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**The Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons:
A Study of Comparisons**

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The year 1890 was a time of critical change for the inhabitants of the Great Basin. After decades of exposure to colonialism and varying degrees of assimilation, the Native American residents of the region experienced a new hope in the songs, dances, and millennial prophecies of the Paiute messiah, Wovoka. Mormon settlers, though colonizers themselves, were in many respects equally in need of prophetic assistance. The United States government's anti-polygamy campaigns of the 1880s were the culmination of over fifty years of American resistance to Joseph Smith's strange version of Christianity. From the perspective of the American public, both groups of peoples, the Native Americans and the Mormons, were problems that required immediate solutions. Comparisons and connections linking the two "superstitious" cultures had been floating around the country prior to the formation of the Ghost Dance of 1890; however, it was from within the reports and commentaries of this movement that a tradition of producing comparisons between the two religions was initiated. Although rarely more than speculations based on bias and prejudice, these initial comparisons circulated throughout the country via newspapers and magazines until 1896 when the ethnologist, James Mooney bestowed upon them an authority that only comes from academic approval. Since Mooney's publication of *The Ghost Dance Religion and Wounded Knee* the comparisons have been perpetuated and even expanded upon by modern scholars, resulting in a general acceptance of them as noteworthy knowledge. The goal of this study, then, is to examine the historical circumstances and individuals involved in this narrative as a way to critically reflect on the use of comparison in the production, circulation, and perpetuation of knowledge about religion.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Introducing the Comparison	5
Introducing the Comparative Method.....	14
Introducing the Comparison to the Comparative Method.....	24
Chapter 1. The Ghost Dance Religion of 1890	26
History and Context	28
The 1870 Ghost Dance.....	32
Wovoka and the 1890 Ghost Dance.....	34
The Shoshone and Bannock.....	37
The Lakota Sioux.....	38
Conclusions.....	41
Chapter 2. The Mormons	43
Anti-Polygamy	46
Key Doctrines and Practices	47
Lamanites.....	49
Conclusions.....	52
Chapter 3. Producing Comparisons	54
Early Comparisons.....	54
Initial Comparisons.....	58
General Nelson A. Miles.....	61
The Three Nephites.....	66
The 1891 Millennial Prophecy.....	69
Conclusion	75
Chapter 4. Circulation and Perpetuation	76
James Mooney	79
Paul Bailey	85
Modern Perpetuations	90
Chapter 5. Dissecting the Comparisons	98
Miles' Struggle for Power.....	98
Mooney's Sympathies.....	102
Bailey's Fiction.....	106

The Future of the Comparisons.....	109
Conclusions	111
Works Cited	115

University of Cape Town

Introduction

Introducing the Comparison

On November 7, 1890 General Nelson A. Miles, Commanding Officer of the Missouri Division stationed at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, responded to the question “Who do you think responsible for this Imposition [the “Messiah Craze” as it was referred to in the paper’s of that time, or as it is now more commonly known, the Ghost Dance Religion] upon the Indians?” by publicly claiming:

I cannot state positively, but it is my belief that the Mormons are the prime movers in it. This is not a hard statement to believe, for there are 200,000 Mormons and they themselves claim to believe in prophets and spiritual manifestations, and they even now claim to hold intercourse with the spirit of Joe Smith. Besides, they have had missionaries at work among the Indians for many years and have made many converts (Deseret News November 7, 1890; New York Times November 8 1890).

Six years later Dr. James Mooney published his extensive report for the Bureau of American Ethnology in Washington D.C., *The Ghost-Dance Religion and Wounded Knee* (1896). In this seminal work on the Ghost Dance Movement of 1890, Mooney, like Miles, finds enough evidence to place the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or as they will be referred to mainly in this study, the Mormons, in the same frame as the Native American Ghost Dancers. However, unlike Miles who pictures Mormon Elders as very real ghosts whispering deceits in Native ears, Mooney places the Utah believers on the periphery, donning their sacred clothing, clasping hands, and dancing with their Lamanite brethren.

The Mormons have always manifested a particular interest in the Indians, whom they regard as the Lamanites of their sacred writings, and hence have made special efforts for their evangelization, with the result that a considerable number of the neighboring tribes of Ute, Paiute, Bannock, and Shoshoni have been received into the Mormon church and invested with the endowment robe (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 790).

Mooney takes this connection one step further when he provides an appendix entitled, “The Mormons and the Indians” (792-793). In this addition Mooney brings to light a contemporary pamphlet, “The Mormons have stepped down and out of Celestial Government – the American Indians have stepped up and into Celestial Government” (1892), which further links the Mormons with Wovoka’s revivalist religion. The article proclaims that the fifth of seven signs to

precede the millennial age of Christ's advent was fulfilled in Walker Lake, the birth place of the Ghost Dance Religion.

The coming of the Messiah. Three years later, March, 1890, the people of God who were notified by the three Nephites [three immortal beings of *Book of Mormon* origin], met at Walkers lake, Esmeralda county, Nevada, where a dispensation of the Celestial kingdom of God – the gospel in the covenant of consecration, a perfect oneness in all things, temporal and spiritual – was given unto them. Twelve disciples were ordained, not by angels or men, but the Messiah, in the presence of hundreds, representing scores of tribes or nations, who saw his face, heard and understood his voice as on the day of Pentecost (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 792).

According to this document, Wovoka and his followers were warned of Christ's return by three individuals of Mormon myth. To Mormons, and others familiar with their teachings, this statement would have been a direct fulfilment of latter-day scripture (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 792; Doctrine and Covenants 90:9-11). While much more needs to be said on this topic (which will happen in subsequent sections of this work) it is enough for the purposes of this introduction to note the associations and comparisons that James Mooney, the most authoritative figure and source for Ghost Dance researchers, is circulating between nineteenth-century Mormonism and the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890.

Mooney's last substantial contributions to this comparative analysis directly follows "The Mormons and the Indians" appendix. Supplied as another appendage to his work, "Porcupine's Account of the Messiah" retells the detailed description of the Cheyenne pilgrim, Porcupine's journey to the sacred centre of the Ghost Dance religion, Walker Lake, Nevada, home of the prophet and messiah himself, Wovoka (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 793-796). While the full account is an interesting and necessary study for all students of the Ghost Dance only a statement and a parenthetical remark provided by Mooney are relevant for our purposes here. "All the Indians from the Bannock agency down to where I finally stopped danced this dance [referring to the late religious dances at the Cheyenne agency], the whites often dancing it themselves. [It will be recollected that he traveled constantly through the Mormon country]" (794).¹ Mooney's clarification leaves the reader with little doubt as to whom he wanted his audience to believe Porcupine was referring to.

¹ These are Mooney's parentheses and not my own.

By the time Mooney's research was completed and published, the excitement over Wovoka's teachings had nearly been extinguished. If the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee had not been enough, the passing of the prophet's predicted day of salvation most assuredly was. The fate of the religion was unsure, the West was all but tamed, and the American colonists no longer feared the retributions promised by the Dancers and their messiah. However, the "Indian Problem" was not the only area of concern for government agents stationed in the American West. From its insemination in upstate New York, the Mormon Church had always caused its neighbours some level of anxiety, but as the members of this church trekked across the country and began to settle the Great Basin in relatively large numbers the government became increasingly apprehensive of the institution's political power and influence. This political threat, coupled with the church's openly practiced doctrine of polygamy seemingly forced Eastern Bureaucrats to further their dealings in the West. However, an 1890 proclamation by Church President, Wilford Woodruff, and Utah being granted Statehood in 1896 alleviated most of Washington's worries. By the early 1900s, following the Reed Smoot hearings and a second manifesto declaring the absolute abolishment of polygamy as a sanctioned practice of the LDS Church, the Mormons, like their Native American neighbours, found themselves tamed, controlled, and consequently no longer a topic of debate or importance.

It was not until the early 1930s, perhaps spurred by the death of Wovoka, that new studies of the Ghost Dance were undertaken. However, Alexander Lesser's *The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game* (1933) and the Columbian University educated anthropologist Leslie Spier's *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives* (1935) made no connections or comparisons between the faiths of Joseph Smith and Jack Wilson (Wovoka). It was not until 1957 and the biographical account of the Ghost Dance prophet by Paul Bailey, *Wovoka: The Indian Messiah*, that such links appear again. In this work, and a later fictional one entitled *Ghost Dance Messiah* (1970), Bailey goes to great lengths to not only make explicit comparisons but to provide the imagined scenarios of how the relationship and connections between the two groups were formed. After introducing the alleged relationship by claiming,

And from the east came another peculiar religious influence among the Paiutes who looked to him [Wovoka] for guidance. Hundreds of the Paiutes of Utah and eastern Nevada had been dipped in water by the Mormons and had become pious members of that great white man's church. Mormons promised the Paiutes much. They had a book

which was said to have been written by the ancestors of all Indians. They had promises that someday the Indians – that is Mormon Indians would become white, like that church’s missionaries who labored so diligently among them (Bailey 1957: 75-77; Bailey 1970: 83-84).

Bailey then introduces fictional characters that interact with historical ones in an attempt to further his purposes. According to Bailey, Wovoka’s uncle, Charley Sheep (a real figure) “had once been dipped into Mormonism” – an unsubstantiated claim – and was therefore petitioned by Wovoka to invite the “Mormonee” missionaries to his home for a gospel discussion (Bailey 1970: 145). The feat is eventually accomplished, however, not by Sheep but by Ed Dyer (another real character), the white proprietor of the local trading post, and Elder Peter Swenson (the fictitious missionary) is introduced to Bailey’s tale. Once the formalities and introductions had been completed Wovoka immediately makes the following request, “I want that you should get me some underwear. Some Mormon magic underwear.” To which Elder Swenson replies,

“That I cannot do, Brother Wilson [the Elder had finally determined to call Wovoka Brother Wilson that both Brother Jesus and just Jack were at the opposite ends of the spectrums]... Assuming that you and I are talking about the same thing. You *are* meaning our temple garments?”(146-147).²

The conversation between the two religious men continues for quite some time with Wovoka peppering the Utah man with questions about his “magic underwear” and the Elder deflecting them as best he can. Bailey concludes the dialogue and meeting with a glimpse into Wovoka’s troubled mind,

What irked was that there were Paiutes dancing the ghost dance who, because they were Mormons, were wearing a garment that would be most helpful. A garment still zealously denied the Messiah. Mormon explanation that one must enter the Temple of the Lord to gain privilege to its underwear, seemed illogical to him. To his people – even to the Mormon-dipped Paiutes – yes, to himself – he *was* the Temple of the Lord. And even Mormon initiates, in accepting him as Jesus, could scarcely expect him to make any silly pilgrimage to Utah (150).³

Bailey’s purpose in concocting this scenario is to answer the puzzling and ambiguous creation of the Ghost Shirt, a “bullet-proof” covering worn by dancers, especially the military

² Italics and parenthesis are Bailey’s not my own.

³ For the entire exchange see Bailey (1970: 144-145).

minded Lakota Sioux. Bailey obviously believes, as other scholars before and after him do, that the inspiration for the Ghost Shirt must have been the Mormon temple garment. While the historical account of Mooney does suggest a plausible connection between the two, no actual evidence exists for a comparison of this magnitude and thus Bailey finds it necessary to abandon the realm of verifiable history by creating his own version, a necessary chore of the storyteller but one not thought highly of by scholars.

Although Bailey is undoubtedly the most adamant author in claiming this alleged relationship, other interested scholars have also found some of the similarities and circumstances appealing. David Humphreys Miller, whose work *Ghost Dance* (1959) criticized prior scholarship on the subject as being overly concerned with pleasing an “unknowing” and “bigoted” audience, while not personally forwarding a belief in a relationship between the Ghost Dance and Mormons did add a further contemporary voice to those already heard, namely General Miles and Dr. Mooney (viii). Miller draws attention to a letter written by Catherine Weldon, a New York “field representative of the National Indian Defense Association” which was “a benevolent group of citizens from the Eastern states who sought to relieve – as well as reform – the entire Indian situation across the nation”, to Agent McLaughlin, the Indian Department’s representative stationed at Wounded Knee in 1890 (Miller 1959: 66). The letter, which was forwarded by McLaughlin to Washington, reads in part: “I believe that the Mormons are at the bottom of it all & misuse the credulity of the Indians for their own purposes” (115). Miller then states that “The federal government at once stepped up pressure on Mormons in Utah and elsewhere to the extent that not only did the Church of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City ban the ghost dance among its membership, but it outlawed polygamy as well” (115)

Miller’s brief mention and addition to the comparison under scrutiny here would probably have gone unnoticed by readers if it had not been for Robert Utley’s classic study, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (1963). Utley’s objective inspection of the various comparisons being made led him to proffer these remarks:

In addition to conventional Christian teaching absorbed from the Wilsons, Wovoka encountered another brand of Christianity. By 1890 Mormon families had spread out in all directions from the Great Salt Lake Valley, and many had settled in Nevada. In the theology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Indians occupied a place of special significance, and Mormons took special interest in them. Wovoka was exposed to

Mormon teachings but rejected them. Nevertheless, they were almost certainly among the factors that shaped his mind (Utley 1963: 64-65).

While the legitimacy of Utley's claim that "Wovoka was exposed to Mormon teachings" is suspect, he indemnifies himself by adding the following footnote:

The link between the Mormons and the Messiah Craze is shadowy and probably never will be sharply defined. Many whites, some in high places, accused them of fomenting the Indian troubles of 1890 – an accusation that doubtless originated in the widespread hostility to Mormons and ignorance of their theology. Existing evidence will not sustain the charge but does suggest that the Mormons contributed indirectly to the form the religion assumed, as indeed did all Christian teachings. Some accounts speak of whites participating in Ghost Dances at Walker Lake. It is entirely possible that they were Mormons, for Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, had prophesied in 1843 that the Messiah would come to earth in mortal form during the year 1890 (65 fn 6)

Remarks and footnotes as exemplified here by Utley have become the archetypal approach of modern scholars in dealing with the opinions of Miles, Mooney, Weldon and others. A single example may suffice for our purposes here. Alice Beck Kehoe's relatively recent study of lingering Ghost Dance movements across the western plains, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (1989), confronts the comparisons and connections during a discussion of the infamous Ghost Shirts briefly explained above,

Many Mormons of Mooney's time believed that wearing these dresses protected them from dangers, including bullets. Some Mormons joined their Indian neighbours in the new messiah's dance, and they may have been wearing their robes. Some Paiutes, Shoshoni, and other Indians joined the Mormon church and may have owned and worn "endowment robes" when they later participated in Jack Wilson's ritual (Kehoe 1989: 13).

The link between the Ghost Shirts and the endowment garments worn by Mormons must and will receive thorough attention as this one connection and comparison above all others has intrigued scholars charmed by the comparative method. However, right now it is more important to note the rhetoric being employed by Kehoe in the above quotation. Kehoe's repeated use of the term "may" allows her the freedom to acknowledge the connection without actually making a comparison. This vagueness has become necessary for scholars seeking objectivity in their work

and is a useful tool in exposing the reader to possible comparisons that have yet to be, and probably can never be, fully justified.

It would take until the mid 1980s before any academic decided to place the speculations and comparisons being made under the microscope. The first to do so was Lawrence G. Coates with his 1985 publication “The Mormons and the Ghost Dance”. Published in a volume of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* devoted entirely to the relationship between Native Americans and Mormons, Coates’ article thoroughly examines the many connections and comparisons that have been made and arrives at the conclusion that while Mormons were aware and conscious of the Ghost Dance movement, they played no part in its development or diffusion. One year later, Gregory E. Smoak, perhaps not entirely satisfied by Coates’ refusal to allow even the most fruitful comparative seeds to sprout, produced his own study of the situation, similarly titled, “The Mormons and the Ghost Dance of 1890” (1986). Printed in a non-Mormon periodical, *South Dakota History*, Smoak’s argument runs an almost parallel course to that of Coates until the core millenarian doctrines of the two groups crop up and Smoak, after traversing down his own comparative road, is compelled to conclude that “the similarities in the doctrines, whether related or coincidental, must have appeared obvious in 1890” (Smoak 1986: 294). Because of this, and perhaps more so because of the denial of many whites to “accept the Ghost Dance as an Indian response to the destruction of traditional tribal cultures”, the Mormons became the “obvious choice” for nineteenth-century commentators to link to an economical, societal, political, and spiritual response that they simply did not understand and thus were very afraid of.

The articles of Coates and Smoak were quickly joined by a third, very different study conducted by Garold D. Barney, *Mormons, Indians and the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890* (1986). While Coates and Smoak had arguably the same intention and objective in mind, Barney finds the connections so appetizing that his study turns into an attempt to prove the relationship not only plausible but probable by employing the comparative method. Even though Barney’s stated intention may have been to answer the “question of Mormon-Indian relations” by exploring “those traditions of Mormonism which may have influenced the Ghost dance Religion and the Indian prophet Wovoka” (Barney 1986 [1973]: 2) his overall presentation, as one reviewer notes, falls well short of this goal because of a lack of “empirical evidence,” overall

knowledge, and narrative writing style where the writer appears more as an occasional voice meant only to move the reader through one lengthy secondary source after another (Bender 1988: 168-169). However, these are not the only shortcomings of Barney's work. In the authors eagerness to prove the worthiness of his comparisons, he falls victim to many of the classic criticisms of any comparative study: the suppression of recognizable differences, a lack of objectivity, the inability to suspend judgement before critically reviewing all data thus leading the reader down a predetermined road, and an undefined, and thus untestable, system of analysis.

As we shall soon discover, Barney's study is the quintessential comparative analysis that twentieth-century scholars have criticized as being narrow-minded, undefined, and overly subjective. Consequently, comparative studies such as this, and unfortunately, by association, comparative studies in general are viewed in a negative light by many scholars and students of the human sciences. The principle problem with Barney's work is found in his aforementioned thesis. Any attempt at answering the "question of Mormon-Indian relations" cannot be limited to a comparative study of a single event in history, especially when this event was neither the seminal occurrence nor culmination of these associations. Also included in Barney's introduction are six links between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormon Church as it existed in that same year. Barney's stated comparisons are of a subjective nature in that they employ Western concepts and ideas about religion in an effort to pen both faiths in the same corral. For example, Barney's concept of 'prophet' is defined by the following comparative link:

Both Joseph Smith and the Paiute Prophet Wovoka (Jack Wilson) were accepted by their followers as messengers of God having received marvellous revelations for their people after having been in the presence of God, heard His voice and accepted the mandate to deliver God's children from captivity and bondage and to lead them to a new promised land (Barney 1986: 9).

This passage is froth with examples of Western, Judeo-Christian influences. Terms such as 'Prophet' (note the capital), 'marvellous revelation', 'God', 'captivity', 'bondage', and 'promised land' all evoke biblical phraseology that would have been foreign to traditional Paiutes, resulting in a studying lacking appropriate and necessary objectivity. One could argue that the Native American people most passionate in their adherence of the Ghost Dance had been heavily indoctrinated by Christian missionaries for many years prior to 1890. While this *may* have been the case, and if so it *may* justify Barney's use of language and categorization.

However, the fact that many of the individuals involved in the circulation and practice of the Ghost Dance spent a great deal of energy avoiding Western influences such as religious beliefs and concepts, language, and education, provides enough doubt to warrant in the very least, a rewording of Barney's fifth comparative topic.⁴

In order to avoid the same fate as Barney, the following study is an attempt to build upon previous scholarship by presenting the material as a "disciplined, historically informed consideration of any commonalities and differences that appear among [these] religions" (Paden 2010, 225). However, it is much more than just a comparative analysis as defined by William E. Paden, for such a study, regardless of its flaws, already exists and to merely provide an academically aware improvement of that work would be not only be redundant but severely limited in its scope and application. Therefore, the central thesis of this paper will be to critically examine the process of comparing religion, religions, and the religious by using the example of the Ghost Dance of 1890 and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it existed during that same time period. If this goal is achieved, the following will hopefully be considered as a leaf on the branch of comparative studies that David Chidester grafted in 1996 with his publication of *Savage Systems*. In this epic endeavour to unfold the origins of religion in southern Africa, as defined and determined by European scholars, travellers, and government officials as well as their native informants, Chidester discovered an intricate web of comparisons that once unravelled, began a new narrative of not only comparative religion but of the power relations involved in the colonial interpretation and circulation of religion, religions, and the religious. Chidester's more recent work has continued down this path of exploring power relations as he researches the comparative process of producing religious knowledge through the tripartite system of collecting and circulating religious data as it flows from colonial contact zones where it is lived by the indigenous adherents, observed and written by interested Europeans, and then defined by comparative scholars such as F. Max Müller, E.B. Tylor, Andrew Lang, and James Frazer (Chidester 2008). The current study under review here will not be as adventurous and thorough as Chidester's; however, it is my wish that it will be considered as a minor extension of his studies, as it attempts to add a colonial and comparative context to the comparison that has hitherto been ignored. This contextualization is most clearly seen

⁴ We have to look no further than Wovoka himself, whose time spent under the tutelage of the Wilson's Bible resulted in a lifelong pursuit of living as traditional a style of life as circumstances would permit (Hittman 1990).

through the lens of power relations which is overtly recognized in the letters and writings of General Miles as well as within the sympathetic observations of James Mooney. These two Eastern-born producers of Western knowledge fashioned very different accounts of the Ghost Dance religion and its practitioners, begging the informed reader to ponder why. This thesis believes the answers lie in the realm of personal, political, and academic power relations and will elucidate these relations by discussing not only the writings of both men but their personal histories as well.

Many conjectures have been made regarding the involvement and influence of the Mormons on the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890. The majority of these suppositions are based on comparative interpretations of these religions circulated by observers, government officials, and scholars. More recently, anthropologists, historians, and scholars of religion have perpetuated these associations in their attempts at discovering the truth about the Ghost Dance and the events that culminated in the Massacre at Wounded Knee. The purpose of this paper is not to discern truthfulness but to examine the comparisons themselves and answer questions such as: Who is making this comparison and why? Why are the comparisons so readily agreed with and what is the purpose in perpetuating them? And finally, what can we, the modern student of the human sciences, learn about the comparative process from this example? In order to provide adequate answers to such inquiries, the comparative method and those scholars responsible for its continuation and growth must be introduced and then emulated throughout the work. It is by this process only that a comparative study such as this can achieve its goal of adding to the wealth of knowledge already in existence.

Introducing the Comparative Method

When introducing his work, *Religious Worlds* (1988), William E. Paden writes the following paragraph that I find particularly enlightening in regards to the use of the comparative method when studying religion, religions, and the religious:

Comparison has also been used as a polemical weapon by religions themselves to show the inferiority of other traditions and the superiority of one's own. It has been used to show that all religions are really the same. It has been used to show that all religions are false. Many people sense that the absoluteness of their own beliefs is threatened by the

existence of parallels elsewhere. So there is a kind of politics of comparison (Paden 1988: 2).

Paden's last sentence is an understatement. The politics involved in employing and interpreting comparisons is perhaps the greatest contributing factor to modern scepticism of the method. However, this observation has not frightened scholars such as Paden away from utilizing its contributing attributes; in fact, the scepticism surrounding the comparative method has only benefited it as an academic methodology in the study of religion. As Paden puts it, "In spite of the potential dangers of misuse, comparative perspective is a necessity for any field of study, and without it no real understanding of religion is possible" (3). In order to fully appreciate this method and theory it will be a useful endeavour to provide a brief history of this academic procedure before introducing the modern thinkers and theorists whose brilliant modifications have shaped the comparative study of religion into its current form. It will be from within the frameworks provided by these important figures that the task we have placed before us will be most suitably engaged.

Eric J. Sharpe, the author of *Comparative Religion: A History* (1975), finds the German expatriate, philologist, who produced most of his theories from Oxford, F. Max Müller, as the founder of the scientific study of religion (Sharpe 1975: 35). In his *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1873) Müller claims, "all higher knowledge is acquired by comparison and rests on comparison" (Müller 1873: 12; Sharpe 1975: 43). Müller's contribution to the comparative method stems from his emphasis on the phrase he borrowed from Goethe, "he who knows one, knows none" (Müller 1873: 35-36). This clever euphemism insists that in order for actual knowledge to be gained about a particular religious belief or custom, for Müller the topic of choice was generally compared to the Vedic traditions in India and their use of language in describing religious phenomena, a comparison involving two or more other religions must be undertaken through a disciplined and scientific examination. Although he had a tendency of romanticizing his interpretations of myth and language, Sharpe still believes Müller deserves the title of the founder of comparative religion because he "prepared the Western world for what has since come to be called the dialogue of religions, insisting not only on accuracy with regard to dead traditions, but sympathy with regard to living traditions" (Sharpe 1975: 45). While Müller

may have forged through the labyrinth leaving a trail in his wake, it was the “armchair” academics such as E.B. Tylor, Andrew Lang, and James Frazer who began the paving process. .

For students of religious studies it is no surprise to find the names of Tylor, Lang, and Frazer introduced here. They, like their contemporary Müller, had a great deal to do with the development of the comparative study of religion. Indeed, modern academics such as David Chidester have gone to great lengths to explore their influence on the production and circulation of religious knowledge – a knowledge gained through the use of the comparative process (Chidester 2008). Sharpe also finds their influences on comparison noteworthy, Tylor for his work *Primitive Culture* (1871) and his ideas of “animism” and “survivals”; Lang for his ability to critique and problematize the theories of his fellow scholars, as well as his own work with folktales and myths; and Frazer for his widely known comparative work *The Golden Bough* (1922), which exemplifies the kinds of studies being produced at the turn of the twentieth century. These four, Müller included, nineteenth and early twentieth century comparativists along with an ever growing number not mentioned here, took religious data gleaned from the four corners of the earth and with little regard for historical context, set out on the quest of discovering the very origins of religion. By exploring “primitive” cultures through the eyes of their informants, these thinkers began the trend of comparing similarities in language, myth, deities, and ritual practices with an eye single to the goal of creating a theory of the origin of the discipline they found so fundamental to the human experience. The task, while lofty by any measure, at first seems quite reasonable, however, these scholars made one crucial mistake: they placed a value judgement on each religion they encountered, the lowest value belonging to those they found the most “savage” or “primitive”, the highest to those they, themselves, were most familiar with and found the most rational: the monotheistic traditions of the West such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The process of evaluation was thought of as the evolution of religions and cultures and became the benchmark for scholars of that era. In America the works of Henry Lewis Morgan and John Wesley Powell employed this evolutionary theory in their writings of Native Americans. The ideas of Morgan and Powell, as gleaned from their European colleagues, will play a central role in the narrative of comparisons discussed in this work and will be introduced in greater detail at that time.

As the works of Müller, Tylor, Lang, and Frazer circulated through academia the focus of the study of religion began to shift. Scholars became more interested with interpretation and methodology than with the systematic cataloguing of every religion ever known to man. In other words the academy adjusted its focus from the ‘who’ and ‘what’ to the ‘why’ and ‘how’. This paradigm shift evolved into a theory of religion referred to as the phenomenology of religion. It is this theoretical practice, as exemplified by Mircea Eliade and Ninian Smart, which we must now explore to further our goal of understanding the methodology involved in comparing religion, religions and the religious.

