and Autobiography, 1868 to 1912*, 122 quoted in Lance Chase, “Laie Life, 1850 – 1883,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Society*, 2:1 (1981), 94.

⁶⁵¹ Berge “Laie Plantation Sugar Mill,” 44.

⁶⁵² Maffly-Kipp, “Assembling Bodies and Souls: Missionary Practices on the Pacific Frontier,” 72 – 73.

in Wailuku on the island of Maui.⁶⁵³ The leadership of these men within the church provided a native Hawaiian face to Mormonism in the nineteenth century. Although the white Mormon missionaries held many of the leadership positions within the church, Napela and other native Hawaiian missionaries interacted with members and provided a sense of continuity as white missionaries returned to the United States and embarked on months-long itinerant missionary work. The establishment of Lā‘ie as a sacred gathering space for Hawaiian members of the church may have also reestablished the sense of relationship with the land that had been lost during the Māhele. It also, however, asserted the church as a mediating force. It was only through the church that Native Hawaiian Mormons could reassert their relationship with the land.

When Susa and her husband arrived in Lā‘ie in 1885, however, they did not necessarily understand the meaning of the plantation for native Hawaiians. For them, Lā‘ie was also a temporary community and a place of short-term missionary work. Although Susa and her husband believed that God had called them to Lā‘ie, they knew that their residency would be temporary. They did not have the same sense of connection to the land or community as native Hawaiians living in Lā‘ie did. The differences in perspective between white missionaries and native Hawaiians occasionally caused tensions within the community. In June 1873, Frederick Mitchell arrived in the Hawaiian Islands where he was to serve as the mission’s president. He was a deeply religious man who found it difficult to accept laxity in others. In California, for example, he had noted happily that a fire, which he interpreted as a judgment of God, had destroyed the homes and property of several people who he had seen “wallow[ing] in abomination and filth” the day before.⁶⁵⁴ When he arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, he was

⁶⁵³ Riley Moffat, Fred Woods, and Jeffrey Walker, *Gathering to Lā‘ie* (Lā‘ie, HI: Jonathan Napela Center for Hawaiian and Pacific Island Studies at Brigham Young University-Hawai‘i, 2011), 12.

⁶⁵⁴ Lance Chase, “The Hawaiian Mission Crisis of 1874: Character as Destiny,” *Mormon Pacific Historical Society* 1:1 (1980): 91.

horrified that they used an intoxicating plant called ‘awa in their cultural and religious rituals and sold it for commercial purposes. Native Hawaiians saw the use of the plant as being integral to their culture, and other missionaries had allowed its use to continue. Mitchell, however, was unwilling to be lenient on the issue, which he saw as violating the dietary code that God had commanded all members of the church to follow. Shortly after he arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, he announced that the entire ‘awa crop would be burned. In response, several native Hawaiian members of the church bought land in nearby Kahana and openly defied Mitchell by establishing their own rival community.⁶⁵⁵

By the time that Susa arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, the ‘Awa Rebellion had been resolved. The church had removed Mitchell as president of the mission, and some of the members who had participated in the movement returned to Lā‘ie. Tensions still sometimes arose between white and Native Hawaiian Mormons. Although the community was envisioned as a Native Hawaiian space, Susa and Jacob were only two of many white Mormons living in the islands. Florence and Joseph Dean, Lillie and Elihu Barrell, and Mary Ann and William King were among the white missionaries who lived with them in Lā‘ie.

Joseph F. Smith and his wife Julina arrived in the islands in 1885. Susa had known Joseph F. for decades. Emma Smith’s unwillingness to let her own children travel to Utah after her husband’s death meant Joseph F. was one of the closest living links to the prophet for nineteenth-century Mormons. Brigham Young and the other leaders of the church closely watched the young boy who had only been five years old when his uncle Joseph and his father Hyrum had been shot in Carthage. When Joseph F. was a young man, Brigham invited him over to his house frequently. Susa was entranced with the handsome young man. In letters that she wrote later in her life, she teasingly mentioned the affections she had for him from the age of

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid, 95.

fourteen.⁶⁵⁶ “Even if I draw close the door into the chamber of my soul,” she laughingly told him, “[my feelings] will be there! Eternity is not far away.”⁶⁵⁷ It is impossible to tell from these letters how deep Susa’s feelings for Joseph F. had been. Joseph’s status within church meant that every letter she wrote to him was scrutinized by church historians and kept for posterity. As a result, all of the letters that she wrote to him were carefully constructed and written with an eye to their possible readership. Whatever their relationship, her decision to help her sister Dora elope severed any budding romance that Susa had in that time period. In an attempt to control his recalcitrant daughter, Brigham moved his daughter Susa and her mother Lucy to St. George, 300 miles from Salt Lake City. He hoped distance from the city’s social scene would make her more governable.

While in Lā‘ie, Susa reestablished her friendship with Joseph F. He would become her confidant and advisor, answering her questions about what was appropriate behavior and what was not. In one instance, a dispute arose when a twenty-two year old woman who had recently arrived in the islands questioned the propriety of white women healing and administering to their families. Susa defended the practice, citing her mother’s own prowess as a healer and the numerous instances she remembered in which her mother had administered to her father who was the prophet of the church.⁶⁵⁸ She also wrote to Joseph F., however, to ask him what he thought. He confirmed her arguments, citing the numerous instances in which his own wives had laid their hands upon him and their sick children. “Mothers in Israel,” he told her, “have the

⁶⁵⁶ Susa Young Gates, “Polygamy as It Was. Susie Young Gates in the New York Sun. Pleasure of Women and Children in the Early Days. A Daughter of Brigham Young Passionately Defenders Her Creed,” *The Utah Enquirer* Vol. 13:99 (December 13th, 1889): no pg., photocopy, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT. For an example of her later letters, see Susa Young Gates to Joseph F. Smith, December 31, 1906, Scott Kenney Papers, Box 3, Folder 1, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁵⁷ Undated letter, Susa Young Gates to Joseph F. Smith, received by Joseph F. Smith December 31st, 1906, Scott Kenney Papers, Box 3, Folder 1, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁵⁸ Susa Young Gates to Joseph F. Smith, December 11th, 1888, Joseph F. Smith Papers, 1854 – 1915, Box 15, Folder 7, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

privilege of washing, anointing, [and] blessing their sisters in the name of Jesus. Just as much as they have the right to pray, or ask a blessing in his name upon themselves or their children.”⁶⁵⁹

Although Susa had been confident in her own answer, it was ultimately Joseph’s reply to her query that settled the question.

