

**Transatlantic Latter-day Saints:  
Mormon Circulations between America and South Africa**

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Thesis Presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Religious Studies  
University of Cape Town  
February 2014

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## **Abstract**

“Transatlantic Latter-days Saints” is an analysis of Mormonism in South Africa from a history of religions perspective. Contextualizing the Mormon experience in South Africa, the central concern of this dissertation is whether or not the religion’s history in the country should be defined as distinctly American. By tracking historical transatlantic circulations, mapping changing territories, and utilizing the comparative strategies of scholars such as Jonathan Z. Smith and David Chidester, this study documents and analyses the changing associations of South African Mormonism with America. In some instances, such as its nineteenth-century practice of polygamy and its twentieth century policies of racial prejudice, Mormonism appears to be more at home in South Africa than in America. In other areas, such as the contributions made by Mormon missionaries during the 1930s in the organization and development of the game of baseball in South Africa, the religion utilized its American heritage to contribute to its advantage as well as to the Americanization of South Africa. While these case studies yield conclusive outcomes, others, such as the historical mapping of the life and legend of Gobo Fango, display the complexity of tracking transatlantic circulations between America and South Africa. This dissertation demonstrates that despite Mormonism’s location on the periphery of South Africa and South Africa’s peripheral position within Mormonism, the transatlantic circulations that link America, Mormonism, and South Africa raise issues that are often of central concern to both countries and to the religion. By attending to Mormon circulations between America and South Africa, this dissertation develops alternative perspectives on such important areas of study as nineteenth-century missions, slavery, policies of racial discrimination, and American popular culture.

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## **Introduction: Mormonism in South Africa and the History of Religions**

On 23 May 1853 Jesse Haven, William Walker, and Leonard Smith, the only three members of the Church of Jesus of Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church) in all of Africa at the time, ascended the steep slopes of Cape Town's Lion's Head to pioneer the inaugural Mormon conference on the continent. The dedicatory ritual that took place involved singing, prayer, and the official organization of a branch of the LDS Church in the Cape Colony. Haven was sustained, by popular vote, as the president of this branch of three, with Walker and Smith constituting the required positions of first and second counsellor to the president respectively. Near the end of the ceremony the Elders, who had arrived at the Cape of Good Hope only five weeks earlier, began to prophesy their impending and future success throughout the colonial settlements in South Africa when Smith "motioned that this mountain, now called the 'Lion's Head,' be known hereafter by the Saints throughout the world by the name of Mount Brigham, Heber and Willard" (Haven n.d. 72-73; Wright n.d. 1:71). The meeting was adjourned with a benedictory prayer. Haven records in his journal that immediately after their descending the popular look-out a local Cape Town resident by the name of Joseph Patterson sought out Smith and petitioned the missionary to baptise him as soon as possible. Three days later, on 25 May 1853 the first two converts to the Mormon Church in South Africa—Patterson was evidently joined on the day by another Englishman named John Dodd (Wright n.d. 1:72)—were baptized and confirmed members of this globally expanding, American-based version of Christianity.

During the three-year period in which these original missionaries proselytized in South Africa, a total of 176 individuals were claimed as converts and at least another one hundred were baptized between 1856, the year after the three sailed back to America, and 1865, the year the last official Salt Lake City missionary, Minor Atwood, boarded the *Mexicana*, consequently closing the mission for the remainder of the nineteenth century. Based on the historical records available, it seems that a conservative total of converts during this period can be approximated at 300.<sup>1</sup> The mission would not be reopened until 1903, a date that those interested in South Africa will recognise as the year following the British victory in the Anglo-Boer War, and for those interested in Mormon history as a date signifying a new era of Mormonism, *sans* polygamy and politically integrated within the United States of America. A

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<sup>1</sup> Wright has found records for 281 emigrating converts and at least 12 members were found in 1903 when the missionaries returned (see Wright n.d. 1:264; and 2:7, 33).

Salt Lake City presence has remained in South Africa ever since.<sup>2</sup> However, this constant attendance of Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa has not resulted in the fulfilment of the prophesied successes made by the original missionaries that day on the summit of Mount Brigham, Heber, and Willard. By 1950 only 1 500 Mormons could be found in the country, and while the next thirty years saw a relative increase of membership, totalling approximately 7 200 as of 1978, no one from either Salt Lake City or South Africa would have termed their existence here an achievement (Monson 1971; Bringham 1981a).

The year 1978 was pivotal for Mormonism as the long-held belief and practice of denying the priesthood and rites of the temple to black individuals of African ancestry was repealed, subsequently allowing for missionaries to be deployed throughout the African continent. For the Mormon Church in South Africa this policy reversal had dramatic and immediate consequences as missionaries began to scour the black and coloured townships in search of potential converts. By 1985 a temple, the *axis mundi* of Mormondom, was completed in Johannesburg and today another is being erected in the suburbs of Durban. In 1987 sections of the *Book of Mormon* were published in isiZulu which, along with the English and Afrikaans versions already in circulation, meant a much broader range of potential converts could now receive the gospel in their native tongue. In 2000 and 2003<sup>3</sup> the holy Mormon scripture was translated into isiXhosa and Setswana respectively, expanding once again the reach of the organization. Currently nearly 60 000 Mormons call South Africa home, with missions, stakes, wards, and branches located in nearly every large and mid-sized city. However, as mentioned above, these figures and local organizations do not necessarily mean the Mormon Church has been a successful and influential religious institution in South Africa.

From a Mormon perspective the figure of 60 000 represents a mere 0.4% of the Mormon Church's worldwide population. Although it has the longest historical presence of any other African country, South Africa ranks second in membership behind Nigeria, with Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo close behind. From a South African perspective this number of adherents is even more negligible as it represents just over 0.1% of the population and 0.16% of the Christians in the country ([www.southafrica.info](http://www.southafrica.info)). However, the statistics do not tell the entire story. While the history of Mormonism in South Africa should always be considered as peripheral from the perspective of both Mormonism

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<sup>2</sup> During the two World Wars the numbers of missionaries were reduced to just the president and his wife and family.

<sup>3</sup> 2003 also saw the completion of the isiZulu version.

and South Africa, there are a number of telling experiences—in this dissertation called ‘transatlantic circulations’—that, when contextualized and compared with more general Mormon, American, and South African narratives, allow many important and interesting questions to rise to the surface, the most central of which, and the foremost concern of this dissertation, is: can, or should, the Latter-day Saints experience in South Africa be considered distinctively ‘American’?

### *America and South Africa*

In order properly to ascertain a reasonable response to this query, the question must be extended further to ask: what does ‘American’ mean, specifically in regard to South Africa and even more specifically in regard to religion, religions, and the religious in South Africa? There is a long history of transatlantic circulations between America and South Africa, with a consequent long list of scholars and works examining them. The first wave of research conducted in this field took place during the 1970s and ’80s, a turbulent and definitive time for American-South African relations as economic interests collided with anti-apartheid boycotting.

In an effort to make sense of all the research being published at this time, C. Tsehloane Keto produced a useful bibliographic review that identified five key ‘phases’ in the history of American-South African relations to assist scholars in their future efforts: 1) Trade and Missionary (1784-1869); 2) Transition (1870-1928); 3) African Colonial (1929-1948); 4) Decolonization (1949-1960); and 5) African Independence (1961-1980). If Keto were to revise his work today, a sixth phase, Post-Apartheid (1990-present), would have to be included and works such as Ilana Mercer’s comparative analysis *Into the Cannibal’s Pot: Lessons for America from Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2012), which sees a reversal of most comparative studies between the two nations, with South Africa now becoming a point of reference for America, instead of the other way around, would feature prominently.

Shortly after Keto’s work was published, Y. G-M. Lulat compiled a slightly more useful, for our purposes, annotated bibliography entitled *U.S. Relations with South Africa* (1991). The first volume of Lulat’s bibliography contains approximately 4 500 references to “books, documents, reports, and monographs” written in the English language. Lulat, a professor of transnational studies at the University of Buffalo, compiled the work while conducting research for his *Analyzing U.S. Relations with South Africa: Past Present and*

*Future* (1996). While Keto's bibliography is concerned with time, Lulat's takes a topical approach with works falling under categories such as U.S. Foreign Policy and African-Americans and South Africa.<sup>4</sup> Almost twenty years after the production of this ambitious two-volume bibliography, Lulat produced the most comprehensive and challenging history to date. *United States Relations with South Africa: A Critical Overview from the Colonial Period to the Present* (2008) has been described as "a comprehensive, dense, rich, thoughtful, and troubling book, covering the full sweep of relations between the governments of South Africa and the United States, and between the peoples and institutions of those two countries."<sup>5</sup> In his latest offering Lulat narrows his topical list to just three<sup>6</sup> areas of focus: 1) Economic; 2) Political and Other; and 3) U.S. African-Americans and South Africa. In order to answer the question posed above, a brief overview of American and South African relations is necessary and Lulat's categories offer the most prototypical format for accomplishing this task. However, (and this can be considered as an observation that results in the scale initially leaning towards the negative side of whether the Mormon experience in South Africa is typically American) adjustments must be made to Lulat's categories in order to accommodate Mormonism's specific history.