The ‘phenomenology of religion’, as coined by the Dutch scholar P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye in 1887 was first used as theory for a new methodology in the field of *Religionswissenschaft* (religious studies) and has its philosophical roots embedded in the works of Hegel and Edmund Husserl as discovered and discussed by Gerardus van der Leeuw in *Phänomenologie der Religion* (1933) or as it was later translated, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1938) (Sharpe 1975: 221-224; Erricker 1999: 76-77). It is the title of the English translation that is most telling of the philosophies of Hegel and Husserl. It was Hegel’s stated claim that understanding the ‘essence’ of the religious experience was achieved by studying the ‘appearances’ and ‘manifestations’ of religious phenomena. Husserl’s contribution to the phenomenology of religion stems from two concepts: *epoche* and eidetic vision. *Epoche* is the ability to suspend judgement or ‘bracket out’ one’s own presuppositions. Sharpe, who is quoting John Macquarrie, writes, *Epoche* or bracketing is the process whereby “an object which is present to consciousness is reduced to the pure phenomenon by ‘putting in brackets’ or excluding from further interest those elements which do not belong to the universal essence” (Sharpe 1975: 224). Clive Erricker further explains that “bringing to one’s own study the concepts and constructs of one’s own worldview is seen as a distortive influence upon the results” (Erricker 1999: 77). Thus, according to phenomenologists, the evolutionary hypotheses of Müller, Tylor, Lang and Frazer are fundamentally flawed in that they do not utilize the tool of *epoche*. The second concept, eidetic vision, “is the observer’s capacity for seeing the essentials of a situation, or in the case of a phenomenon, its actual essence as opposed to what it has been, might have been, or ought to be” (Sharpe 1975: 224). What this means is that the researcher, after objectively obtaining data concerning the particular phenomenon in question, must subjectively reflect upon the meaning of the data to understand the true essence. It is the duty, then, of the

phenomenologist to objectively observe and then subjectively reason. As Erricker observes, “it is not difficult to see how fraught with epistemological difficulty this equation is” (Erricker 1999: 77). A look at some of the scholars and works that exemplify this practice may clear up some of the confusion.

It is beyond the scope of this study to pursue in detail the works and contributions of scholars such as Nathan Soderblom, the Swedish exemplar of comparative religion who utilized the phenomenological approach in his studies of Christianity, and William Brede Kristensen, the Norwegian professor who championed the cause of ridding *Religionswissenschaft* of the value judgments axiomatic to most studies in the field. Nor can we dwell on the aforementioned van der Leeuw and his exceptional and influential work *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. We must begin, then, with Rudolph Otto’s *sui generis* approach to studying the *numen* (‘the holy’) as it is essential to the historical narrative of both the phenomenological and comparative study of religion in that it contends that aspects of the religious experience that pertain to ‘the holy’ should not and cannot be understood in terms other than those inherent to ‘the holy’. Consequently, ‘the holy’ must be an *a priori* category in which the researcher displays a degree of empathy towards the subject matter. Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy* (1923) is critical for modern scholars in the field because it is the first successful attempt of distinguishing the study of religion from the sibling disciplines of philology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology of religion (Erricker 1999: 81). With this historical narrative of the construction of the phenomenological and comparative study of religion to work from the Romanian scholar, Mircea Eliade published his own ideas on the subject in his 1958 work *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. It is from within this work that we find the theories necessary to conduct the business at hand: that of understanding the comparisons between the Ghost Dance of 1890 and the Mormon Church.

In order to fully appreciate Mircea Eliade’s contributions to the comparative method, one must begin with his fundamental distinction between what constitutes religion, religions, and the religious. His definition, expanding upon previous designations most famously linked to the sociologist Emile Durkheim, revolves around the idea of the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’. To Eliade, as indeed it must be to all students of religions, the issue of distinguishing between what actually makes up the category of religious material that can be studied by religious specialists is

a central concern that must be addressed before any significant advancement to the field can then be pursued. As Eliade himself writes, “before you attempt any definition of the phenomenon of religion, you must know where to look for the evidence” (Eliade 1958: 1). This is Eliade’s quest: to discover the “basic comparative structures and patterns built into religion whereby man perceives the sacred” (Whaling 1983: 214). These manifestations of the sacred, which Eliade terms ‘hierophanies’, can be found by studying the various comparative morphologies found in the sacred world –as opposed to the profane or everyday world. These categories include sacred myths, rituals, symbols and persons as well as sacred time and sacred space. Eliade believes that almost everything has the capacity to be considered a hierophany. He writes, “it seems improbable that there remains anything that has not at some time been transfigured” by which he means made sacred (Eliade 1958: 12). Eliade’s goal is to discover these sacred manifestations and “lay bare their archetypal structure” (Whaling 1983: 215). In Eliade’s thought there exists in every society a sacred-profane dichotomy that must be explored through the phenomenological practice of employing *epoche*, sympathetic objectivity, and then systemically divided into comparative categories of hierophanies and symbols, or as he calls them, the ‘modalities of the sacred’ (215). A recent Routledge publication sums up Eliade’s methodology with the following three “keys”: first, an antireductionism that assumes the ‘irreducibility of the sacred’ by employing *epoche*; second, the ability to distinguish between the sacred and profane in order to develop universally applicable comparative categories; third, these categories provide the necessary “hermeneutical framework” from which to view and study religious data (Allen 2010: 213). In my own words, Eliade believes that to discover and understand the sacred one must first study and then compare the sacred.

While Eliade’s success and innovation is unquestionable, that does not mean his theory is beyond criticism. Indeed, critics of Eliade echo critics of the comparative method in general when they suggest that he lacks historical accuracy and is too selective with his empirical data which results in overarching generalizations that deliberately leave out the unique differences of persons and societies. Sceptics also suggest that Eliade lacks the necessary objectivity in his comparative patterns, researching, and theories and believe that his work revolves around the data manipulation to suit his “underlying presuppositions.” Despite Eliade’s weaknesses, his studies such as *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1963) remain immensely valuable to introductions such as this. The worth of his method lies in his approach of sympathetic

objectivity to aspects of the sacred and the subsequent categorization of this religious phenomena using structural comparative analysis. As a relevant side note to the topic under consideration in this paper, one of Eliade's main failings is mirrored by the General Miles and James Mooney in that all three mistakenly view possible similarities and connections as the basis for producing comparisons or simply further perpetuating these connections. As this overview of the comparative method continues it may be worthwhile to keep in mind just how easy it is to view promising connections as a basis for comparative analysis. Eliade's strengths and shortcomings would allow for the British scholar, Ninian Smart, to take up the phenomenological and comparative banner and by slight manipulations mend it into a fully functional, modern methodological approach to studying religion, religions and the religious.

In most cases the commendable aspects of Smart's contributions to the comparative method are the reconciliations he made with Eliade's critiques. Smart's fundamental approach has the accuracy of historical evidence at its core. Alongside this is his emphasis on "methodological agnosticism" which promotes the use of the phenomenological tool of *epoche* with great stress being placed on the researcher's suspension of all value judgements and predetermined suppositions. Allen writes that Smart "endorsed a liberal, humanistic, phenomenological approach that upholds pluralism and diversity and recognizes that religion expresses many dimensions of human experience. Such an approach is 'polymethodic,' multiperspectival, comparative, and cross-cultural" (Allen 2010: 214). Smart's theory and method of studying religion deflects the vast majority of problems we have seen throughout this review. The early comparativists' insistence of placing value within their hierarchical comparative studies is gone; the manipulation of empirical data and the lack of historical contextualization is seemingly expelled; and finally, the suspension of judgment and presuppositions is stressed in the theoretical attempt at dispelling this subjectivity altogether – the sceptical reader must acknowledge that this task can never be fully achieved as human nature prohibits the elimination of subjectivity in its entirety.

One final critique of the comparative method remains to be addressed: the issue of overemphasizing likeness at the expense of difference. Smart does recognize this failing in his work, however, it is not to him that we must look for the answers to this critique; it is to the great University of Chicago professor, Jonathan Z. Smith, whose work in developing the methodology

of comparative religion is unparalleled in its scope, magnitude and universal application. In an article written to honour Smith's contributions to the field of religious studies, Sam Gill describes Smith's process of comparison as a three-fold procedure beginning with a juxtaposition of two seemingly dissimilar religious phenomena, followed by the recognition of difference, and finally a critical evaluation through reflection (Gill 1998: 284). Smith's initial step of juxtaposition is "more than placing two things in adjacent spaces" it is the "necessary precondition to comparison" in fact it "demands comparison" (284). Smith's second step is described as the next logical action since in "comparison the acceptance of *difference* is the grounds of its being interesting, creative, and important" (284). In Smith parlance difference is more often referred to as "incongruity, lack of fit, and incredulity" (284). When these two aspects, juxtaposition and difference, are combined they provoke thought and it is this thought process that "generates theory and insight" (284). Gill's study is a thorough overview of Smith's insights and contributions to both the theoretical and practical side of comparative religion. Topics such as the general study of religion, Smith's theories of mapping space and time, myth, and ritual are all expertly addressed; however, one section in particular is of interest here as it describes Smith's 1969 Yale University doctoral dissertation *The Glory, Jest and Riddle: James George Frazer and The Golden Bough*. According to Gill, Smith was one of the first scholar's to truly dissect Frazer's acclaimed work and in a startlingly display of "virtuosity, tenacity, incisiveness, courage, and boldness" Smith unapologetically declares Frazer and his work as a failure to the academic enterprise (Gill 1998: 300). A single passage quoted by Gill will suffice as an example here. After Smith has examined a particular Scandinavian myth as interpreted and incorporated into the comparative conclusions of Frazer he writes, "I can think of no other passage of less than one hundred words in the work of any other scholar which contains a comparable number of errors of fact and interpretation" (300). Gill then adds a footnote that Smith did, in fact, find a comparable passage in the work of the equally as influential, Eliade (300 fn 25). What is even more shocking about Smith is that despite these errors and indeed because of these errors and "deliberate failure[s]" Smith finds Frazer extremely "interesting and valuable" (300). This intrigue and emphasis of difference is precisely what makes Smith the genius that he is.

All previous scholars placed the comparative value of religious phenomena on the amount of similarities they could find within separate and distinct traditions; to them this was

interesting. Smith guffaws at such studies, finding it much more fascinating to discover difference. It is the weight Smith places on difference, along with his ability to make the reader, especially those involved with academia, pause and for a moment reflect critically upon their own motivations and self-serving investigations. Smith writes in the opening of *Imagining Religion*, “the student of religion, and most particular the historian of religion, must be relentlessly self-conscious. Indeed this self-consciousness constitutes his primary expertise, his foremost object of study” (McCutcheon 2008: 14). Earlier in that same introduction Smith wrote one of his most quoted passages, “*there is no data for religion*. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study. It is created for the scholar’s analytical purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy” (McCutcheon 2008: 14). It is Smith’s goal to awake the scholar to his own consciousness, to make him or her aware of what it is they are studying and to what end they do so. Smith’s essay “Map is not Territory,” published in a work of the same title, goes to great lengths to convince the student of religion that it is their task to “complicate not to clarify” (Smith 1978: 290). By employing his famed analogy of cognitive mapping, Smith leads the reader through a complex metaphor of how not only the subjects one is studying, but the researcher as well, are in possession of a certain number of ‘maps’ from which their version of the world is viewed. It is by recognizing and acknowledging these maps that the comparative method finds validation; for without such identification the study will lack the necessary historical and societal context needed for further critical analysis. The incongruities inherent to individual maps cause a ‘lack of fit’ between any two varying maps and it is to these differences that one must apply their efforts.

In order to conclude this introduction to the comparative method and the phenomenological tools used to enhance it, it may be useful to reflect on some of the most recent surveys of the topic. In 2000 Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray edited a volume of essays entitled *A Magic Still Dwells* which, playing on the title of a Smith essay included in the work, though first published in *Imagining Religion*, “In Comparison a Magic Dwells”, provides a postmodern perspective of the comparative method. Smith’s essay challenges the reader to ask the question “so what?” in regards to the making and interpreting of comparisons. His narrative of the field of comparative religion reflects upon four of the most basic methods of comparison. The first he terms ‘ethnographic’ and claims that the majority of information produced at this level is based on the biased impressions of travellers and government officials whose broad

strokes of observation are focused primarily on “overcoming strangeness.” Smith finds that this method lacks the necessary discipline and systematic approach to render it anything other than “uninteresting, petty, and unrevealing” (Smith 2000: 27). The second method, the ‘encyclopaedic,’ Smith finds no less stimulating, as these general studies usually consist of unexplained data simply cohabitating a common category, “inviting comparison by their coexistence, but providing no clues as to how this comparison might be undertaken.” (27). The ‘morphological’ approach, as exemplified by scholars such as Eliade, Smith believes could be useful if not for its lack of historical grounding, however, this one failing is a big enough deal to scare most modern scholars away. The fourth and final method Smith reviews in this work is termed the ‘evolutionary’ and has as its main goal the description of religious material as it evolves due to a wide variety of influences, however, with little regard for historically founded time and space. This method falls short, not necessarily in its theory, but in the inability of practitioners to control the scope of their comparisons. It is Smith’s thesis that “the only option appears to be no option at all” (29) and he concludes with the assessment that no current method is good enough to answer the questions of ‘how’, ‘why’, and ‘so what’. As I hope is becoming an obvious trend in the work of Smith, he finds greater value in problematizing the situation than in simply proffering another imperfect system himself.

The essays comprising *A Magic Still Dwells* (2000) understand that without Smith’s emphasis on critical awareness and difference the field of comparative religion might have fallen by the wayside, relegated to new, more specific fields, such as colonial and area studies. Kimberley C. Patton, in her essay “Juggling Torches”, recognizes the importance of Smith’s de-emphasis of homologous comparisons, that is the comparisons between two or more like hierophanies such as Eliade promoted. Patton writes, “Homologous comparison in the study of religion, Smith has said repeatedly, is deeply to be mistrusted *because of the implicit, even if often occult, idea of a shared evolutionary origin*” (Patton 2000:155). Patton is wise to point this out, as is evident especially in a study of comparisons such as this one where the majority of comparisons are being made by observers comparing apples with other fruit that appear very much to be apples. From the essays included in this collection, as well as those included in a 2004 edition of the academic journal *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, it is evident that the process of writing and rewriting, theorizing and retheorizing, continues within the field of comparative religion. Smith’s work continues to be deconstructed in much the same manner in

which he deconstructed the work of those who came before him, in this manner the comparative study of religion can be considered a living entity kept alive by the students and scholars who constantly demand something better, more relevant and consequently of greater worth to the current generation. It is from within this tradition that this work stems, as a critique of not only the comparisons being made between the Ghost Dance of 1890 and the Mormon Church as it existed at that time, but also a critical reflection of the act of producing and circulating these comparisons both in the public sector as well as within the academy.

Introducing the Comparison to the Comparative Method

This introduction began by allowing the reader a glimpse at the types of comparisons and connections currently in circulation regarding the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormon Church contemporary to that time period. It followed this appetizer with a historical overview of the comparative study of religion, stressing the ideas and stratagems of the most influential theorizers in the field. It must now demonstrate how the former will be illuminated by the latter and how the latter will be enhanced by the former. In order to efficiently accomplish this task the remainder of this work will take shape in the following manner.

Chapter one will comprise a detailed and historically situated analysis of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890. With a critical eye, it will provide the necessary context to more fully understand the reasons behind the Ghost Dance's comparison with Mormons and Mormonism; this includes a discussion of Ghost Dance doctrines among the Northern Paiutes in Nevada followed by an account of the role played by the Bannock and Shoshone Nations at Fort Hall, Idaho. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the reinterpretation of the Ghost Dance by the Sioux in South Dakota. The theory and methodology that will be employed for this task will be taken from the school of phenomenology as introduced by Eliade and enhanced by Smart, with emphasis placed specifically on the use of *epoche* or sympathetic objectivity and historical accuracy. These same tools will be employed throughout the work whenever a religion or religious phenomenon is addressed.

Chapter two is in many respects similar to chapter one except that the religion under review is that practiced by the followers of Joseph Smith's gospel. A brief overview of the formation of this church and its journey from upstate New York to Utah will provide the context

necessary to address the various aspects of this church that comparativists have cited. This will include a political overview of the “kingdom” followed by a discussion of the doctrines of the Mormons most intimately connected to the Ghost Dance of 1890. By providing this information I am aware that I am participating in the comparative method by writing only those beliefs, rituals, and customs of the Mormons I find most useful to this narrative.

The third and fourth chapters of this work are presented as a discourse of the production, circulation, and perpetuation of the comparisons between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons of that time period. One of the most important goals of these chapters will be to not only introduce the comparisons themselves but the histories of the main observers, scholars, and writers of these comparisons. Nelson Miles, James Mooney, Paul Bailey, and Garold Barney will emerge from these pages as the main contributors to the continued existence of these comparisons. It will be recalled that it is not my intention to compare the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormon Church as Barney and others have done, but to expose the reader to the politics behind such comparisons.

The concluding chapter of this work will attempt to broaden the scope of a study such as this by examining the politics involved in making comparisons, discussing the value of both producing comparisons as well as studying them, and proffering an answer to Smith’s question of “so what.” The contributions of this section will be seen more readily by students of comparative religion; however, I hope that it is not limited to seekers in this discipline alone. The comparisons described and dissected in this work can help enhance the knowledge of students and scholars working in the fields of area studies, colonial and postcolonial studies, as well as anthropology, history and ethnohistory to name but a few. An awareness of the production and distribution of religious and cultural knowledge was, and is, a comparative process and because of this fact, studies such as this, which seek to illuminate the reader of the circumstances and subjectivity surrounding the circulation of this knowledge, have the potential for varying application.

Chapter 1. The Ghost Dance Religion of 1890

In attempting to unravel the complexities of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 I found no shortage of literature on the topic. However, the majority of scholarship has been centred on the thundering Hotchkiss guns that were heard that fateful December day on Wounded Knee Creek. Aside from Mooney, who deserves a lot of credit for his attempts at tracing the religious fervour from the battlefield of South Dakota to the empty desert of northern Nevada (Elliot 1998: 217), historians and anthropologists have busied themselves with discussing the termination of the Ghost Dance which many view as the final demise of Native American resistance and identity altogether. Works such as Robert Utley's *Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (1963) and Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970) have perpetuated these theories; however, recent scholars of the Ghost Dance Religion have found both levels of these claims to be untrue (Kehoe 1989; Thornton 1986, Thornton 1987). While studies of the Lakota, Sitting Bull, and Wounded Knee are useful for those interested in the Ghost Dance as a coherent religious movement and not just an excuse for resistance to government and colonial controls, they are but one chapter in an ever growing narrative. More recent works such as Rani-Henrik Andersson, *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (2008) and William Coleman's *Voices of Wounded Knee* (2000) have become more critical of past works and have brought to light previously unexplored primary resources to shed greater light on the thoughts and actions of those actually practicing the tenets of the Ghost Dance Religion. However, these works, like their predecessors, only provide insights about a small minority of those adhering to the Prophet Wovoka's words. Luckily, many current anthropologists and historians of religion have sought to rectify this precarious situation by producing studies which review the rise and influence of the Ghost Dance on a variety of northwestern plains peoples.

Michael Hittman has spent a career studying and writing about the Ghost Dance movement from an anthropological perspective and has published many works on the subject including a much needed biography of Wovoka and excellent reviews of both the 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dances from their birthplace in Walker Lake, Nevada (1973, 1990, 1992). Gregory Smoak, it may be recalled from the introduction that he is one of the three scholars to produce a work reviewing the comparisons between the Mormons and the Ghost Dance, finds plenty of religious movement at Fort Hall among the Shoshone and Bannock during the time of the Ghost

Dance (Smoak 2006). Other scholars have produced additional insights into the tradition in their more general reviews of Native American religion and culture (Peterson 1990; Martin 2001). It will be from these works, as well as others that have yet to be introduced, that the following historical reconstruction of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 will be produced. In researching this topic I have sought to cover as much ground as possible in hopes of providing a review that would allow for as much individuality as realistically feasible. However, the immense popularity of the teachings of Wovoka, which spread like an August prairie fire across the plains from the years 1889 to 1892, consequently has made it impractical to not include generalizations in regards to individual Nation's beliefs, customs, level of adherence and so forth. Despite this, I will try my best whenever possible to respect this individuality by providing as much detail as time, space, and circumstance permits. That being said, the following history is centred on the Northern Paiute peoples of northwestern Nevada, since it is from within this society that the Ghost Dance Religion was introduced to the world.

By reconstructing the historical events and circumstances surrounding the conception of the Ghost Dance of 1890, this section will act as a pool of resources from which subsequent sections will be able to draw information in order to accurately discuss the comparisons being made between the Dance and the Mormon Church of that time period. A description of what life may have consisted of prior to contact will be contrasted by the adaptations forced upon Native American societies once they found themselves in the contact zone. Reservations were formed and a once semi-nomadic people became day labourers working for food and wages. Devastating diseases were introduced, killing without prejudice. The shock to the secular way of life had obvious spiritual ramifications as well; which is to say that the changes brought on by contact affected the totality of the Numu peoples lifestyle, from the necessity of obtaining food to the dance that accompanied such activities.⁵ Something needed to be done, but the weaponry of the government troops and settlers was too advanced, too sophisticated, and too deadly. The cries of the people were eventually heard and they were taught a dance that, if done correctly and consecutively for five straight nights, would induce the spirits in nature to team with the spirits

⁵ It must be noted here that one cannot and, indeed, should not seek to distinguish between the secular and spiritual, or the sacred and profane, when discussing pre and early contact Native American peoples as these designations are the result of colonial contact and academic investigation and consequently it cannot be known whether the groups and individuals recognized such distinctions themselves. See Ken Morrison's *Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Encounter* (2002) for a more in depth discussion of this topic.

of the dead and together they would rid their sacred land of unwelcome invaders. The Ghost Dance was first practiced in 1870, being taught by Wodziwob of Fish Lake Valley, but its success was limited, local, and lacking in the constitution needed to bring the Nations together. Somehow life on the Plains got even worse as government promises continued to go unfulfilled, leaving the original inhabitants of the land sick, hungry, and destitute –and not just physically but spiritually as well. It was under these conditions that a new Ghost Dance was formulated with fresh songs and a renewed hope for a future where the Native could once again roam free. It is this story of hope that follows.

History and Context

While conducting interviews for her 1939 publication of *The 1870 Ghost Dance*, Cora Du Bois found that “Whether or not [the] informants were adherents of Jack Wilson, they were all agreed that his doctrine was neither new nor unique, but that it was simply one expression of a recurring native pattern” (Du Bois 1939: 5). These findings are not unexpected, as the title of Du Bois’ work overtly indicates, however, they do require further elucidation. The Ghost Dance of 1890, or 1889 as some, perhaps more correctly, identify it, originated on the Walker Lake Reservation in northwestern Nevada. It was here that Jack Wilson (Wovoka) dreamed of a future where the Native peoples could once again roam the earth without interference from their American invaders. His doctrine was simple, full of hope, and easy to follow. But, as Du Bois found, it was not necessarily new. The religion appropriated many of its central ideas from the teachings of a former prophet, and current healer, Wodziwob. Wodziwob’s Ghost Dance of the early 1870s brought new and intriguing eschatological possibilities to light; however, it too had recognizable qualities for residents of the lake. The following is a history of the *Numu* (Northern Paiute) with specific regard for those aspects of their history which would fall under the academically created category of religious. This delineation is crucial and must be mentioned here as members of this community would have considered many of the topics included below as aspects of everyday life and would not have thought of them as ‘religious’ in the way they would later be taught by Christian missionaries.

Northern Paiute cosmogony places their Nation at the very centre of the earth. Originally covered completely by water, the earth began to take its current shape when Mount Kurangwa (present day Mount Grant) mysteriously emerged from the water breathing fire from its zenith;

however, a fierce cold wind began to blow, threatening the continued existence of the sacred fire until a sagehen flew to the rescue and with a mighty effort managed to fan the wind and water away from the mountain, singeing her feathers and underbelly in the process. The mountain would eventually rise high above the earth, causing the water to recede until only Agai Pah (Walker Lake) was left. It was after this cosmogonic event that the father and mother of the Northern Paiute settled on the land, teaching their children to hunt, fish, and to gather and cache the seeds and nuts necessary to survive the harsh winters. As the children grew into adults, a quarrel occurred causing one half of the family to leave the sacred centre and journey to the north. These people are known today as the Bannock while those who stayed are known as the Northern Paiute (Johnson 1975: 15-16).

More recent histories, as told in written accounts and not by storytellers around fires, portray the Northern Paiute as living a communal lifestyle based primarily on surviving each changing season. Gliding along with the warm spring winds were the many migratory fowl indigenous to the area that, along with their eggs, were a welcome meal after a long winter of eating nuts, seeds, berries, and dried game. Fish was a main source of food, and the spring trout run on Walker River became an annual festival which saw many neighbouring bands make the journey in order to benefit from the large schools of delicious fish. The summers were spent gathering and harvesting all types of seeds, grasses, berries, and especially pine nuts, a staple of the Northern Paiute diet. The fall was a time for hunting the antelope, rabbits, and small deer that roamed through the mountains and valleys. The people lived in small huts made of wild grass (tule) and wore clothes made from materials available to them, such as animal skins and sagebrush. Marginal trade did occur between various groups, however, because the most fundamental aspect of their society was the family, few economic and political systems existed outside these tight knit familial units (7-15).

For the Northern Paiute, and here we include the various neighbouring groups of the Great Basin as well, religion can be defined as the beliefs, rituals and myths employed to control the many forms of power found in the natural universe. Power or *puha* is found in such naturally existing objects as mountains, rivers, plants and animals, as well as in the supernatural phenomena such as the sun, moon, clouds, wind and thunder. It is the way in which these powers are called upon to do good and appeased when delivering evil that we, with Western mindsets,

would call religion. The ability to manipulate these powers is inherent to all people, however, in each society there are certain individuals who, through the process of knowledge acquisition in dream-like trances, possess a special capacity to commune with these powers. It matters little what one calls these men and women, in nineteenth-century writings they are often referred to as shamans, however, within the communities themselves they are considered doctors and traditional healers and are held in high regard as long as their medicines (control and knowledge of the powers in nature) are effective. An apprenticeship program exists wherein knowledge can be passed from generation to generation, however, it is important to point out that one does not choose to become a healer, you must be chosen by your dead relatives in a dream or vision. In these dreams the new apprentice is taught to control and call upon spiritualist power through song and dance. The knowledge of song and dance is what, in turn, gives the healer his or her own power and position in the community. More than one healer could often be found in these communities as one healer may have possessed a song or dance used to control the weather while another may have had the knowledge of medicinal plants. The powers in nature can also be described in the Judeo-Christian parlance of spirits. These spirits exist in all sentient beings, the knowledge of which is generally gained from those who have already passed on and now dwell in a land much like our own, however, without the hardships of famine, drought and war. In order to communicate with these ancestors one must journey to their land in a dream or vision where they then pass on their religious knowledge. The power and mysterious nature of the dead caused the people to both revere and fear them (Liljeblad and Fowler 1986: 451-453).