Susa also developed a close relationship with the other white men and women within the community. The journals and diaries of the Mormon men and women who lived in Lā‘ie document frequent trips to the beach and excursions to visit volcanoes. On Sundays, the white families who were living at the Mission House often invited the other missionaries to dine with them, a favor which was reciprocated when the other wives hosted parties at their houses. At one New Year’s Party, they ate roasted chicken, mashed Irish and baked sweet potatoes, plum pudding, and fruitcake decorated with fresh flowers and leis.⁶⁶⁰ A few years later, they held a massive feast to celebrate the anniversary of the Saints’ entrance into the valley, cooking a meal of roast beef, stuffed sweet potatoes, pork, watermelons, fish, poi, chicken, rice, and cake. The speeches that day were given in Native Hawaiian and the feast was held in “Native fashion.” The night ended with dancing, swimming, and races.⁶⁶¹

The wives of the white missionaries also sent each other loaves of bread, oranges, and other small gifts of food to help each other supplement what food they were able to purchase in nearby villages or on the plantation itself. They visited each other while they sewed garments for their husbands and clothes for their children. Relationships between the white missionary wives were sometimes tense. Susa, for example, was a frequent gossip, causing some of the other

⁶⁵⁹ Joseph F. Smith to Susa Young Gats, January 8, 1889, Joseph F. Smith Papers, Box 31, Folder 4, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁶⁰ January 1, 1888 Entry, Laie Journal, Vol. 1, Susa Young Gates Papers, 1870 – 1930, Box 105, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁶¹ July 23, 1887 Entry, Journals of Mary Ann King, Vol. 2, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

women to write angrily about the “rubbish” she said during their visits.⁶⁶² Susa was also the source of more tension after she wrote a letter to Joseph protesting his decision to appoint Sister Noall as a counselor in the Relief Society over her “head.” Her letter demanded to know whether she had “inferior qualifications” to a woman who was little more than “a young girl” or if Noall was somehow a “better and nobler woman” than she was.⁶⁶³

In spite of these tensions, the domestic life that Mormon men and women described in their journals during their time in Lā‘ie was picturesque. The fact that the United States had no official sovereignty over the Hawaiian Islands provided Mormon men and women with a chance to reestablish a sense of domesticity and normalcy. Historians like John Tosh have pointed out how important the home was to male identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Male authority had traditionally stemmed from the order and hierarchy of the family. They superintended property, led their families in prayer and worship, and exercised control over discipline within the household. The nineteenth century saw a shift in familial roles, as the moral center of the family moved from the father to the mother. Men, however, remained invested in the family. Nineteenth-century understandings of domesticity demanded that men see themselves as existing within the family and that they be emotionally attached to their wives and children. They were expected to confine their sexuality to the marital bed, and though some failed to do so, the majority tried to fulfill these domestic demands. Tosh uses diaries, journals, and memoirs to recreate the anxiety that men felt for their children and the intense, emotional relationships they developed with their wives. He suggests that the image of the Victorian father as distant is a

⁶⁶² November 30, 1887 Entry, Florence Dean Ridges Journal, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁶³ Letter, Susa Young Gates to Joseph F. Smith, April 1, 1887, Joseph F. Smith Papers, 1854 – 1918, Box 14, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

mythical creation rather than a reflection of how men actually lived their lives. The family, he argues, was just as important for men as it was for women.⁶⁶⁴

Lā'ie offered Mormon men and women an opportunity to reestablish families that had been destroyed during the anti-polygamy raids. Julina's diary offers readers a picture of domestic normalcy. She describes making mincemeat pies, sewing pillowcases and dresses, and ironing clothes.⁶⁶⁵ The domesticity they reestablished, however, was a monogamous one. The sense of normalcy she experienced with Joseph F. came at the expense of her relationships with her sister wives and with the children that she had left behind. In her letters, Julina constantly mourned for her absent children and worried about their safety. In one letter to her sister wife Sarah Ellen, she told her that she was as "well here as anywhere," but she realized what "a trial it [was] for others to do for my children."⁶⁶⁶ Sarah's willingness to care for Julina's children in her absence brought the two women closer together. She wrote told Sarah that she loved her "more than I ever did and you know I always loved you as much as it is possible for one woman to love another." She added that she knew "my pets are as safe in your care as they would be in mine" and that she could "never repay you in this world."⁶⁶⁷ Joseph F. also felt the pull of his family, especially after one of the children of his wife Edna died. Julina wrote in her diary that she could tell just from the look on his face that something was wrong. Even two weeks after he read the letter

⁶⁶⁴ There is a large literature on the role of the family and domesticity in the construction of masculinity in the nineteenth century. It is too large to provide more than a few citations, but for some of the influential works, see Mary P. Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class*; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*; Lystra, *Searching the Heart*; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁶⁶⁵ Entries for January 2 – 24, 1886, Julina Lambson Smith Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁶⁶ Letter, Julina Lambson Smith to Sarah Ellen Richards Smith, May 10, 1885, Sarah Ellen Richards Collection, 1868 – 1895, Box 2, Folder 8, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁶⁷ Letter, Julina Lambson Smith to Sarah Ellen Richards Smith, December 18, 1886, Sarah Ellen Richards Collection, 1868 – 1895, Box 2, Folder 11, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

saying that one of his sons had died, his eyes were “read [sic] and swollen with crying” and he spent most of his days holding his daughter Ina.⁶⁶⁸

The domesticity that Mormon men and women created in the Pacific was important beyond its implication for the immediate families of Mormon missionaries. The anti-Mormon rhetoric of William Hepworth Dixon had relied upon the racialization of Mormon men and women to suggest that the church was incapable of controlling its own affairs or of governing Utah.⁶⁶⁹ The categorization of people according to race, religion, and ethnic origin had been one of the technologies of power within Anglo-American society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In reference to British India, for example, Sudipta Sen has argued that the British colonial government contrasted the tropical environment of India, which promoted effeminacy and despotism, with the civilized temperance of Great Britain. Ethnographic descriptions of Hindu and Muslim populations reinforced the assumption that the people of India were naturally slavish and submissive.⁶⁷⁰ These racialized descriptions of colonized people often turned on their domestic practices. Newspapers in the United States and Great Britain focused on female infanticide and the burning of Indian widows after the deaths of their husbands. In identifying Mormons as racially different, white reformers, journalists, and government officials identified them as a people subject to imperial control, missionary work, and domestic intervention. The Mormon assertion that they lived normal domestic lives was, thus, a claim to whiteness that had been denied them. Ironically, the fact that the domesticity they established in the Hawaiian Islands was a monogamous one may have bolstered their claims to normalcy. In Lā‘ie, there was little difference between the lives of Mormon men and women and those of Protestants.

⁶⁶⁸ March 7, 1886 Entry, Julina Lambson Smith Diary, Julina Lambson Smith Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁶⁹ William Hepworth Dixon, *White Conquest* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876).

⁶⁷⁰ Sudpita Sen, *Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India* (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2002), 119 – 128.

It is important to remember, however, that the Mormon assertion of whiteness and domestic normalcy was fundamentally based on a denial of the role native men and women played in maintaining domestic life.

There are references to Native Hawaiians in the diaries of Mormon women. They are usually fleeting, however, and, even a quick read of their writings suggests that white Mormon women formed closer relationships with each other than with indigenous women. The diaries that Mormon women kept also minimized the labor that Native Hawaiians performed in their homes. It is likely that Native Hawaiians helped to prepare meals, fetching water from nearby streams, washing the clothes that the missionaries and their families had dirtied, scrubbing dishes and floors. In one entry, however, Julina reduces their labor to a single sentence: “The native girls helped me and did the work often.”⁶⁷¹ Far more frequent are the references to the multiple pillowcases, dresses, and aprons that she sewed. The separation between the two communities is also visible in the structure of the community itself. Although white Mormons had initially lived in Native Hawaiian communities when they served as missionaries in the islands, they began to build houses that mirrored building styles in the continental United States. The proximity of these houses facilitated the creation of a white community. Mormon women could visit each other’s houses while remaining close to their own families and houses. The wooden structures were also visibly different from the houses of Native Hawaiian Mormons, which tended to be made of straw or grass.

In many ways, the denial of the presence of native labor within the home is similar to the interactions between middle and upper class families and their servants in the United States and Great Britain. Although servants were ubiquitous within middle class homes, they were also

⁶⁷¹ January 2, 1886 Entry, Julina Lambson Smith Diary, Julina Lambson Smith Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

supposed to be as absent as possible. In nineteenth-century novels, they appear as “the silent messenger,” pouring tea or dusting the furniture with nothing more than a “yes, mum” or “no, sir” to mark their presence.⁶⁷² This silence allowed middle class men and women to perpetuate the myth that their homes were self-contained and to efface the labor that was required to reproduce them each day.