The category of economics needs no modification in order to facilitate the inclusion of Latter-day Saints history in South Africa, mainly because the organization has nothing to contribute. With the exception of the Doll House chain of ice cream and drive-in parlours first established in Johannesburg in 1936 and eventually expanding to Cape Town, Durban, and Pretoria, there is no real record of any major transatlantic circulations of an industrial or economic nature between Mormons, Mormonism, and South Africa. The history of the Doll House is, however, an interesting and noteworthy circulation and will be treated as such, but not from the perspective of economics; instead it will be treated alongside baseball and basketball as a reflection of American popular culture in South Africa. With the history of the Doll House being presented from this alternate perspective, a review of the economic relationships between America and South Africa, though quite substantial and important from a general standpoint, requires little more than passing attention here.

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<sup>4</sup> The work has nine categories in total: 1) General Observations; 2) U.S. Foreign Policy; 3) Southern Africa in U.S.-South African Relations; 4) Nuclear Technology and other Sectors of Trade and Economic Relations; 5) Education, Scientific and Cultural Exchanges; 6) African-Americans and South Africa; 7) South Africans and the U.S.; 8) Divestment, Disinvestment and Sanctions; and 9) Comparative Studies

<sup>5</sup> This is attributed to the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* on the book's jacket.

<sup>6</sup> In reality, his work is divided into four sections, but the last, "Looking Toward the Future," serves as a conclusion to his overview and has no bearing on my own work.

Briefly, although economic relations between the two nations began as early as the eighteenth century and involved the whale trade, significant contributions by Americans in South Africa did not occur until diamonds, gold, and other minerals were discovered in the country beginning in the 1880s. Much of the equipment required to extract the minerals was manufactured in the United States and maintained by Americans working in the Witwatersrand. In fact, the influence from across the Atlantic was so great that one of Johannesburg's original nicknames was the 'American city'. After the Anglo-Boer wars, American investment and industry continued to expand in South Africa throughout the first half of the twentieth century in areas such as the shipping of automobiles, advertising, and entertainment. The American presence in South Africa during the 1930s had risen to such an extent that Eric Rosenthal, a South African writer, published an informative work about the history and present condition of the relations between the two nations that he felt would become an instant best seller (see Rosenthal 1938; 1979). However, after World War II, as America entered into the Cold War with the Soviet Union and South Africa instituted apartheid, the relationship between the two nations changed in many ways; yet, in the area of economic exchange, Americans remained one of South Africa's key investors. In March 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre over 250 million rand in capital investments drained from the country almost instantly; however, by the end of that year the U.S. government had loaned 150 million dollars to the South Africans to help stabilize the economy. In the 1970s and '80s American values at home had shifted in such a way that any investment in South Africa while apartheid was still being enforced was no longer acceptable and eventually both countries had to sever most of their ties.

Today, in the post-apartheid era there has been resurgence in economic relations between the two countries most visibly noticed on the landscape as American automobiles, fast-food chains, and clothing brands once again flourish in the country.<sup>7</sup>

Lulat's second categorical vein of exploration between America and South Africa is labelled 'Politics and Other Relations'.<sup>8</sup> The political relationship between America and

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<sup>7</sup> For those interested there is a wealth of information on the subject in print. After consulting Lulat (2008), researchers may also consider specific studies such as James T. Campbell's *The Americanization of South Africa* (2000); Richard W. Hull's *American Enterprise in South Africa* (1990); Vic Razis's *The American Connection: The Influence of United States Business on South Africa* (1986); Lawrence Litvak, Robert DeGrasse, and Kathleen McTigue's *South Africa: Foreign Investment and Apartheid* (1978); and Barbara Rogers' *White Wealth and Black Poverty: American Investments in Southern Africa* (1976). Although of a more general nature, both in scholarly and geographic scope, the works of Peter Duignan and fellow scholars are some of the earliest and most influential on the topic (Clenden and Duignan 1964; Clenden, Collins, and Duignan 1966; and Duignan and Gann 1984).

South Africa certainly has some bearing on the experience of Mormonism in the country, perhaps the most direct example being found in the sanctions placed upon the mission restricting the number of American missionaries Mormon headquarters could send into the country. In fact, at one point during the mid-1950s, in order to maintain the number of missionaries local leaders were demanding, a disproportionate quantity of Canadian Mormons had to be called to serve in the area. However, unlike Lulat's pairing of politics with 'other', by which he mainly meant religion, or more specifically nineteenth-century colonial religion, the political context of the history of Mormonism in South Africa is better explored next to race, Lulat's third category. Thus, while I too will utilise three different sections in my analysis, they are not the standard three found in most examinations of America and South Africa—economics, politics, and race. Instead, my research of Mormonism in South Africa focuses on circulations of nineteenth-century religion, politics and race, and popular culture.

The nineteenth-century history of American religion and religions in South Africa is defined almost entirely by the work conducted under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).<sup>9</sup> The ABCFM was initially organized in Boston in 1810, with missionaries first being sent to South Africa, Natal and Zululand specifically, twenty-five years later. While the ideology of this non-denominational association was originally drastically different from that of the more influential London Missionary Society (LMS), after a number of uninspired years, missionaries such as Daniel Lindley were forced to alter the ABCFM's American idealism and adopt more neutral goals such as those espoused by the LMS and other European missions in the country.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Besides the latest work of Lulat, other notable studies dealing with circulations between America and South Africa in terms of politics are: George Frederickson's *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (1981) and *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (1995); John Cell's *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (1982); Robert Kinloch Massie's *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (1997); Donald R. Culverson's *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (1999); Princeton N. Lyman's *Partner to History: The U.S. Role in South Africa's Transition to Democracy* (2002); Francis Njubi Nesbitt's *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (2004); David L Hostetter's *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (2006); Alex Thomson's *U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948-1994: Conflict of Interests* (2008).

<sup>9</sup> By the 1890s this is no longer the case as the Watchtower (Jehovah's Witnesses), Seventh-day Adventism, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), and Zionism in South Africa all trace their roots to the concluding years of the nineteenth-century.

<sup>10</sup> The more involved works produced on the ABCFM's mission to the Zulus are: Edwin W. Smith's *The Life and Times of Daniel Lindley* (1949); D. J. Kotzé's *Letters of the American Board Missionaries, 1835-1838* (1950); Eleanor S. Reuling's *First Saint to the Zulus* (1960); Alan R. Booth's *Journal of the Reverend George Champion, American Missionary in Zululand, 1835-1839* (1967) and *The United States Experience in South*

The place of Mormonism within this larger mission history is situated on the periphery and can hardly be considered a mission when compared with those organized by the ABCFM, LMS, Moravians, Catholics, and others. To begin with, Mormons did not come to the country to civilize the heathen indigenous communities, but to convert existing Christians to their alternative form of that religion. The reason missionaries were deployed to the Cape in the first place was due to a letter written by a Mormon missionary on his way to Calcutta who, after being delayed at the Cape for a month, suggested: “It would be a good place for a mission; there is one-third Romans, one-third Mahometans, and the rest all sorts” (Richards 1853). It was the ‘Romans’ that interested nineteenth-century Mormons, and within a matter of weeks, at a special missionary version of the semi-annual general conference of the LDS Church held in the Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Jesse Haven, William Walker, and Leonard Smith were asked to leave their families and possessions behind and try their luck at missionary work among the Romans residing at the Cape of Good Hope.

By ignoring the remaining two-thirds of the population, according to Richards’ erroneous statistics, especially the ‘all sorts’ category, the Mormon experience has few, if any, parallels with the history of the ABCFM and the European missions. However, this does not mean that there were no points of intersection. For example, during the 1850s and 1860s a battle of policy raged amongst missionaries, especially between John William Colenso, the Anglican Bishop of Natal, and the Americans, specifically Reverend Lewis Grout, over the issue of how to deal with Zulu polygamy. A more detailed discussion of this debate will take place in the first chapter of this work; however, for our purposes here in this introduction it must be stated that while none of the parties involved believed polygamy to be a current and accepted tenet of Christianity, Colenso advocated vocally for the sympathetic treatment of its practitioners who desired to join a mission. Grout, the most outspoken of the Americans involved in the argument, believed that polygamy should not be tolerated and that any man wishing to be a Christian must abandon all his wives but his first.

Contemporary to this debate which was being circulated throughout the Colony, but most demanding in Natal, is the arrival of Henry Dixon, a Mormon missionary, to the port

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*Africa 1784-1870* (1976); Norman Etherington’s *An American Errand into the South African Wilderness* (1970) and *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880* (1978); C. Tsehloane Keto’s *Race Relations, Land and the Changing Missionary Role in South Africa: A Case Study of the American Zulu Mission* (1977); and the works of Ross Andrew Shiels (1988a; 1988b; 1992a; 1992b). For broader reflections on the missionizing of South Africa in the nineteenth century, consult Hilary Carey’s *God’s Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908* (2011); and Jean and John Comaroff’s *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (1991).

of Durban. Dixon soon won over a sugar cane farmer at Isipingo named Adolphous Noon. Together the two set about promoting their faith throughout the region and were soon caught in the cross-fire of the greater argument over the interpretation of indigenous polygamy between Colenso and the Americans. Consequently, the circulation of Mormon polygamy, perhaps the most controversial feature of nineteenth-century Utah Mormonism, in South Africa becomes a footnote in this great debate.