The belief system of the Northern Paiute and surrounding Great Basin Nations is, of course, more complex than just reviewed and involved a hierarchical system of gods and spirits ruled over by a supreme being sometimes referred to as “Our Father” (Hultkrantz 1986: 632). Furthermore, the acknowledgment of these spirits affected the everyday life of each member of society, not just the healers. Songs were sung and dances danced at all occasions of significance such as trout runs, hunts, births, marriages, and deaths. The tradition of round dances is long and important and can be seen in modern times through the continued use of its form in Bear, Sun, Round and even Ghost Dances. One cannot stress enough the importance of singing and dancing in the ceremonial worship of these peoples. One early publication produced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs found that the “only real” types of ceremonies that existed among the Northern Paiute were these performance rituals of singing and dancing as a way of appealing to the spirits

before going in search of food and as a way of thanking them after the venture had proved a success (Underhill 1941:51-54).

Life was drastically altered for the residents of the Great Basin in the early nineteenth century as group after group of Europeans and Americans drifted across the country in search of freedom, land, and wealth. According to most sources the first non-Native to cross the Sierra Mountains and view Paiute territory, with the possible exception of a Spaniard or two⁶, was the trapper Jedediah Smith in the early 1820s. Smith did not stay long though he did meet a few local “Indians who appeared [destitute], having nothing to subsist on (nor any clothing), except grass-hoppers etc.” (Johnson 1975: 18). Shortly thereafter Peter Skene Ogden, a British employee of the Hudson Bay Company, found his way into the country along the Humboldt River in his search for beaver pelts. These types of contact did not last as the area was not especially suited for trapping nor did it have the big game animals like buffalo to hunt. The area of Walker Lake was named though, after one such trapper, Joseph Reddeford Walker who arrived in 1833 with a party of forty men. These men set up traps surrounding the lake and when some of them were found missing they attacked a group of Paiute who were camped nearby, killing several and leading to an additional skirmish where forty more Natives were killed. Reports from these trappers were sent east and with descriptions of resplendent hills, valleys, and lakes along with vast tracts of open land, the settlers soon followed.

The territory, while never colonized by the Mormons, was originally claimed by Brigham Young as part of Utah; however, despite Young’s attempts to keep it, which culminated in the Utah War of 1857, the United States government named it as part of Nevada Territory in 1861. According to the reports of Indian Agent Frederick Dodge, 1,625 Northern Paiutes occupied the Walker Lake and River area at this time. It was in 1859 that Dodge wrote Washington recommending the development of a reservation system at Walker River as well as nearby Pyramid Lake. By this time the majority of Northern Paiutes “had already begun to sell fish, dress like Americans, and speak English and most were excited about the proposal of a

⁶ While Smith, or perhaps an unknown Spaniard, is considered to be the first non-Native in the region that does not mean that the residents of the region were untouched by colonialism prior to this date. According to Ned Blackhawk’s *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the early American West* (2006), Spanish influence had been felt in the Great Basin and surrounding regions well before 1750 and is seen most directly in his discussion of the dealings between the Spanish and the Utes and the dissemination of the consequences of these dealings by the Utes to their many neighbours well prior to contact with trappers and colonizers (Blackhawk 2006).

reservation where, according to the promises being made, they could own their own land, hunt and fish as they liked as well as work for wages on the neighbouring farms” (Hittman 1973: 254). It was at this point, once the majority had become content with their fate, that a period of long deprivation and culture change occurred.

The 1870 Ghost Dance

Michael Hittman calls this deprivation experienced by the Northern Paiute “cataclysmic” and forwards it as one of the main reasons of the formation of the 1870 Ghost Dance (252). Settlers, farmers, missionaries, miners and government officials came in droves, gobbling up the food supply, chopping up lumber and forcing the people to begin the assimilation process immediately. Years of drought causing a famine in the land and the realization that the government made empty promises along with an influx of new, untreatable, European diseases left the Northern Paiute desperate for some sort of intervention. It was under these conditions that Fish Lake Joe, also known as Wodziwob, began to preach a new kind of round dance that, when performed, would not only restore the land and game to the Natives but would bring back their deceased ancestors as well (248).

The teachings of this Ghost Dance, as it was termed by observers and not adherents⁷, gave the deprived members of the Walker River Reservation a way of defending themselves that was both familiar and trustworthy. The focus on the resurrection of the dead presented a way for many to be reunited with their recently deceased family members who had succumbed to one of the many epidemics sweeping the country. Wodziwob seems to have achieved his fame due to an 1869 prophecy that foretold of a train appearing from the East. The prophecy was fulfilled that very year when the eastern and western lines of the railroad met at Promontory Point in Utah (Johnson 1975: 42; Du Bois 1939: 10). This event triggered immediate renown in the community and Wodziwob began announcing his visions and prophecies at traditional community gatherings such as the pine nut festival, rabbit drives, and spring fish runs (Hittman 1973: 263). During these events Wodziwob would encourage those gathered to form a circle and begin dancing in the traditional round dance style. Once the dance was in full swing, Wodziwob generally fell into a trance, appearing dead, and upon waking would tell his eager audience that he had seen, in

⁷ See Mooney (1896 [1973]: 791) for the various names of the dance employed by practitioners.

vision, their deceased relatives. The dead, he proclaimed, would once again walk amongst the living and bring with them a renewal of the world the Natives had once know, free of white oppression and diseases. One of Cora Du Bois' informants gave this date as three or four years from the year 1869 (Du Bois 1939: 10-11). Wodziwob preached that the practice of a new round dance would facilitate this imminent return. The dance had to be performed for five straight nights and was lead by a singer armed with new songs imploring the dead to rise again and free the living.

Wodziwob's Ghost Dance was initially successful, and followers of the prophet began spreading the word to neighbouring Native American peoples. Leslie Spier notes in his *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives* (1935) that one "most unusual characteristic" of the 1870 Ghost Dance was this act of proselytizing neighbouring groups (Spier 1935: 12). According to him, proselytizing was not a mainstay of Native American culture and began a trend that would later culminate in the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890. One follower of Wodziwob who contributed to the lasting success of the movement was the father of Wovoka, Tavibo, who Mooney erroneously believed was the originator of the 1870 movement (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 701-704; Du Bois 1939: 6-7). Although much has been written and speculated about Tavibo (or Numu-tibo'o) for our purposes here what can be concluded is that he was an adherent of the 1870 Ghost Dance, was considered a man in possession of great *bbooha* (power), and was the father of Wovoka (Hittman 1997: 29-34). Tavibo's influence on his son will never be fully known but according to Hittman's informants he did not pass away until 1914 or 1915 which means that the *poenabe* ("good talker" or "chief") was around during his son's most celebrated years (29-34).

Local observers of the movement in Walker Lake find that the adherents of the dance numbered anywhere from fifteen hundred to three thousand (Johnson 1975: 44). However, despite these numbers the religious zeal that was first experienced in 1869 abruptly ceased by 1871. Du Bois claims that this was due to the unexpected death of Wodziwob, however Hittman has since discredited this belief and suggests that the reasons for the failure of the movement are due to the Northern Paiutes traditional avoidance and fear of the dead, the failure of Wodziwob's prophecies to yield results, as well the improvements of the farming industry in the region (Hittman 1973: 270). Regardless of the explanation for its sudden departure from the religious

landscape of the Great Basin, the movement has proven to be an interesting prologue to the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and more importantly for the purposes of this paper, a seminal event for comparativists such as Mooney to locate the connection between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons.

Wovoka and the 1890 Ghost Dance

One might reasonably assume that the cultural and spiritual deprivations that sparked the 1870 Ghost Dance are also to blame for its reformation twenty years down the road. Curiously, however, this is not the case – at least in regard to the Numu (Northern Paiute) at Walker Lake (Hittman 1992: 158; Johnson 1975: 49). Residents in the area had experienced relative economic success due largely to innovations in the farming industry. As a result of this economic stability, peaceful coexistence between Paiute and settler was achieved. However, changes did still occur during these times of peace for the Native residents of Walker Lake. The most challenging one to their way of life was the formation of “Indian schools” where Numu children were taken away from their families and boarded by the government in places such as Pyramid Lake and Carson City where disease was difficult to contain and native culture was seen as a barbarism of the past. Other substantial influences of the time period were the institution of Native police officers who answered to Indian agents and government officials as well as an influx of Chinese immigrants, a trend that unfortunately led to the introduction of opium to the area and other illegal substances including alcohol (Johnson 1975: 85 -95). If the drastic changes and deprivations of the 1860s were in the past and since the new ones just mentioned seem to have played a very small role in the development and local practice of the Ghost Dance of 1890, what then was the cause of this movement in northwestern Nevada?

What is known for certain in regards to the formation of the Ghost Dance of 1890 is that it all started with a vision which probably occurred on New Year’s Day in 1889 (Hittman 1990: 63). On the same day “the sun died” (Mooney interpreted this event as a solar eclipse and after consulting an almanac, fixed the date as January 1, 1889) Wovoka “fell asleep” and was transported to “the other world” (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 771). In this place, Wovoka saw God and all the deceased ancestors of the Native Americans (771). In this land of the dead people were happy and could be seen playing sports and hunting the plentiful game.

After showing him all, God told him he must go back and tell his people they must be good and love one another, have no quarrelling, and live in peace with the white; that they must work, and not lie or steal; that they must put away all the old practices that savoured of war; that if they faithfully obeyed his instructions they would at last be reunited with their friends in this other world, where there would be no more death or sickness or old age. He was then given the dance which he was commanded to bring back to his people. By performing this dance at intervals, for five consecutive days each time, they would secure this happiness to themselves and hasten the event. Finally God gave him control over the elements so that he could make it rain or snow or be dry at will, and appointed him his deputy to take charge of affairs in the west, while “Governor Harrison” [United States President, Benjamin Harrison] would attend to matters in the east, and he, God, would look after the world above” (771-772).

When Wovoka awoke from this vision he did as he was told and began teaching others the dances that God, himself, had taught him. This event is known as the “Great Revelation” and for the most part sums up the entire Ghost Dance Religion as it was practiced in by the Numu in Nevada. Of course this statement does come with an asterisk as these are not the words of Wovoka but a rendition of his statement recorded two years after the event by Mooney.

Mooney was not even the first to be granted an interview with Wovoka as that honour was given to Arthur I. Chapman an Indian Scout acting on the orders given him by Brigadier General John Gibbon of the Military Department of the Pacific in November of 1890 (Hittman 1990: 7). Before meeting with Wovoka, Chapman first learned about this religion from James Josephus, who was a “Captain” on the Walker River Reservation’s police force (7-8). Chapman recorded that Josephus told him that Wovoka’s first vision occurred sometime in 1887 while the soon to be prophet was chopping wood in the mountains (8).⁸ Wovoka, startled by a “great noise” stopped what he was doing and while searching for the cause of the noise, “fell down dead” (8). Josephus’ description of this vision of Wovoka’s is very similar to the one written above by Mooney. Wovoka had travelled to another world where everything was green and there was enough food and wild game for everyone (8). The excess meant there was plenty of time for the dead, “who were all young”, to play sports, dance, and gamble (8). According to Josephus, Wovoka awoke after this vision and returned to his chores but later that night was transported again to this heavenly place and on this second trip Wovoka was told by God to “Tell all the people that they must not fight, there must be peace all over the world” (8). God’s instructions continued with admonitions not to steal and to consider all men as brothers and to treat them as

⁸ See Hittman for a discussion on the reasons for a discrepancy in the dates (1992: 125-128).

such (8). Josephus then told Chapman that Wovoka was told to teach “his people” a new dance that should last for five straight nights “and then stop for three months” (8). Josephus’ then called Wovoka the “new messiah” and told the scout that Wovoka was given great powers not the least of which was to control the weather (8-9). Josephus confided in Chapman that he originally was not a believer in Wovoka until the man demonstrated his new powers and called on the rains during a particularly bad drought in Mason Valley the year before this interview occurred (9). Chapman eventually met with Wovoka who confirmed most of what Josephus had already told him. In addition to what Chapman had already learned, Wovoka told him that he had met with God many times since his initial vision and that God had added a further commandment that his people (“the Indians”) should “work all the time and not lie down in idleness” (10). Chapman’s report given to General Gibbon, who really just wanted to know if the religion posed a threat to the white citizens in the area, concluded that the Wovoka’s gospel was one of peace and promoted the assimilation process.

From the accounts of Mooney and Chapman it can be concluded that the core doctrines associated with *nanigukwa* (“dance in a circle”), as the Numu refer to it, can be summarized in the following way; first and foremost, adherents must love one another, cease fighting amongst themselves as well as with others, and be good people which includes working hard and not lying or stealing. Secondly, they must dance a new circular dance as taught to them by their prophet for five nights in a row at regular intervals. Third, they must listen to the words of Wovoka and trust in his powers. If these steps are followed, Wovoka’s religion promised, each individual would receive a youthful inheritance in the next life and live in happiness with their deceased relatives. From this summary one wonders how this religion was ever considered a threat or even worth mentioning in the public arena. The answer can be found by an examination of one final belief.

In Mooney’s words, “The great underlying principle of the Ghost dance doctrine is that the time will come when the whole Indian race, living and dead, will be reunited upon a regenerated earth, to live a life of aboriginal happiness, forever free from death, disease, and misery” (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 777). It is this one belief and promise that overshadows the rest. The main purpose, then, of singing the Ghost Songs and dancing the Ghost Dance was to usher in this blissful millennium. For white observers of the religion this principle was a problem

because as Mooney observes, “The white race, being alien and secondary and hardly real, has no part in this scheme of aboriginal regeneration, and will be left behind with the other things of earth that have served their temporary purpose, or else will cease entirely to exist” (777).

Mooney found that the date set for the commencement of these events was sometime in early spring of the year 1891 (777-778). It was the nearness of the date, as well the idea of a world free of invaders, that ultimately caught the attention of Wovoka’s neighbours and it did not take long for the news to travel across the entire Great Basin and onto the windy plains of the Dakotas.

The Shoshone and Bannock

Two of the first Nations to hear about and begin practicing the tenets of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 were the Shoshone and Bannock of the Fort Hall Agency in Idaho (785, 805). They are mentioned here because of their proximity to Mormon settlements and their role in the transmission of the new religion. Gregory Smoak writes, “Fort Hall was one of the most important centers of Ghost Dance activism in the 1890s” (Smoak 2006: 171). Local Bannocks attended Wovoka’s second dance in 1889 and brought back with them a knowledge of the songs, dances, and doctrines. Fort Hall also served as a resting place for many Ghost Dance pilgrims, including “the Northern Cheyenne medicine man Porcupine” and “the Lakota apostles Short Bull and Kicking Bear” (171). Porcupine is perhaps the most important Native observer in the narrative of comparison production that will begin in the third chapter of this work. As such his name should be filed away and recalled at the appropriate time.

In addition to its “strategic location” the reservation seems to have been a place of great linguistic diversity where travellers from all Nations could congregate and understand each other (171). Residents of the Fort also “actively missionized neighboring peoples and served as the religion’s most effective apostles west of the Rockies” (172). The success of the religion, especially among the Bannock, is due primarily to their desire to remain outside of governmental control (173-174). Smoak points out that during the late 1880s and early 1890s the government’s insistence that all children attend their schools caused a general uproar in the community. The Bannock, who throughout this period were always considered as “nonprogressives” were staunchly against the assimilation programs of the government and were not afraid to show it. One Ghost Dance activist, who has a role to play later in this paper, named Pagwite “interpreted and used the Ghost Dance as a more militant form of resistance to physical and cultural

encroachment” (175). This was a typical response for Pagwite who was known as a military leader during the Bannock Indian wars of the late 1870s and can also be linked to the 1870 Ghost Dance (123). Although Pagwite is probably an extreme example of resistance, Smoak suggests that the majority of residents at Fort Hall who actively practiced Wovoka’s religion were doing so as form of protest.

These findings are different from the ones previously mentioned in regards to the success of the Ghost Dance Religion in its birthplace; however, they are almost universally similar to the rest of the Nations who began believing in the powers of the prophet and his dance. No better of example of this emphasis of resistance exists than the story of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 as interpreted by the Sioux Nation.

The Lakota Sioux

News of the Ghost Dance reached the ears of the Lakota in the fall of 1889, nearly a year after the prophet’s first vision (Utley 1963: 61). After a brief council a delegation of over ten men lead by Short Bull and Kicking Bear left Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River and journeyed across the Plains, making stops and gaining companions at the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and Forth Hall, Idaho, to the home of the prophet (61-62). Short Bull and Kicking Bear were both well respected warriors and leaders of the Sioux Nation and after witnessing firsthand the power of Wovoka’s message they became two of his “most ardent disciples” (62). Upon reaching Mason Valley, the delegation spent a week absorbing the songs, dances, and doctrines of Wovoka (68). Their return journey is one of legend and added to their belief in Wovoka, the “Messiah” (71-72). Accounts from visitors such as Porcupine state that Wovoka was now claiming to be Jesus Christ and offered as proof the visible scars on his hands, feet, and side (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 793-796). Mooney would later claim that Wovoka never claimed to be “the Messiah” only “a messiah”, the difference being that the former is the resurrected personage who was once known as Jesus of Nazareth and the latter is merely a messenger and prophet sent by Him (773).

Returning now to the Sioux delegation’s homeward journey, the legendary miracle occurred when the group happened upon a very rare herd of buffalo (Utley 1963: 72). Killing one, the hunters remembered the words of their prophet, who had forewarned them that this

unbelievable event might occur, and proceeded to cut off the beast's head, tail, and four feet. Just as Wovoka had prophesied, the buffalo returned to life before their very eyes (72). A second miracle followed, this one some days later when tired and weary, the travellers prayed to their prophet and were rewarded the next morning when they "awoke to find themselves much closer to their destination" (72). Because of events such as these, the disciples were able to convince their friends, families, and neighbours of the wondrous powers of Wovoka. However, it must be noted, a point that many scholars are either unaware of or neglect to mention, at its very zenith among the Lakota, the Ghost Dance Religion was only practiced by just over 4,200 individuals or 28% of the population (Andersson 2008: 76).

Once the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 reached the reservations on the South Dakota Plains something unique occurred which would have dire consequences. There can be little doubt that the members of the delegation who made the pilgrimage to Walker Lake were taught the same doctrine as those who had gone before them. The principles of peace, hard work, and tolerance, through the promised blessings of a better future, were most likely drilled into their heads by Wovoka as well as his followers. In spite of this, the Sioux returned home with a different message for their people. Robert Utley writes, "The Sioux proclaimed that the Messiah, as punishment for three centuries of oppressing the red race, would wipe the white race from the earth" (Utley 1963: 73). The Sioux version of the Ghost Dance blamed the whites for their dire condition, which must be admitted was quite a bit worse than many of the other Nations who flew the Ghost Dance banner (40-59). While Wovoka's promised millennium saw the white race receding into the background, perhaps returning to their own ancestral lands, the Sioux version of the apocalypse was a story where revenge was gained and ended with the white race's elimination from off the face of the earth (74). The Sioux, like the rest of their brethren, believed this would occur in the spring of 1891. Another aspect of the Sioux version of the Ghost Dance was an article of clothing worn by some of the Dancers now referred to as the Ghost Shirt. These shirts were painted sacred colours and depicted sacred symbols and were thought to be bulletproof. While scholars are not all agreed in regards to the origination of this sacred garment, it is difficult to not conclude that the Sioux were the biggest believers in its powers.

The poor conditions on the reservations turned worse over the course of the year 1890 and the Sioux began a struggle for their very existence. Ration cuts, land loss, and a year of hot

dry conditions left the Sioux hungry and desperate. These deprivations brought in government officials such as military leader General Nelson A. Miles to try and alleviate some of the pressures that had been placed on the local agents (104-105). As might be expected, the popularity of the Ghost Dance grew during this time and while some truly believed in its promises, others such as Sitting Bull, the famous warrior who did battle at Little Big Horn and also joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show, used it as a tool to try and force agency officials like James McLaughlin of Standing Rock to better the circumstances of the Native people in South Dakota (98). McLaughlin estimated that Sitting Bull had 450 followers who practiced the Ghost Dance Religion in front of his tent (98). McLaughlin petitioned his superiors in October for the opportunity to arrest Sitting Bull and withhold rations to the followers of the Ghost Dance. His request was denied but eventually this refusal was ignored and during McLaughlin's efforts to subdue the famous Hunkpapa leader, Sitting Bull was shot dead by a member of the Indian police force.

Sitting Bull's death created a panic on the reservations and the various bands became restless and were no longer willing to obey the government's orders of no travel outside their specific boundaries. During the month of December a "group of diehard Ghost Dancers" were camped just north of the Pine Ridge Agency. Other members of the Sioux Nation wished to join them, specifically a band known as the Miniconjou lead by Big Foot. Big Foot's reputation was impressive both among his fellow Native Americans and the local field agents. Because of this, government officials were keeping a close watch of his movements so when the call came from the chiefs gathered near Pine Ridge asking that Big Foot and his people join them the army's response was quick and deadly. On December 28, 1890 Big Foot and his followers made camp beside Wounded Knee Creek and retired for the night in their tipis. The next morning this group of Miniconjou were surrounded by the United States Army and were told to turn over all their weapons to the officials present. The events of that morning are shrouded in controversy and for the purposes of this paper it is enough to count the dead: 39 soldiers, 153 Sioux including 44 women and 18 small children (Utley 1963; Kehoe 1989).⁹

⁹ These are the figures recorded by the army and may not tell the whole story as many more died from wounds suffered that day as they fled across the frozen prairie in search of safety. For a full description of the Massacre at Wounded Knee see Anderson (2008).

Conclusions

Many scholars originally suggested that the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 died along with the Miniconjou that fateful day on Wounded Knee Creek; however, this was probably only the case with the Sioux, as most other adherents waited at least until the spring of 1891 had passed before giving up hope in the prophet. Interestingly, despite the foundational belief in an imminent millennium, many Native American groups continued to believe in the prophet Wovoka and more so in his prophecies of hope (Kehoe 1989; Kracht 1992; Hittman 1990). In fact until his death in 1932, Wovoka continued to receive mail and visitors in search of blessings and teachings (Hittman 1990). Even more startlingly are the findings of Alice Beck Kehoe in her study of the Wahpeton Sioux of Round Plain Saskatchewan. In her work *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (1989) Kehoe argues convincingly that this branch of the Sioux Nation still believe in and practice the tenets of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890, with some modern modifications of course.

The legacy of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 has more often than not been defined by the events at Wounded Knee. I began this brief review by shining the light away from South Dakota and refocusing it on the region surrounding Walker Lake. It was here among the Numu that the prophet Wovoka was born, raised, and indoctrinated with traditional as well as Christian beliefs. His exposure to Christianity and the Bible occurred in the home of David Wilson, his employer and alleged father figure whose name he often bore (Jack Wilson) (Hittman 1990). After Wovoka's first few visions the man became the prophet, proving himself a worthy tool in God's hand by using his powers to bring moisture to the barren land. He taught his people the principles he had been taught by God and the ancestors, entreating them to do good always and live in peace with those around them. News of the prophet travelled quickly among the indigenous inhabitants of the Western United States and soon pilgrims were making the long journey to receive his tutelage. Eventually this included members of the Sioux Nation who reinterpreted the prophet's teachings to fit their own circumstances. It was this version of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 that caught the attention of government officials who felt threatened by its promise of eternal bliss of Natives and an undetermined end for them. This sudden exposure of the Ghost Dance was the main trigger in the production of comparisons

between it and the neighbouring Mormons. However, before a narrative of this is presented we must first meet the Mormons.

Chapter 2. The Mormons

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially formed on April 6, 1830 in upstate New York. The founder was Joseph Smith Jr., an average twenty-five year old of average New England, blue collar stock. What set the Prophet Joseph Smith apart from the hundreds of other Christian ministers roaming the “Burned-Over-District”, as this area of New York was referred to, was a book of ancient, North American scripture which he translated from the original etchings found on thin sheets of gold plates. The *Book of Mormon*, the name given to the scripture by its ancient transcriber, Mormon, was entrusted to Smith as an extension of the prophetic calling he had received while as a youth of fourteen by God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, himself. Three years after this initial vision Smith was again visited by a heavenly inhabitant, although this time it was not God or Christ but a translated being who claimed to be of Israelite descent even though his mortal probation was spent on the North American continent. The visitor’s name was Moroni and he had been sent to deliver into Smith’s hands the *Book of Mormon*, which he, Moroni, had himself buried near the summit of a local hill some fifteen hundred years previous. The scripture, once Smith was able to obtain it, a process of that took four more years, was written in “reformed Egyptian” glyphs and required a special instrument of Biblical myth, the Urim and Thummim, in order to translate it into English. Smith, with the assistance of various scribes and friends published the record in 1829 and it instantly became the benchmark for prospective investigators to judge his prophetic claims (Smith 1981: 47-59).

Smith’s church experienced limited success in New York with the majority of followers coming from a handful of faithful families, including his own. By 1831, his past of treasure hunting and seership in addition to his inability to show the public the original plates of gold from which the *Book of Mormon* had originated – according to Mormon history, Moroni is said to have taken the plates and other artefacts that came with them to heaven once the translation was complete – pushed the fledgling movement to move west to Kirtland, Ohio. Once in Kirtland the church saw a rapid influx of numbers due, in part, to the conversion of a local Cambellite minister and the majority of his congregation. In Kirtland the organization of Smith’s church began to take shape, patterned after the early apostolic system of Christ’s earthly administration. Smith, acting as Prophet and president, called twelve apostles, quorums of seventies and countless missionaries to go forth among the nations of the earth and preach the

word of God as contained in the *Book of Mormon*. Smith was inspired to build a temple so God and his heavenly messengers would have a sacred place set apart for them to dwell while visiting earth. While the church grew quickly in Kirtland, Smith knew it would not be their permanent residence for he had received a further vision informing him and his followers of the location of a New Jerusalem, or Zion as most contemporary and modern Mormons refer to it, where all the Saints would gather. The location was revealed as Jackson County, Missouri, much to the chagrin of the current residents (Arrington and Bitton 1979).¹⁰

For a time, Smith split his time between Ohio and Missouri. The temple in Kirtland was nearing completion and economic successes in that region gave support to the struggling Saints in Missouri. Missouri was not good to Smith's people as they were continually displaced and persecuted for their insistence that God had set apart the land for them and their kingdom. At one point Smith led a force of over five hundred militia, most marching on foot, from Kirtland to Missouri, in an effort to maintain their holdings there. Nothing actually came of this march referred to today as the Zion's Camp. According to Mormon legend Smith prayed for a storm that arose so suddenly it scattered the Missourians who had gathered for the fight. The camp disbanded and returned to Ohio after offering what little aid they could to their fellow church members. Eventually Smith's economic adventures went south in Kirtland and a large faction of the twelve apostles, unsure of how a prophet supposedly called by God could have failed so miserably in his secular endeavours, left the church. Smith and those that were loyal to him left Ohio to join up with the rest of the Mormons in Missouri.