The colonial contexts found in the American West, the Hawaiian Islands, and the British Empire, however, made the presence of servants within white domestic spaces even more tense than they had been in metropolitan cities and country estates. Scientific discourses within the Anglo-American world had long argued that white people who traveled to tropical spaces would succumb to the influences of the climate upon their bodies and become as degenerate as the indigenous people who lived there.⁶⁷³ Descriptions of people living in India and other colonized spaces as effeminate and licentious marked an anxiety among white, middle class Britons and Americans about their possible seductiveness. As Sen points out, the limbs and features of Indians were supposed to be “more delicate” and “softer” than those of even the most beautiful European woman.⁶⁷⁴ Contained within the descriptions of tropical spaces was the fear that white men and women who came into contact with them would leave noticeably marked and changed.

Although the American West was more arid and less lush than India or the Pacific, there were fears about the effect that contact with indigenous people and the climate would have on European bodies. Hepworth’s racist invective in Chapter One of this dissertation about

⁶⁷² Bruce Robbins, *The Servant’s Hand: English Fiction from Below* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 123; D.A. Kent, “Ubiquitous but Invisible: female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth-Century London,” *History Workshop Journal* 28 (1989), 111 – 128; Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Alison Light, *Mrs. Woolf and the Servants*.

⁶⁷³ There has been extensive work on the fear of colonial governments of the effects that tropical environments would have on white bodies. See, Karen Kupperman, “Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 41:2 (April 1984): 213 – 240; Nancy Leys Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 85 – 119.

⁶⁷⁴ Sen, *Distant Sovereignty*, 102 – 105.

Mormonism played upon these fears, describing the white body as porous, able to be shaped by the environment and transformed to the extent that people who lived there adopted the domestic customs of those who surrounded them.⁶⁷⁵ White Protestant missionaries, colonial officials, and settlers who traveled to colonial spaces responded to the constant threat of racial degeneracy by distancing themselves physically and emotionally from the indigenous men and women who surrounded them. Ann Stoler and Patricia Grimshaw are only a few of the historians who have described the machinations white men and women underwent to maintain their distance from the bodies of the indigenous men and women who served them and made up their congregations.⁶⁷⁶ In the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth centuries, colonial manuals dictated how native nursemaids should hold white children to minimize the contact that the infants had with the sweat and bodies of their nurses.⁶⁷⁷ In nineteenth-century Hawai‘i, on the other hand, Protestant missionaries quarantined their children, forcing them to quietly read and watch as other children played outside their windows. They hoped that in so doing they would be able to preserve their children’s chastity and prevent them from prattling in Hawaiian or adopting Hawaiian mannerisms.⁶⁷⁸ Although early Mormon missionaries had dismissed the importance of racial separation, their later counterparts embraced it. They emphasized that they were white and belonged firmly within the middle class.

The Mormon adoption of American norms of domesticity was an implicit claim that they should be able to control their own domestic affairs. As white men and women, they could be

⁶⁷⁵ Dixon, *White Conquest*, 179.

⁶⁷⁶ Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*. Other historians have expanded upon this idea. In an edited collection of essays, Stoler has expanded upon this idea, arguing that fears about miscegenation itself were based on a fear of the mingling of categories and the inability to keep white colonial officials separate from the individuals they were to rule. See, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*.

⁶⁷⁷ Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*, pg. #?

⁶⁷⁸ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 72 – 73.

trusted to form moral families and to reproduce the domestic circle that was at the center of Anglo-American understandings of authority and the state. Mormons who defended polygamy would strengthen this argument by pointing to the salutary effect of polygamy upon white bodies and the possibility that it would ultimately be a better system for regulating sexuality than monogamy. One of the earliest examples of this argument can be found in Belinda Marsden Pratt's 1854 *Defence of Polygamy*. Pratt argued that polygamy improved the health of children because it recognized the innate physical differences between men and women. A husband, she argued, needed to refrain from enjoying his wife's body while she was pregnant because "her heart should be pure, her thoughts and affections chaste, her mind calm, her passions without excitement."⁶⁷⁹ Men had no such need. "If God shall count him worthy of a hundred fold in this life, of wives and children, and houses and lands and kindreds," Pratt wrote, "he may even aspire to Patriarchal sovereignty, to empire; to be the prince or head of a tribe, or tribes; and like Abraham of old, be able to send forth for the defence of his country, hundreds and thousands of his own warriors, born in his own house."⁶⁸⁰ Asking men to refrain from sex, she argued, was unrealistic. Refraining from sex during pregnancy, however, would strengthen the bodies of their wives and allow them to become "the mothers of faithful, virtuous, healthy, and vigorous children."⁶⁸¹ The *Woman's Exponent* issue echoed Pratt's sentiments. An article published in August 1873 argued that polygamy would create upon the earth "a race of beings... educated in the ways of righteousness and eternal life... stronger, purer, and in all respects improved."⁶⁸²

The ability of polygamy to strengthen the health and character of children stemmed in part from the ability of men to refrain from sex with their wives while they were pregnant. This

⁶⁷⁹ Belinda Marsden Pratt, *Defence of Polygamy, by a lady of Utah to her sister in New Hampshire* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1854), 4.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁸² "Replication," *Woman's Exponent* 2:6 (August 15, 1873), 45.

emphasis on the eugenic benefits of polygamy tried to place it within American discourses of scientific progress and utopianism. For Mormons, polygamy was entirely consonant with scientific discovery and experimentation. They believed that the revelations that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had received from God revealed scientific as well as religious truths. In his descriptions of the afterlife, Parley Pratt described humans as inhabiting a universe in which affection and knowledge would be eternally bound together. They would forever increase and expand as they were freed from the human body and were no longer bound to its decay.⁶⁸³

Mormons also argued that polygamy was more adept at civilizing indigenous people than monogamy had been. This argument was explicit in Louisa Barnes Pratt's journal and in writings for the *Exponent*. In a retrospective diary, she described her encounter with a half-Tahitian child, who was the daughter of the French governor by a native woman. Pratt portrays the girl as having a beautiful complexion with a slight "tinge" from her mother's dark complexion.⁶⁸⁴ In the *Exponent*, she emphasizes the child's whiteness even more than in her journal, describing her as "a little white girl among the dark children."⁶⁸⁵ Doing so highlighted the degradation in which the child had lived. According to Pratt, she had sat on the ground while living with the people of Tubuai, handling her food only with her fingers. She had also not had any English education and could only speak the native language. In Pratt's descriptions, her light skin contrasted with the barbarity of her surroundings. Educating her was not an act of civilizing a person who was naturally licentious or lazy but helping a white child to regain "her latent sensibilities."⁶⁸⁶ Pratt called her "a lump of shining gold in the dirt."⁶⁸⁷ Under Pratt's tutelage, the girl began to sit at a

⁶⁸³ Parley Pratt, "Intelligence and Affection," *Appeal to the Inhabitants of New York, Letter to Queen Victoria, the Fountain of Knowledge, Immorality of the Body, and Intelligence and Affection* (Nauvoo, IL: John Taylor, 1845), 36–37.

⁶⁸⁴ Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 164.

⁶⁸⁵ Louisa Barnes Pratt, "Scenes from Tubuai," *Woman's Exponent* 2:11 (November 1, 1873): 87.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

table and use utensils. When it was time for Pratt to return to Salt Lake City, she wished that she could bring the child with her but was unable to do so. In her diary, Pratt wrote that hope had caused her to believe that the girl's father had continued to watch over her.⁶⁸⁸ Underneath her confidence, however, was a concern that the child's father would not live up to his responsibilities and would allow her to live among Pacific Islanders. Although she does not explicitly say so, Louisa probably feared that doing so would cause the young woman to slip back into what many white Mormons saw as savagery.