What is most interesting about this circulation, and what develops into the central thesis of Chapter One of this dissertation, is that many of the beliefs and practices of nineteenth-century Mormonism that relegate it to the periphery of nineteenth-century American religion, both in America and South Africa, are actually central to any discussion of religion and religions in nineteenth-century South Africa. Consequently, the initial chapter of my work will argue that the history of Mormonism in South Africa during the nineteenth century is not at all American but actually South African. While perhaps best exemplified through the lens of polygamy, other important myths, rituals, and symbols of un-American Mormonism will be compared with central aspects of indigenous South African religion, revealing the startling truth that nineteenth-century Mormonism was actually South African. However, the great historical irony of all of this is that nineteenth-century Mormons did not acknowledge or exploit these obvious points of congruence.

While I may be the first scholar to draw this conclusion and utilise this interpretive format, my initial exposure to these comparisons occurred while reading the noted historian of 'Southern' Christianity Philip Jenkins' accurate reflection on Mormonism in Africa, "Letting Go: Understanding Mormon Growth in Africa" (2009), and Dennis L Thomson's "African Religion and Mormon Doctrine: Comparisons and Commonalities" (1994). In a further twist, the concluding section of my first chapter will examine the English cyclist Lawrence Fletcher's novel *Into the Unknown: A Romance of South Africa* (1892) which literally relocates Mormondom from Utah to South Africa. The work is a wild, mysterious adventure typical of both nineteenth-century Mormon dramas, most famously exemplified by Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Dynamiter* (1885) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes caper *A Study in Scarlet* (1888), and South African romances, such as those published by H. Rider Haggard. Fletcher's vision of South Africa being a more appropriate home-base for Mormonism is not constructed on congruity between Mormon and indigenous South African beliefs and practices but on geographic and enigmatic congruity with the unexplored hills of Natal being compared with the impenetrable Salt Lake valley.

In order to prove the thesis that nineteenth-century Mormonism was not American but actually South African, Chapter One will begin with an analysis, following the methodological procedures of David Chidester as explained below, of the production, authentication, and circulation of knowledge about Mormonism that defines it as un-American. Working from this perspective, the nineteenth-century Mormon experience in South Africa as reflected in print circulations published in the Colony, such as the pamphlets produced by Jesse Haven and William Walker as well as numerous newspaper articles, will be presented with emphasis on the principal divergent practices and beliefs of Mormonism and mainstream American religion as defined by the ABCFM in South Africa. With this foundation in place, the chapter will proceed by arguing that the main points of difference between Mormonism and American religion are actually points of congruence between nineteenth-century Mormonism and indigenous South African religion. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of Fletcher's mystery and romance novel that exemplifies another circulation between Mormonism and South Africa that leaves one wondering if the American-based religion's more suitable location really should have been across the Atlantic.

Chapter Two of this dissertation is a segue between the discussion of nineteenth-century Mormonism and the impending analysis of Mormonism's prejudiced policies of racial discrimination. The life, and especially the legend, of Gobo Fango is a complicated, but exemplary, transatlantic circulation between America and South Africa with Mormons and Mormonism featuring prominently. Gobo was a native of South Africa, born in the mid-1850s in the Eastern Cape. These years were a time of tremendous turmoil for the indigenous inhabitants of this region. The eighth edition of the Frontier Wars had just concluded with the Xhosa once again being defeated and the tragic millenarian movement known as the Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856-57 was receiving chiefly support from Sarhili and would end only after the great cattle herds had been decimated and the people were left impoverished and starving. It was during these trying times that the toddler, Gobo, was abandoned by his destitute mother on the farm of a soon-to-be convert to the Mormon faith, Henry Talbot. As an indentured servant of the Talbot family, Gobo emigrated with the Mormons to Utah in 1861, landing in Boston a few days after the start of the Civil War. The trek across the country was difficult for the Talbots and their fellow South African Mormons and was made more so due to Gobo's presence and questionable status in the group.

Despite repeated efforts by authorities to apprehend the young boy, the Talbots and Gobo arrived safely in Utah in the autumn of 1861 and took up residence on a smallholding

near Kaysville, just north of Salt Lake City. While tending the family's sheep one cold winter Gobo suffered severe frostbite on his left foot and had to have part of the heel amputated. During his recovery, Talbot sold the slave to the Presiding Bishop of the Mormon Church, Edward Hunter. Hunter took the boy into his household in Grantsville, Tooele County, and paid Talbot the boy's salary until the abolition of slavery was finally enforced in the Territories in 1865. Free, but still only a young boy of 10, Gobo remained with the Hunters, tending their sheep and eventually growing a flock of his own. On 7 February 1886, now a man in his thirties, Gobo was driving his mob in the southern valleys of Idaho when a local landowner shot him multiple times for infringing on his property. Gobo died a few days later in the home of a business partner and was buried in the Oakley, Idaho cemetery.

Besides being an actual physical transatlantic circulation between South Africa, Mormonism, and America, the legend of Gobo Fango continues to circulate between the two nations to this day. *Gobo Fango: The Unsung Black American Hero* (Page 2012) is the latest of these circulations and is an embellished novel of the South African's life that, as the title suggests, reimagines Gobo as a 'black American'—not even an African American—legend. An amateur historian who would take exception to the title and thesis of Glen Page's book is the South African freedom fighter and printing specialist, Patric Tariq Mellet, who wrote an essay titled "The Death of an Eastern Cape South African Slave amongst the Mormons in Idaho—1867" in 2009, posting it to his blog, and consequently recirculating the history of Gobo through a South African lens.

Despite the many circulations of Gobo that can be located today, a thorough contextualization of his life and legend has never been written from an academic perspective. To date the only scholarly representation of Gobo was written in 1989 by H. Dean Garrett; however, Garrett's work is focused as much on Gobo's death and the subsequent trial of his murderer as on his life and legend and never really delves into an analysis of the production, authentication, and circulation of the knowledge about him. As a consequence of this gap in scholarship, the second chapter of this dissertation will serve the dual purpose of transitioning the work from a discussion of nineteenth-century Mormonism to an examination of the religion's racial policies as drawn from the Mormon experience in South Africa while providing an in-depth study of the life and legend of Gobo Fango. Confronting the central thesis question of this study—whether, the Mormon experience in South Africa can, or should, be considered distinctly American—this discussion of Gobo is a useful way to

examine not only policies that governed Mormonism's definition of race, but more importantly how these policies were interpreted and instituted in South Africa.

In his study on American sacred space in South Africa, David Chidester reviews the three main black South African politically motivated religious movements that arose during the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century that imagined America as a "transposable space of freedom ... for Africans in South Africa"—Ethiopianism, Zionism, and Pan-Africanism (1995: 266).<sup>11</sup> The Ethiopian movement was initiated in the 1890s in South Africa's emerging urban centres of Pretoria and Johannesburg as a way symbolically to link its followers with Ethiopia—a symbol of redemption, biblical Africanism, African independence, and Pan-African unity. The organization gained serious momentum after Charlotte Manye, the niece of the movement's founder, toured America with the South African Choir and discovered the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). Manye soon abandoned the choir and became a student at the AME's Wilberforce University where she wrote to her uncle encouraging him to form links with the AME which she and eventually the whole South African Ethiopian community viewed as a symbolic representation of Ethiopia—liberated Africa—in America. Consequently, as the AME emerged as a formal religion in South Africa, the transatlantic circulation between African Americans and African South Africans became a political statement that utilized the slogan "Africa for the Africans" (Chidester 1995: 266-268).<sup>12</sup> With the traditional lifestyle and worldview of indigenous South Africans in a state of liminality, symbols such as Ethiopia were constructed in order for the communities to transition from a European-free world to a new Christian and industry-driven existence. Along with Ethiopia, symbols such as Zion and Israel also emerged at this time to assist South Africans in adjusting to this transition.

When missionaries from Zion City, Illinois arrived in South Africa in 1897 they could not have anticipated that their "spiritual center in the midst of a dangerous and defiling world" would become the symbol of utopianism for nearly half of all South Africans today (1995: 269). The image of Zion was utilized by marginalized South Africans as an American

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<sup>11</sup> Chidester also adds a fourth movement to his list, Tuskegeeism, which was a new and important mode of thought that stressed Booker T. Washington's emphasis on educational reform. For the purposes of this introductory overview I have included Tuskegeeism under Pan-Africanism. The list of works examining the American-South African connection in regard to religion and race is much shorter and includes: Booth (1976); Thomas J. Noer's *Briton Boer, and Yankee: The United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (1979); James T. Campbell's *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (1995); David Chidester's "A Big Wind Blew Up During the Night" (1995), *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (2005), and *Empire of Religion* (2014); and Lulat (2008), though more specifically his third section, "U.S. African Americans and South Africa."