Smith's reign in Missouri, despite its centrality to the ideological concept and practice of Zion, was never a success. Soon after joining the main body of his church there, he was arrested and thrown in jail on various charges. With Smith out of the picture many Missourians set out to drive the rest of the Saints from their state. This led to a series of events which culminated in the Hans Mill Massacre and the signing of an extermination order by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs. With little other option, the Saints abandoned their homes and the majority of their property and trudged through the snow towards Illinois leaving their hopes of building Zion regrettably behind.

¹⁰ This historical sketch is a summary of ideas taken from Arrington and Bitton (1979) and Arrington (1958 [1993]).

The last chapter of Smith's life was spent developing the swampy marsh lands surrounding the Missouri River into a physical and spiritual haven for his followers. Upon his release from his Missouri prison, Smith joined his downtrodden believers in Illinois and with a renewed vigour that astonished many he set out to build one of the most successful cities in Illinois at the time. Nauvoo, or the City of Joseph as some called it, was home to shops, a Masonic Lodge, and eventually a second Mormon temple. It was here in Nauvoo that Smith established the physical and spiritual foundations from which his successor Brigham Young would later build in Utah. Polygamy was first introduced here as was the sacred endowment ceremony that would later define the temple ritual. The odd rite of conducting baptisms for the dead was laid out in a classic sermon entitled the King Follett Address. And finally, Smith would write, in response to a Chicago newspaper man's question of what defined his version of Christianity, the Mormon catechism known as the Articles of Faith. These thirteen points of doctrine, later expanded upon and authoritatively defined by Mormon scholar James E. Talmage (1957), act as a guidepost for any doctrinal discussion of Mormonism and were instantly employed by the Church and printed in their ever expanding canon of scripture (Arrington and Bitton 1979: 65-82).

In Nauvoo, Smith was mayor, commanding general of the Nauvoo Legion, president of his church and candidate for presidency of the United States. However, the trend of neighbourly discontent eventually found its way across Missouri and into Illinois. Smith was again carted off to prison and this time he never returned. His martyrdom occurred in June of 1844 and by the spring of the 1846 Nauvoo was a ghost town as far as Brigham Young's followers were concerned (95). Although not a small number of Saints remained behind in Illinois with Mormon presidential candidate Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith's widow Emma – these followers felt that Smith's son and namesake held the sacred mantle of leadership and became known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS) – the majority ferried across the river in pursuit of the great colonizer Brigham Young. The trek was long and difficult but the hardship would come to fruition as Young crossed over the Wasatch Front of the Rocky Mountains and declared the entire Great Basin as the home of the Mormons (83-105).

This brief narrative must suffice as a precursor to the following historical and contextual narrative of the Utah Mormons and their alleged involvement in the Ghost Dance Religion of

1890. I have attempted to include as much pertinent information above in order to better understand the mindset of the Mormons we will encounter in Utah who would go to great lengths to invite any who would believe within their midst while putting in place equally as great measures to keep outsiders out. Spiritually the Utah Saints finally felt that they were free to worship and build a reasonable substitute for Zion. Physically they were in fact protected from the U.S. government and army by great distances and wide mountains. However, they were not as alone in the Basin as they first thought and knowledge of their interactions with the indigenous tribes of that area will go a long way in providing possible reasons for the comparisons being made between them and their religion and the Dancers and theirs.

Anti-Polygamy

From the time Young lead his people into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 until the time of his death in 1877 he ruled over the land with absolute authority. While this thirty year period contains much history, it is enough for our purposes here to define it as time of great economic growth and a reasonable level of stability (Arrington 1993). For the most part, Mormons practiced their religion during this period unmolested and free from judgemental outsiders. Young's reign culminated in the completion of the St. George Temple which he dedicated on April 6, 1877 just five months before his death. His death marked a new beginning for Mormons and this example is seen most dramatically in the case of the United States government's anti-polygamy campaigns of the 1880s.

In 1879 the Supreme Court upheld the anti-polygamy legislation known officially as the Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862 which "introduced a decade of ever harsher enforcement of even harsher laws" (Hartley and Sessions 1992: 194). Between the years 1878-1898, membership in the Mormon Church nearly doubled as it grew from 115,065 to 229,428 (194). However, this success in the mission field was overshadowed back in Utah. The Supreme Court's decision in 1879 officially made the practice of polygamy illegal. Mormon president, John Taylor, responded to this by "declaring that when the laws of man and God conflict he would obey God" (198-199). Taylor's actions were a reprisal to the actions of some polygamists who had chosen to desert their families and flee the government's agents. In 1882 Congress passed the Edmunds Act which set the punishment for polygamy as a five year jail term and \$500 in fines and made it legal for the government to take away the civil rights of anyone caught practicing polygamy or

unlawful cohabitation, which meant no voting, no serving on juries, and no service in public offices (199). Five years later, in 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker Act raised the stakes of polygamy even higher. “The law dissolved the Church as a legal corporation, required the forfeiture of all property in excess of \$50,000, dissolved the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company and claimed its property, and disbanded the NAUVOO LEGION (territorial militia)” (201).¹¹ One final law, known the Cullom-Struble Bill, was a threat that finally caused the Mormons to change their ways or accept extinction. The Bill would require all citizens to stand before a judge and “state under oath that they did not believe in or belong to a church that believed in plural marriage” (203).

Life in Utah was dramatically altered due to the passing of these laws. Members of the church, fearful of long jail terms and heavy fines, fled to remote areas in Arizona, Mexico, and Canada. Even John Taylor went into hiding in Kaysville, Utah where he continued to run the church through the mail system until his death in 1887. A Mormon underground was formed and the “Saints developed secret hiding places in homes, barns, and fields, codes to warn on another, and spotters to watch for the marshals” (199). By 1890 and with the threat of the Collum-Struble Bill looming over his head, Taylor’s replacement, Wilford Woodruff, issued the “Manifesto” on September 24 which stated that he, Woodruff, had received a vision from God telling him that for the physical safety and survival of the church the practice of polygamy had to be abolished (202-203). Woodruff’s revelation pacified the government but was questioned by the people who for the past ten years had been fighting nonstop in support of plural marriage. The belief in the correctness of the doctrine was not abandoned over night and as we shall see in the next chapter was connected to a different prophecy given by Joseph Smith himself.

Key Doctrines and Practices

For a quick review of the main principles and teachings of the Mormons one has to look no further than Joseph Smith’s thirteen “Articles of Faith.” Mormon apostle and theologian, James E. Talmage has produced a definitive work on these creedal statements and it his work of the same title that we rely on, as well as the outside interpretations of Douglas J. Davies, for the explanations that follow. Only the doctrines most pertinent to this narrative which describes the

¹¹ Emphasis in original.

relationship between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons will be offered and by so doing I have to admit that I am participating in the perpetuation of the comparisons soon to be discussed; however, for the purposes of time and space not all Mormon doctrines can be presented and thus it is left to me to choose those I find most enlightening for the tale about to be told.

The Mormons are a temple going people. As hinted at in the historical overview just presented, the centrality of the temple experience is of immense importance to members of the Mormon faith. To enter the temple one must be found worthy and pass an interview given by a local leader. In the temple each member takes out their individual “endowment” and is awarded special underclothes that are to be worn from that time forth. These garments are meant to be a reminder to the wearer of the promises he or she has made to God during the temple ceremony. More information on the exact nature of this garment will be provided in the forthcoming chapters, however, it is enough now to simply stress the importance and sacredness of both the temple ceremony as well as the garments received there (Davies 2003: 195-224).

Talmage writes, “A temple is more than church-building, meeting-house, tabernacle, or synagogue; it is a place specially prepared by dedication unto the Lord, and marked by His acceptance, for the solemnization of ordinances pertaining to the Holy Priesthood” (Talmage 1957: 154). One of the main purposes of the temple, as explained by Talmage, is the performance of “ordinances pertaining to the salvation of the dead” (153). This work for the dead includes the practice of performing proxy baptisms on behalf of the deceased. Mormons believe that those who have passed on before us dwell on a spiritual plane and will one day be resurrected and receive an inheritance dependant on their level of adherence to God’s words during their mortal probation. In order to increase their chances at “eternal exaltation,” the Mormons have instituted temple rites that can be performed on behalf of the dead, specifically, but not limited to, one’s relatives (Talmage 1957; Davies 2003).

The practice of performing rites for the dead leads us into a discussion of Mormon views of “regeneration and resurrection” (Talmage 1957: 375-394). The first concept of regeneration can be seen through the Mormon belief in the eternal nature of the earth itself. After Christ has returned to the earth and ruled amongst the perfected and rejuvenated peoples, the earth will in

turn undergo a transformation and return to its perfected state. This rejuvenation of the earth is coupled with the resurrection of the dead. These events take place during the millennium. Grant Underwood has written a great deal on the millenarian worldview of early Mormonism (Underwood 1982; 1993). Underwood believes that Mormon millennialism is defined by its belief in Christ's imminent return which will result in the destruction of the wicked. Underwood refers to this as millenarian apocalypticism and believes that "Such faith engenders hope" in the eventual fulfilment of "the great reversal" (1993: 3-12). From the history just presented it is not hard to see why Mormons would believe in a millennial world where Christ rules and their enemies are destroyed. Without drawing the obvious connections to the Ghost Dance let us continue with our overview of Mormon beliefs by discussing the case of the Lamanites as written in the *Book of Mormon*.

Lamanites

One of the better discourses on the history of the Mormons and the Native Americans who they refer to as Lamanites has been written by Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton (1979). In this work the authors write,

According to the Book of Mormon, they [the American Indians] had once practiced an advanced form of Christianity, having been taught its principles by Jesus Christ after his Crucifixion; but through their "abominations and loss of belief," these early settlers had eventual become "wild," "full of mischief," "loathsome," and "full of idleness" (145).

One selling feature of the *Book of Mormon* was its claim at being a history of the origins of the Native American peoples. In this account, published by Joseph Smith in 1830, the Native Americans are said to have descended from a family of Israelites who left Jerusalem around 600 BCE in order to get away from the apostasy that was occurring in the city and the country. Upon reaching the shores of America the family splits into two competing factions: the Nephites and the Lamanites. The rest of the work is a reflection of this initial split where the Nephites are considered the 'good guys' and the Lamanites, the opposite. The title page of the book claims that it was "Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel" and concludes with an exhortation to all who have read and understood the contents to work should pray and learn for themselves the validity of its claims (Moroni 10: 3-5).

During the nineteenth century, Mormon views of Native Americans were seen solely in *Book of Mormon* parlance. Their dark skin was considered a curse from God and would one day be lifted when they collectively joined once again with God's true church. Arrington and Bitton explain,

The Latter-day Saints had the responsibility, according to this theology, of introducing this "covenant people" to the Book of Mormon and teaching them the ways of their ancestor, who once followed Jesus. Eventually, these Lamanites...were destined to become revitalized, and the Latter-day Saints were expected to lead in this process by carrying them "in their arms and upon their shoulder" to help them "blossom as a rose" (145).

Of course these beliefs were only a philosophy and when put to the test varying results occurred. Brigham Young's relationship with Chief Wakara (Walker), a leader of the local Utes, began in June of 1849 with a welcoming ceremony being held between the two leaders (147). After this meeting the two were generally on good terms and Wakara was even baptised into the Church and ordained an elder in the priesthood (151). However, in 1853 Ute warriors began raiding white settlements as they were unhappy with the power relations in the valleys of their homelands. Young urged caution from his members and counselled them not to abandon their homes nor to retaliate against the young warriors. Young wrote to Wakara a letter worth mentioning here,

G.S.L. City, July 25, 1853

Captain Walker:

I send you some tobacco for you to smoke in the mountains when you get lonesome. You are a fool for fighting your best friends, for we are the best friends, and the only friend that you have in the world. Everybody else would kill you if they could get a chance. If you get hungry send some friendly Indian down to the settlements and we will give you some beef-cattle and flour. If you are afraid of the tobacco which I send you, you can let some of your prisoners [Mormons] try it first and then you will know that it is good. When you get good natured again I would like to see you. Don't you think you should be ashamed? You know that I have always been your best friend.

Brigham Young (152)

Because of this letter, Wakara invited Young to a council of the chiefs being held in the mountains. Young would have preferred that Wakara come to him but after Wakara's response he was adamant that if Young wanted to see him, he would have to make the journey himself. Young is quoted as having said when hearing of this, "If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed will go the mountain" (152).

Young made the voyage to the meeting place of the chiefs and brought along with him "sixteen head of cattle, blankets, and clothing, trinkets, and arms and ammunition" (153). After imploring the chiefs to cease their battle with the local settlers, Young presented the delegation with the gifts he had brought. Initially Wakara was undecided as to whose side he would eventually choose, however, after hearing Young speak about peace and brotherhood he stood and spoke, "Wakara has heard all the talk of the Mormon chief. Wakara no like to go to war... Wakara no want to fight more. Wakara talk with Great Spirit; Great Spirit say "Make peace." Wakara love Mormon chief; he is a good man... If Indian kill white man again, Wakara make Indian howl" (153).

This episode is presented here in such detail because it represents the ongoing relationship between the Mormons and Native Americans. When the Mormons first arrived in the Valley they were overjoyed to find that they were no longer under the control of the Americans. In fact, they considered themselves to be alone in the Great Basin, well besides for a few Native Americans. This belief explains just how colonial minded the Mormons were in the nineteenth century. They were not alone on the land nor had they escaped from contact. They were intruders on various Native American lands; lands that had been long since designated to one group or another. In fact, if a history existed written about pre-colonial Native Americans by pre-colonial Native Americans the invasion of the Mormons would probably be depicted as an act of war. It is no wonder that after six long years of exposure members of the Ute Nation decided to win back their territory from the Mormons. However, by this time leaders, as well as other members of society, had already been exposed to Mormon teachings and some, like Wakara, had even been baptized and accepted into the fellowship of the Church. Young, fearful for the survival of his own people was quick to point out these allegiances in his letter to Chief Wakara. Young stressed the fact that the Mormons were "the best friends" of the Natives and in fact, "the only friends" they had "in the world." Young, who was clearly desperate to maintain

control of the situation, must have been very relieved when Wakara told the rest of the chiefs that he was not willing to go war with the Mormons.

Mormons continued to play the role of colonizer throughout the nineteenth century. After this settlement was reached, the Church funded and supported Indian Relief Societies and Indian farms. In southern Utah, Mormon and Native American relations were similar and were helped along in the beginning by the Mormon practice of adopting Native children in an effort to abolish the slave trade among some of the groups in that area (150). In 1865 the Native Americans inhabiting the mountains and foothills of the Great Basin signed a treaty with the United States which turned the title of the land over to the American government and consequently placed the Natives on reservations (156). As occurred in most early cases of the implementation of the reservation system some indigenous people fought back. The incident that occurred due to this is known as the Black Hawk War and was basically a series of guerrilla battles fought on the frontier and although the Mormons were not exactly the enemy, Black Hawk's warriors were no respecters of persons (156-157).

Conclusions

A review of Mormon history is important if one wishes to truly understand the mindset of the nineteenth century Mormon. In their minds they lived outside of American society and in a manner of speaking they were correct. Memories of their mistreatment in the East which culminated in the murder of their beloved prophet no doubt urged Church members to maintain as much sovereignty as they could. However, the allure of the West and the mineral wealth in region combined with the completion of the railroad brought outsiders into the Region. The 1880s were defined by the constant threat of governmental retaliation to their continued practice of polygamy. Eventually the Mormon leaders, pioneered by their prophet, Wilford Woodruff, produced the Manifesto which effectively ended the polygamy as a sanctioned Mormon practice.

Mormon doctrines of the day were dominated by the spirit of millennialism and temple attendance. Inside these sacred buildings the Saints conducted proxy baptisms for the dead in an effort to ensure that their ancestors would be found on the side of Christ when he arrived in his millennial glory. Mormons relied on the teachings of the *Book of Mormon* to define not only their ritual and practices but their relationship with their Native American neighbours as well.

Mormons viewed these groups as descendants of the Lamanites of *Book of Mormon* legend. These Lamanites were originally Israelites and because of these ancestral bonds, the Mormons considered their neighbours as brothers, at least in theory. The example of the relationship between the Ute chief, Wakara, and the Mormon prophet, Brigham Young, allows us a new glimpse of the Mormons. They are no longer the victim, they are now the colonizer. This realignment is essential because too often studies that employ the use of sympathetic objectivity tend to write histories only through the eyes of their subjects, a practice that can be very misleading. Ultimately this chapter has provided a necessary historical overview of the Mormons with specific regard of their state of affairs in and around the year 1890.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 3. Producing Comparisons

An introduction to this chapter has already been proffered in the opening remarks of this work. However, a few interesting comparisons are worth mentioning here before proceeding with the main objective of this chapter which is to review and discuss the comparisons being made about the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons. Following these early comparisons will be a discussion of the initial comparisons produced by contemporary field agents, government officials, and interested observers. These primary comparisons ignited a fire which grew so hot it demanded the attention of Mormon Church leaders who would turn to their multi-purpose myth of the Three Nephites to help quench the mounting flames from spreading. Despite their efforts, Mormon leaders were at the mercy of an ambiguous prophecy made by their founder, Joseph Smith, nearly fifty years prior to the outbreak of the 1890 Ghost Dance. The prophecy alluded to a date for the return of the Savior, a date which coincidentally – or not so coincidentally – matched the time set apart by Wovoka for the commencement of the millennium. Consequently this chapter is both an examination of the key figures and ideas involved in the production of comparisons between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and nineteenth century Mormons as well as an introduction to the following chapter which will discuss the circulation and perpetuation of these same comparisons.

Early Comparisons

One of the first instances of Mormons being compared with Native American religious movements came in the case of an even earlier Ghost Dance than the two already mentioned in this work. The events of the “fake” Cherokee Ghost Dance of 1867 were brought to light by William G. McLoughlin of Brown University in a 1990 journal article. The narrative of this event centres on a group of revolutionary Cherokees led by John Ross. At this time the Cherokee were struggling to find a leader capable of assisting them through a transition period brought on by colonizers from the Eastern United States. Ross presented his nation with a “ghost dance” which McLoughlin writes “was false not because it failed to revitalize but because it was concocted for political purposes by self-interested individuals who hoped to manipulate unsuspecting Cherokees for their own aims; the perpetrators had no faith in its claims themselves” (30). As a means of instigating revolt, Ross claimed that “European powers” were going to sweep the white Americans back across the Mississippi river and that they were going

to be assisted by “the Mormons, the only American white friends of the Indians” (36-37). McLoughlin finds this connection intriguing, as well as expertly employed by the “false prophet”, because at this time in history the Mormons were “hated and feared” by the American public even more than the European colonial powers they once were made to pay homage to (36-37).

McLoughlin continues his explanation of this connection by adding some morphological details:

Although Mormons had lived and proselytized among the Cherokee prior to the Civil War, there is no evidence that any Mormon missionaries were present in 1867. However, Mormonism did appeal to many Native Americans because the Book of Mormon foretold that, ultimately, the Indians would become a “white and delightful” people and would be accorded the honor they deserved as descendants of the lost tribes of Israel...Some credulous Cherokees may have believed that the Mormons, persecuted like themselves by the United States, were logical allies (37).

Despite this possible connection, McLoughlin is still puzzled why Ross and his followers might choose to make this association and wonders if it might not have been that a remnant of premillennialist teachings, as taught by two Mormon missionaries in 1847, were still being adhered to among some of the band (28, 37). Regardless of the reasons why the statement was made by Ross, the connection was troubling enough for William L.G. Miller, a Scottish observer of the incident who had lived in the area for many years and could fully communicate in the Cherokee tongue, to write the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, urging him to “arrest and prosecute the ‘emissarie’” of the Mormons who must have been residing close by – although Miller never did provide the commissioner with a name or identity of this individual – as he was positive that this was “just the kind of element the Mormons would operate on, to the greatest advantage, and I cannot avoid thinking that all our late Indian difficulties are due to them or to men equally unprincipled” (37, 40). Miller concludes his letter by stating, “That this [disturbance] did not originate with the Cherokee is sure, while I think that there is a pretended, or real, emissarie [sic] of the Mormons at the bottom of it. That he should be taken, tried, and punished to the extreme of the law, seems to be a duty” (40).

No action was ever taken by the government as a result of this letter and indeed none was required since the excitement of this “false ghost dance” never amounted to anything, probably

due to the failure of any of the false prophecies to come true (40). What is most curious about this event is the willingness of both the instigator and observer to utilize the comparative connection of Ghost Dance religious fervour and Mormon beliefs and behaviours. Instead of proffering reasons why this might be the case here, one further example of this comparison prior to the 1890 Ghost Dance will prove beneficial in our campaign for explanation.

The 1870 version of the Ghost Dance appears to have a Mormon connection as well. According to Lawrence G. Coates, as many as five individual Native Americans allied themselves with the Mormons “after hearing the prophetic message of Wodziwob” and after having “had their own dreams, visions, and supernatural experiences telling them to” do so (90). Coates writes of one typical occurrence where a Native American, while in his lodge, received “three strangers who looked like Indians...and said the Mormons’ God was the true God and the father of the Indians” (90). This individual was told to seek out the Mormon missionaries and be baptized for “the time was at hand for the Indians to gather, and stop their Indian life, and learn to cultivate the earth and build houses, and live in them” (90). Coates’ example is taken from an 1877 account of an 1872 tale written by George W. Hill and published in the Mormon periodical the *Juvenile Instructor*. Hill’s rendition of the events were meant for a Mormon audience and as such add much needed insight into Mormon views of Native prophecy as a means of speeding up the process of their conversion to Mormonism, which was a definite sign of the Second Coming. As is reflected in this retelling, and perhaps substantiated by the previous example of the 1867 Cherokee Ghost Dance, nineteenth-century Mormons welcomed Native resistance movements as a necessary precursor to the reconversion of the Lamanites as promised in the *Book of Mormon*.

Hill’s stories were not the only ones in circulation at the time in connection to Wodziwob’s movement. A. H. Thomson of the United States Geological Survey commented that,

a great excitement was caused among the Indians by the report that two mysterious beings with white skins...had appeared among the Paiute far to the west and announced a speedy resurrection of all the dead Indians, the restoration of the game, and the return of the old-time primitive life. Under the new order of things, moreover, both races alike were to be white” (Smoak 2006: 130).

As Gregory E. Smoak attests, this assessment of Thompson's had dashes of Mormon flavouring (130-131). The recent formation and localized success of Mormon missions in the areas surrounding Fort Hall probably contributed to the idea held by the Natives in the region that their skin could turn white if they embrace either the Ghost Dance Religion and/or the Mormon Church. When studying the effects of this 1870 Ghost Dance on Wovoka's later version, James Mooney found that a "large number" of Bannocks joined with the Mormons in 1875 after having embraced Ghost Dance doctrines (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 704). Mooney's "large number" has recently been contested by Coates. However, Coates did find that the year 1875 saw the greatest number of Native American converts enter the endowment houses of the Mormons, a figure totalling 161, between the years 1850 and 1890 (Coates 1985: 99). Although Mooney was most assuredly not privy to these statistics, his assessment is that a "large number" might not be that far off as Coates' study found only 238 total endowed Native American Mormons during this forty year time period (99).

One final comment by a modern scholar on the connection between the 1870 Ghost Dance and the Mormons may prove beneficial before moving ahead with our narrative. Joseph G. Jorgensen in his study "Ghost Dance, Bear Dance, and Sun Dance" (1986) writes,

It is interesting that prominent members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) interpreted the religion as a harbinger of the millennium, and in the 1870s because of the superficial compatibilities of Mormon and Ghost Dance doctrines, the Mormons had some success in proselytizing the Bannock and Northern Shoshone from Fort Hall and the Eastern Shoshone to be baptized into the Church and to be baptized for deceased Indians (661-662).

Jorgensen's reference to "prominent members" in the Mormon Church taking notice of the 1870 Ghost Dance probably stems from Mooney, who wrote that Mormon apostle and philosopher Orson Pratt believed that these events were the beginning stages of Christ's millennial reign (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 703-704). More will be said of Pratt's interpretation presently, however, for now, we must push our narrative forward by introducing the initial comparisons and comparativists concerned with the 1890 version of the Ghost Dance and the Mormons.

Initial Comparisons

It may be recalled from the introduction to this work that as early as November of 1890 General Nelson A. Miles began blaming the Mormons for instigating the entire “messiah craze” (see page 1 of this work). While Miles definitely emerged as the most prolific and quotable initial comparativist, with the possible exception of Porcupine, others do exist and the evidence, as compiled expertly by Coates, suggests that their own theories and comparisons helped Miles form his own.

It seems that the first report linking the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 with the Mormons was given by Porcupine. Porcupine was a member of the Cheyenne Nation who heard about the Ghost Dance early in the summer of 1890 (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 793-796). With his interests peaked, Porcupine set out on a pilgrimage to the birthplace of the movement in Walker Lake, Nevada. His journeys took him through Mormon country, specifically through Fort Hall, Idaho where it would later be recorded in General Thomas Ruger’s status report to the Adjutant General in St. Paul, Minnesota that he had seen both white people and Native people dancing together (Coates 1985: 94). The two races were friendly to each other and indeed considered one another as siblings. This amazed the Cheyenne and so did the fact that no one was drinking alcohol at these social gatherings. Eventually Porcupine pushed on from Idaho and made it to Nevada where he sat in the presence of “the new Christ” who presented himself to the traveller and the others who had gathered with him “dressed in a white robe with stripes” (94). The Christ showed the anxious crowd “the scars on his body” to prove that he was in fact the same Christ who had been crucified many years before in Jerusalem (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 795-796). Porcupine’s account of his observations during his short stay among the “Fish-eaters” is an incredible read, however, for our purposes here only one final statement is worth mentioning. Upon meeting the Christ, Porcupine observed, “I had always thought the Great Father was a white man, but this man looked like an Indian” (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 795). However upon further inspection Porcupine concluded, “He was not so dark as an Indian, nor so light as a white man” (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 795; Coates 1985: 94). This one statement would prove useful for future comparativists to suggest that who Porcupine really met during his stay was not actually Jesus Christ but a messenger sent to proclaim Christ’s message. Mormons in particular would latch on to Porcupine’s description of the individual’s complexion in their development and

usage of the theory of the Three Nephites. More will be written on this topic presently, however, we must first discuss the remaining initial comparisons and those who produced them.

General Ruger's report on Porcupine's observations very quickly became standard knowledge for those interested in the happenings of the American West which would have included Miles. However, Ruger was not the only one producing information at this time. On October 27, 1890 E.R. Kellog, the post commander at Fort Washakie in Wyoming, wrote,

There seems to be no unusual excitement in either [the Shoshone or Arapaho] tribe, although emissaries of the Indian "Christ" have been among them; but not, I think, recently. This Indian "Christ" is, I am led to believe, one "Bannack Jim," a Mormon, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that his attempts to stir up strife have been instigated by Mormons. I think "Bannack Jim", I believe at the Lemhi or the Fort Hall Agency (Coates 94).¹²

Kellog not only believed the Mormons were behind the "messiah craze" but that one of their own was the "Indian 'Christ'" that so many rumours had been heard about. Kellog was also not the only official who referred to a "Bannack Jim", J.B. Randolph the chief officer of the Correspondence Division in the Office of Secretary of War also forwarded a belief that this individual was behind these strange affairs in the West (94-95).