In the articles the *Exponent* published, it was ultimately Pratt who "saved" the young girl. Her father had abandoned her to live with a native woman—a nurse mother—and his wife refused to let the child live with them. The woman had done so because she was upset that her husband had taken a mistress without telling her. Pratt's writing seemed to suggest that she may have been willing to accept her husband's illegitimate children if he had been honest with her. In Pratt's writing, monogamous sensibilities had taken a white child and plunged her into a barbarous situation. It was only Pratt's intervention that secured the girl's education.

The articles that the *Exponent* published about Pratt's life further underscored her utility in the islands and described the missionary work she had done in the Pacific and the reaction of indigenous men and women to her presence. These articles described her walking among the coconut and tamanah trees and picking up small pieces of coral as she strolled on the beaches. They also included descriptions of the native people she encountered in her travels. According to the newspaper, the Queen of Tubuai dressed in bonnets made from the stalks of arrowroots and wore "fine kid" shoes upon her neck as she was certain that they would make her walk clumsily.⁶⁸⁹ Pratt's obituary described the faith of the native women in her healing.⁶⁹⁰ In

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid, 87.

⁶⁸⁹ Louisa Barnes Pratt, "Sketches," *Woman's Exponent* 3:9 (September 30, 1874): 66.

combining the images of this endangered white child with those of the thankful natives and nursemaids, the *Exponent* created an image of Mormon women as successful missionaries who had taken the gospel to the islands and nations of the sea when other Christian missionaries had failed. It was Pratt, a woman that Stenhouse and others had labeled as a degraded, broken creature, who was ultimately the successful missionary.

Mormon missionary work in Hawai‘i allowed Mormons to make these arguments explicit. George Q. Cannon lambasted the effect of Protestant missionaries on the morals of native Hawaiians in his editorials in the *Juvenile Instructor*, a magazine he edited for Mormon children. In an October 1887 editorial, for example, he told the children who would read the magazine that month that the experience of Mormon missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands suggested that “the effects of the so-called Christian teaching upon the natives there” had been in a word – “bad.” It was “utterly inadequate to supply the spiritual wants” of native Hawaiians or to “reform the lives of the heathen who embrace it.”⁶⁹¹ Mormon missionaries also recorded with pride the visits of King David Kalākaua and Queen Kapi‘olani to Lā‘ie and their assertion that the native Hawaiians who lived there were some of the healthiest and most industrious on the islands.⁶⁹² Mormons saw themselves as offering civilization to a once-great people who would be restored to their former glory by accepting the Mormon faith. Unlike Protestant missionaries who had only taught native Hawaiians sexual libertinism and avarice, Mormon missionaries would transform them into a moral people.

For Susa, working among the people of Lā‘ie offered her an opportunity for personal transformation. When she had arrived in the islands, she was still uncertain about her own domestic abilities after her disastrous first marriage. The entries in her diary are filled with

⁶⁹⁰ “In Memoriam: Louisa Barnes Pratt,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9:10 (October 15, 1880): 77.

⁶⁹¹ George Q. Cannon, “Topics of the Times,” *Juvenile Instructor* 22:19 (October 1, 1887): 290.

⁶⁹² Chase, “Laie Life,” 91, 95.

references to the small mistakes that she made in her domestic life – letting her children fall out of their cribs, being overly harsh with them when they cried, and burning the dinners that she prepared.⁶⁹³ At times, she also felt that her work left her too exhausted for much else. In one diary entry, she complained about the “weariness” of her body and how difficult it was to complete all of her work. “I can’t do all the things I would wish and have everything on time,” she complained. “It worries and wears on me.... I am so anxious to make and keep a clean sweet, happy home for my beloved husband and precious children.”⁶⁹⁴

In spite of the complaints she recorded in her diary, it was her time in Lā‘ie that allowed her to transform herself into a writer. Although she had written and published a few articles before she arrived in the islands in 1885, she ultimately began to publish in national magazines during her time in Lā‘ie. On February 10, 1888, she received three dollars from *Godey’s Lady’s Book* for an article she had written on Hawaiian women. It was the first real money that she had ever earned for writing. She immediately wrote another piece for the magazine on the manufacturing of kappa cloth in the Hawaiian Islands.⁶⁹⁵ Adopting the pseudonym “Homespun,” Susa also wrote for Mormon newspapers and magazines. Several of the pieces focused on her life in Lā‘ie. Others were short, didactic pieces for children. In the October 1, 1888 issue of the *Juvenile Instructor*, she published a short piece about a fair that the white members of the Relief Society were organizing. She told the children in Utah that she wished they “could come in any day now and see the black-haired, dark-skinned women and children all busily, quietly, eagerly working at mats, tidies, baby hoods and socks, crotchet work for pillow-slips and clothes, [and]

⁶⁹³ January 10, 1888, January 19, 1888, January 31, 1888, February 4, 1888, February 12, 1888.

⁶⁹⁴ May 25, 1888 Entry, Laie Journal, Vol. 1, Susa Young Gates Papers, 1870 – 1930, Box 105, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁹⁵ February 10, 1888 Entry, Laie Journal, Vol. 1, Susa Young Gates Papers, 1870 – 1930, Box 105, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

shoulder shawls.”⁶⁹⁶ In another article, she wrote about the apparel of Hawaiian women, describing the “grace of the flowing skirt” and the “convenience that it afforded to its wearer as a concealment.”⁶⁹⁷ Her didactic stories, on the other hand, admonished children not to be afraid of telling the truth and to never put off their work.

Although these pieces may initially seem distant from each other, they were connected by a common focus on the importance of proper domesticity and comportment. Her stories about the antics of children were designed to teach young children to behave properly and to exhibit the understandings of proper domesticity that historians have argued were so important to white, middle class identity. Her descriptions of life in the Hawaiian Islands provided a foil for white Mormon domesticity. In the article describing the Relief Society’s fair, she described native Hawaiian children who had volunteered to make quilts and socks as “a lot of frowsy, strong-smelling, untidy, noisy, ignorant girls... [who] had to be taught with infinite patience how to first handle a needle or crochet-hook” before they could “fashion something with it.”⁶⁹⁸ These children were the opposite of the sweet-cheeked children that she described in her other pieces. They were not, however, completely without hope. The same article described the “useful and also pretty things” that the children and, after a while, even their mothers produced. It only came, however, after long hours of work on the part of the white sisters living in Lā‘ie. According to Susa, their “back, eyes, and nerves” ached “with exhaustion” after an afternoon teaching the native Hawaiian women how to knit and sew.⁶⁹⁹ Her depictions also played into Mormon understandings of the role that they would play in civilizing the native peoples of the Pacific and the American West. Susa’s pieces for the *Juvenile Instructor* argued just as cogently as Louisa

⁶⁹⁶ Homespun [Susa Young Gates], “What the Sandwich Islands Children are Doing,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 23:19 (October 1, 1888): 301.

⁶⁹⁷ Susa Young Gates, “Hawaiian Kapa,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 23:11 (June 1, 1888), 174.

⁶⁹⁸ Homespun, “What the Sandwich Islands Children are Doing,” 301.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Barnes Pratt's had in the *Woman's Exponent* that it was Mormon women rather than their Protestant counterparts who would ultimately civilize the West.