<sup>12</sup> One should see Campbell (1995) for a full history of the emergence of Ethiopianism in South Africa.

Utopia, where one could live and worship freely. One of the most appealing aspects of the symbol was that the idea of freedom did not terminate with political and economic independence but branched into the realm of religion as well, allowing for the various Zionist movements in South Africa—the largest being the Zion Christian Church (ZCC)—to incorporate elements of their traditional religions such as the veneration of ancestors, the reality of witchcraft, and various rites of passage (1995: 268-270).

In the 1920s Israel, as defined in America by the Church of God and Saints of Christ, an African American religion, was also utilized as a symbol of freedom, utopia, and the spiritual connection between Africans in America and South Africa when Enoch Mgijima's millenarian-minded Israelites refused the South African government's demands that they move their Passover ritual from their designated sacred space near Bulhoek, Eastern Cape. Believing that their fellow American Israelites would come to their rescue, nearly 500 South African Israelites were killed, wounded, or arrested by government forces during the persistent quest to establish a place of freedom, like America, in South Africa (1995: 269-270).

The last circulation that I wish to introduce at this point that deals directly with politics, religion, and race is Marcus Garvey's idea of Pan-Africanism. Although Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and W. E. B. Du Bois approached the idea of Pan-Africanism from an educational upliftment and independence perspective intrigued and influenced many South Africans, it was Garvey's political emphasis and strategic desire to see America and Africa directly linked through the 'Black Star Line' of ships that really made an impact in the country (1995: 270-272). "In South Africa," Chidester summarises, "Garvey's message was often received in ways that fused political liberation and religious salvation into a single promise of African redemption" (1995: 272). ANC leader and activist, James Thaele, utilized Garvey's circulations as a means of promoting the organization's stance that it was up to Africans in South Africa to liberate themselves from their oppressors as well as dissociate themselves with 'White' churches in order to achieve religious salvation. This period of time—1890s-1930s—was one of the most important and efficacious with respect to political and religious circulations of ideas and symbols regarding race and the definition of African between America and South Africa. With ideas and symbols of Ethiopia, Zion, Israel, and Africa flowing across the Atlantic, one wonders where Mormonism fits into this greater narrative.

Returning to South Africa after the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War, the LDS mission once again set out to convert the white, European population in the country. Still clinging to the popular Curse of Cain/Ham/Canaan definition of ‘African’, Mormonism espoused the belief that blacks—defined as someone with dark skin who could not trace their lineage away from Africa—were an inferior race, predisposed to a life without the priesthood and the rites of the temple. Consequently, no missionary work was conducted among black South Africans, which generally included South Africa’s ‘Coloured’ populations as well. Remarkably, these racist policies endured the greater portion of the twentieth century and were not reversed until 1978. Chapter Three of this dissertation will be devoted to a discussion of the interpretation of Mormonism’s policies of prejudice in South Africa. Chapter Four will focus in on the specific role that religion, in this case Mormonism, has played in circulating American culture throughout South Africa

In addressing the central thesis question of this study, we again see a trend in which Mormonism is actually more at home in South Africa than in America, at least until 1978; however, this time the American-based religion is located not on the side of indigenous South Africa but with Afrikaners. Consequently, the first part of Chapter Three, after a review of the circulation of the Curse of Cain/Ham/Canaan itself, will focus on the history of Mormonism in South Africa prior to 1978 with comparisons and contextualizations being drawn from the larger political, religious, and racial narratives developed in both South Africa and America, with the conclusion being drawn that the religion is once again more South African than American with regard to its definition of race.

However, all of this changed after 1978 when the self-constructed borders around the townships and rural areas were opened to Mormons and we finally find evidence that reflects the religion’s Americanness. Interestingly, the manner in which this repositioning occurs is through the circulations of the reimagined African as the perfect example of faithfulness, unity, and most importantly, perseverance. My analysis of this post-1978 era will be conducted through a representative lens that examines the images of black South Africans found in works published by the LDS Church itself in magazines such as the *Ensign* as well as by historians like E. Dale LeBaron. A precedent for a study of this nature can be traced to Newell G. Bringhurst, the acclaimed scholar of Mormonism and race, and his study ‘The Image of Blacks within Mormonism as Presented in the *Church News*, 1978-1988’ (1992) which argues that the Mormon Church presented an image of Africans as the “prime facilitators” in Mormonism’s global expansion. I find Bringhurst’s argument persuasive and

confirmed by my own findings in South Africa. My section dealing with this topic will be a continuation of Bringham's study that focuses specifically on black South Africans and will be more direct in claiming that the LDS Church utilises a political strategy that reverses their earlier circulation of the image of Africans as cursed beings in order to further their desire to reinvent their image as a religion that emphasized unity, equality, and global growth.<sup>13</sup>

In a study published in 2000 examining American popular culture in South Africa James T. Campbell wrote: "An American arriving in South Africa today cannot help but be struck by how familiar it seems" (2000: 34). Along with music, television, and cinema Campbell also points out the prevalence of Coca-Cola products, Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants, and Nike shoes on South African streets. If Campbell were conducting research today, McDonalds would now be first and foremost on this list as over the past few years the African National Congress's Deputy President and magnate Cyril Ramaphosa has spread America's Golden Arches all across the landscape.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps one of the more unexpected findings while researching the history of Mormonism in South Africa was that there were two significant and one minor way in which Mormons contributed to the Americanization of South Africa through the circulation of popular American cultural forms. One substantial circulation has already been mentioned in this introduction and that is of the chain of drive-in roadhouse restaurants known as the Doll House that was established and run by three American Mormon entrepreneurs in 1936. Specialising in American-styled ice cream, the original Doll House on Louis Botha Avenue in Johannesburg was such an instant success that within a month the chain had expanded to

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<sup>13</sup> The field of Mormons and race has been exhausted from an American perspective and all but ignored from an African one. Scholars such as Bringham (1979; 1981a; 1981b; 1981c; 1992; and 2004), Lester E. Bush Jr. (1969; 1973; 1984; and 1999), and Armand L. Mauss (1981; 1984; 1999; 2001; 2003; 2004a; and 2004b) have produced a plethora of studies on the subject that have made important and lasting contributions for those concerned with Mormonism in America; however, only Bringham, in the work mentioned above as well as an earlier history (1981a), has attempted to observe the topic with respect to Mormonism in Africa in a distinctive way. As a consequence of this gap in scholarship, the third chapter of this dissertation will provide an essential transatlantic and peripheral analysis of a central conflict in Mormonism's American past.

<sup>14</sup> There has been significantly less scholarship conducted on the cultural aspects of America and South Africa relations than on any of the other topics addressed in this dissertation. Campbell's chapter in *"Here, There and Everywhere": The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (2000) along with David Chidester's inclusion of "Transatlantic Religion" in his *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Religion* (2005) are the two most notable. However, many of the more general studies such as Lulat (2008) do provide some space to the subject. Once again drawing from these larger narratives, Chapter Four will focus in on the specific role that religion, in this case Mormonism, has played in circulating American culture throughout South Africa. Methodological precedents have been established for studies of this nature in works such as George Marsden's *Religion and American Culture* (1990); Rob Nixon's *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (1994); and most influentially by David Chidester's *The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture* (1996). Chidester's study will prove especially useful in maintaining the history of religions approach that will be explained in detail below.

Durban and soon restaurants were opened in Pretoria and Cape Town. While the original Mormon owners of the chain sold the business shortly after the Second World War, the chain continued to be an example of American culture for a number of years. The other significant cultural circulation between America and South Africa facilitated by Mormons was the formulation of the Western Province Baseball Association in 1932. The LDS mission's president, Don Mack Dalton, was a member of the organising committee and the manager, catcher, and number two hitter for one of the league's earliest and most dominant teams, the Cumorahs. The Cumorahs were a team made up almost exclusively of American Mormon missionaries and were the staunch rivals of the Nomads, the league's inaugural season champions. In 1930s South Africa the term 'baseball' was as synonymous with Mormon as it was with America, and Mormon missionaries formed teams throughout the nation, the most important always being the Cumorahs, with the Wembley Americans and Wanderers of Johannesburg being a close second and third.

Along with ice cream and baseball this chapter also highlights the Mormon participation in and circulation of another American sport: basketball. Although never utilized to the extent of baseball, basketball became a way for the mission to highlight its American heritage by assisting in the introduction of the sport to South Africans.

As a contribution to the transatlantic circulation of American religion, Mormonism, and South African history, this dissertation resides on the periphery of all these disciplines. However, each chapter deals with Mormon circulations that intersect with the central concerns of all three. Consequently, this study emerges as an alternative view from the periphery of the centre and has the ability to make a distinct contribution to each field. American religion in South Africa has been defined by the movements of the ABCFM, Ethiopianism, Zionism, and Pan-Africanism. While never in direct confrontation, this history of Mormonism frequently finds the organization in direct opposition to the goals of these 'American' religions and thus an examination of difference becomes contributory. With few more than 7 000 members by 1978 and with fewer than 60 000 today, South Africa cannot be considered a central concern of Mormonism when countries such as Brazil have over 1.2 million adherents. However, many of the key issues throughout this religion's history such as emigration, polygamy, slavery, and the policy of racial discrimination have been interpreted and applied in distinctive ways in South Africa which allows for this study to be of interest to those concerned with the LDS movement.