By way of clarification, Coates writes, "Reports citing Bannock Jim as a Mormon and an important link to the Ghost Dance are not supported by facts. Also known as Pagwhite, Bannock Jim was a leader during the Bannock Indian War of 1878. No Church records list him as a member" (Coates 1985: 100-101). After providing further information about the success of Mormons in Bannock country, Coates concludes, "It seems extremely unlikely that Bannock Jim or some other Indian from Fort Hall served as a link between the Mormons and the Plains Indians" (101). In a recent study entitled, *Ghost Dances and Identity* (2006) Gregory Smoak provides additional information into the life of Pagwite (Pagwhite, Bannock Jim). Smoak finds that not only was Pagwite a military leader during the 1870s in Bannock territory but he was also a political leader who fought for the rights of his people throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century especially in regard to the resistance movements in the 1880s and 1890s

¹² Also quoted in part in Smoak 1986: 273-274 and Smoak 2006: 175

regarding government schools (Smoak 2006: 121-124,128-130).¹³ Pagwite was killed during these disputes by Baptiste “Bat” Avery, the agency’s butcher (184). In connection with the Ghost Dance Smoak echoes Coates’ assessment, “Pagwite was certainly a Ghost Dance activist, but he never became a Mormon” (166).

One further documentary source can be found mentioning an individual that at first glance might be Bannock Jim. An article printed on November 9, 1892 in the *Walker Lake Bulletin* claimed,

Sergeant Jim, a leader of the once terrible Bannocks, now living on the Fort Hall Reservation neare [sic] Pocatello, declares that the Messiah will be assassinated if he does not cease his attempts to stir up trouble. Jim declares that the red men of the far West want no more trouble with the whites, and the Bannocks will certainly take steps to have the false prophet killed if he sends any more runners into Idaho (Silver State) (Logan 1980 276).

However, upon closer inspection the military Bannock the journalist is referring to could not have the same as Bannock Jim since Pagwite’s death occurred in 1891. Perhaps the Jim referred to in the article is “Captain Jim” a recognized leader of the Bannocks, according to Smoak’s study (Smoak 2006: 110-111). The identity of Bannock Jim nor his actual connection to the Mormon Church does not matter as much as the fact that he was a tool utilized by initial comparativists to further their claims that Mormons were the ones responsible for the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890.

Other initial comparisons were based on the arrogance of the white observers being unable to fathom that a movement of this magnitude could have been conceived by an “Indian”. Reports were continually filed voicing opinions similar to William J. Plumb’s, an Indian agent among the Western Shoshone, “I cannot think but some designing white man or men are at the bottom of the whole matter” (95). After interviewing a group of “Plains Indians” who had recently returned from meeting Wovoka, William T. Selwyn stated,

In my opinion, this whole business is started or originated by the spies or missionaries of the Mormons because some of the visitors told me themselves that this new Messiah had

¹³ See John W. Heaton’s *The Shoshone-Bannock: Culture & Commerce at Fort Hall, 1870-1940* (2005) for further information on Pagwite (106-119).

told them that the plural wives is no sin; from this I think that this man or messiah is a Mormon with practice of slide-hand [sleight-of-hand] performer and ventriloquist (95).

Special Agent S. Saloman went as far as to petition the Secretary of the Interior to allow the Secret Service to investigate the matter as he was convinced the Mormons were behind all the trouble (95). On November 27, 1890 S.A. Crandal of Columbia, South Dakota wrote United States President, Benjamin Harrison that she had been told from a reliable source that the Mormons were to blame for the whole business and that they were providing the Sioux with “arms” and “ammunition” in preparation for war (95-96). Crandal’s voice sounded a lot like that of Catherine Weldon who was also concerned about Mormon influence among the Sioux (Miller 1959: 115). Weldon was an interesting woman who travelled from her home in Brooklyn as a representative of the National Defence Association before falling in love with Sitting Bull and becoming, allegedly, one of his wives (Miller 1959: 68-69; Miller 1962). As we have already seen in the introduction to this work, Weldon wrote Agent McLaughlin stating that she believed “the Mormons are at the bottom of it all” (Miller 1959: 115).

One final initial comparativist who might have influenced the theories of General Miles wrote in *Harper’s Weekly* (1890) “There is little doubt but that this belief is a perversion of the Christian religion as taught by missionaries, and in its present form suits the wishes and hopes of the Indians....Many of the Indians have joined the Mormon faith, and it is believed that the teachings of the Mormons have encouraged these prophecies, in order to increase their influence with the Indians” (Overholt 1974: 46). Marion Maus’ comments provide a good transition into a discussion of Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles.

General Nelson A. Miles

Nelson Appleton Miles was born in Westminister, Massachusetts on August 8, 1839 and died 85 years later in Washington D.C. while attending a circus with his grandchildren (Pohanka 1985: 19, 318). At least three biographies of the farmboy turned Lieutenant General have been written which focus primarily on his military career (Johnson 1962; Tolman 1968; Pohanka 1985). However, for our purposes here it is enough to note that by 1890 he had managed to manoeuvre his way to the rank of Major General and transferred from the Pacific Division of the United States Army to the Division of the Missouri which ultimately resulted in him being the commanding officer on the ground in South Dakota (Pohanka 1985: 186-189). From this lofty

position, Miles was able to observe and write a great deal about the happenings on the western frontier. His station also afforded him a unique authority that subsequently resulted in the publication of two compilations of his observations (1897; 1911). These collections along with other contemporary writings found in letters, reports, and newspaper articles are evidence for General Miles' recognition here as a leading nineteenth century participant in the practice of comparative religion.

A relevant example of this can be found in his *Personal Recollections* (1897) where he devotes an entire chapter to the study of Mormons and Mormonism (362-370). Although primarily a sceptical review of Brigham Young's economic policies in Utah, Miles does address some fundamental doctrines of the church namely their temple worship, tithing, and prophetic worship. The tyrannical rule of Young is juxtaposed by a picture of the simple but prosperous average Utah Mormon; however, Miles is quick to point out that "Anyone who was very troublesome disappeared very promptly, and the Mountain Meadow massacre will forever be a blot upon the history of the Mormons" (370). Perhaps a more keen observation of Miles' is found in a report written on September 14, 1891 which cites the various reasons for the "Indian Disaffection" the previous year (Pohanka 1985: 190-224). Inadequate food supplies, crop failure, and numerous poor bureaucratic decisions are all named as various reasons behind the uprisings, Miles, is also willing to place the blame on the shoulders of the "deluded, fanatical people living on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains" (203). As we shall see, Miles' willingness to produce comparisons involving the Mormons and the Ghost Dance of 1890 had consequences for those he was writing about.

The comparisons being produced and circulated by the initial commentators above provided Miles with plenty of ammunition from which to produce his own. Miles' early views made in 1890 were later expanded upon after the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1891 and later in 1896. In an article written for the *North American Review* Miles gives us a perfect example of the comparative method in action. After having introduced his topic, which is a comprehensive review of the "Indian Question", Miles petitions the reader to place themselves in the shoes of the Natives by asking them how they would feel if

sixty millions of people from Africa, India, or China, claiming that their civilization, customs, and beliefs were older and better than ours, compelling us to adopt their habits,

language, and religion, obliging us to wear the same style of raiment, cut our hair according to their fashion, live upon the same food, sing the same songs, worship the same Allahs, Vishnus, and Brahmans; and we realized that such a conquest and the presence of such a horde of enemies had become a withering blight and a destroying scourge to our race: what then would be our feeling towards such a people? (Miles 1891: 2-3).

Miles' insight is refreshing as he compares the conquered life of the Native to relatable societies throughout the world. Miles must have understood that most people find it easier to perceive the injustices that occur in foreign lands than to scrutinize the events that take place in their own backyards.

During the course of his review, Miles eventually makes the statement,

At this stage emissaries from a certain religious sect or people living on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains came among them announcing that the real messiah had appeared...So well was this deception played by men masquerading and personating the Christ that they made these superstitious savages believe that all who had faith in this new religion would occupy the earth, and all who did not would be destroyed; and they were told that which is most precious to the Indian heart, that the spirits of their departed relatives would be resurrected, and after the whites were destroyed they would come back driving vast herds of buffaloes and wild horses (6-7).

Miles comments further on the influence of these "Rocky Mountain" deceivers during his concluding remarks. Miles writes, "You ask me who is responsible for this condition of affairs. The answer is both the whites and the Indians." He then lists six reasons, the second of which reads,

Another class of whites are those who have committed the great crime of instilling into the minds of these superstitious and vicious savages the delusion that they have a messiah among them, and that the white people who do not believe it will be destroyed by some supernatural power: it matters not whether the Indians have been incited by this class of white people in actual words to open hostilities or not; the deceptions that have been practised upon them have aroused their warlike natures until they are in a condition for devastation, plunder, ravage, and all the horrors that savage fiends can inflict upon defenceless and unprotected people (9).

Miles firmly believed, regardless of actually existing evidence, that the Mormons were to blame, at least in part, for the Ghost Dance Religion and the Massacre of Wounded Knee. Coates

calls these circumstantial associations “conspiracy theories” based on “hearsay” (Coates 1985: 96). To further this argument, Coates brings to light even more opinions of Miles in regards to Mormons and Mormonism as found in an 1897 work written by Miles entitled *Personal Recollections and Observations of General Nelson A. Miles*. Miles’ comments concerning Mormons reflect the prejudices of the day. He cites the Mountain Meadow Massacre as evidence for his perpetuation of the “Danite image” of absolute control and “perfect discipline” (Coates 1985: 96). Miles’ purpose is to prove how much influence and control the Mormons had on anyone living in the surrounding area, which would have included most of the Ghost Dancers. Because of Miles’ position of authority and willingness to perpetuate possible connections between the Ghost Dance and Mormons, it is safe to conclude that the majority of interested Americans would have believed his conclusions. This fact is seen best by the manner in which James Mooney, after having traced the Ghost Dance to its roots and despite having little verifiable evidence to work with, found ways to still include the Mormons in his history.

Up until now we have only explored the views and opinions of outsiders. While personal accounts of Dancers do exist, the recollections of Porcupine being a prime example, the majority of voices that can be found on the subject come from within the ranks of the Mormons. As early as the 1870s Mormons had become aware that they were being compared with Native American religious movements. Orson Pratt, a Mormon apostle and philosopher, after reading the accounts of George W. Hill mentioned above, thought he knew who the three “Indians” looking strangers responsible for “some fourteen hundred” convert baptisms, may have been. Pratt believed they were the Three Nephites of *Book of Mormon* origin. Pratt’s findings were not uncommon amongst his fellow Mormons as the Three Nephite theory had been constantly utilized throughout the church’s history as a means of explaining unheralded events. By the time Miles began formulating his views on who might be responsible for the “messiah craze”, the Mormon public was already well aware of the possible connections between the two faiths. It was common knowledge that the Three Nephites would one day appear to the “Lamanites” and teach them about Christ’s gospel as contained in the *Book of Mormon* and as practiced by the Mormons. Joseph Smith had even prophesied that during his 85th year of life the Messiah would return and usher in the millennium. Smith was born on December 23, 1805 which placed the time for the Saviour’s coming sometime between December 23, 1890 and December 23, 1891, dates which just so happened to coincide perfectly with the prophecies of Wovoka. The

following two subsections discuss the Mormon responses to the comparisons already seen as well as responses to comparisons they were producing amongst themselves.

The Three Nephites

The legend of the Three Nephites is a popular folktale employed by Mormons throughout their history to explain rather unexplainable visitations, healings, and messages. An example of such usage comes from a collection of written and oral accounts of the Three Nephites published by A.E. Fife entitled “The Legend of the Three Nephites among the Mormons” (1940). This account is of particular interest to this study as it was observed in the summer of 1876 near St. George, Utah amongst the Native Americans in that region. It states that during the summer months of that year a stranger, with a “long white beard” and “entirely dressed in white”, suddenly appeared amongst the Natives camped at Duck Creek claiming to be “one of their forefathers” (10). The stranger asked for runners to gather as many of their neighbours and relatives to this location as possible for he had a special message that all Native peoples needed to hear. The message, which took several months to deliver, was summarized after its completion and recorded by a local Mormon and his brother, was a message of patience and hope. They said that Nephi, the name of the stranger, had “told them that the Mormons were their friends and that they should listen to their advice, assuring them that in due time prophets would come among the Indians and teach them how to live a better life” (10). One obvious interpretation may be that this messenger was prophesying about the prophet Wovoka and his teachings of peaceful endurance; however, if this connection was made by the witness it is not recorded in Fife’s article. What Fife does include is the obvious Mormon interpretation that the messenger must have been one of the Three Nephites. Sextus E. Johnson, the recorder of the event mentioned above, forwarded this suggestion as his official analysis over thirty years later to the current Prophet and President of the LDS Church, Joseph F. Smith. By this time in 1911, Smith would have been accustomed to hearing such interpretations regarding the Three Nephites as both he and previous President Wilford Woodruff composed similar theories in specific regard to Wovoka and the “messiah craze” in the early 1890s. Smith, writing in *The Young Woman’s Journal*, states

With reference to who the personage is (one or more) who is claimed by the Lamanites [Native Americans] to have visited them, there appears to me to be room for grave doubts. From all the reports I have seen upon this subject, it is not at all conclusive to my mind that he was indeed the Messiah (270).

After a sceptical discussion of the source from which such claims had been made, which in this case was the Cheyenne pilgrim Porcupine, and as Smith rightly points out, a series of

Porcupine's interpreters and commentators, Smith makes the suggestion that a Latter-day Saint might reasonably "conclude that perhaps one or more of the three Nephite disciples...had made an appearance to Porcupine and perhaps to many others" (270-271). Elaborating on this, Smith writes, "This would be a very natural conclusion and not at all inconsistent with the established principles of the gospel and our knowledge of the manner of God's dealings with the children of men" (271). What Smith means by this interpretation is that in order for the Mormon belief of absolutism to remain intact, Christ could not appear to the Natives without having first told the Mormon prophet who would in turn have told Smith, as Smith at this time was a member of the First Presidency acting as a counsellor to the President. Since Mormon leadership had no knowledge of Christ's return, the role then fell to a messenger or group of messengers of Christ, the Three Nephites. Smith's interpretation was no doubt influenced by the Prophet of the Mormon Church himself. Woodruff had already forwarded a belief that the "heavenly messengers" that were causing a great commotion amongst the "Lamanites" were probably the Three Nephites in a letter he wrote to George Terry, who was the son of a Mormon missionary and a Shoshone woman who lived among his mother's people (Coates 1985: 101-102).

Before any conclusions can be drawn about the use of the comparative tool being employed by Mormon leaders in clarifying the Dancers own belief that their prophet was receiving visitations from the Messiah, we must first understand who the Three Nephites are. According to the *Book of Mormon*, Jesus Christ, after his resurrection and post-mortal visitations in Israel, descended upon a remnant of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel in North America. Called Nephites, a clan name based on lineage as well as faith, these descendants of Lehi, an Israelite prophet living in the time of Jeremiah who took his family and close friends on a journey from Jerusalem to the "promised land", were expecting Christ's coming as it fulfilled their Law-of-Moses-styled scriptures. Christ's mission to these diasporic Israelites was to establish the Kingdom of God in America just as he had done so in the Middle East. Consequently the calling and setting apart of twelve apostles was required. The role of chief apostle went to Nephi, a namesake of the progenitor whom the entire group was labelled after. In due course the Lord asked each apostle individually "What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?" Nine of the twelve answered similarly, "We desire that after we have lived unto the age of man, that our ministry, wherein thou has called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto thee in the kingdom." Their wish was granted and Christ immediately blessed each

one that on their seventy second birthday they should experience the rest they had earned. The other three apostles, although names are given of the twelve no delineation of who was part of the nine and who was one of the three is proffered,¹⁴ requested the very opposite of this former desire. The *Book of Mormon* states their desired fate in the words of Christ:

Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me. Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doing of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand (3 Nephi 28: 6-9).¹⁵

The three apostles were given the gift of immortality and according to Mormon, the editor and compiler of the *Book of Mormon*, they went forth ministering and baptizing all who would listen. However, some did not listen and the three were “cast into prison, buried alive, thrown into a furnace and into a den of wild beasts” but in all cases came out unscathed and even more desirous to preach righteousness (Fife 1940: 3). Mormon leaves the story of the Three Nephites by stating that they will one day preach to all the nations of earth including the Gentiles, Jews, as well as the Lost Tribes of Israel.

While the myth of the Three Nephites has its origins in the *Book of Mormon* its popularity and propagation must be ascribed to its utility. As works such as Fife’s contest, the theory of the Three Nephites can be employed to nearly every scenario and is an extension of the Jewish myth of the Wandering Jew and the Christian myth of John the beloved. The myth has been used to explain such simple scenarios as an early notice of the death of a son at war to more complex interpretations of Columbus’ discovery of America. Its usefulness in answering the question of the identity of the Ghost Dance Messiah cannot be overstated for on the one hand it allowed for a deflection of the allegations being made by observers like General Miles and E.R.

¹⁴ Mormon, the editor of the *Book of Mormon*, apparently did know the names but was commanded by the Lord not to write them. No reason is given as to why this might have been the case.

¹⁵ Also quoted in Fife and Beardell.

Kellog that the “Messiah” was a Mormon, possibly named “Bannack Jim” while on the other hand providing a much needed explanation for the spiritual awakening that the Native Americans in the Great Basin were experiencing. However, despite the utility of the myth it could not answer the lingering question on many Mormon minds: how do we account for the prophecy of Joseph Smith coinciding so well with the teachings of Wovoka?

The 1891 Millennial Prophecy

The time set by Ghost Dancers for the return of their deceased ancestors was the “spring, when the grass is knee high” of 1891 (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 799). Accompanying this event would be a natural disaster – or disasters depending on whose version you read – great enough to rid the world of the white race. Kuwapi, a South Dakota Native, believed, “The father [Wovoka] is going to cause a big cyclone or whirlwind, by which he will have all the white people to perish” (799). As the word spread across the Great Basin of this appointed hour, members of the Mormon Church began to wonder just who this “new messiah” really was. As we have just seen, one explanation that Mormon leaders latched onto was that he must be one of the Three Nephites, sent to prepare the way for the mass conversion of the “Lamanites” to Christ’s restored church. However, the question is why the Mormons allowed this connection between their own beliefs and those of the Ghost Dance to be made. Would it not have been more favourable for them to have joined in with the majority of Americans and passed the movement off as a one last attempt of a conquered people to free themselves from oppression? The simple answer is that they could not do this, and here is why.

In 1835 Joseph Smith blessed his newly selected apostles in a prophecy that declared that “they would witness Christ’s ushering in of his millennial reign ‘in the flesh’ and that ‘even fifty-six years shall wind up the scene’” (Erickson 1998: 7). Smith’s prophecy was reiterated eight years later on April 6, 1843 while speaking at a session of general conference being held at the Nauvoo Temple. Smith told the audience that he “was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following: Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eight-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man” (Doctrine and Covenants 130 14-15). The prophet then proceeded to clarify, “In the name of the Lord God, and let it be written- the son of man will not come in the clouds of heaven till I am eight-five years old” (Erickson 1998: 6). The members of the church gathered that day, well

aware of the recent failure of the Millerite millennial prophecy just three days prior, needed no help doing the math. Smith's eighty-fifth birthday would occur on December 23, 1890 and coincided perfectly with his previous prediction of 1891. Current Latter-day Saints and their scholars will contest that this revelation is full of ambiguities and as history has since proven the failure of Smith's prophecy, insiders cling to the word "if" as found in the canonized version. However, the veracity of Smith's claim is not under inspection here, what matters for the purposes of this work is what nineteenth-century Saints felt about the prophecy and how they waited in great anticipation for the year 1891.

Nineteenth-century Mormons were a millennial minded people and according to Dan Erickson, who along with Grant Underwood has thoroughly investigated this topic, it was a "common Mormon belief that the millennium would commence in 1891" (2). As premillennialists, Mormons actively anticipated the day of Christ's return and it was this attitude that allowed them to endure some highly volatile circumstances during their early years in Utah including the Utah War (1856-58), the Civil War (1861-64), as well as the many anti-polygamy bills that were passed during the 1880s (8). Interestingly, the Saints viewed these events as necessary signs of the Second Coming. Church leaders were constantly reinforcing this idea and consistently referring to the year(s) of 1890 and 1891 as the appointed time. Wilford Woodruff was the perhaps the most prolific in perpetuating such beliefs. In 1837 he received a patriarchal blessing at the hands of Joseph Smith Sr., the father of the prophet, which promised the Woodruff would "remain on the earth to behold thy Savior Come in the Clouds of heaven" (6-7). During the Utah War Woodruff preached to a group of Saints and warned them "that President Buchanan [the President of the United States] had no idea what he was up against...and that the government was 'turning the last key to rend the nation asunder'" (11). In 1868 he again prophesied the destruction of Albany, Boston, and New York and went as far as to claim that when this happens the president of the Mormon Church would have to "take the Presidency of the United States to save the Constitution" (13).

With the conclusion of the Civil War and the issue of slavery being somewhat under control many Americans and members of the government turned their attention West and began a long campaign against polygamy. This battle over the practice would define the latter half of the nineteenth-century for the Saints. With increased opposition came a renewed appeal to

Smith's 1891 prophecy. In 1875 Oliver Huntington wrote, "God had revealed to him [Smith] that the coming of Christ would be within 56 years, which being added to 1835 shows that before 1891 and the 14th of February the Savior of the world would make his appearance again upon the earth and the winding up scene take place" (14). The Church officially sanctioned the prophecy, not Huntington's specific date only the year 1891, when they republished the Doctrine and Covenants and included Smith's 1843 speech as the 130th section (15). Three years later Orson Pratt edited a new version of the canonized book which included footnotes. "Pratt's footnote for Section 130 highlighted Joseph Smith's eighty-five year millennial prophecy, adding in the commentary section confirmation of the fateful time frame 'near the end of the year 1890.' Pratt also cross-referenced the revelation: 'See prophecy of Joseph, uttered 14 March 1835... 'Even 56 years should wind up the scene'" (18-19). Pratt's inclusion of the prophecy was undoubtedly a declaration by Mormon authorities of belief and expectation.

Woodruff continued to voice his own beliefs during these years that "there will be no United States in the Year 1890" (16). The 1880s saw the passing of the Edmunds Act (1882) and the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887) was officially found to be constitutional in May of 1890 which allowed for the government to seize any property the Mormons owned valued over \$50,000. However, these decisions only increased millennial fervour amongst the Saints. Woodruff was continually circulating through the region promising the Saints present at his meetings that Christ's coming was so soon that most in attendance would live to see him in the flesh (19). The apostle Moses Thatcher, perpetuated the date of February 14, 1891 in an address given in 1886 (19). Erickson does point out that not all "General Authorities" – the leadership of the church – felt as strongly as Woodruff and Thatcher, however, it was Woodruff who became the president in 1888 and even in this position he spread his apocalyptic beliefs to the main body of the church. So strong was his belief in the imminent millennium that he declared more than once that "the Lord will never give a revelation to abandon plural marriage" (23). Right up until Woodruff read out his shocking Manifesto, effectively ceasing the practice of polygamy, in September of 1890 his apostles could be heard preaching Smith's 1891 prophecy. Lorenzo Snow, the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told the members of that group on May 29, 1890, "You brethren will live to behold the savior, you shall not die, death shall have no power over you" (24). Another member of the quorum, Anthon H. Lund, speaking to members of the San Pete Stake, "we need not say – 'our Lord delayeth his coming!'... We can be sure it is in the near

future, because the Lord told Joseph Smith...that if he lived to be a certain age, he should see His face, which points to [18]91” (24).

The October general conference of 1890 is perhaps the best example to use while attempting to understand the mindset of the majority of Saints. It was in this same conference that Woodruff’s plural marriage Manifesto was presented to the public.

When the Manifesto was presented for a sustaining vote in the October 1890 general conference...many supported it only reluctantly, some believing that it was a sign that the millennium was nigh. Moses Thatcher, in the meetings preceding general conference, had supported the Manifesto because of his faith that the millennium would occur within months” (26-27).

It seems the debate of the coming apocalypse was as equally important as the ending of plural marriage. According to Erickson, no less than seven leaders spoke on the topic with some, Moses Thatcher being the most vocal, sticking to Smith’s prophecy while others downplayed the date. Woodruff’s own comments on the Manifesto were thought provoking if nothing else, “All that the Latter-day Saints have to do is to be quiet, careful and wise before the Lord, watch the signs of the times, and be true and faithful; and when you get through you will understand many things that you do not today” (27-28).

From of all this talk emitting from Temple Square it is no surprise that the majority of members eagerly anticipated the year 1891. On January 1, 1891 Woodruff wrote in his journal, “This is New Years day and the year that that has been looked upon by many as one of the most important years of the world” (30). Erickson believes that most Mormons were well aware of the coinciding dates of Smith and Wovoka’s respective prophecies. He writes that “The Saints also drew comfort from an unlikely source”, this source being the “Native American Ghost dance movement” (24-25). In another work, Erickson states, “The year 1890 also saw the culmination of the Native American Ghost Dance movement. This, coinciding with the calamities facing the church, prompted many members to associate the visions of the Messiah declared by Indians with Christ’s millennial reign” (Erickson 1998: 202).

Despite the obviousness of this comparison, few scholars have given it the attention it deserves. Gregory Smoak and Garold Barney briefly mention it during their discussions of Mooney’s inclusion of the 1892 pamphlet “The Mormons have stepped down and out of

Celestial Government – the American Indians have stepped up and into Celestial Government”. Produced anonymously, the pamphlet, as cited in the introduction of this paper, claims that the Three Nephites visited Ghost Dancers in Walker Lake and directed them in the organization of their faith (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 792). The short piece goes onto remind Mormons of Joseph Smith’s 1891 prophecy and encourages its readers to attend a series of free lectures to take place in July of 1892 on the “coming of the Messiah to the Hebrews...the Jews...[and] the American Indians” (793). The author of the pamphlet perpetuates the Three Nephites myth as well as the 1891 prophecy. However, no commentary is given by Smoak other than a one line clarification of the prophecies time table. Barney allocates a few more words, but no more information, as he writes, “To the Mormon Millennialist, 1890 was the long awaited year in which it was believed, that the Messiah would return. Both the Indian People and the Mormons began 1890 with a burning desire to see and feel the return of the Messiah” (Barney 1986 [2011]: 142).