Defending the Faith

Susa's experience in the Hawaiian Islands and the articles that she published there catapulted her into a position of prominence within the church. Soon after she returned from Lā'ie in 1889, she began editing *The Young Woman's Journal*, a magazine meant to provide young Mormon women with an alternative to the popular fiction so popular among nineteenth-century girls. Although she continued writing editorials, newspaper articles, and short stories about women's issues and didactic stories for children, Susa rarely mentioned her time in the Hawaiian Islands. Her focus was on the experiences of young women in Utah and the difficulties they faced. The Hawaiian Islands, however, were not unimportant to her life after she returned to the United States. Native Hawaiian men and women had been moving to Utah to gather with the Saints and complete temple work since the mid-nineteenth century. J.W. Kauleinamoku, for example, had immigrated to Salt Lake City from Hawai'i in 1875. He worked for over twelve years as a stonecutter before being called to serve a mission in New Zealand in 1887.⁷⁰⁰ William King and Alma L. Smith arranged for several native Hawaiians who wanted to immigrate to Utah to return with them to the United States when they had finished their missions.⁷⁰¹ Native Hawaiians who moved to Utah, however, faced significant discrimination. Rumors circulated that the "unclean" habits of Native Hawaiians facilitated the spread of leprosy. Eventually, white

⁷⁰⁰ Matthew Kester, "Race, Religion, and Citizenship in Mormon Country: Native Hawaiians in Salt Lake City, 1869 – 1880," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 40:1 (Spring 2009): 51.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid*, 57.

fears that their presence in Salt Lake City would lead to an outbreak of leprosy led church leaders to seek an alternate place for Native Hawaiians to settle.⁷⁰²

In 1889, church leaders decided to purchase land in Skull Valley, Utah, in preparation for creating a settlement of Native Hawaiians. The purchase of this land created a native Hawaiian space where Mormons could demonstrate their ability to teach indigenous people how to be colonizers themselves while providing their Polynesian converts with land they could cultivate that was close enough to Salt Lake City to provide them with access to the temple but far enough away that they were separated from the city's white residents. Joseph F. frequently visited the settlement and the community they formed would be named after him and called "Iosepa." He also tried to alleviate some of the difficulties that the native Hawaiians encountered within their settlement, sending them pants and gifts in hopes that it would keep them warm during the winter and advising them on spiritual discipline within the community.⁷⁰³ Perhaps one of his most useful functions was relaying information about the health and well-being of the native Hawaiians who had moved to Utah to their families in Honolulu and Lā'ie. Even after he returned to the United States, Joseph F. remained in contact with Native Hawaiians and was interested in their welfare. He wrote them letters consoling them when their children died and assuring them that they had received "crowns of life eternal."⁷⁰⁴

What was most important about the establishment of the Hawaiian colony, however, was how it shaped Mormon understandings of their role in civilizing indigenous people. Men like Joseph F. Smith and Harvey H. Cluff saw themselves as teaching the native Hawaiians how to

⁷⁰² Ibid.

⁷⁰³ Letter, Joseph F. Smith to S.M. Kinimakalehua, November 7, 1890, and Joseph F. Smith to Ellen Halemanu, June 25, 1890, William Kaneakula Sprout Collection, Translations of Joseph F. Smith Letters in Hawaiian, Box 1, Folders 2 and 3, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁷⁰⁴ Joseph F. Smith to Lucy Makakao, August 13, 1891, William Kaneakula Sprout Collection, Translations of Joseph F. Smith Letters in Hawaiian, Box 1, Folder 2, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

cultivate crops and live in the desert environment. The Mormons who had once made the desert bloom as a rose would now teach their Hawaiian converts how to do the same. In creating Iosepa, Mormons also believed that they were fulfilling a prophecy in which they brought the descendants of the original Israelites who had settled the Americas back to the land they had once ruled. In so doing, they started the redemption process and hastened the day in which Native Americans, Polynesians, and other Israelite peoples would become “white and delightful.”⁷⁰⁵ Iosepa and the other Mormon colonies demonstrated the ability of Mormons to colonize the West and to recreate it as an American space.

In many ways, Hannah Kaaepa’s story served as an embodiment of the arguments that Susa and Louisa Barnes Pratt had made in their articles they had published in the *Juvenile Instructor* and the *Woman’s Exponent*. In establishing a Hawaiian colony in the arid American West, Mormons had gone one step beyond Protestant missionaries and the American government and had transformed Hawaiians into their own kind of colony. When Susa chose to bring Kaaepa to represent the women of Hawai‘i at a national women’s suffrage meeting in 1899, the young woman embodied the arguments that Mormon women and men had made about their ability to civilize the indigenous people of the Pacific and the American West. Her descriptions of Kaaepa emphasized her civility and upbringing even as she continued to emphasize the differences between the young Hawaiian woman and the Mormons who accompanied her to Washington. In Susa’s descriptions, Kaaepa was dressed in leis and represented not the white Mormon women who shared her faith but the indigenous peoples of the Pacific with whom she shared a history of racial degradation and colonization. Kaaepa’s presence at the national convention marked the success of the Mormon civilizing mission and the possibilities for their inclusion within the American body politic.

⁷⁰⁵ 2 Nephi 30:5 – 6.

Conclusion

This dissertation was inspired by a simple question: How did Mormon missionary work affect the lives of Mormon women who did not travel to “the islands of the sea” and the “nations of the earth” with their husbands to spread the gospel? Although missionary work was part of the experience of most Mormon families in the nineteenth century, the experiences of those in the United States and those outside of it have rarely been told in the same frame. Doing so raised other questions about the relationship between domesticity and missionary work: How, for example, did the Mormon practice of polygamy affect their perceptions of indigenous sexualities? How did perceptions of Mormon polygamy change as Mormon missionaries moved between different imperial spaces? As my dissertation developed, it began to focus more explicitly on Mormon interactions with indigenous people while maintaining an emphasis on domesticity. The questions I was asking when I finished my dissertation were slightly different from those with which I began. My key concern throughout, however, was the interplay between Mormon ideas about domesticity and nineteenth-century American imperialism. I argue that Mormons were both subject to nineteenth-century imperial discourses and the promulgators of them. This dissertation is an exploration of the tensions and cleavages that developed surrounding the Mormon family and missionary work in the nineteenth century.

In the first chapter, I provided a general overview of Mormon theology. I argued that Mormon ideas about the body shaped their perceptions of both race and gender. Unlike other nineteenth-century Christians, early Mormons emphasized the divinity of the body. In their

theology, the material body was essential to God's redemptive plan. As the Mormon theologian Parley P. Pratt suggested, individuals had to be embodied before they could be exalted and attain a state in the next life like the one that their Heavenly Father currently inhabited. In the worlds-to-come, individuals would experience the same emotions, physical desires, and bodily needs that they did in this life. They would eat and have sex. The idea that the world-to-come would mirror this one led to questions about how families should be organized and the nature of racial hierarchy. Because families would not be dissolved in the hereafter, the relationships that individuals created in this world became particularly significant. Mormons sought to remake their families after those they found in the scriptures, reviving both the practice of polygamy and the language of patriarchy. In making this argument, I draw upon the work of Benjamin Park on the Mormon body.⁷⁰⁶ The body I describe in this dissertation, however, was both gendered and racialized. Early Mormons envisioned an apocalypse in which the bodies of indigenous people would literally be transformed – their skin would be lightened as they accepted the gospel.