Lastly, the history of religion and the Americanization of South Africa also benefits from this alternative perspective as the topics of nineteenth-century missions, slavery, segregation of races, and American popular culture combine to form a peculiar study of an American religion that at times seemed to be right at home in South Africa.

### *A Note on Sources*

For those interested in the history of Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa the initial work that must be consulted is Evan P. Wright's three-volume history *The South African Mission*. While never formally published, the histories (in this thesis referred to as Wright A, B, C) can be found at Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library, The Church History Library in Salt Lake City, and the Africa Southeast Area Office's collection in Johannesburg. Wright is undoubtedly the leading local expert on Mormonism in South Africa and his personal history seems to encapsulate almost the entirety of the Mormon experience in the country from the 1930s through the 1950s. Serving his mission in the country from 1931-1933, Wright played baseball for the Cumorahs and helped formulate a more positive American image of the Church in the nation. After a brief stint back in the States, Wright returned to South Africa in 1936 as a one of the three principal partners of the Doll House. While establishing his business, Wright served as a branch president in Johannesburg and also played baseball again for the Wembley Americans. Once WWII was over and the Doll House was sold, Wright thought he was finished with South Africa but LDS Church's First Presidency had other ideas and he was soon called to return to the mission as its president. During his time at the mission's helm, Wright petitioned Salt Lake frequently for policy changes to occur with regards to the proselytising of individuals of African descent. With his tenure up in 1953, Wright left the country, never to return in an official capacity but frequently as a travel and amateur historian.

As a consequence of his personal connection and knowledge of the Mormon experience in South Africa Wright's work is unparalleled as a primary resource to date. Volume One, covering the dates 1852-1902, is by far the most encyclopaedic and was produced from an extensive search of local newspaper articles, missionary journals, and official Mormon documents. Along with these sources Wright produces charts and tables documenting every known individual missionary, convert, and immigrant, as well as the ships they crossed the Atlantic on during this period. Wright's work in this section and during this period leaves the

current researcher with little else to discover and because of this, his work will be utilized extensively throughout this dissertation. Wright's work, however, is not without its shortcomings and in some cases I have found transcription errors in Wright's verbatim copying of newspaper articles. Volumes Two (1903-1944) and Three (1944-1970) are great resources for basic overviews of Mormon happenings in South Africa during the first seventy years of the twentieth century. In particular they focus mainly on relating histories of the mission's presidents as well as the major events that occurred during this time. Much effort is put into each of the three volumes to provide a contextualization of what is happening in South African history as well as in Mormon history. The last two volumes will be used mainly in drawing attention to points of interest that will need to be researched as Wright's encyclopaedic approach to Volume One drops off drastically and instead the reader is met almost exclusively with reprinted articles produced by the mission's magazine, the *Cumoram Southern Messenger*, which was first put in circulation as the *Cumoram Monthly Bulletin* in 1927 but was retitled the *Cumoram's Southern Cross* before receiving its final banner in 1933 due to a copyright dispute with the Catholic Church's *Southern Cross* (Wright n.d. 2:230-231). Even though Wright's research undergoes a noticeable shift during the course of these three volumes, his work is still the most useful in drawing out the main points of concern for Mormons in South Africa and should be considered as a great resource for discussions that require a Mormon and an American perspective.

A second history written contemporarily with Wright's was submitted by Farrell Ray Monson to the Department of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University in 1971 as a Master of Arts thesis. Monson's work is less impressive than Wright's, but does offer researchers an alternative Mormon perspective of the history of Mormons, and more specifically in this case, of Mormonism, in South Africa. Monson focuses a great deal of attention on the proselyting efforts of the missionaries and explores the various methods they utilized in their attempt to gain converts. He, too, attempts a contextualization of South African politics, culture, and demographics, but for the most part Monson's history will be referenced throughout the dissertation, either in substantiating a claim found in Wright or by itself during the years when Wright becomes too personal and general in his history.

Since the work of Wright and Monson no new definitive histories about Mormonism in South Africa have been written although there have been a number of useful reviews such as Andrew Jenson's "The South Africa Mission" (1941); John G. Kinner's "South African Mission" (1959); Lawrence Cummins' "The Saints in South Africa" (1973); Val Johnson's

“South Africa: Land of Good Hope” (1993); as well as my own bricolage offering “Mormon Impressions: Locating Mormon Footprints on the South African Religious Landscape” (Alston 2012).<sup>15</sup> There are also a number of other works and resources that have been considered in order to produce this study. Chronologically, these resources begin with the journals of Jesse Haven and William Walker and include a number of other nineteenth-century reminiscences of Mormon missionaries and converts in South Africa such as: Minor Atwood; Henry Dixon; William Fotheringham; Adolphous Noon; Henry Talbot; Eli Wiggill; and John Wesley. Collections of material from twentieth-century missionaries and mission presidents are also available, for instance those of O. Layton Alldredge; Don Mack Dalton; Glen G. Fisher; J. Wyley Sessions; and June Bennion Sharp. Besides these primary materials there is very little secondary work done on the subject until after 1978 when articles began to appear with some regularity in both official Mormon newspapers and magazines as well as in more scholarly settings. These reports are exemplified best by the works produced from 1989 to 2000 by E. Dale LeBaron (1989; 1990a; 1990b; 1993; 1999; 2000), a former South African Mission president and a member of Brigham Young University’s faculty of religion. The source for LeBaron’s publications came from personal interviews conducted across the African continent with new, black converts to the church. The majority of his work, especially *All are Alike unto God* (1990a), is uncritical and is presented as a faith promoting study of personal conversions. LeBaron’s work is the epitome of the types of articles that were being published during this time that sought to picture Mormonism as globally relevant and inclusive religion.

Another influential work is Andrew Clark’s “The Fading Curse of Cain: Mormonism in South Africa” (1994) which for the most part is a personal reflection of his own experiences as a Mormon working as a journalist in Johannesburg in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He speaks about Julia Mavimbela, a quasi-celebrity at this time in the Mormon world,<sup>16</sup> and reflects on the lack of integration within the church at this time. He goes into a few details about the contemporary political atmosphere and concludes his thoughts with a section that points out many comparative paths between South African history and American Mormon history with a focus mainly on the *Book of Mormon* as the main information source for this

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<sup>15</sup> Although not of central importance to my own study, several other works are in circulation that provide various histories and perspectives of the Mormon experience in South Africa such as Ben de Wet’s “South Africa: A Different View” (n.d.); Erwin L. Sheffield’s “A Short History of the African Mission” (1964); Douglas P. Ridge’s “Learning to Breathe Easier: My South African Mission, 1964-1966” (2001); and Robert A. Rees’ thought provoking work “The Long-Promised Day? Black African Jews, the Mormon Denial of Priesthood to Blacks, and Truth and Reconciliation” (2004).

<sup>16</sup> See Giles H. Florence Jr.’s “Julia Mavimbela: Sowing Seeds in Soweto,” *Ensign* (1990) April.

comparison as opposed to cultural traits such as racism and the Word of Wisdom. It is a useful source as a foundation builder but offers little else for critically minded scholars.

Perhaps the best source produced during this era was the first and was written by an academic mentioned previously as an authority on Mormon and black relations, Newell G. Bringhurst. Bringhurst's 1981 "Mormonism in Black Africa" was printed the same year as his acclaimed history *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks* and while brief, it does offer a much needed scholarly perspective of the history of Mormons and Mormonism in Africa. However, despite its usefulness at the time, it is now severely out-dated and as we have already seen that current scholars such as Jenkins (2009) are well aware of the need for new comparative studies of the Mormon experience in Africa. Besides Jenkins's reflections the latest work published in the field is Jeffrey Cannon's *Mormonism's Jesse Haven and the Early Focus on Proselytising the Afrikaner at the Cape of Good Hope, 1853-1855* (2007). Cannon, who is currently working on a much anticipated dissertation discussing the Mormon experience amongst Afrikaners, proves his worth as an archivist in this article as he relies almost solely on Haven's diary to discuss the unfruitful Mormon efforts amongst Afrikaans-speaking South Africans in the Cape Town area. The work of Bringhurst, Jenkins, and Cannon is essentially the only critical, academic work written, leaving the field of inquiry wide open for any number of studies to be conducted.<sup>17</sup> However, from the materials available at present, I believe the most important initial contribution should be viewed from a history of religions perspective that traces the transatlantic Mormon circulations between America and South Africa.