Lawrence Coates thankfully continues his trend of excellent research as he cites Porcupine’s comments of witnessing Mormons and Natives dancing together as a cause of alarm for President Woodruff. Upon hearing reports of these alleged events, Woodruff asked John King, a Cherokee, to study the situation further. King travelled to Fort Custer, Montana and spoke with Porcupine, himself, about his observations. King concluded that Porcupine was telling the truth and that he had actually met Jesus Christ, the Messiah. King was excited as he returned to report his findings to Woodruff, because he felt the time for the gospel to be fully preached to his Native brethren had arrived. Woodruff accepted the testimony of King except in regard to Porcupine having actually seen Christ. In Woodruff’s mind the personage could only have been one of the Three Nephites sent as a messenger from Christ. Regardless, Woodruff wanted to keep a closer eye on the proceedings of the movement from that time forward and sent King back, but this time as a missionary. Porcupine’s account created quite an excitement amongst the Saints, an excitement that intensified when General Miles’ views were printed in *Desert Weekly News* in early November. Woodruff was forced to act quickly in hopes of counteracting the allegations being thrown at his church. Allegations which the perpetuation of the Three Nephites myth and 1891 prophecy, both of which he played a major role in circulating, played no little part. Within two weeks of the printing of Miles’ article, Woodruff had his secretary write King in Montana:

In view of General Miles' report that he deems the Mormons to be at the bottom of the present movement among the Lamanites regarding the coming of a Messiah, the President thinks the present an unsuitable time for any of our brethren to visit these tribes, as the presence would, in all probability, be regarded as confirmation of General Miles' suspicions, and if, unfortunately, any harm was done it would be laid at their doors or on those of the whole people. For this reason the present is not regarded as an opportune time for missionary efforts among these tribes (Coates 1985: 108).

Woodruff's political acquiescence to outside pressures was in tune with his less than two month old Manifesto. It seems that Woodruff felt the church could not take any more bad press and wanted to distance the Saints as far away from pointing fingers as possible. However, this would prove difficult as he had already shown enough interest in the proceedings of the Ghost Dance to offer commentary on its leadership, not to mention the obvious connection of the two prophecies.

Woodruff continued to urge precaution on his members in outlying areas where the Ghost Dance movement was being scrutinized by the public eye. On November 21, 1890 he wrote two Idaho stake presidents requesting them to take a precautionary path in regards to their involvement with the movement and to "avoid any entanglements with unprincipled people who may have motives in compromising...our people" (108). Other Church commentators, such as John Nicholson and Joseph F. Smith, writing early in 1891 sustained Woodruff's policy of treading lightly in the public forum. Nicholson wrote his "Thoughts on the Indian Question" in the *Young Woman's Journal* which can be summarized as an acknowledgment of the comparative phenomena between the Ghost Dance Religion and Christianity with a warning to his fellow Mormons to scrutinize the details of the events carefully before drawing the conclusion that it was Christ – a fact he does not dismiss but allows as a possibility – who visited men like Porcupine. He does however, dismiss the allegations that the heavenly messenger could have been a "Mormon" missionary as "manifest absurdity" (218-221). Future president, Joseph F. Smith added his voice to those before him by stating authoritatively that "God has not heretofore worked, nor will He be likely to so work among this remnant of His people" (269). He does acknowledge that in other areas missionary work had been taking place but concludes that little success had been reached "on account of the extremely benighted minds, and the wild, nomadic habits of the red man. And for many other sufficient reason they have not been susceptible to the impressions of the Holy Spirit, nor capable of rising to the comprehension of its power" (269). As we have seen previously in this chapter, Smith believed that the "Messiah" spoken of by

Porcupine was “one or more of the three Nephite disciples” (270). Smith, like Nicholson, does not dismiss the possibility of Christ visiting the “Lamanites” and believes that such heavenly communication will one day occur as a forewarning of the Second Coming but he does not believe that this specific case was one such occurrence.

Conclusion

As the press coverage and public interest of the Ghost Dance Religion increased so did the necessity of Mormon leaders to respond to outside allegations as well as to internal interpretations of doctrine, myth, and prophecy. The conversion of the “Lamanites” was part of the very foundation of the Mormon belief and practice. Combined with the myth of the Three Nephites and the perpetuation of Joseph Smith’s 1891 millennial prophecy by authorities, it would have been logical and reasonable for many Mormons to look at the Ghost Dance as a sign of the times. Years of premillennialist teachings and missionary work among neighbouring Native groups only added to the comparative possibilities. Porcupine’s account of the Messiah and Mormon participation, followed by General Miles’ fallacious accusations forced the once interested observer President Woodruff to adopt a policy of caution and submission to governmental pressures. Though it can be argued that personally, Woodruff still looked towards the year 1891 as the year Christ would manifest himself in the flesh, publicly he took actions that would ensure the survival of his church and its membership. Though Miles and others continued to place blame on the Mormons after 1891, the events at Wounded Knee coupled with the failure of Wovoka’s prophecy of the millennium and Mormon acquiescence, resulted in both the Mormons and the Ghost Dance fading out of the limelight and into relative obscurity, at least until the Smithsonian Institute sent the young and eager anthropologist James Mooney to investigate what really happened way out in the west.

Chapter 4. Circulation and Perpetuation

Once the excitement over the events at Wounded Knee died down and the government once again felt that they had control over the situation, the production of comparisons between the Mormons and the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 began to fade out of the spotlight. However, the influence of these comparisons did not, rather they grew as scholars such as James Mooney, Paul Bailey, and Garold Barney began a process of circulation and perpetuation that has yet to be diminished. Mooney was the first to add a scientific validity to what he felt was an obvious connection between the two religions. Bailey, a Mormon by birth, caught hold of Mooney's ideas and, with additional source material to work from, perpetuated the comparisons in a self-serving manner. The most recent publication of these comparisons is found in Barney's *Mormons, Indians, and the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890* (1986). In this work, Barney continues the process of production, circulation, and perpetuation by specifically employing the comparative method. Barney's work falls short of its mark in that he uses the comparative tools at his disposal irresponsibly; a fact that has resulted in a work that is ultimately uninteresting to anyone outside the Mormon world.

Before approaching this chapter a knowledge of both the Ghost Shirt and the Mormon temple garment is required. The Ghost Shirt as described by a contemporary observer of the Sioux Ghost Dance rituals and recorded in William S. E. Coleman's *Voices of Wounded Knee* (2000) was worn by both male and females (41-42). The anonymous witness writes that the female version was made "of white cotton cloth" and

was cut like their ordinary dress, a loose robe with wide flowing sleeves, painted blue in the neck, in the shape of a three-cornered handkerchief, with moon, stars, birds, etc., interspersed with real feathers, painted on the waist and sleeves. While dancing they wound their shawls about their waists, letting them fall to within 3 inches of the ground, the fringe at the bottom (40-41).

The onlooker continues with a description of the male version,

The Ghost shirt for men was made of the same material – shirt and leggings painted red. Some of the leggings were painted in stripes running up and down, others running around. The shirt around the neck was painted blue, and the whole garment fantastically sprinkled with figures of birds, bow and arrows, sun, moon, and stars, and everything they saw in nature. Down the inside of the sleeve were rows of feathers tied by the quill ends and left to fly in the breeze, and also a row around the neck of up and down the

outside of the leggings. I noticed that a number had stuffed birds, squirrel heads, etc., tied in their long hair. The faces of all were painted red with a black half moon on the forehead and on one cheek (41).

These descriptions were chosen almost arbitrarily as many descriptions and actual examples of the Ghost Shirt can be found in nearly every work written on the Ghost Dance. However, the visual produced upon reading these particular descriptions is especially vivid and useful to those unfamiliar with its image.

More important than imagery, however, is the application and origins of the Ghost Shirt. The Ghost shirt was thought of as “bulletproof” and that its special powers would render the wearer invincible to their enemies. Indian Police Captain George Sword stated, “All the men and women made holy shirts and dresses... They said that the bullets will not go through these shirts and dresses, so they all have these dresses for war. Their enemies weapon will not go through these dresses” (Coleman 2000: 42). Nothing emphasizes this belief greater than the events that occurred on Wounded Knee Creek where hundreds of men, women, and children when the old medicine man Yellow Bird stood before the surrounded Miniconjous and screamed,

Do not be afraid, and let your hearts be strong to meet what is before you; we are all we aware that there are lots of soldiers about us and that they have lots of bullets; but I have received assurance that their bullets cannot penetrate us. The prairie is large and the bullet will not go toward you, but over the large prairies, and if they do go towards you, they will not penetrate you (290-291).

History sadly attests that Yellow Bird and the rest of those wearing the Ghost Shirt that day were mistaken. However, prior to this event the invincibility of the Ghost Shirt was very much believed in.

The origins of the Ghost Shirt are harder to trace as we shall see in this chapter. According to Mooney, the sacred garment was created by the militant Sioux on the Plains and not by Wovoka in Nevada. Two contemporary sources disagree with Mooney’s findings. The first is an eye witness account recorded by Ed Dyer that describes in detail an event where Wovoka, in an effort to prove his invulnerability, asked his brother to shoot him in the chest while wearing only a shirt. The event took place in front of large gathering and by the use of practiced “wizardry” Wovoka was fired upon and miraculously came out unscathed. Dyer claims that the shotgun was full of sand and paper wadding. Wovoka was later asked about this event by Arthur I.

Chapman, the first outsider to interview the prophet and second source to disagree with Mooney, and responded that “It was only a joke” (Hittman 1990). If we are to believe Mooney that Wovoka was not responsible for the Ghost Shirt then the question remains as to who was?

If the Ghost Shirt was not invented in Nevada than it is probable that Mooney is right in believing it originated amongst the Arapahoe (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 798). Mooney specifically claims that Kicking Bear, the leader of the Lakota Sioux, perpetuated the use of the Ghost Shirt and expounded upon its bulletproof qualities after attending dances in Arapahoe territory (798). Later scholars have looked elsewhere for answers. David Humphreys Miller suggests that Nicholas Black Elk with the help of Kicking Bear is responsible for the initiation of the garment (Miller 1959: 78-80). Black Elk had had a vision as a young boy after collapsing during a dance, in this vision he saw “two men wearing strange painted shirts”. Upon awakening Black Elk states, “Soon I found myself sitting on the ground with dancers crowding all around me, eager to know if I had seen a new vision. Knowing that the sacred shirts had been the gift for my people, I told the dancers of my dream and described the holy garments to them” (78-80). Upon hearing this tale, Kicking Bear became the most staunch supporter of Black Elk and set about immediately to create the holy shirts that his young cousin had seen in vision. After donning the Ghost Shirt for the first time Black Elk received confirmation that he had interpreted the vision correctly. He told the researcher,

That day I dreamed again,” Black Elk told the author years later. “This time I flew once more to the Spirit Land. Now all the Indians who lived in the great camp were wearing the sacred garments – shirts for the men and loose dresses for the women. I decided that such holy dresses must be made for our women to wear during the ghost dance. These Indians in the Spirit Land were wearing white eagle plumes in their hair. I took this to be some sort of added protection that my own people must have so that when the new world came as the Wanekia [Wovoka] had promised, Wakantanka would only need to glance down to know which people to save and which to destroy (80-81).

Whether one gives credit to the visions of Black Elk or sticks with the more approachable evidence which suggests Wovoka as the originator, one has to admit that it provided a powerful tool for its wearers in the fight against colonial oppression.

The history of the Mormon temple garment, or endowment garment, is much easier to trace. Joseph Smith first introduced the garment in Nauvoo as a precursor to the expected

completion of the Nauvoo Temple. The garment was to be worn by all endowed members of the Mormon faith. Being endowed meant that the individual was found worthy enough to enter into the temple and take part in the rituals that occur within its sacred walls (McDannell 1995). The garment is a sacred symbol of one's standing in the eyes of God and is an outward expression of an inward conviction to always serve God and keep the commandments of the Mormon faith. The nineteenth century version of the garment – it has since undergone various different alterations to suit modern needs– is described by one Mormon deserter as “a dress made of muslin or linen, and worn next to the skin, reaching from the neck the ankles and wrists, and in shape like a little child's sleeping garment” (201). Colleen McDannell writes, “Since the garment at the time was split up the middle, one could conceivably use the toilet, make love, and give birth without taking the garment off” (212). This was an important fact because the garment, like the Ghost Shirt and thus the basis for their comparability, was considered a protective shield from both physical as well as spiritual enemies. William Jarman, an endowed member of the Mormon Church, who defected in 1857, supports these propositions when he writes in 1869 that when wearing the holy garment “it is impossible for the Devil to get into our body, for it extends high on the neck and covers the wrists and ankles. It is claimed to be a shield against fire, bullets, drowning and other physical danger” (212). More information on both the Ghost Shirt and the Mormon temple garments will be presented throughout this chapter as this comparison has emerged as the most circulated and perpetuated of all the comparisons heretofore mentioned.

James Mooney

James Mooney was born on February 10, 1861 in Richmond, Indiana (Moses 1984: 2). His parents were Irish immigrants who married shortly after their arrival to America in 1852 (2). Like most immigrants to the country in those days they took up residence in New York, however, they soon wandered west in search of a healthier and happier environment (2). Mooney never knew the man whose name he shared, as just nine months after his birth the elder Mooney – at one time an “itinerant scholar” –passed away from pneumonia (3). Left with only his mother Ellen and two older sisters, Mary Anne and Margaret, Mooney was tutored in the Richmond public school system and nourished at St. Mary's Catholic Church (2-3). As Mooney's biographer, L.G. Moses, puts it, the childhood of James Mooney “was just another footnote to the ‘annals of the poor,’ and more specifically the Irish-American poor” (3). At the age of twelve Mooney first began to develop his passion for studying Native Americans after fixating on a

remark made in reference to the Modoc War, which took place in northern California and southern Oregon in 1873, “that every little Indian uprising brought to light another unknown tribe” (1). Mooney immediately began the arduous task of cataloguing the names and locations of every tribe and tongue he could discover with his limited local resources. Moses writes that this endeavour “surprised neither his family nor his teachers” as Mooney “had been a bookish child” who “searched for adventure in a world of ideas and famous lives” (1). After high school matriculation Mooney spent two brief semesters as a teacher before moving on to a more stimulating career in the print room of the Richmond *Palladium* (5).

In this same year, 1879, the Bureau of Ethnology was formed as a division of the Smithsonian Institution under the direction of John Wesley Powell (7-11). At this time ethnology was considered, along with the anthropometry (physical anthropology), archaeology, and ethnography, as one of the main branches of the “science of mankind” or anthropology. In fact Powell “would have preferred anthropology rather than ethnology” as the title for his department since the overlap between all four subcategories, especially ethnography and ethnology, was extensive and difficult to define (7). Powell was one of the earliest American anthropologists and had spent a great deal of time conducting field research amongst the Numic peoples of the Great Basin prior to this appointment by Smithsonian director John Henry. Mooney was aware of Powell’s findings as well as the great surveys of the West by travellers such as Lewis Henry Morgan.

The science of ethnology was an exciting new field of research for inquisitive young minds like Mooney’s and offered a chance to get out of rural Indiana and travel to the exotic locations he had been reading about for most of his adolescent life. Since Morgan’s work focused on the Iroquois and Powell’s on the Shoshones and Utes, Mooney sought to carve out a niche for himself by studying the Eastern Cherokee of North Carolina. Funds were short for the poor Irishman and resources in Indiana were even scarcer. It soon became evident to Mooney that in order to transform his “avocation into a vocation” he would have to seek employment in Powell’s bureau as no other organization, including universities, offered remuneration for anthropological work at this time. Consequently, Mooney wrote John Wesley Powell in June of 1882 petitioning the director for a job. By way of qualifications, Mooney considered his “ten years” of active interest in gathering and cataloguing the names and locations of approximately

two thousand Native American tribes. Mooney wrote, "I have made a study of local names, tribal relations and boundaries, linguistic affinities and general history of the Indians of North and South American, but have had no personal experience with them" (11). Mooney's letter was sent by Powell to Colonel Garrick Mallery, one the bureau's first ethnologists, who wrote a perfunctory reply which pointed out the unimpressive nature of Mooney's resume and ultimately admonished the applicant to abandon the hope of employment in Washington (12). It is not known whether Mooney received Mallery's response as he wrote the Bureau a month after hearing that his initial letter had been forwarded to Mallery, that he had not yet received the results of his application (12). Mooney was persistent in his efforts for appointment. He first solicited the assistance of an Indiana Congressman, however, this "political jobbery proved unsuccessful" (12). He then wrote to Powell again, expressing his desire to travel to Washington and display his many findings in person. However, this could only be accomplished if the Bureau would pay for the cost of travel and accommodation. His third letter, like his second, went unanswered.

It was not until April 24, 1885 that Mooney would finally begin work for the Bureau of Ethnology in Washington D.C. After another round of letters and appeals to various men in higher places than he had failed, Mooney was left with no alternative but to make the journey at his own expense and seek an appointment with Powell face to face. His bold venture proved a success as Powell "offered him a position on the staff if he would serve as a volunteer until the next fiscal appropriation" (17). Mooney accepted this offer and began "compiling a list of tribal synonyms" for future reference in a comprehensive publication of Native American ethnological data (17).

With his position now secured at the Bureau, Mooney began to work with and learn from other ethnologists including Mallery, the man who had originally thought his qualifications inadequate (18-19). For the next five years Mooney progressed through the junior ranks until he was given the opportunity to begin researching the Eastern Cherokee of North Carolina. His work was so thorough and well respected that when news of the "messiah craze" hit Washington Mooney, despite his already overburdened workload, was assigned the task of unlocking the mysteries of the fascinating new religious movement (51). Mooney was still en route to the West when the tragedy at Wounded Knee Creek occurred and it was not until the new year that he

began his initial investigations into the religion that would culminate years later in his most celebrated work *The Ghost-Dance Religion and Wounded Knee* (1896).

His first encounter with the actual ceremony of the Ghost Dance must have occurred early on in January, 1891, when he was among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations (54). Although Mooney's biographer has supplied a detailed analysis of the ethnologist's encounters with a wide variety of informants including Wovoka himself, what is more important for our own survey is not Mooney's investigations but his writings and especially his use of the comparative method.

Nineteenth century anthropology was defined by the evolutionary belief that "primitive" cultures and religions were "survivals" of the past. These "survivals" – a term credited to E.B. Tylor and his 1871 publication of *Primitive Culture* – were destined to be replaced by more civilized forms of living and would, given enough time and exposure, culminate in a society much like those found in Western Europe and the Eastern United States. Mooney's boss, John Wesley Powell, as well the other noted ethnologists at the Bureau believed wholeheartedly in this theory of evolutionary cultures and thought that their studies and observations of Native Americans would further illuminate these foundational principles of human existence. In actual fact, one of the main reasons for the necessity of the Bureau of Ethnology was to gather as much data as possible on these cultures before their inevitable extinction due to acculturation (231-232).

No doubt Mooney would have bought into this idea of savagery before civility; however, as his work in the field became more frequent and lengthy his ideas began to shift. During his time among the Eastern Cherokee, "Mooney began to stress more than an equality in human nature. He stressed instead the humanity of Indians. Indians were a noble and as base as any other member of the human race" (49). At this time Mooney displayed the first inklings of a psychological paradigm shift that reached fruition in the sixteenth chapter of *The Ghost-Dance Religion and Wounded Knee*. Up until this point in his work, Mooney had employed the comparative method in a proper manner as far as the Bureau was concerned. He had traced the origins of the Ghost Dance back through Native American history to the earliest resistance movements of Pontiac and Tecumseh and included comparisons between Wovoka and the contemporary prophets Smohalla and John Slocum. These comparisons were standard and

probably expected of an ethnologist of Mooney's calibre. However, his initial remarks in chapter sixteen were well beyond the scope of academically accepted comparisons. Mooney writes,

The human race is one in thought and action. The systems of our highest modern civilizations have their counterparts among all nations, and their chain of parallels stretches backward link by link until we find their origin and interpretation in the customs and rites of our own barbarian ancestors, or our still existing aboriginal tribes. There is nothing new under the sun (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 928; Moses 1984: 89-90).

It is true that from this example Mooney is still holding on to the grand exercise of tracing the origins of religion to the most foundational examples history can attest to, however, his thoughts on the equality of the human experience despite one's religion or ancestry are truly remarkable for the time period.

In chapter sixteen Mooney continues by comparing the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 to known biblical rituals, Islamic practices, as well as past and present Christianities (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 928-952). Mooney's biographer, L.G. Moses, provides excellent insight into the various reasons why Mooney chose to include these comparisons.

In marshaling such evidence, he [Mooney] only hoped to suggest that Wovoka's religion...was no more fantastic in its precepts than were the more traditional religions of the larger American society; that frequently one man's vision was another man's hallucination; and that one's skepticism concerning prophets often diminished in direct proportion to the number of years that separated the faithful from the revelation. He also implied that what separate the ghost Dance from the more conventional religions was not so much differences in ritual and belief as it was the absence of the authority conferred upon a religion by numbers of believers (Moses 1984: 90).

To Moses' final remarks I might add that not only the absence of large numbers but the absence of numbers of political rank and importance. For instance, if the Ghost Dance Religion could have somehow been linked favourably through comparison to the Protestant populations in Massachusetts would not a greater number of sympathizers been gained? Mooney's intention was to enlighten his audience of the plausible connections between their own worldview and that of the Ghost Dancer.

As one might imagine this chapter was not well received by Mooney's superiors. Samuel Langley, the director of the Smithsonian Institution in the 1890s, met with Powell to discuss his

anxiety over Mooney's comparisons and expressed the wish that they "had better have been left unwritten. They give the ill-wishers of the Bureau a powerful means of attack if attention is called to them, which I trust it will not be" (91). Powell, too, was concerned about the chapter and produced a warning to readers that Mooney's remarks were his own and that the Bureau of Ethnology still believed that all primitive forms of religion would one day progress beyond their initial conceptions of the universe and join the rest of society in correct and civilized forms of practice (91-92). Interestingly, these extensive measures seem to have been for naught as no record of any criticism in this regard has been found (92). Mooney's work actually elicited praise from its readers who enjoyed his sympathetic treatment of the Ghost Dance Religion and although some went as far as to call him an apologist, a claim he quickly refuted, the acceptance of James Mooney as a great ethnologist and comparativist was nearly universal at the turn of the twentieth century (93). The final years of Mooney's life are marked with controversy over government policies towards Native Americans and eventually Mooney went too far in regards to his sympathies in connection with the Peyote Religion and the Native American Church (206-221). Mooney died at Christmas time in 1921 and will forever be remembered as an innovator in the science of ethnology and anthropology along with the great scholars of his generation such as John Henry Powell, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Franz Boas.

A final note on Mooney's comparative chapter is the obvious omission of the Latter-day Saints from this review. Possible suggestions to this will be offered in the next chapter and therefore the mention of this curious detail is enough for now.

James Mooney's first mention of the Mormon faith has already been presented in the discussion of the 1870 Ghost Dance in the previous chapter. A further connection he included in his work was the anonymous pamphlet entitled "The Mormons have stepped down and out of Celestial Government – the American Indians have stepped up and into Celestial Government" (1892); however, this too, has been adequately covered in previous chapters. We are left then, with only one final comparison of Mooney's to bring to light. After enlightening his readers as to the existence and physical descriptions of the Ghost Shirt, Mooney concludes,

The author is strongly inclined to the opinion that the idea of an invulnerable sacred garment is not original with the Indians, but, like several other important points pertaining to the Ghost-dance doctrine, is a practical adaptation by them of ideas derived

from contact with some sectarian body among the whites. It may have been suggested by the “endowment robe” of the Mormons, a seamless garment of white muslin adorned with symbolic figures, which is worn by their initiates as the most sacred badge of their faith, and by many of the believers is supposed to render the wearer invulnerable (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 790).

Mooney continues his comparison by suggesting that the sacred clothing of the Mormons must have been introduced by converted Shoshoni and Bannock (791). Mooney points out that during his interview with Wovoka, the prophet “expressly disclaimed any responsibility for the ghost shirt, and white and Indians alike agreed that it formed no part of the dance costume of Mason valley” (791). Mooney’s circulation of this comparison has had a profound effect on modern scholarly perpetuation of the connection between the two religions beginning most noticeably in the works of Paul Bailey.

Paul Bailey

Paul Bailey was born in American Fork, Utah in 1906. He was the son of two baptized Mormons – his mother was considerably more involved in the church than his father who had major troubles keeping the Word of Wisdom – and the grandson of polygamists on both sides of his family tree. According to his autobiographical work *Polygamy was Better than Monotony* (1972), Bailey was baptized at the age of eight by his grandfather and continued to claim adherence to the Mormon faith throughout his life, although at times his level of adherence varied. In this sense one might assume that Bailey is a ‘Mormon author’; however, a more apt description might be that he is an author writing about Mormons and Mormonism. This delineation is due to the nature of many of his works which at times have not found favour in the eyes of Mormon leadership.¹⁶ Bailey began his literary career in the backrooms of California newspapers painstakingly setting type. He eventually purchased the *Eagle Rock Advertiser* which later turned into the Westernlore Press. With a press of his own, Bailey began specializing in publishing historical as well as fictional tales about the American West. Bailey’s own works include the histories *Jacob Hamblin, Buckskin Apostle* (1948) and *Wovoka, the Indian Messiah* (1957) which he later turned into a fictitious novel entitled, *Ghost Dance Messiah* (1970). Bailey’s role in perpetuating the comparisons between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons cannot be overstated, as until his 1957 publication of *Wovoka, the Indian Messiah*

¹⁶ One such example was the case of *Jacob Hamblin, Buckskin Apostle* (1948). See Bailey’s own discussion of this in *Polygamy was better than Monotony* (1972) page 186-192.

scholars had relegated Mooney's thoughts to brief speculations and footnotes (Miller 1959; Utey 1963).

Bailey's works on the Ghost Dance prophet are overflowing with references of how the Mormon Church and its followers influenced Wovoka's own prophecies and beliefs. Beginning with an unsubstantiated claim that "from the east came another peculiar religious influence among the Paiutes who looked to him [Wovoka] for guidance. Hundreds of the Paiutes of Utah and eastern Nevada had been dipped in water by the Mormons and had become pious members of that great white man's church" (Bailey 1957: 75). It must be mentioned that very little of Bailey's work is referenced due primarily to the fact that he conducted much of the research himself, interviewing informants such as Ed Dyer, Colonel Tim McCoy, and some members of Wovoka's immediate family (13-15). However, Michael Hittman conducted similar researches and obtained a manuscript of Dyer's testimony and reached drastically different conclusions than those of Bailey's.

Bailey continues his narrative by citing the Mormon belief that converted Lamanites would one day turn white and be considered "pure and delightful" once again. While the beginning of this process was baptism into the faith, the next step was a visit to the Mormon Temple and experience the ritual receiving of the "holy underwear" that had the power to protect "its wearers from all bodily harm" (76). Bailey claims that Mormon ambassadors could be found during the time of Wovoka in southern Nevada amongst the Paiutes of that region. In this manner Bailey is able to convince his readers of the plausible influences of Mormon beliefs on Wovoka. However, despite the enticing prospect of "donning a garment which protected one from death and danger" as well as the possibility of "achieving white man's status and color" Wovoka "summarily rejected Mormonism" (76-77). Wovoka was the only prophet on Walker Lake and he would not be persuaded to join a church where he had to share his power and influence (77).

Throughout his work Bailey reiterates his belief that Southern Paiutes from the St. George brought their new faith and underwear with them to Walker Lake. He also finds the opposite to be true when he writes,

The circles of the ghost dance began forming in the very shadows of the Mormon chapels. Mormon white settlers themselves, cognizant of a familiarly ringing religious phenomenon in their midst, listened attentively to the new tidings, and before long they themselves were shuffling in the dance circles along with their “Lamanite” brethren of the promise (100-101).