The second and third chapters analyzed how imperial logics in the Pacific Islands and Great Britain affected the Mormon experience there. I argue that the arrival of Mormon missionaries in Tahiti should be interpreted in light of the difficulties that the London Missionary Society had with interracial sex in their early missionary work. The LMS had been resident in the islands for a half-century or more. The sexual indiscretions of single men like George Vason, John Cock, and Francis Oakes led it to embrace the white missionary family as a bulwark against sexual sin. The decision of Mormon missionaries to travel without their families made them suspect in the eyes of the members of the LMS. In Great Britain, on the other hand, the response to Mormonism focused on the similarity between Mormon religious practices and those of other discredited prophetic movements. Although this theme had been present in the Pacific, it was

⁷⁰⁶ Park, "Salvation through a Tabernacle," 1 – 44.

more prominent in Great Britain. The British response to Mormon missionary work focused on its delusions and ability to appeal to the working classes. While conflicts over Mormonism in Tahiti focused on sexuality, in metropolitan Britain, the conflict was fundamentally about class expectations and conflict.

In the fourth chapter, I examined how the faith's emphasis upon missionary work affected Mormon ideas about domesticity. I argued that Mormon women created alternative female kinship networks that allowed them to support their families in the absence of their husbands. My research also revealed, however, that the secrecy that surrounded the practice of polygamy before Joseph Smith's death in 1844 undermined relationships between women. At the same time that some women welcomed Mormon theology's emphasis on the eternal nature of the family, others found themselves separated from family members. Mormonism's apocalypticism encouraged members to abandon their communities to gather with the Saints. As a result, conversion itself could separate families. Mormons dealt with this tension by sending men as missionaries to their former communities and neighborhoods. In proselytizing to the men and women that had known them before their conversions, Mormon men could clean their skirts of their kinsmen's blood while potentially reuniting their families.

Chapter Five followed the changes that occurred within the Mormon community after Smith's death when Mormon leaders sought to take the secret practice of plural marriage and make it public. After Smith's death, Mormon leaders like Brigham Young established the predominance of plural marriage. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, they did so by disciplining families and ensuring that men only took plural wives with permission. Chapter Five also examined Mormon interactions with Native Americans in Utah. Amy Kaplan has argued

that white Americans envisioned territorial expansion through the home.⁷⁰⁷ The establishment of white families marked the transition of a space from a “wild frontier” into a part of the United States. My focus on polygamy allows me to reimagine her argument. Although white Mormons rejected many of wider American ideas about domesticity, they accepted the role of the family in civilizing indigenous people. Instead of creating model monogamous families, Mormons incorporated indigenous people into their families through adoption and plural marriage.

The sixth chapter of my dissertation examined the partial dissolution of the Mormon family as a result of anti-polygamy raids. As a result of the decision of the U.S. government to prosecute polygamists, the mission fields that had once worked to tear Mormon families apart became spaces where they could be reconstituted. As I pointed out, however, the situation was not without its ironies. The practicalities of traveling to the Hawaiian Islands and Canada often meant that men had to leave behind at least some of their plural wives. When Mormons traveled to the Hawaiian Islands, they did so as monogamous couples who maintained polygamous ties.

In focusing on Mormon polygamy, my dissertation made several key interventions: First, it demonstrated the importance of missionary work to early Mormon theology and the lived experience of the Mormon community. Second, it explored how the Mormon practice of polygamy changed their interactions with indigenous people. And, finally, it highlighted the role played by imperial discourses about sexuality, religious faith, and the family in shaping responses to Mormonism. The importance of this dissertation, however, does not just lie in the past. Missionary work shapes the Mormon present as well.

On several boulders in the Utah desert are petroglyphs that Native Hawaiian settlers carved into the rock. A sea turtle evokes images of a locality far removed from Skull Valley, Utah, while another image of individuals holding hands is more ambiguous. Anthropologist

⁷⁰⁷ Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Empire*.

Jonathan Reeves has argued that it represents the Hawaiian concept of the family.⁷⁰⁸ The petroglyphs are one of the few remnants of the Native Hawaiian colony that once lived there. Every Memorial Day, a group of Polynesian Mormons living in Utah holds a festival commemorating the men and women who settled Iosepa. In addition to a luau, they carve Tahitian drums out of coconut wood, hold an exhibition in which Samoan men dance with fire knives, and place flowers on the graves in the town's cemetery. For them, Iosepa represents the beginnings of a Polynesian Mormon identity.

The festival is a continuing reminder of the effects of Mormon missionary work in the Pacific Islands on the history of the American West. Although the construction of an LDS temple in Hawai'i led to Iosepa's abandonment, there has been a continued Native Hawaiian presence in Utah.⁷⁰⁹ Other Pacific Islanders have also traveled to the area. In 2013, Utah had the largest per capita share of Pacific Islanders in the continental United States.⁷¹⁰ Within Mormonism, the story of Mormon missionary work in the Pacific Islands has been one of celebration. During a research trip to the LDS Church History Library in Utah, I heard an elderly missionary tell visitors that the murals that greeted visitors were copied from the walls of the Mormon temple in Lā'ie. The white Mormon missionaries who traveled to the Hawaiian Islands in the nineteenth century are remembered as beloved figures who cared deeply for Pacific Islanders and their community.

Several years after Joseph F. Smith's death in 1918, the U.S. Senator and Mormon Apostle Reed

⁷⁰⁸ Jonathan Reeves, "Illuminating Iosepa: Hawaiian Petroglyphs in Skull Valley, Utah," Paper Presented at the Society for American Archaeologists, Sacramento, CA, March 30 – April 3, 2011.

⁷⁰⁹ Kester, *Remembering Iosepa*, 132 – 136.

⁷¹⁰ Tony Semerad, "From the Islands to the Highlands: Polynesians are Thriving in Utah," *The Salt Lake Tribune* (February 1, 2013), accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/tribpreps/55702182-190/pacific-utah-family-islander.html.csp>

Smoot wrote that he did not “believe it [was] possible for human beings to love a man more than did the natives of the islands love President Joseph F. Smith.”⁷¹¹

White Mormons, however, have been more reticent to celebrate the history of Mormon interactions with Native Americans. In the early twentieth century, Mormons began to move away from the elements that had marked them as distinct from mainstream Protestantism in an attempt to integrate into mainstream American society.⁷¹² This movement required them to jettison their polygamous past and emphasize their fundamental whiteness.⁷¹³ Although the church had issued a manifesto temporarily suspending the practice of plural marriage until U.S. law could be changed, members of the church leadership secretly authorized certain individuals to perform plural marriage. In 1904, Joseph F. Smith read a letter in the church’s general conference declaring that polygamous marriages “were prohibited” and that anyone who participated in such a marriage would “be deemed in transgression against the Church and will be liable to be dealt with... and excommunicated therefrom.”⁷¹⁴ The statement represented the church’s final movement away from a practice that had defined it for decades.

The LDS Church’s de-emphasis of the role that Native Americans played in their theology can be partially read as an attempt to distance themselves from a racially ambiguous past. It can also be seen, however, as a response to the pushback that the church received to its policies concerning Native Americans. American Indian activists have frequently critiqued the community. In 1973, members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) staged a protest in which over one hundred of their members boycotted the LDS Church’s annual conference,

⁷¹¹ Richard J. Dowse, “Joseph F. Smith and the Hawaiian Temple,” *Joseph F. Smith: Reflections on the Man and His Times* ed. Craig K. Mascill, Brian D. Reeves, Guy L. Dorius, and J. B. Haws (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), accessed: April 8, 2015, <http://rsc.byu.edu/es/archived/joseph-f-smith-reflections-man-and-his-times/joseph-f-smith-and-hawaiian-temple>

⁷¹² Thomas Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1890 – 1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

⁷¹³ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

⁷¹⁴ Quoted in Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 64.

demanding that the church donate one million dollars to Indian social programs.⁷¹⁵ The following year members of AIM again issued a challenge from Temple Square to the Mormon Church to donate ten million dollars to Indian self-help programs over the next decade and to return native skulls being held in a church-owned museum.⁷¹⁶ AIM's political activism made many Mormons uncomfortable. It belied the church's narrative about the role white Mormons would play in "redeeming" Native American communities.