One final vein of source material remains to be introduced. During the first 125 years of the Mormon presence in South Africa there were a number of local, South African observers who authored material about this American-based religion. The majority of these can be found in newspaper articles published during the 1850s and 1860s and then irregularly throughout the twentieth century. Reference to these pieces have generally been found in the primary material mentioned above and mainly portray Mormons and Mormonism in a negative light. However, these are not the only materials available from outside sources. In

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<sup>17</sup> Other works that are not specific to South Africa but deal with Mormonism in other regions of continent include M. Neef Smart's "The Challenge of Africa" (1979); Rendell N. Mabey and Gordon T. Allred's *Brother to Brother: The Story of the Latter-day Saint Missionaries Who Took the Gospel to Black Africa* (1984); Alexander Morrison's *The Dawning of a Brighter Day: The Church in Black Africa* (1990); James B. Allen's "Would-Be Saints: West Africa before the 1978 Priesthood Revelation" (1991); and Bradley Walker's study of Mormonism's charitable resources in less-developed countries "Spreading Zion Southward, Part II: Sharing our Loaves and Fishes" (2003).

1863 a Dutch Reformed Minister, J. Beijer, circulated a study entitled *De Mormonen in Zuid-Afrika* which discussed critically many of the beliefs and practices of the Mormons that clashed with the Dutch Reformed system, including polygamy, emigration, and the treatment of women to name only a few. A similar, though much shorter, work was published in 1910, titled *De Mormonen, of "De Heiligen Der Laatste Dagen."* As mentioned above, in 1938 South African lawyer and amateur historian Eric Rosenthal produced a study meant for American tourists on the connection between his country and that of the visitors. Included in this work is a short chapter devoted entirely to Mormons and Mormonism. Along with a rough historical overview, Rosenthal also reflected on the current condition of the organization and mentioned, among other things, Don Mack Dalton and the Cumorah Baseball Club. Rosenthal's work was blessed with a foreword by Jan Christian Smuts, the well-known two-time prime minister of South Africa, and was popular enough to warrant a revision in 1968.

Three years following the second printing of Rosenthal's coffee-table book, Allen Makin published an important historical work on the 1820 settlers of an Eastern Cape village known as Salem. Included in Makin's account is a description of the Henry Talbot family, who, it may be remembered, were the owners of Gobo Fango, and their conversion to Mormonism and journey to America. Makin's work will prove especially useful in the second chapter of this work which discusses the life and legend of Gobo Fango. After Makin's history, two more Afrikaans critiques of Mormonism were published in 1981 and 1983 respectively, alluding to the increase in attention the religion was giving and receiving in South Africa due to its expansion into the townships (van Staden 1981; Steenkamp 1983). In 1994 Chris Mokolatsie accepted the challenge to review the history and current status of 'Mormons in the Townships' and while not the most historically relevant piece of journalism, the work asks several important questions that historians of religion in South Africa must address, such as "Where were the Mormons during the dark years of the struggle against apartheid?" Mokolatsie's story is based on various statements made by the Mormon's publicity officer in South Africa that suggested the religion "was growing fast in the townships," an observation reflective of the period and of a politics of racial representation employed by LDS leaders. Mokolatsie is revealing when he shows confusion over these statements of rapid growth by enigmatically stating, "If that is so, I still don't understand why" (Mokolatsie 1994: 22-23). The only other source published in South Africa, besides my own, "Mormon Impressions" (2012), was written by the University of South Africa scholar

of religion, Michel Clasquin (1999). Utilising Mokolatsie’s article as a base from which to formulate a discussion of the LDS Church in Pretoria in comparison with other Christianities of American origin—New Apostolic Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists—Clasquin’s work is mostly interesting because it provides a South African reference point that places the history of Mormonism firmly on the side of America.

### *Methodological Genealogy*

As a student of the academic study of religion, religions, and the religious, whenever I read, write, or think about anything I immediately attempt to interpret the data by filtering it through the methodological and theoretical structures established by leading strategists of this discipline. Formally originating among late nineteenth-century European thinkers such as the German comparative philologist F. Max Müller, the comparative study of religion has developed into a pluralistic—methodologically speaking—composite discipline of observation and analysis that incorporates “historical, archaeological, linguistic, textual (e.g., philological, structural and semiotic), philosophical, sociological, psychological, ethnographic, anthropological, and art historical methods” of inquiry (Geertz and McCutcheon 2000: 6). This ‘methodological pluralism’ allows for data pertaining to religion—a working definition of this term is always a necessity and so for the purposes of this work dealing with Mormonism, the University of Chicago, the *axis mundi* of the history of religions, scholar Bruce Lincoln’s description that religion “is that discourse whose defining characteristic is its desire to speak of things eternal and transcendent with an authority equally transcendent and eternal” will suffice (Lincoln 2005: 395)—to be observed, examined, and analysed from multi-, cross-, and inter-disciplinary perspectives. However, religion, religions, and the religious<sup>18</sup> have also been studied as a *sui generis* phenomenon, inherently distinctive to itself. This sheltered approach stems from the phenomenological theories of Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Rudolf Otto, and gained notoriety when Mircea Eliade championed its subtleties at the University of Chicago from 1956 to 1986. Eliade’s contribution to the expansion and improvement of the discipline is incalculable, and although many of his ideas, theories, and categories have since been challenged and are now viewed with varying degrees of scepticism, his legacy as the founder of the history of religions remains.

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<sup>18</sup> I use this list purposely and repeatedly as it is an integral aspect of Jonathan Z. Smith’s school of thought that I have been indoctrinated into through the pedagogy of David Chidester.

The focus of Eliadian thought on the *sui generis* nature of religion allowed for religion, religions, and the religious to be examined without the constant need for historical, social, and political contextualization. Consequently, the ‘essence’ of religion became the focus of scholars, instead of the long sought after ‘origin’ of religious thought and belief. In searching for essences, practitioners of the discipline developed various strategies to study the perennial characteristics of humanity’s search for the divine. Critical terms such as sacred, profane, myth, ritual, manifestations, *numinous*, hierophany, and many others were utilized at this time to categorise and compare religions throughout the world. Scholars like Ninian Smart introduced ‘dimensions’ where such analyses could take place in order to codify and add a structural element to studies in the field. As a *sui generis* universal phenomenon, religion demanded an academic discipline that allowed for analyses to be constructed within recognized paradigms and rhetoric. Once accomplished, the foundations were in place for scholars to develop new strategies with reference to historical, sociological, and political influences in order to produce more generally useful studies. It is at this stage in the history of religions that Jonathan Z. Smith was seated as the William Benton Professor of Religion and Human Sciences at the University of Chicago. Smith’s inaugural lecture from this podium, “Map is Not Territory,” revolutionized the discipline by adjusting the focus away from congruent manifestations and comparative structures that emphasized likeness and onto the more interesting and thought-provoking areas of incongruence. Smith’s central strategy in studying religions is to “complicate not to clarify,” a paradigm shift he accomplishes by viewing the study of religions as a cartographic process. “What we study,” Smith states, “when we study religion is the variety of attempts to map, construct and inhabit such positions of power through the use of myths, rituals and experiences of transformation.” Up to this point, Smith claims, scholars of religion were fixated on “describing and interpreting” ordered maps of the world structured by “congruity and conformity,” and oriented by centres and origins, which he calls “locative.” In apparent opposition to this are ‘utopian’ maps that emphasise modes of creation and construction of meaning that challenge boundaries and burst them when necessary. Sam Gill, a current scholar of the history of religions, provides the following interpretative description of the difference between Eliade’s and Smith’s thought:

For Eliade, the student of religion shares the anthropology of all human beings in that he or she must discover the sacred in the world of the academic subject and report upon its existence: an academic method that seems to require certain

human qualities more than rational procedures. Smith's anthropology, also encompassing students of religion as well as religious peoples, sees humans as constructing their worlds of meaning. For Smith there is no objective territory; religion is not *sui generis*; and no data are essentially religious. The discourse on territory is then a discourse on mapping. Distinctions in space, time, shape, and body are the human methods of constructing reality, or engaging the world meaningfully. (Gill 1998b: 305)

For Smith then, the history of religions is an academic discipline that must discover, examine, and analyse utopian maps—maps of incongruent comparisons; maps of human and societal construction; maps of meaning. It must be noted that in Smith's history of religions, locative and utopian maps are 'coeval possibilities' and can potentially exist simultaneously in any society. If we take Mormonism as an example, a locative—structured, centred, ordered—community exists at all times at the “center in Salt Lake City. However, as Walter E. A. van Beek has persuasively argued, on the periphery—van Beek would call this 'satellite'—such as South Africa, various social, political, historical influences have resulted in the creation of utopian Mormon societies that have reinterpreted accepted 'Deseret' policies on matters such as gay marriage and politics. More will be said presently on van Beek's important analysis; however, for now let us return to Jonathan Z. Smith's interpretation of his use of the critical term 'territory'.

At the University of Cape Town, an almost canonized work for postgraduate students in the religious studies department is Mark C. Taylor's *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (1998). In this collection of essays one finds works by many important scholars and theorists of the history of religions including Jonathan Z. Smith himself. Smith's definitional study, “Religion, Religions, Religious” is an informative text on the history of the definition and use of the terms that frame the discipline; however, another important article in the volume is Sam Gill's discussion of 'Territory'. One of the first images that comes to mind when contemplating Mormon circulations between America and South Africa is a world map with America and South Africa highlighted, with dashed lines linking the two nations together. Along with the obviousness of the connection to Smith's emphasis on mapping, this image also highlights the concept of territory. “‘Territory’ is not a term commonly used in the academic study of religion,” Gill observes—a strange, though accurate, observation considering the title of Smith's significant essay and book (1998b: 298). In lieu of territory, scholars—an example being the primary theorist that my own work depends on, David

Chidester—tend to favour terms such as ‘sacred space’, ‘sacred time, and place’. Gill argues that while these are useful substitutes, consideration of “territory,” as exemplified by Smith’s “map-territory metaphor,” can be a thought-provoking resource for methodology in the history of religions.