Bailey is of course working from the account of Porcupine and his beliefs are probably influenced by his research of Jacob Hamblin, a Mormon missionary who was instrumental in forming the Southern Indian Mission of the LDS Church (Bailey 1948). In his work on Wovoka, Bailey claims that the prophet was grateful to the Utah church because he “found his easiest and most enthusiastic converts among those who already had embraced the tenets of that faith” (Bailey 1957: 122). From Bailey’s perspective this involved a great number of Southern Paiute since Hamblin and other Mormon missionaries had converted “almost to a man the tribes and clans of Paiutes in southern Utah and eastern Nevada” (122).

One of Bailey’s more notable contributions to the perpetuation of this comparison comes from a manipulation of a story told by Ed Dyer. According to Bailey, Wovoka wanted more than anything to possess a “bullet-proof” garment like those worn by Mormons. In order to accomplish this without actually being baptized, Wovoka presented his followers with a well thought out deception.¹⁷ After painting a shirt with various sacred symbols the night before, Wovoka gathered together all those encamped nearby and stood in their midst as he handed a member of the crowd a loaded shotgun, full of paper waddings and not buckshot, and asked the man to fire straight at his chest. “A blast of flame shot out, and the gun roared” (127). Wovoka doubled over, spilling a generous amount of buckshot onto the ground in front of him. When he arose not a drop of blood could be seen and the shirt was still intact. In order to provide further evidence of the shirt’s power Wovoka hung it limply from a tree and asked those present with guns to fire at it. Each round of fire caused the shirt to swing backwards, thus avoiding the holes that should have appeared. In this manner the infamous Ghost Shirt was born as an extension of the Mormon endowment robes and as a way to invoke the powers of invincibility (126-128).

Bailey’s fictitious account of the prophet published thirteen years later is similar in its perpetuation of the relationship between the Ghost Dance and the Mormons. No new ideas are

¹⁷ Bailey considered Wovoka as “a great man and a fake” (Hittman 1990: 22).

forwarded, just old ones reiterated and at times expounded upon by the creation of fictitious scenarios and characters. We have already encountered Elder Peter Swenson in the introduction to this work and his refusal to allow Wovoka a glimpse at his underwear. What is of interest here is that in the tale just told Wovoka simply painted a normal shirt of his own, however, in Bailey's fictitious account the article of clothing used is a stolen pair of Mormon garments that, according to one character, "pinched like hell in the crotch" (Bailey 1970: 150). After a few alterations, the garment is then painted using the sacred colors and symbols of the Paiute and then put to the test demonstrated above (150-154). Bailey is the quintessential example of a comparativist manipulating data in circulation to forward notions that fit a predetermined belief system. Bailey wanted the Mormons to be involved in the formation of the Ghost Dance of 1890 because the connection fell in line with his perceptions that Mormons must have been successful missionaries and that Native Americans are unable to generate their own complex belief systems without outside influences.

Various modern scholars have cited Bailey as evidentiary support of Mooney's claims of Mormon involvement including Scott Peterson in his *Native American Prophecies* (1990) and Joel W. Martin in *The Land Looks After Us* (1999). These two examples are of particular importance because they are written in general overviews of Native American religious history. Consequently, many students may only be exposed to such ideas and without their knowledge are indoctrinated into believing and perpetuating a connection whose validity is suspect and based on questionable comparative methods. Peterson relates the incident of the "bullet-proof" shirt which, in all fairness to Peterson, was testified to in the Dyer manuscript and thus probably did happen. However, Peterson contextualizes this story by referencing Bailey's belief that the Southern Paiutes were all converted members of the Mormon Church and thus privy to the "deeper mysteries of the faith", one of which was the acquisition of a rank high enough to don "a holy undergarment, or Endowment Robe, emblazoned with sacred symbols that are reputed to protect the wearer from Satan and physical harm" (Peterson 1990: 110). Peterson believes that Wovoka probably learned of this robe from Mormons who danced alongside their Native brethren in Walker Lake (110). If a student were to only read Peterson's account of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 there can be no doubt that he or she would come away with a belief that the Mormons played a significant role in the formulation and circulation of its religious principles. In fact, unlike most scholars who generally pick up on only one or two aspects of the

comparison, Peterson finds space in his review for a lengthy discussion of Joseph Smith, the *Book of Mormon*, the 1891 millennial prophecy, as well as the Ghost Shirt speculations of Mooney and Bailey (101-103, 107, 109-111,120). Martin's use of the comparison is much more critical and while he mentions most aspects of it he does not go into any amount of detail which allows the reader to become familiar with the possibility of a connection without actually contributing to its perpetuation (Martin 1999: 85-86, 93).

After Bailey's publication of *Wovoka, the Indian Messiah* in 1957, a second generation of scholars became interested in the events of Wounded Knee and the religious excitement created in Nevada. David Humphrey Miller wrote *Ghost Dance* in 1959, a historical narrative of the events that was soon joined by Robert Utley's *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (1963). Both works contributed peripherally to the perpetuation of the comparison by including the thoughts of Catherine Weldon and brief details of Mooney's belief that Ghost Shirt stemmed from contact and knowledge of the Mormon temple garments (Miller 1959: 115; Utley 1963: 64-65). Frank D. McCann, Jr. saw more value in the comparison when he published an academic article in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* in 1966. Drawing from both Mooney and Bailey, McCann perpetuates the doctrine of the Lamanites and Porcupine's account of Mormon converts both of Native and White ancestry dancing in Nevada (29-31). Further perpetuations of the comparison can be found in Vittorio Lanternari's *The Religions of the Oppressed* (1963), Peter Farb's *Man's Rise to Civilization* (1968), and Weston La Barre's *The Ghost Dance* (1972). These three works are similar in that they are a lingering remnant of the evolutionary theory of religious progression – with the possible exception of Lanternari whose work is much more defined than the other two. Lanternari cites Mooney's inclusion of the Mormons in connection with the 1870 Ghost Dance as a starting point drawing conclusion regarding further comparison between American Christian groups and indigenous peoples of the world (Lanternari 1963: 133-134). Lanternari again mentions the Mormons in his discussion of the Ghost Shirt, however, he affords this comparison no more than a passing thought and directs the reader to Mooney for more information (153). Farb's review of the Ghost Dance is brief, nevertheless, despite this fact he first devotes a paragraph to discussing the comparison in regards to the 1870 Ghost Dance before concluding, "The teachings of the Mormons seem to have opened the way for a prophet in the tradition of Wodziwob. He appeared as the prophet Wovoka" (Farb 1968: 265-266). Farb's perpetuation of the comparison is managed poorly and gives unwarranted credit to Mormons,

suggesting that their success in converting the Native American residents of the Great Basin somehow paved the way for Wovoka. This proposition is narrow minded and does not allow for an explanation of the vast majority of Native converts who had no Mormon leanings whatsoever. La Barre's work is not so bold as Farb's and offers no more than a perpetuation, nearly verbatim, of Mooney (La Barre 1972: 227-228).

At this point in our narrative we have worked our way through the many connections and comparison being made between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons of that time period beginning with early contemporary sources and concluding the theories of James Mooney and Paul Bailey. We have also seen how modern scholars have perpetuated these findings in their own reviews of the subject matter. Perhaps this would have been the end of this tale if it had not been for three scholars writing almost simultaneously in the 1985 and 1986. The contributions of Lawrence G. Coates (1985), Gregory E. Smoak (1986), and Garold D. Barney (1986) to this narrative of comparisons will now be reviewed.

Modern Perpetuations

Coates' article has been extensively cited throughout this work as he has undoubtedly done the most research in regards to finding the initial comparisons being made at the end of the nineteenth century. Coates first presented his interest in the topic in a conference of Mormon and Western history in 1976 (Coates 1985: 89). His work was later published in 1985, in an issue of the Mormon publication *Dialogue* devoted entirely to the study of the Mormon and Native American relations (1985, Vol. 18 No. 4). In this study, Coates paved the way for a study such as mine in his successful attempt at refuting the validity of much of the documentary evidence. An example of this is his research of Native American Mormon converts who were endowed during the years 1850-1890 (Coates 1985: 99). Interestingly, the total number of Native temple goers is only 238, with the majority of these having been first introduced to the temple in 1875 and only a handful in the years directly associated with Wovoka's religion (99). This is a far cry from the exaggerated estimates of Paul Bailey. Another example of Coates' excellent research is his discussion of the perpetuation of the comparisons in question as he cites a rare senior thesis written by Randolph W. Linhan at Yale University entitled, "The Development of a Mormon Empire in the Western United States" (1971). Coates discovered that the young scholar spent ten pages discussing the Ghost Dance of 1890, quoting extensively from Bailey. For the most part,

Coates' article can be considered the absolute authority on this topic from the perspective of an historian. Coates purpose is to prove once and for all that Mormon connections to the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 were "peripheral, not central" (89). He definitely accomplishes this task, however, his desire for refutation leaves his study lacking in explanations of why the comparisons were made and more importantly why were they so readily believed.

A year later Smoak published his article "The Mormons and the Ghost Dance" in the *South Dakota History* and perhaps in response to Coates' study or perhaps just by coincidence, Smoak began the process of explaining the reasons behind the comparisons, the one thing Coates' article lacked. The reason for this is that Smoak is concerned primarily with discussing the relationship between Mormons and Native Americans and is using this comparison as a backdrop. Smoak's article contains descriptions of the Mountain Meadow Massacre and the perception of the Mormon Church in the mind of the average American (284). In Smoak's concluding remarks he writes, "Because of the [Mormon] church's history of antagonism with the federal government and non-Mormons, it was a natural target for such accusations" (293). Smoak continues, "For their part, the Saints did little to allay suspicion and remained isolated and at times seemingly hostile towards the government" (293). Smoak's most insightful comments follow these preliminary ones:

Mormonism was part of a movement in search of a "primitive Christianity."...It was a quest for simple origins that was characterized by a "withdrawal reaction." The Mormons, and a few other primitive Christian groups, sought to remove themselves from the "world" and its complexities and seek their own relationship with God...It may be this "primitive" aspect of Mormonism that explains the Saints' deep interest in the Ghost Dance and why they were blamed for it as well (293).¹⁸

Smoak's shrewd observations will prove useful in the final chapter of this work as I attempt to provide a modern example of comparing religions by utilizing the historical contextualizations and comparisons discussed throughout this work. However, one final work must first be reviewed and scrutinized – Garold Barney's *Mormons, Indians, and the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890* (1986).

¹⁸ Smoak is referencing a passage from Weston La Barre's *The Ghost Dance* (1970). See page 279.

Barney's comparative study of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and nineteenth century Mormonism is the first and only lengthy discussion of the kind. Barney's work thoughtfully reflects on many aspects of the two movements that he believes are comparable. In this manner, he becomes the last comparativist in our narrative and must be regarded as not only a circulator and perpetuator of the comparisons, but a producer of new ones as well.

As a producer of comparisons, Barney uses the heavily criticized approach of making homologous comparisons. Modern proponent of the comparative method, Kimberley C. Patton, urges caution in regards to producing these types of comparisons when she writes, referring to the work of the great historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith, "Homologous comparison in the study of religion, Smith has said repeatedly, is deeply to be mistrusted *because of the implicit, even if often occult, idea of a shared evolutionary origin*" (Patton 2000: 15).¹⁹ According to Patton and Smith, regardless of the usefulness of Barney's comparisons, they are critically flawed in that they are attempting to forward a predetermined idea of shared religious beliefs, rituals, and customs between the two very different religions. Another flaw in comparative works such as Barney's is that they often revert to the evolutionary framework of evaluating religion, religions, and the religious as discussed in the introduction to this work. Barney is working under the assumption that a connection between the two religions exists, a postulation we have seen being built on a very unstable foundation, and weaves his comparative analysis from the first inklings of a genealogical connection through the web of morphological comparisons that seem enticing, but ultimately leave the reader with nothing more than a series of possible connections grounded in the evolutionary assumption that Ghost Dancers would seek out the higher teachings of Mormonism. Despite these criticisms Barney has produced the following homologous comparisons.

The first similarity that struck Barney as noteworthy is the status of the singing and dancing within both groups. The fact that Ghost Dancers relied almost exclusively on the power and inspiration gleaned from singing the Ghost Songs and dancing the Ghost Dance seems almost too obvious to state. A great deal of Mooney's work is devoted to the precise rendering of the various songs sung by dancers from every Nation he encountered where practitioners of the religion were found (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 948-1102). Barney writes that Mormons similarly

¹⁹ Emphasis in original.

relied upon the rituals of singing and dancing to maintain a positive outlook during their most perilous times (Barley 1986: 41, 78). The Mormon mantra “All is well, All is well”, written by William Clayton in his hymn *Come, Come Ye Saints* (1846) is cited by Barney as an example of this comparison. After establishing the fact “the Saints should be understood as a ‘singing-dancing people’”, by referencing a lecture given by Dr. Perry McCandless at Central Missouri State University, Barney concludes: “In a similar manner, the hymns and dances of the Ghost Dance Religion prepared the Native American People for the uncertainties of encounters with land-hungry and gold-crazed settlers moving onto the Plains and into the Great Basin” (41). Elsewhere he perpetuates his own comparison by stating, “The Indian People, like those of the Mormon community, looked to the singing of songs (hymns) as a vehicle of expression of one faith, one hope, one redemption” (79).

A second comparison produced by Barney is his belief that:

Both Joseph Smith and the Paiute Prophet Wovoka (Jack Wilson) were accepted by their followers as messengers of God having received marvellous revelations for their people after having been in the presence of God, heard His voice and accepted the mandate to deliver God’s children from captivity and bondage and to lead them to a new promised land (11).

When one couples this with a third comparison of Barney’s – the fact that “Both the Ghost Dance Religion and Mormonism were spawned in the midst of religious Revivalism that gripped upstate New York in 1820-30 and the Great Basin 1870-1890” (11) – the result is a very weak comparison based primarily on circumstantial evidence that has to undergo a plethora of manipulations in order to make it work. For example, while it is true that both religious groups believed their respective prophets to be messengers of God, each group has a very different perception of what constitutes a prophet. Smith was considered a modern day Moses whose word became law to his followers. Smith’s “Articles of Faith” are a prime example of this fact. Wovoka’s supporters on the other hand felt a degree of creative liberty when interpreting the prophecies of their leader. The Lakota’s ability to take a doctrine originally expounding non-violence and peaceful existence and turn it into one of forceful resistance is an adequate example of this difference. Barney’s further suggestion that the religious climates at the time of each religions birth are comparable is a far stretch indeed. To place the two side-by-side would reveal countless differences not the least of which is that the revival in the “burned over district” of

New York state occurred amongst religious peoples unthreatened by invaders and therefore unconcerned with altering their current belief system for physical survival, a reality which this study has shown was very much a leading factor of the Native American revivals occurring in the West.

A final link that Barney deserves credit for producing was first hinted at by Bailey in a rare footnote (Bailey 1970: 212 fn 10). While conducting interviews with Wovoka's family, Bailey learned that his daughter, Alice Wilson Vidovich, and son-in-law, Andrew Vidovich, were "not only converts of the Mormon church, but very staunch members" as well (212 fn 10). After coming across this information Barney set out to discover the validity of such claims. He wrote the Office of Church History Department in Salt Lake and received a letter which stated that no record of Wovoka or Jack Wilson joining the Mormon Church could be found (Barney 1986 [2011]: 84). He then conducted an interview with "a venerable woman, Mrs. Mary Wilson" in June of 1984 and was told that indeed Wovoka had never joined the Mormons but that his daughter had (84). Barney finds this an interesting link to make a further comparison between the Ghost Dance's belief in the return of the dead and the Mormon practice of baptizing in behalf of the dead (139). Barney writes that "it would be more than reasonable to assume that Andrew Vidovich was a member of the Mormon priesthood, and Elder of the Melchisedic Order and as such quite capable of participation in the Mormon ritual known as Baptism for the Dead" (139). Barney's purpose in forwarding this comparison is to suggest that this Mormon practice allegedly performed by Vidovich influenced Wovoka's own teachings. This claim is suspect as no dates for the marriage between Vidovich, the son of a Slovenian and a Shoshoni, and Alice Wilson are given nor a date for their conversion to Mormonism. The research of Michael Hittman brings clarity to this situation and it turns out that Alice was not even born until 1903 and thus neither her conversion nor her husband's could have played a role in formulating Ghost Dance doctrine (Hittman 1990: 42). In an interview transcript edited by Hittman of a conversation between Alice and Andy Vidovich and Peg Wheat we learn that Alice and her husband Andy were not impressed with Paul Bailey's insistence that the Mormons had something to do with their father's teachings (345-356). Alice states, "Yeah! That's what Paul Bailey said; in that book. Oh, it just, honestly, it was disgusting! To me it was, oh, I could have just throw [sic] that book!" (354). This interview is an enlightening glimpse at how producing preconceived comparisons as Bailey and Barney have done can affect the lives and feelings of

actual individuals. Barney's function as a producer of new comparisons has now been adequately discussed it is time to move forward and discuss his role as a circulator and perpetuator.

As one might imagine, Barney has covered all of the core comparisons that have already been discussed in this work. The Three Nephite connection employed by Mormon leaders as well as the 1891 millennial prophecies of Joseph Smith are addressed in much the same manner as they are here and require no further investigation. However, what Barney's work has been most noted for is his comparison of the Ghost Shirt and the Mormon temple garment; not in the traditional Mooney-Bailey context where the physical attributes of the shirt are thought of as similar but as a concept of invincibility. Barney finds that nineteenth century Mormons believed and relied heavily upon their belief that they were invincible due, in part, to their sacred temple garments. During the early stages of Mormon history a "Detachment of Invincibles" was led by Dr. John C. Bennett, an early Mormon leader in Nauvoo (Barney 1986 [2011]: 23-24). The legend of invincibility among the Mormons was even more ingrained in their minds by such legendary figures as Orrin Porter Rockwell who was given a Sampson-like promise by Joseph Smith that as long as he never cut his hair no knife nor bullet would ever penetrate his body (24). The case of Willard Richards, an apostle present in Carthage Jail when Smith was killed, is perhaps the most impressive since "it was believed that Doctor Richards had escape unhurt from assassin's bullets in Carthage Jail because he possessed an endowment robe that was purported to have made him [invincible] safe from the arts of the devil, safe from shipwreck, bullets, and deceit" (24). An 1890 work entitled *History of Utah* claimed that, "This garment protects from disease, and even death, for the bullet of an enemy will not penetrate it. The prophet Joseph carelessly left off this garment on the day of his death, and had he not done so, he would have escaped unharmed" (Barney 1986 [2011]: 177-178).²⁰ With such notions floating around the Great Basin it is no wonder that Mooney linked the Ghost Shirt to the Mormon temple garment, not because they looked alike but because they performed the function of providing physical and spiritual protection for its wearers.

Despite this new spin on the old comparison Barney makes sure to point out that no actual evidence exists to suggest that Ghost Dancers received their inspiration for the Ghost Shirt from Mormons (183). Barney's reinterpretation of this comparison has received high praise from

²⁰ For a further discussion of this topic of the garment's protective qualities see McDannell (1995: 211-214).

Michael Hittman who addresses the concept of invincibility – he uses the term “invulnerability” – in more than one location (Hittman 1992: 141-144; Hittman 1990: 82-88). In Ed Dyer’s manuscript “Wizardry” the story of the Wovoka’s creation of a bulletproof shirt is told without the Bailey connection to Mormonism (Hittman 1990: 247-255). Hittman retells this incident as a precursor to a discussion of the claims that Wovoka was somehow “invulnerable” to bullets. In his interview with Chapman the prophet claimed the incident “was only a joke”, however, during the course of his own investigations, Lieutenant Nat Phister found, “The prophet had said that he was invulnerable and if anyone tried to kill him, the soldier will be killed. If cut into pieces the soldier will be without bones and collapse” (83-84). Confusion over these details seems to have begun by Mooney’s belief that the prophet had nothing to do with the creation of the Ghost Shirt and played it off as a misinterpretation of the Sioux (Hittman 1990: 84; Mooney 1896 [1973]: 791). Hittman points out in conjunction with Barney’s comparison that such legendary figures as Crazy Horse and General Custer were also thought of as bulletproof (Hittman 1990: 85). The case of Wovoka’s invincibility has been attested to by various observers throughout the years. One story reads as follows:

One time J [Jack Wilson] was stacking hay. He wore one of his badges of his honor – a big brass button on his breast. As the fork swung around the stack one of the tines struck him in the breast on the button and threw him off the stack. Mr. Simpson rushed around to pick him up and as Jack was coming to he said, “Oh, me alright, Frank. Me bulletproof” (86)

This account along with Dyer’s statements and others recorded in Hittman’s *Wovoka* leaves little doubt that Wovoka did in fact believe himself to be impervious to gunfire or in the very least his followers believed this for him. However, as Barney points out, this does not mean that Wovoka’s ideas stemmed from well known Mormon beliefs but it does make for a much more interesting comparison than Mooney’s speculations and Bailey’s imaginations.

Barney’s production, circulation, and perpetuation of the comparison between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and nineteenth century Mormons has generated two lasting results. The first, and most positive in terms of historical advancement, is that his study has attempted to combine all previous comparisons into one work. This allows students and scholars interested in this situation to become intimately familiar with the comparisons and those who have produced these comparisons. The benefits of such a study are obvious, however, if Barney’s study is

lacking in any one area it is in the authors knowledge of nineteenth century source materials. Unlike Coates, whose study is predominantly concerned with tracing the origins of the comparisons to their origin sources, Barney's study glances over these particulars in favour of circulating the general themes inherent to both religions such as millennialism, invincibility, and a belief in prophets. Barney's second lasting contribution is his lack of critical awareness of the proper use of the comparative method which has resulted in a study replete with homologous comparisons that, while interesting to Mormon insiders, have very little value for the rest of the world including the modern adherents of the Ghost Dance. The final chapter of this work will attempt to rectify this situation by producing comparisons of value for researchers of all fields interested in this period of time and space.

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Chapter 5. Dissecting the Comparisons

In order to fully appreciate the narrative just offered, an examination of the use of the comparisons in a colonial context must be assessed. This will involve a closer inspection of the motivations behind its employment by Miles, Mooney, and Bailey. These three observers, in particular, have emerged from the pages of this work as the main producers, circulators, and perpetuators of the comparisons between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and nineteenth century Mormons. As such, a study of these writers' manipulations of their observations will expose the power relations involved in comparing religion, religions, and the religious in colonial contact zones. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of Garold Barney's role in this saga with an emphasis placed on the need for modern students and scholars to produce new comparative studies that focus on allowing their conclusions to be drawn only after a full examination of differences and similarities has occurred.

Miles' Struggle for Power

General Miles was a practitioner of the comparative method and did so from deep within colonial contact zones by flushing out possible connections between differing groups of people. As a military leader Miles was privy to information and correspondence that afforded him a unique authority of which he took full advantage. One of Miles' favourite endeavours was to proffer answers to the "Indian Question" or more to the point, the reasons for the so-called "messiah delusion" (Pohanka 1985: 202-204). Inevitably Miles paints a picture of the destitute Native: powerless, hungry, and cold. From Miles' perspective the Natives had only one choice and that was to turn to "their God for some supernatural power to aid them in the restoration of their former independence and the destruction of their enemies" (203). But it was not God who answered the cries of the people, it was the "deluded" and "fanatical" Mormons who seeing an opportunity to fulfill their own "pretensions or superstitions" took advantage of the poor, beleaguered "savages" by presenting them with a false hope in a false movement (203). It matters not that Miles was wrong, what does matter is why he was so energetic in producing this comparison.

Gregory Smoak has stated that "Many whites would not accept the Ghost Dance as an Indian response to the destruction of traditional tribal cultures, and thus they had to believe that more "civilized" people had inspired and spread the religion" (Smoak 1986: 294). Smoak

concludes that “The Mormons were the obvious choice” (294). Smoak’s deductions are only partially true in the case of Miles. Miles viewed the world through a colonial lens that displayed conflicts of power. As an observer of cultures and comparer of religions, Miles’ main goal was to restore power to the colonial government. The Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 threatened Miles’ worldview when the Sioux Nation began proclaiming its gospel and flying its standard. Miles had witnessed such a loss of control in a similar place but in a different time and among a different people. Miles’ observations of the Mormons, as recorded in his *Personal Recollections* (1897), tell the story of a people living outside the control of the United States government. Brigham Young factors exhaustingly in his review, as it was this man in particular who Miles held responsible for Mormon separatism. In Utah, Young was the president, prophet, governor, and economic policy maker for his people and, as such, posed the biggest threat to Miles’ way of viewing the world. Miles lashed out by using his voice and his pen by calling attention to the holy dictatorship; the Danite captain, Porter Rockwell, and the atrocities that occurred at Mountain Meadows (Miles 1897: 362-370).

Smoak is right in concluding that the “Mormons were the obvious choice”, however, in this case, he is wrong about the reasoning. Miles did not believe that the Native peoples were incapable of formulating their own religious movement as a response to the deprivations forced upon them. In fact, he seems to have been an advocate of the Native Americans in this regard. While proffering reasons for what he believed was a reactionary religion, Miles wrote often that poor government decisions in regard to reservations and land allotments as well as the general supply of foodstuffs were the main causes of the necessity to form and believe in the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 (Pohanka 1985: 185-224). The reason why Miles blamed the Mormons for instigating the movement was because he felt that the government had no control over either religion. The Mormons openly refused to give up their illegal practice of polygamy throughout the 1880s just as Sitting Bull, Kicking Bear and other Sioux leaders openly performed their rituals and donned the Ghost Shirt. Power was the currency up for grabs here and Miles must have felt that in order to gain back what he had lost, the most logical route was to place the Mormons alongside the desperate Dancers.

In Miles’ first accusation and use of comparative religion, he pointed out that there “are 200,000 Mormons” before proceeding to compare the two religions by focusing on the common

elements of prophets, communication with the dead, and the few Native American Mormon converts (*Deseret News* Nov. 7, 1890). Miles draws attention to the large population of Mormons in Utah because he wants the public to be in awe of just how dangerous a threat this religion might pose if allowed to get further away from governmental controls. Was this not one of the greatest reasons for the anti-polygamy campaigns of 1880s: to gain control and restore power to its proper place? Further evidence to support this theory is that Miles, as well as the majority of initial comparativists, were not concerned at all with tracing the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 back to Nevada because, as Chapman found, the religion itself, as well as its leader, posed no threat to society. It was only the militant Sioux version of Wovoka's teachings that troubled Miles to begin with and it was only after the Massacre at Wounded Knee and some semblance of balance and power had been restored that these colonial minded comparativists began to look for answers elsewhere.