Much of the criticism that Mormons received centered on the church's Indian Placement Program. The program began in 1947 as a way to educate Navajo students who had immigrated to Utah to work. Selected families fostered Indian children whom they introduced to white Mormon culture through enrollment in local public schools and church attendance. At its height, over five thousand students a year enrolled in the program.⁷¹⁷ Although some of the Navajo children who participated in the program had fond memories of it, others criticized the effects that it had on Indian families. The removal of Indian children from their homes on the reservation during the school year made it difficult for them to learn about Navajo culture or to develop deep relationships with their extended families. Many of the children who participated remembered the loneliness that they experienced. One Navajo boy remembered being picked up in a Cadillac. It was a contrast to the poverty of the Navajo reservation. Although his foster parents tried to help him overcome his loneliness, he remained aloof. He remembered getting into their pool and going over to the corner because he was so overwhelmed. "I just went over to

⁷¹⁵ Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 101.

⁷¹⁶ Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, "Boycotting General Conference 40 Years Ago: The Lamanite Generation, the American Indian Movement, and Temple Square," *Juvenile Instructor* (blog), April 12, 2013, Accessed: June 27, 2015, <http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/boycotting-general-conference-50-years-ago-the-lamanite-generation-the-american-indian-movement-and-temple-square/>

⁷¹⁷ Tona Yonce Hangen, "A Place to Call Home: Studying the Indian Placement Program," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30:1 (Spring 1997), 54 – 55.

the corner and stayed there,” he told an interviewer. “I wouldn’t come out of my corner.”⁷¹⁸

Another child who participated in the program remembered crying as her foster family drove her from Provo where they had processed the children to Ogden. They bought her ice cream to try to calm her, but she still refused to talk to them for a while. “I knew how to talk English,” she remembered. “I guess I was just really shy.”⁷¹⁹

In many ways, the Indian Placement Program was a continuation of earlier Mormon attempts to domesticate American Indians by incorporating them into white families. Nineteenth-century Mormons had adopted Indian children in the belief that doing so would teach the latter the habits of civilization while saving them from slavery. Mormon women played an important role in these adoptions, teaching Indian children how to cook, correctly eat with utensils, and creating the skirts and stays that dressed their bodies. Although the Indian Placement Program emphasized the temporary nature of its foster placements, it drew on similar imagery and rhetoric as earlier Mormon practices. Both nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mormons believed that the redemption of Native Americans would occur through their incorporation into white families. In both cases, it was the home that served as the place where indigenous people would be culturally whitened. As a result, Mormon women played an important role in the program. They were to serve as mothers to the Indian children they fostered, ensuring that they received a proper education and learned how to behave within white society.

It is important to note that white Mormons did not see this transformation as a loss of indigenous identity. They believed that Native Americans, in adopting Mormonism and the habits of white culture, were returning to their original heritage. Nevertheless, Native American activists attacked the program as a form of cultural terrorism. The anthropologist Martin Topper

⁷¹⁸ Hangen, “A Place to Call Home,” 60.

⁷¹⁹ Hangen, “A Place to Call Home,” 61.

wrote that the program was “neither a successful missionary practice nor a means of reducing the strain of acculturation on the Navajo child.”⁷²⁰ Beth Wood, a child psychologist, went further and called the program an “adoption racket.”⁷²¹ Opposition from Indian activists combined with opposition on Navajo reservations led to the program slowly being phased out. The last student graduated from the program in 2000. The controversy surrounding the program was symptomatic of a larger discomfort surrounding the position of American Indians within the LDS Church. Perhaps the most famous incident concerning American Indian Mormon identity centered on George P. Lee, a Navajo man who had participated in the Placement Program as a child and became the first Native American to be named a General Authority. For much of his tenure Lee was seen as a symbol of the success of Mormon programs concerning Native Americans.

Lee’s career, however, ended in disgrace. In 1989, a church court excommunicated him for “apostasy and other conduct unbecoming of a member of the church.”⁷²² There is evidence that Lee may have sexually molested a young woman. Lee, however, insisted that his excommunication was the result of his criticism of the church. In two letters that he wrote in preparation for his disciplinary court, Lee wrote that white Mormons had “set” themselves up “as a literal seed of Israel,” while “shov[ing] true Israel out of his own home.”⁷²³ He condemned the church for siphoning money away from Mormon programs designed to help Native Americans.

Whatever the ultimate reason for his excommunication, the disillusionment that many felt after Lee’s dismissal only deepened the uncertainty about the place of Native Americans within the church. Important Mormon leaders dismissed Lee’s claims that they had abandoned their

⁷²⁰ Brandon Morgan, “Education the Lamanites: A Brief History of the LDS Indian Student Placement Program,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35:4 (Fall 2009), 209.

⁷²¹ Beth Wood, “Mormons and the Indian Adoption Racket,” *FPS: Magazine of Youth Liberation* (April 1979), 51.

⁷²² “Press Coverage of Lee’s Excommunication Ambivalent,” *Sunstone* 13 (August 1989): 47 – 51.

⁷²³ “The Lee Letters,” *Sunstone* 13:4 (November 1989), 54, quoted in David Grua, “Elder George P. Lee and the New Jerusalem: A Reception History of 3 Nephi 21:22 – 23,” *Juvenile Instructor* (blog), August 27, 2013, Accessed: April 11, 2015 <http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/elder-george-p-lee-and-the-reception-history-of-3-nephi-2122-23/>

calling to redeem Native Americans. The most pointed denials centered on Lee's contention that white Mormons were only to "lay the foundation" for "the building of New Jerusalem."⁷²⁴ Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who had married into the Smith family, told Mormons that the idea that white Mormons would only "assist" the Lamanites in the creation of Zion was a "whiff of nonsense."⁷²⁵

Several white Mormons have recognized the role that Christian missionary work as a whole played in destroying Indian communities. Tona Hangen, a Mormon woman and historian of race, describes visiting a Navajo Mormon ward during her field research into the Indian Placement Program. As she sang the verses of a common Mormon hymn—"They, the Builders of the Nations"—she found it difficult to reconcile the celebration of white Mormon pioneer heritage with the fact that she was surrounded by the people that white Mormons had dispossessed. Unable to navigate the meaning of the hymn, she broke into "awkward giggles."⁷²⁶

The discomfort that she experienced is less prominent in Mormon discussions of the role that Polynesians play within the LDS Church. Although Pacific Islanders have advocated for the decolonization of the islands upon which they live, white Mormons have been less aware of this political activism. Instead, they tend to celebrate Mormon missionary work in the Pacific Islands as an unambiguous success. This lack of awareness of Polynesian activism may be responsible for the differences in how Native Americans and Polynesians are perceived by contemporary Mormons. Mormonism has also found a wider acceptance among the Polynesian community as a whole than it has among American Indians. Native Hawaiians saw their conversion to Mormonism not as the adoption of a white faith but as a way to reconnect with their religious

⁷²⁴ "The Lee Letters," 54, quoted in Grua, "Elder George P. Lee"

⁷²⁵ Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 519, quoted in Grua, "Elder George P. Lee."

⁷²⁶ Hangen, "A Place to Call Home," 67.

heritage as Hawaiians. It was Native Hawaiians who served as the community's examples of the faith, not white men.