The work of the study of religion is borne in the juxtaposition of the interpretive frame of the student (the mapping strategy) with the data (the territory), such as rites and myths that present a religious tradition, in the attempt to manipulate and negotiate the incongruities between theory and data in the construction of meaning (a map), making an interpretation or reading. (Gill 1998b: 308)

While this may seem like a manageable task, Smith is adamant that “map is not territory.” In other words, the study produced by the scholar can never perfectly capture the entirety of the religious subject. Why not? Because “as religion is the continuing process of negotiating the application of elements of a tradition with the on-going lived history of the tradition, the academic study of religion is the continuing process of negotiating the application of academic theories and expectations with the historical and culturally specific evidence of the traditions studied” (1998b: 309). In Smith’s methodological structure, nothing is static, not the cartographer, not the territory, and not the map. Consequently, no matter what study is presented it is only the individual scholar’s constructed representation of the subject at that moment in time, after that the territory changes, the scholar’s method changes, and ultimately so does the map. Perhaps Smith’s theory is best captured by the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus’ famous quote, “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

According to Gill, the application of Smith’s methodology “depends in the most basic way upon juxtaposition, upon the holding together of two things that cannot easily subsume one another” (Gill 1998a: 285). Consequently, Smith’s history of religions is best practised through comparison. However, this does not mean simply comparing one religion to another or comparing religious phenomena like Eliade espoused. Smith’s comparative method is built upon the interestingness of juxtaposing two aspects of religion that may or may not have anything in common and then analysing the comparison by first deconstructing it with especial consideration to incongruities that exist in the religious, historical, societal, and political realms. Once this deconstructive phase is complete, Smith then reconstructs the comparison by creating a ‘map’ that may not always clarify the situation but will at least provide a useful legend for observers to locate interesting locations that require further

analysis. One of the most prolific scholars utilising and building upon the comparative frameworks of Smith currently is the University of Cape Town's David Chidester. Like Smith, Chidester values the use of juxtaposition in his work and exploits the sense of intrigue it creates every chance he gets. Take for instance the titles of the following works in his ever-expanding corpus: *Salvation and Suicide* (1988); *Savage Systems* (1996); "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll" (1996); *Authentic Fakes* (2005)—which was written under the working title of *Holy Shit*—; and *Wild Religion* (2012). There are many other examples, but these are sufficient in order for the reader to get the feel of Chidester's distinctive style of juxtaposition and comparison. How can religion be wild; what does this even mean? How can something that is deemed fake also be considered authentic; can shit really be holy? Certainly baseball is not a Church, a religion maybe but not a Church. What do Coca-Cola and rock 'n roll have to do with religion? However, Chidester's eye-catching and intriguing titles are not frivolous works but serious reflections on the production, authentication, and circulation of knowledge about religion and religions. In many instances—*Savage Systems*, *Authentic Fakes*, and *Empire of Religion* being the prime examples—they are deconstructions of both the history of the study of religion itself and the history of the application and definition of the term 'religion'. In the Chidesterian model of the study of religion, religions, and the religious the role of comparison is integral to this history; it becomes the main tool employed by students, scholars, the public, and the religions themselves to construct their understanding of sacred, or profane, as the case may be, things. According to Chidester, by way of Smith, comparison is "by no means an innocent endeavour"; it is a highly politicized weapon that has been used to "classify and conquer" the subaltern populations of the world—his work deals specifically with "others" in South Africa and America. Subsequently, the maps produced by Chidester can be found in atlases dedicated not only to the history of religions, but to transatlantic discourses on power relations and otherness.

As stated above, I am student of the academic study of religion, religions, and the religious. The theories and theorists reviewed here are my major influences and have provided the lenses with which I view the world and produce my own metaphoric maps of it. In dealing specifically with Mormonism, I am also aware of the critical issues inherent in studying one's own religion that have been brought to light by the problematizer Russell T. McCutcheon in his edited volume, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (1999). The negotiation of approach is one all producers of knowledge must face, and is a

particularly pressing issue within the history of religions as personal subjectivity and background collides with methodological principles forcing one to ask, as McCutcheon has, “Can you climb out of your own skin?” McCutcheon has located four ways that scholars of religion answer this question: no (empathetic); yes (explanatory); I don’t have to (agnostic); and let’s think about it (reflexive). My own response does not fit cleanly into any one of these categories though it certainly favours the agnostic approach of suspending value judgements. In order to locate myself as scholar in this regard I often reflect on Bruce Lincoln’s “Theses on Method,” the concluding essay in McCutcheon’s volume. Lincoln’s work gives just thirteen points that define what it means to be a scholar of the history of religions—reflexively, what would it have meant if I had labelled these points as ‘articles of faith’ or ‘commandments’? While each point is essential for students of the discipline, there are a few standouts that are vital for my own research. Numbers 3, 9, 12 and 13 state:

[3] History of religions is thus a discourse that resists and reverses the orientation of that discourse with which it concerns itself. To practise history of religions in a fashion consistent with the discipline’s claim of title is to insist on discussing the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human, and material dimensions of those discourses, practices, and institutions that characteristically represent themselves as eternal, transcendent, spiritual, and divine.

[9] Critical inquiry need assume neither cynicism nor dissimulation to justify probing beneath the surface, and ought to probe scholarly discourse and practice as much as any other.

[12] Although critical inquiry has become commonplace in other disciplines, it still offends many students of religion, who denounce it as ‘reductionism’. This charge is meant to silence critique. The failure to treat religion ‘as religion’—that is, the refusal to ratify its claim of transcendent nature and sacrosanct status—may be regarded as heresy and sacrilege by those who construct themselves as religious, but it is the starting point for those who construct themselves as historians.

[13] When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one’s interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between ‘truth’, ‘truth-claims’, and ‘regimes of truth’, one has ceased to function as historian or scholar. In that moment, a variety of roles are

available: some perfectly respectable (amanuensis, collector, friend, and advocate), and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None, however, should be confused with scholarship. ([1999] 2005: 395-398)

Lincoln's third law defines both the subject matter—the “discourses, practices, and institutions that characteristically represent themselves as eternal, transcendent, spiritual, and divine,” in other words, religion—and the manner in which it should be studied—through examinations of “the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human, and material dimensions” that religion exists in. Number nine is important in that it justifies the length of this particular section of my introduction. In any study the methodological and theoretical approach is often as important as the case study itself. Finally, Lincoln's twelfth and thirteenth points declare what scholars of religion must and must not do in order to label themselves as such. One cannot allow the religion itself to define the parameters of the study: “Reverence is a religious, and not a scholarly virtue.” While I am still unable to clearly locate myself in one of McCutcheon's approaches, I do understand the definitional responsibilities inherent in my being able to lay claim to the genealogical foundation—Max Müller, to Eliade, to Smith, to Chidester—presented above as well in my claim to being a student of the academic study of religion, religions, and the religious.

### *Application of Methodology*

This dissertation is a contribution to multiple discourses in the academic study of religion, religions, and the religious. At the most general level it is a history of religions offering that follows in the footsteps of Chidester and Smith. In a more narrow sense, it is a history of the transatlantic circulations between an American-based religion and South Africa. Focusing further, this study is an analysis of a religion on the periphery of South Africa and of a mission on the periphery of a religion. The areas of specialization can be enhanced further still as each subsequent chapter addresses important issues in nineteenth-century South African missions and religion, transatlantic travel and indentured-servitude, the politics of defining race, and the relationship between religion and popular culture. Despite the specific nature of the four major chapters of this dissertation, the main methodological structure will not change and will focus on situating this study as a history of religions approach to a transatlantic discourse between a peripheral American religion in South Africa. As such, this

dissertation is influenced most heavily by one of the few scholars concerned with transatlantic production of religion between America and South Africa, David Chidester, and a European academic interested in the circulations between the centre and periphery of Mormonism, Walter E. A. van Beek.