If I am correct in claiming that Miles' use of comparison was based primarily on his desire to control the power relations in the American West, then I believe the most fundamental way in which he employed this tool was through his use of language and more specifically through his use of the terms "superstitious" and "superstition." In an 1891 article written for the *North American Review* Miles uses the term twice and in both cases is referring to the Native American Ghost Dancers who are being controlled and influenced by the "Rocky Mountain" Saints. Miles first reference reads, "So well was this deception played by men masquerading and personating the Christ that they made these superstitious savages believe that all who had faith in this new religion would occupy the earth, and all who did not would be destroyed" and is followed by second similar usage of the term, "Another class of whites are those who have committed the great crime of instilling into the minds of these superstitious and vicious savages the delusion that they have a messiah among them" (6-7; 9). A further quotation taken from a report Miles wrote to his superiors applies the term again in reference to Ghost Dancers, however, he also employs it in the following manner, "It was at this stage of affairs, when driven to desperation, they were willing to entertain the pretensions or superstitions of deluded, fanatical people living on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains" (Pohanka 1985: 203). It must be pointed out that the term "superstitious" does not always mean the same thing as "superstition", as the former is generally applied to a group of people and the latter to a distorted religious practice. However, from the examination of the use of the terms as part of a colonial

vocabulary of power relations that follows, it is hoped that a reasonable explanation of the continuity of the two terms will emerge.

Mary R. O'Neil defines the term superstition in her review of this religious category published in Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (1987). O'Neil writes:

Superstition is a judgemental term traditionally used by dominant religions to categorize and denigrate earlier, less sophisticated or disapproved religious attitudes and behavior. A belief is perceived as superstitious by adherents of a particular religious orthodoxy, and it is from their perspective that the category acquires its meaning...The use of the term *superstition* is inevitably pejorative rather than descriptive or analytical, for superstition is defined in opposition to a given culture's concept of true religion (163).

The sociologist Rodney Stark adds a further dimension to O'Neil's definition when he states, "In any society, deviance can take the form of violating norms about what sorts of beliefs and practices are 'responsible.' That is, societies will identify certain beliefs about the world as unfounded 'superstitions'" (Stark 1984: 279). From these scholars we learn that the term "superstition," and by extension "superstitious," are defined by the dominant religions and cultures of the day. In *Savage Systems* (1996), David Chidester adds that individuals involved in the production and interpretation of comparative religion are also involved in defining this category. In Chidester's explorations of the creation of religion in southern Africa he cites examples of observers, travellers, and government officials who use the terms "superstition" and "superstitious" to justify their own society's belief in their superiority over the African "savages" (75-78, 84-87). By using Chidester's example we see that O'Neil is correct in stating that "superstition" is "inevitably pejorative" and that it is "defined in opposition to a given culture's concept of true religion."

Our own example of the comments, comparisons, and opinions of General Miles supports these claims and further illuminates the state of comparative religion on colonial frontiers. It should be obvious that Miles' choice of language was no accident and by using freely the terms "superstition" and "superstitious" he was sending a message to his readership that he felt the main basis for his comparison between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons was their inferior status in society. Miles relied on the pejorative nature of the terms to relay his true feelings of the two religious movements. In the struggle for power on the colonial frontier, Miles was the foremost supporter of this comparison and did so, not because he felt the two religions

shared any similarities but, because he saw them as immediate threats to his worldview. The fact that they did share some commonalities was just a bonus. By corralling both religions together through the use of pejorative terminology, Miles accomplished much more than just simply producing a comparison, he branded Ghost Dancers as societal outcasts and Mormons as “savages” in need of civilization. A discussion of the American version of cultural evolution and James Mooney will further these thoughts along.

Mooney’s Sympathies

The Bureau of Ethnology, under the direction of John Wesley Powell, believed in the cultural evolution of primitive societies. Although this theory was first presented and then codified in the offices of European scholars such as Charles Darwin, F. Max Müller, E.B. Tylor, and James Frazer its relevance to our American colonial discourse is seen best through the work of the famous American explorer Lewis Henry Morgan. In Morgan’s *Ancient Society: Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilization* (1877) the theory of evolutionary societies is laid out in its barest form. Morgan provides each group of peoples he is familiar with a category, for example, he places the aboriginal Australians at the stage of “Middle Status of Savagery” and the Italian polities before the creation of the Roman Empire with the “Upper Status of Barbarism” (Elliot 1998: 207). Morgan’s ideas were instrumental in the philosophies of Bureau director Powell who, after receiving some criticism in regards to the actual benefits of gathering ethnographic materials, responded by suggesting that in order to fully assimilate the Natives in North America and help them progress along the evolutionary path one must first understand who they are and what makes them tick (209). One scholar has noted, “The theory of cultural evolution, as it turns out, dovetails nicely with the notion of assimilation; it made the process of civilization seem inevitable and natural” (208).²¹ Powell’s belief in this theory defined the purpose of the Bureau during James Mooney’s tenure.

Mooney’s early admiration of the work of Morgan and Powell led him down this same theoretical path and he was not alone. Michael A. Elliot explains that by the time the Sioux began practicing the Ghost Dance in 1890 most Americans believed the fate of all Native Americans was a foregone conclusion (212). The general public’s view of this uprising was one of “nostalgia” for the great Sioux Nation who had battled Custer and defied the U.S. Army;

²¹ Elliot is quoting Leah Dilworth (1996).

however, these feelings were not felt in regard for the individual, but for the race as a whole, for the time had finally come for the Native Americans to embrace White culture and climb the cultural ladder. When Mooney began working at the Bureau there can be no doubt that he, too, felt that assimilation was a necessary part of this evolution. His early work reflects this attitude fully (Elliot 1998). However, at some point during his investigations of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 something occurred that made him question the value in ridding the world of cultural diversity. Elliot emphasizes this when he writes, “Yet by the time Mooney began to write *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, he had lost full confidence in Powell’s evolutionary assumptions” (210). As mentioned in the previous chapter it was during his investigations of the Ghost Dance Religion that Mooney developed a real sympathy for the Native American as an individual, a paradigm shift that would have a serious effect on the narrative of comparisons under investigation here.

According to Elliot, Mooney’s epic narrative troubled John Wesley Powell because of its circular structure (213-215). What Elliot means by this is that for the first time Powell had placed before him a study that did not adhere to the evolutionary theory. “Evolutionary narratives move definitively *forward*” not in circles (214). The reason for this spherical result is because of Mooney’s refusal to cast “Ghost Dance adherents as ignorant barbarians and refuses to see the Wounded Knee massacre as the end of backward race” (214). What made Mooney deviate from the most respected and definitive philosophies of the day? Elliot hints at this answer when he points out Mooney’s description and conversations with Wovoka. Elliot writes that these passages are “the first moment in which the readers feel themselves to be in the presence of an actual, living Native American” (216). Prior to this narrative in *Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, Mooney spends a great deal of time relating legends and histories of various individual Natives without ever actually allowing the reader to engage with the subject. As one approaches the description of Wovoka in Mooney’s words, the reader is immediately presented with an individual with hopes, dreams, problems, and real life needs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, while his superiors were unsure of Mooney’s results, the public appreciated the sympathetic picture he painted.

Returning to Mooney’s role as a producer and circulator of comparisons between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormon Church, we must conclude that Mooney’s

sympathies for Wovoka and the spirit that his teachings engendered resulted in his determination that Mormons were not to blame for the insemination of the indigenous religion. Mooney must have been aware of the comparisons produced by contemporary observers such as Miles – Miles thoughts were published across the entire continent and were even printed in the *New York Times*.²² As such, he probably was looking for connections during his early interviews with Ghost Dancers and Wovoka. He found very little evidence of exposure to Mormon doctrines within the religion, a fact verified by the noticeable absence of the sect in Mooney's chapter of modern comparisons (Mooney 1896 [1973]: 928-947). However, as we have seen, this did not stop him from including the anonymous pamphlet "The Mormons have stepped down and out of Celestial Government – the American Indians have stepped up and into Celestial Government" (1892) in an appendix to his discussion of Ghost Dance doctrine (792-793). The motivations behind Mooney's inclusion of this pamphlet are probably best seen as a way for him to include the Mormons in the tale without him actually presenting hard proof. The short booklet was written by an individual or a group of individuals unhappy with Mormon General Authorities and their dismissal of Joseph Smith's 1891 millennial prophecy. The author(s) claims that the Messiah did in fact return to the Earth and that He spent his time among the "Lamanites," ordaining them as the new "Celestial Government" on this terrestrial sphere. Mooney makes few comments about the article other than a perfunctory introduction. Why, then, did he include it in his work? Possible answers lie again in complex structure of power relations between Americans, Mormons, and Natives.

From the works of scholars such as L.G. Moses, Mooney's biographer, and Michael A. Elliot, an interested modern academic, it is obvious that Mooney had developed a sympathetic affinity of Native culture and religion. These leanings would not allow him to reach the same conclusions as Miles because Mooney would not have been blaming the Mormons for the Ghost Dance Religion, as Miles had, but would have been giving credit to them, a privilege he obviously was unwilling to take away from Wovoka. Mooney's sympathies, consequently, are what distinguish him as a producer of comparisons in our narrative. However, these sympathies did not extend to all involved in the Ghost Dance. As a result Mooney must have felt justified in

²²²² See Rani-Henrik Andersson's chapter "In an Atmosphere Pregnant with Mysteries": Press Coverage of the Ghost Dance" in *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (2008: 192-250) for a detailed description of the news coverage of this event.

moving the comparison away from Walker River and shifting it through the Great Basin and onto the Plains.

Mooney believed the Sioux were the true creators of the Ghost Shirt, not Wovoka, and therefore he found himself free to make a comparison between the Ghost Dance Religion of the Sioux and the Mormons. The Ghost Shirt would prove to be a convenient foundation for comparison as the Mormon temple garment was steeped in mystery and full of symbolic power. When examined in the light of power relations, Mooney's comparison between the Ghost Shirt and the Mormon garments is significant to our narrative of colonial comparative religion. The Ghost Shirt was bulletproof and rendered its wearer invincible to all manner of earthly weaponry; the temple garments were equally as physically impenetrable. Spiritually both sets of robes repelled evil influences and allowed for heavenly messages to be received without threat of mistreatment. Mooney's readers must have been capable of picking up on this connection just as Miles' would have been able to interpret his use of language as a method of control. The popularity of the Ghost Shirt in newspaper articles and magazines is well known and while less dramatic, accounts of the Mormon temple garment were certainly in circulation at this time (McDannell 1995). By publishing his work, Mooney sent a message to the American public that it was no longer acceptable to remain ignorant of Native Americans and their religious leanings but forwarded the idea that when these beliefs are altered, a healthy scepticism and wariness should be employed. The Sioux version of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 was one such alteration and along with it came the Ghost Shirt, a powerful object full of mystery and uncertainties. Mooney wanted his readers to know that it was not Wovoka who invented the Shirt but that in all likelihood the idea had originated in the equally as mysterious Mormon temple ceremonies. Consequently, Mooney's contribution to our narrative is similar to Miles' in that both writers see the comparison in terms of power relations, however, while Miles is concerned with grouping the two together in an effort to regain control, Mooney is busy exploring these uncontrollable elements of power and finding their commonalities most appealing.

The circulation of Mooney's comparison has already been reviewed in this work in terms of its presence in recent scholarly writings. Most of these works simply echo Mooney's findings, however, one author in particular grasped hold of Mooney's comparison and applied it to a story about Wovoka that Mooney had failed to mention. We are already familiar with the work of Paul

Bailey and his reinterpretation of Ed Dyer's tale of Wovoka's bulletproof shirt. Bailey's belief in Mooney's deduction that the Mormons played some role in the creation of Ghost Shirt is seen in this example by willingness to include Mormons in its creation no matter the cost. In order to unlock the consequences of Bailey's decision a discussion of his fictitious work *Ghost Dance Messiah* (1970) is necessary.

Bailey's Fiction

Often the politics of power are viewed best through works of fiction. In narrations such as these, authors are afforded special literary license in their efforts to produce a story that will highlight aspects of society they find noteworthy. As may be deduced from the discussion of his life and writings in the previous chapter, Bailey viewed life through three different lenses. The first, a consequence of birth, was a Mormon lens; the second, a consequence of both birth and interest, was the lens of Western American history; the third, a matter solely of choice, was the lens of storytelling. These three varying perspectives are most evident, at least for our purposes here, in Bailey's fictitious study of the prophet Wovoka, and play a critical role in the discourse of power relations in the production, circulation, and perpetuation of colonial comparisons.

Bailey's invented narration of the origin of the Ghost Shirt reflects his three perspectives of the world. In an effort to convince the reader of his historical knowledge Bailey begins this work by relying heavily upon his findings for his 1957 biography of Wovoka. His discourse takes the reader on a journey deep into Northern Paiute territory, to David Wilson's farm, the slopes of Mount Grant, and to the shores of the Walker River. For the sake of time, I wish to draw attention to a single story that involves the Mormons and the creation of the Ghost Shirt (Bailey 1970: 143-155). To establish a believable connection between the two groups of people, Bailey claims that Wovoka's uncle, Charley Sheep, was a convert to the Mormon Church.²³ For fiction writers it is just that easy. Wovoka, knowing this fact about his uncle, asks him if he is in possession of any "magic underwear." Sheep admits that he is not nor is able to obtain a pair through the lawful channels of the Mormon Church because he has failed to pay his tithing and keep the commandments. According to Bailey, Wovoka is determined to get a hold of pair of these sacred garments and consults a local Mormon missionary in the area. Elder Peter Swenson enters the tale at this point and despite the many petitions of the Ghost Dance prophet, the

²³ Sheep really was Wovoka's uncle however there is no evidence to support Bailey's belief that he was a Mormon.

Mormon Elder does not give Wovoka what he most seeks. Before letting the missionary leave, Wovoka asks about the magic properties of the clothing. Swenson replies laughingly,

It doesn't give magic. The endowment ceremony reveals the deeper mysteries of the gospel. It promises celestial glory after death. The garment's sacred markings are a protection against physical harm and satanic influences. As elders in the Church, its wearer bears the higher or Melchizedek priesthood. There are many such among the Lamanites (148).

Bailey's Wovoka reflects on this reply:

He [Wovoka] had long known of the garment they wore. Important thing was its acceptance by them [the Lamanites] as an actual physical protection against disease and death. There was belief that this underwear was even bullet proof. It was secrecy about the special meanings of the "marks" upon them – marks whose potent magic made ordinary clothing into a shield of protection – that irked and puzzled Wovoka (148).

Soon after this the conversation between the prophet and the missionary ends abruptly with Wovoka declaring, "I am the real Jesus...And I'll get the underwear" (149).

According to the story, Wovoka tells Sheep to obtain for him two pairs of the garment by any means necessary. Once accomplished Wovoka and his wife, Mary, washed, altered, and painted the clothing until they were satisfied that it represented a Native version of the costume. Soon after this, Wovoka gathered his followers together and displayed the shirt before demonstrating its protective qualities by having a member of the crowd shoot him in the belly. What the audience did not know was that Wovoka had exchanged the buckshot with paper wadding and with a magician's touch, he fooled the crowd into believing in the Ghost Shirt.

The purpose in relating this tale again is to draw out the colonial consciousness that Bailey displays in his perpetuation of the comparison of the Ghost Shirt and the Mormon temple garment. Bailey's worldview is completely different from both Miles' and Mooney's. Through his different lenses Bailey's view took the account of Dyer and the comparison of Mooney and conceived a fictitious encounter between Mormon and Native. Significantly, Bailey's choice was probably not motivated by a desire to control or even understand either group better. Bailey simply wanted to allow his readers a glimpse of the world as he views it. For Bailey the narrative of the American West is a story where Mormons move about freely, preaching and converting as they go. A bibliography of his works as well as his own description of his purpose in creating the

Westernlore Press, further suggests this (Bailey 1972). However, as a historian Bailey is not necessarily concerned with always shedding a positive light on the Mormons, a fact reflected in this example where the Mormon, Charley Sheep, is in no way a promoter of solid Mormon values. In fact, Bailey the historian, is constantly concerned with presenting his information in a historically feasible manner, the keyword being feasible, not provable. Bailey's third role, that of storyteller, allows him the literary freedom to create fictitious characters, events, and conversations to further his comparisons along.

Placing Bailey's perpetuations of the comparison in a colonial context ruled by power relations, we find that a shift has occurred. In the production of these comparison Miles and Mooney held the reins of power in their hands. Both were able to employ the comparison to fit their own unique perspective of the world. In Bailey's role as Mormon, historian, and storyteller we ultimately discover that the power of the comparison is no longer controlled by the observer but by the subject. What I mean by this, is that by providing a comparison where Wovoka is the instigator and is seen actively utilizing Mormon beliefs and ritual clothing, the power has shifted into the hands of Wovoka. Mooney's Wovoka could not have been the creator of the Ghost Shirt because at that time the Ghost Shirt was a symbol of deviance and eventual suicide. Bailey's Wovoka is free of this circumstance, over eighty years had now passed since the Massacre at Wounded Knee and while it has always played a factor in the discourse of the Ghost Dance of 1890 Bailey has, in a sense, freed the Ghost Dancers from their belief in a failed project. This is significant for the purposes of this narrative, because Bailey is one of, if not, the greatest perpetuators of the comparisons and connections linking the Mormons to the Ghost Dance of 1890. Students and scholars reading his works, probably more so the 1957 version than the 1970 one just referenced, are confronted with a new alignment of the old comparison and are free to place the power and control into the hands of Wovoka, a luxury never afforded them by Miles or Mooney. It is true that these same readers might conclude that if Wovoka was indeed the inventor of the Ghost Shirt and that he did, in fact, acquire the idea from the Mormons that both parties are still to blame for the Sioux's reliance on the powers. However, Bailey's Wovoka is portrayed as a guiltless man and guiltless men are very powerful.

The Future of the Comparisons

A review of Garold Barney's contributions to the comparisons, such as presented in the previous chapter, shows that not only was he a circulator and a perpetuator but a producer as well. Barney honed in on the comparisons already in circulation, expounding upon them whenever possible before forging ahead with new ones of his own. As we have seen, his greatest contribution was his examination of the Ghost Shirt and Mormon temple garments as "invincible" tools with both spiritual and physical applications. Because of his treatment of this topic, Barney the circulator and perpetuator, is successful and deserves the praise he has gotten from scholars such as Michael Hittman (1990). However, in his role as a producer of comparisons, I find Barney lacking the necessary methodological tools in his application of the comparative method. Barney's failure in this regard is dominated by his reliance on homologous similarities and the manipulation of data, both in time and space, in order to convince his readers of his preconceived end goal.

As examined in the introduction to this work, comparative religion began as a tool employed by philologists, anthropologists, and cultural observers interested in supporting the dominant evolutionary theories of the time. The works of Miles and Mooney have already been examined through this theory's lens. Modern practitioners concerned with comparing religions no longer feel the need to place value judgements on the subjects they study. The innovations of Mircea Eliade helped emphasize the necessity of sympathetic objectivity, *epoche*, in this field. However, Eliade was unable to set aside his strict categories used to discover the sacred elements of specific societies and as such he has been criticized for his manipulation of data. Fortunately for present day students of comparative religion, Ninian Smart and Jonathan Z. Smith appeared on the scene. Smart was able to create a working methodology that built upon Eliade's sympathetic objectivity but stressed the importance of flexible categorization and no preconceived conclusions. Smith would later add to this by recognizing the critical value in discussing differences and not just similarities.

Barney's study is very much reflective of Eliade's work in that homologous categories based on preconceived expectations and similarities are the norm. Comparative studies of this nature do little more than compare an aspect of a religion and then show how a similar aspect found in the other religion is connected. Barney's work is styled very much in this manner.

Future writers interested in this topic will be better off taking a step away from the works of Bailey and Barney and focus their attention on the events occurring in the Great Basin, a land shared by Dancers and Mormons. Studies such as W. Paul Reeve's *Making Space on the Western Frontier* (2006), which examines the complex relationships between Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes as they battle on the frontier for control over land each considers sacred, Jared Farmer's *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (2008), and B.C Mohrbacher's "The Whole World Is Coming" (1996), a study of the concept of utopia, would provide excellent starting points for new comparative studies. Reeve's and Farmer's works would allow the comparativist to view the conflicts of sacred space in its physical form in the Great Basin while Mohrbacher's examination of utopias would allow for the conflicts of this space to be viewed in a futuristic, spiritual sense. Another possible comparison, not meant for the fainthearted, would be to tackle the concept of prophets within both religions as well as within an American context. Barney's attempt at this topic falls well short of the mark as he ignores the many differences between the groups that would make an analysis of this nature both exciting and worthwhile. Thomas W. Overholt's "The Ghost Dance of 1890 and the Nature of the Prophetic Process" (1974) is just the beginning of comparative studies in this vein.

In a way this chapter has been a comparative study of the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons of that time period. By placing the producers of comparisons, as well as the comparisons themselves under a political microscope, the complexities and power relations of the comparisons has been brought into view. General Miles was one of the first to place the two religions on the same plate and we have found that he did so as a way to regain control over the adherents of the gospels. James Mooney continued the trend of producing comparisons caused a realignment of the comparisons by focusing on the mysterious and powerful in his quest to absolve Wovoka of any blame for the Massacre at Wounded Knee. Over half a century after the Ghost Dance prophet's first vision, Paul Bailey perpetuated the comparisons but altered Mooney's interpretation by telling a story that made Wovoka solely responsible for the creation and exploitation of the Ghost Shirt. By placing these comparisons within a colonial context where groups of people were considered outsiders, like the Ghost Dancers and nineteenth century Mormons, this chapter has discovered that the production, circulation, and perpetuation of comparisons such as these are really just part of a greater more complex colonial narrative of power relations.

Conclusions

The Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 was practiced on various colonial frontiers. In each location a dash of local flavouring was added to allow for the differences between the diverse groups of Native Americans who adhered to its teachings to emerge. From the time of its inception among the Numu on the Walker River Reservation, the Ghost Dance brought a much needed hope to a beleaguered people. Wovoka, the Ghost Dance prophet, taught those who journeyed to see him that this hope was based on righteous and respectful living; he then taught them a new round dance where men and women could come together and dance until they collapsed in exhaustion. Wovoka prophesied that if his followers would perform this ritual for five consecutive nights at regular intervals the Messiah would appear in the spring of 1891 and restore the land to its rightful owners. The dead would rise again, rejuvenated with youth and would bring with them herds of wild game so the Native peoples could once again roam the earth, hunting and living happily as they had in times past. News of this message spread across the Western United States quickly and eventually found its way past the Bannock at Fort Hall, Idaho and onto the Plains of South Dakota. It was here, among the Lakota, that the most militant form of the religion was practiced. Ghost Shirts emblazoned with sacred symbols offered a protection from the weapons of the colonialists. It was at this time and in this space that government officials first began to take notice of the popular new dance. Eventually the movement became a threat to the public order these officials were trying to create. The Sioux defiantly continued their practice of the rituals until the day their Ghost Shirts failed them and over 150 Miniconjou lay dead in the snow.

The Mormons in Utah had caught wind of the Ghost Dance Religion during the first year of its practice. Long before outsiders began wondering if there was a connection linking the Latter-day Saints and the Ghost Dance, Mormon leaders themselves were busy trying to explain the odd coincidences between the two faiths. Because of their sacred scripture, the *Book of Mormon*, and the teachings of their sacred prophet, Joseph Smith, the Mormons had always regarded Native Americans as chosen people of God. Wovoka's 1891 prophecy had striking similarities to the prophecies Joseph Smith made fifty years previously. Mormons, themselves, were experiencing trying times during this period and many felt that the emergence of an "Indian Messiah" was a premonition that Smith's prophecy was about to be fulfilled. Mormons, like their

Native neighbours, were on the periphery of American society. They had been forced to abandon their homes on several different occasions until finally finding sanctuary on the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains. In this location they initially were free to openly practice polygamy and live in a manner of their own choosing. Their only neighbours during this period in the mid-1800s were Native Americans and aside from a few specific incidents including the infamous Mountain Meadow Massacre the two groups lived in relative harmony. Eventually, though, American colonialists made their way into Utah and demanded the allegiance of the Mormons. The anti-polygamy campaigns of the 1880s by the United States government finally forced this religious group into submission late in 1890. As Garold Barney astutely observed what truly bound the Mormons and Native Americans together was their “oppression” (Barney 1986 [2011]: 11).

For various reasons travellers, government officials, and general observers found value in linking the two religions together. General Nelson Miles, through his use of pejorative terminology, was one of the first to draw the public’s attention to the connections and comparisons. As we have seen, he did so as means of restoring power to the government in an effort to control the two factions who dwelt on the periphery of society. Eventually the Bureau of Ethnology sent one of their own up and coming stars into the field to determine the cause of the uprising. James Mooney arrived at the commencement of the year 1891 and set about the business of tracing the movement to its origins. Mooney met with Wovoka over a year later and was greatly affected by this encounter. The report Mooney presented for publication a couple of years later was different than any other ever encountered by John Wesley Powell, the director of the Bureau. Mooney had the audacity to shy away from the standard theory of cultural and religious evolution of the times and was seen sympathizing with Wovoka’s religion. Mooney’s theoretical realignment had ramifications for the comparisons between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons. From his investigations, Mooney concluded that it was not the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 that was influenced by Mormons but only the Sioux version of the Dance as seen through their use of the Ghost Shirt. The Ghost Shirt not only resembled the Mormon temple garment but had similar physical and spiritual protective qualities. Mooney repositioned the comparison in order to free Wovoka and his pure followers from having to be fettered with the outcast Mormons. The Sioux were already outcasts, so Mooney felt they were the logical choice.

For over half a century the comparison of Mooney stood as the definitive link between Ghost Dancers and Mormons; that is until the Mormon historian and storyteller, Paul Bailey reopened the case. Working from personal interviews of people present during the great Ghost Dances at Walker Lake as well as from other testimonies not fully covered by Mooney, Bailey discovered that it was Wovoka who was to blame for the invention of the Ghost Shirt. However, Bailey did not remove the Mormons from this new revelation. By using a large degree of literary licence, Bailey once again placed the Mormons alongside this Native religion, by claiming the inspiration for Wovoka's creation of the Ghost Shirt was the Mormon temple garment. Bailey's perpetuation and circulation of the comparison found its way into scholarly reviews of the topic. Because of these perpetuations, students can hardly pick up a book on the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 or the Massacre at Wounded Knee without being confronted with these comparisons. Modern scholars such as Lawrence Coates and Gregory Smoak have traced these comparisons back to their origins in an attempt to prove their erroneous nature. While their arguments seem convincing enough, the allure and temptation to produce comparisons dragged Garold Barney into this picture. Barney, who had knowledge of Coates' article, still believed that some value could be found in perpetuating the comparisons of Miles, Mooney, and Bailey before setting out to produce his own new ones. The result is work full of weak comparisons based solely on homologous similarities mentioned in an effort to prove Barney's preconceived notions of commonality.

My purpose in writing this paper is to provide a narrative of the comparisons made between the Ghost Dance Religion of 1890 and the Mormons in that same time period. In producing a discourse of this nature it has been a central desire of mine to provide explanations of not only what comparisons were being made, but by whom and for what purpose. By first situating the two religions inside a colonial context, this example of comparison has hopefully added to the conversation of colonial comparative religion. This has been accomplished by unravelling the motivations of the comparativists and discovering that the main driving force behind their production, circulation, and perpetuation of the comparisons are best described in terms of power and control. Finally, this study has drawn attention to the necessity for current examples of comparative religion to address situations such as these, by focusing not on perceived commonalities but on shared experiences and obvious differences. It can only be from

new examinations of these topics, through modern and defined application of the comparative method that the cycle of unjustified production, circulation, and perpetuation will cease.

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