This tradition has continued into the present. In the 1960s, the Mormon Church founded the Polynesian Cultural Center (the PCC) as a way to preserve the cultures of the Pacific while entertaining white tourists. Many of the people who left their homes to work there saw their callings as religious ones. Emosi Damuni, who served as a cultural expert for the center's Fijian village and worked at the PCC for decades, told an interviewer in the 1980s, "I think I was chosen to come here by our Heavenly Father... I think I was brought here on purpose... to help... build up the Fijian Village and help the students learn the dancing and the culture of Fiji."⁷²⁷ The PCC built on the blurring between cultural tourism and religious calling found within Damuni's statement. According to Hokulani Aikau, he was not the only one to do so. PCC management frequently "blurred the boundary between what constituted work for the center and what was a calling for the church."⁷²⁸ Students were given college scholarships for agreeing to dance for tourists, and faculty members were encouraged to work at the center. Although there was some dissent from Polynesian faculty members about the willingness of the LDS Church to ask students to display their bodies at the center to please tourists, many of the people who worked there saw their employment as a type of missionary work in which people would be converted through their exposure to the joys of Polynesian culture.⁷²⁹

The geographic distance of many white Mormons from the Pacific Islands allows them to ignore the critiques that Polynesian scholars have raised of the PCC. Instead, the Pacific Islands become an idealized space where Mormon relationships with indigenous people are unrestrained

⁷²⁷ Interview, cited in Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land*, 123.

⁷²⁸ Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land*, 148.

⁷²⁹ Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, "Mahana, You Naked! Modesty, Sexuality, and Race in the Mormon Pacific," *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism after 1945* ed. Patrick Mason and John Turner (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

and uncomplicated. A 2014 issue of the *Ensign*, an official church magazine, celebrated Tonga as “a land dedicated to God.” It describes the conversion of a Lord Fulivai, the descendant of ‘Iki Fulivai who invited Latter-day Saint missionaries to proselytize in Tonga in the early twentieth century.⁷³⁰ Although the *Ensign* frequently published articles lauding the conversion of people from a variety of cultures, Polynesians are often depicted as especially faithful. For many Polynesians, their Mormon faith and their cultural heritage are intertwined. The country’s motto, “God and Tonga are my inheritance,” reflects a general sense that Tongans—and many Polynesian nations—are dedicated to God.⁷³¹

The embrace of a Polynesian Mormon identity as natural allows white Mormons to see Pacific Islanders as fulfilling the promise in the Book of Mormon that American Israelites would eventually be brought back to the faith of their fathers. It has also created an often unrecognized dynamic within Mormonism in which many of the socially conservative ideas within Mormonism are imported to Hawai‘i without being adapted to the state’s progressive political contexts. In the mid-twentieth century, members of local LDS congregations led the movement against the Equal Rights Amendment within the Hawaiian Islands.⁷³² Decades later, the LDS Church’s opposition to same-sex marriage in Hawai‘i became a precursor to a much more highly publicized contest in California over the same issue.⁷³³ Native Hawaiian Mormons adopted a definition of marriage, sexuality, and domesticity that closely mirrored that of their white coreligionists. Their decision to do so was based on their belief that the Mormon Church was a mouthpiece for God. They saw their acceptance of Mormon ideas about domesticity not as a

⁷³⁰ Harvalene K. Sekona, “Tonga: A Land Dedicated to God,” *Ensign* (August 2014), Accessed: April 14, 2015, <https://www.lds.org/liahona/2014/08/tonga-a-land-dedicated-to-god?lang=eng&query=Tonga>

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Martha Sontag Bradley, *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 294.

⁷³³ D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 403 – 404.

concession to whiteness, but as an embrace of godliness. For them, there was little tension between their Mormon faith and their Polynesian identity.

White Mormons have tended to view the place of Polynesians within Mormonism as unproblematic. This embrace of “Polynesian Mormonness” occurs at the same time that the original importance of Native Americans to Mormon theology is effaced. The pictures within the modern Books of Mormon frequently use South American motifs to represent Lamanites and Nephites. The emphasis on converting specific groups of American Indians is absent in comparison. The petroglyphs on the rocks near the site of Iosepa represent the general tendency within Mormonism to elevate a Polynesian Mormon identity while effacing the church’s difficult engagement with American Indians. In celebrating the founding of Iosepa as a Native Hawaiian space, Polynesians and white Mormons erase the Native American presence from the land.

This silencing of Native Americans in Utah is part of a more general movement within Mormonism towards the American mainstream. The historian Paul Reeve has argued that the social transformations that occurred within the church in the early twentieth century caused American views of the church's racial identity to shift. In the nineteenth century, he argues, Mormons were seen as racially suspect—as almost non-white. As the twentieth century progressed, however, Mormons were increasingly accepted into mainstream society. Mormons embraced the eugenics movement, arguing that polygamy strengthened the bodies of children and created a newer, more vital race. By the 1960s, Mormons, with their carefully kept hair and beardless faces, were seen as “too white.”⁷³⁴ Although Mormon whiteness did not preclude missionary work among American Indians and other indigenous peoples, it did mean that the experiences of non-white Mormons became less central to the stories Mormons told about themselves to wider American society.

⁷³⁴ Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

As this process occurred, the identification of Polynesians as naturally religious became a way to celebrate an indigenous Mormon identity while avoiding discussions of the Mormon role in American colonialism. According to the anthropologist Jane Desmond, the Hawaiian Islands have often served this role for white Americans, who can imagine a tropical paradise where racial mixing occurs with few of the tensions that have plagued the mainland United States.⁷³⁵ This vision of Hawai‘i, of course, ignores the sexual violence that white men had frequently enacted upon Polynesian women. In the early twentieth century, Native Hawaiian surfers in Waikiki frequently confronted American soldiers who became sexually aggressive with Native Hawaiian women.⁷³⁶ This sexual violence, however, is forgotten in favor of a whitewashed version of Hawaiian history in which Native Hawaiians welcome white Americans to the islands.

The ambivalence of white Mormons towards Native Americans is reflective of a shift in how Mormons remember their history. Although missionary work is an important part of contemporary Mormon culture, it is relatively absent from studies of nineteenth-century Mormonism. Instead, Mormon history is told as a relatively straightforward narrative in which violence drives Mormons from New York to Missouri, Illinois, and finally to Utah. Although Mormon women are present in this narrative, they are relatively absent from the faith’s missionary work or from the work of colonizing Utah. The attempts to recast this narrative have not been integrated into Mormon history as a whole. This dissertation has been an attempt to recast Mormon history by exploring the effects that Mormon missionary work had on settlement of Utah. Doing so allows historians to more fully understand Mormon interactions with American Indians and Pacific Islanders. It forces us to examine Mormon ideas about the family

⁷³⁵ Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 7, 122 – 130.

⁷³⁶ Isaiah Helekunihi Walker, *Waves of Resistance: Surfing and History in Twentieth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), 72 – 77.

in light of the frequent absences of Mormon men and incorporation of American Indians into Mormon families. The presence of Native Hawaiian petroglyphs in Utah is a reminder of the importance of considering Mormonism within an imperial frame. They are unexpected pieces of Mormon history, but they remind us that Mormonism has always been engaged in missionary work and that their experiences abroad affected their lives within Utah.

This dissertation was partially an attempt to excavate that history – to understand how the marriage of Benjamin F. Grouard to a young woman in the Tuamotus might affect women living in Illinois or Missouri. In its dual focus on Mormon polygamy and missionary work, my dissertation examined the tensions that occurred within the Mormon community surrounding the faith's emphasis on the family and the requirement that men temporarily leave their families to spread the gospel. It also asked how Mormon interactions with indigenous people were different from those of other Christian missionaries. In asking these questions, my dissertation sought to tell a history of Mormonism that extended beyond the boundaries of the United States and considered the experiences of non-white people within the faith. It is a reminder that Mormon history is as much a history of the Pacific Islands as it is a history of the United States.

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