Much has already been said about the contributions of David Chidester to my own methodological understanding. As an ambassador of Jonathan Z. Smith's method of studying religion, religions, and the religious, Chidester has applied his interpretations of Smith and developed a distinct way of examining the transportability of sacred space as well as a systematic approach to exploring the transatlantic production, authentication, and circulation of knowledge about religion. In "A Big Wind Blew Up During the Night" (1995), an essay included in Chidester's and Edward T. Linenthal's *American Sacred Space*, Chidester utilises his understanding of the study of religion to analyse the appearance of America as a foreign sacred space in South Africa by interpreting his findings through Smith's distinction between utopian and locative space. Chidester's study not only serves as an example of how to process the circulations between America and South Africa, but it reinforces the importance of defining territory as a fluid, constantly changing discourse where one moment, in Chidester's example, America is pictured as a utopian location of redemption for oppressed South Africans and the next as a locative source of that oppression. A decade after publishing *American Sacred Space*, Chidester further employs his understanding of space and territory in *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (2005) and ultimately draws the same conclusions during his narrative on "Transatlantic Religion" that territory is continuously reconstructing itself and that all any scholar can do is produce a map capturing the territory as it exists in that moment. The territory for Chidester's *Authentic Fakes* is the exchange between religion and popular culture, a topic this dissertation will devote a chapter to exploring, and serves as another example of the importance of juxtaposition in the comparative process. South Africa and America, two completely incongruent nations, historical narratives, ideologies, and geographies, are compared in order to explore the mediations between two seemingly incongruent facets of life: religion and popular culture. Thus, what my own work ultimately derives from Chidester and his studies about transatlantic circulations of religion between America and South Africa is a methodological map that constructs meaning through incongruent comparisons and draws territory in pencil. Consequently, when asked the question of whether the Mormon experience in South Africa is distinctively American Chidester would first state that the query is important and then

answer, “It depends.” Thus, like Smith and Chidester, I, too, believe the purpose of history of religions is to complicate, not clarify.

While in a general sense this study is about religion and the circulations between America and South Africa it is also a work about Mormonism, an American-based, global religion that has become a relatively new and exciting subject of inquiry for scholars from all social science backgrounds. From noted sociologists of religion like Rodney Stark and Armand L. Mauss to historians of politics and religion such as J. Spencer Fluhman, the amount and quality of work discussing the Mormon experience in America is striking. However, the vast majority of this work is conducted exclusively through an American lens and with the exception of various histories about foreign missions and nineteenth-century immigration, rarely probes the periphery.<sup>19</sup> Fortunately, a few of the peripheral studies about the periphery have explored the realm of method and theory and produced vital analytical examples for scholars like myself to draw from. One such study is Walter E. A. van Beek’s 2005 contribution to *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons? An ‘Afro-European’ View on Religious Colonization.”

What van Beek, an anthropologist of religion generally concerned with examining exchanges between Europe and Africa, develops in this work is an excellent example of Smithian and Chidesterian methodology in practice, though van Beek does not acknowledge this. First, van Beek reviews the history of Mormonism through a nineteenth-century anthropological, colonial lens, constructing a map with symbols in the legend demarcating tribes, kinship, chiefs, colonies, and other typical colonial rhetorical terms that were utilized by comparativists to marginalize and ‘other’ the colonized. However, as the territory of van Beek’s map reconstructs itself—i.e. Mormonism’s twentieth-century global missionary expansion, van Beek reflects specifically on Africa and Europe—so too must his analysis of it and the study shifts from a nineteenth-century anthropological view of Mormonism as an American colony to a modern anthropological discourse on Mormonism as a coloniser that circulates, transatlantically, between the Mormon centre, or ‘metropolis’, in Utah and the colonized peripheries, or ‘satellites’, of Mormonism such as Europe and Africa. The thesis of the second half of van Beek’s work is to examine the complicated nature of politics, power, and the mediations of knowledge between the Mormon centre and Mormon peripheries by asking whether a Mormon living outside the metropolis, in our case South Africa, is a South

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<sup>19</sup> Mexico (Tullis 1987) and Australia (Newton 1991) and greater regions like Asia (Britsch 1998) and Europe (van Beek 2005; van Orden 1996).

African Mormon or a Mormon South African. The question is complex and even involves examining whether having ties with America is an asset or a liability for satellite Mormons. While van Beek purposefully probes these queries for Mormons in Europe, his study serves as another methodological footing for my study about Mormonism in South Africa. As a colonized satellite of Mormonism, how has the Mormon experience in South Africa been shaped by the American metropolis? How has it interpreted the politics, power structures, and policies emanating from the metropolis through specific a South African lens? According to van Beek, “Satellite status implies that the status of the LDS Church inside these countries is different from that in the core religion” (2005: 18). Is this true in South Africa; if so, how so? Are Mormons in South Africa South African Mormons or Mormon South Africans?

This dissertation is a history of religions approach to the Mormon experience in South Africa. With Mormonism acting as the territory, the various maps I construct during this study locate the transatlantic circulations between this American-based religion and South Africa. As a religion on the periphery of a nation and as a nation on the periphery of a religion, the circulations between Mormonism and South Africa have never had worldview-shattering results for either entity; however, this does not mean that there are not important stories being played out within the America/South Africa nexus. Generally speaking, the Mormon experience in South Africa is at odds with the American experience and as such the importance of constructing a map from which to view these experiences becomes the essential endeavour of this study. Why did Mormons not try to civilize the ‘heathen’ South Africans in the nineteenth-century? How have Mormon South Africans allowed for Gobo Fango to be stolen from them by Mormon Americans? Where were the Mormons during the struggle? What has Mormonism contributed to South Africa? These are the questions that must be considered in order to appreciate fully the transatlantic circulations between this American-based religion and South Africa.

## Chapter 1: Missions, Messages, and Missed Opportunities

Included in the 26 April 1853 edition of the *Cape Town Frontier Times* is a short article summarising a controversial lecture on religion held the previous evening at Cape Town's Town Hall. "The Mormons—three disciples of Joe Smith, who arrived in Cape Town a short time since from America," had obtained the use of the venue by applying as "three missionaries from America, who were desirous of giving lectures." According to the report, the meeting began in an orderly fashion "until two or three extraordinary assertions from the lecturer" caused so much chaos among the audience that the meeting was promptly dissolved. The acrimonious dispute caused such an uproar in the community that the following morning Advocate Pieter Jan Denyssen, the City of Cape Town's Secretary and a future Supreme Court judge in the Colony, overturned the municipality's previous decision to allow the Mormon missionaries access to the government podium, citing that their application had been "misunderstood" and a direct appeal to the Board of Commissioners would have to be made in order to lift the immediate sanction.

The *Cape Town Frontier Times* article is important for a variety of reasons. First, it is the earliest known circulation of Mormonism in South Africa. The Mormon elders, Jesse Haven, Leonard Smith, and William Walker had arrived in Table Bay only the week before, disembarking on 18 April 1853. This was the first night of their inaugural public lecture series which they envisioned taking place over several days. Second, it states that the missionaries were initially welcomed by the citizens and government officials of Cape Town because they were "from America." The report claims that approval of applications of this nature were customarily, "immediately complied with." Third, this welcome was short-lived once the Mormons began lecturing on Mormonism. The article does not state which doctrines or beliefs triggered the backlash, but the journal of William Walker claims, and Jesse Haven's diary confirms, "As soon as Joseph Smith was mentioned as a prophet, they began to hoot and holler 'Old Joe Smith'" (Walker 1943: 23; Haven 1853: 64-65). Fourth, local administrators were quick to correct the original misunderstanding—that the Americans were actually Mormons—and when the missionaries returned to Town Hall the next evening, perhaps not having seen Denyssen's letter in the paper, they found it locked and had to hire "a black man to stand and tell the people" that the meeting had been relocated to the Bethel Chapel, which was also known as the Old Sailor's Home (Walker 1943: 24; Haven 1853: 65).

These observations, discovered in an analysis of this seminal circulation of Mormonism in South Africa, lead us to conclude that American religion was welcome in Cape Town, but not Mormonism. “As three missionaries from America, who were desirous of giving lectures,” Haven, Smith, and Walker were customarily granted access to the town’s most public forum and, according to Walker, the anticipation of an American lecture on religion was met with such enthusiasm in the colonial city that the hall was filled to capacity.<sup>20</sup> However, once Mormonism’s “extraordinary assertions”, such as Joseph Smith’s prophetic nature, were mentioned by the missionaries the audience quickly altered their perceptions of the preachers as Americans. As Mormons, preaching Mormonism, the lecturers were no longer accepted by the citizens and officials of Cape Town and were publicly banned from delivering their presentations in government-operated locations. As a result of this analysis, the thesis of this chapter on nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa argues that despite geographic origins, Mormonism was not viewed by inhabitants of the British-ruled colony as American but as a distinct, and largely unwanted, ‘other’.

However, the ‘otherness’ of nineteenth-century Mormonism should really have been recognized as ‘sameness’ by South Africa’s colonisers—especially by the missionizing communities along the frontier who were actively attempting to conquer, convert, and civilise the indigenous populations. Consequently, another central contestation of this chapter will be to highlight the aspects of nineteenth-century Mormonism that should have resonated amongst South ‘Africans’, but because of Mormonism’s racist policies went completely unexploited. By examining nineteenth-century Mormon missions, messages, and missed opportunities in South Africa, the subsequent chapter is really an attempt to answer the following question: was nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa American or actually South African?

### *Nineteenth-century Mormonism as Un-American*

Nineteenth-century Mormonism was not American. This might seem like an odd statement seeing as the religion was founded in the United States by an American and, despite many of its adherents being won outside the country, it could only really be practised on the American

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<sup>20</sup> While this is the subtext of the *Cape Town Frontier Times* article, Walker’s journal claims that even from the beginning the crowd “looked at us [the Mormon missionaries] as though we were some awful beings” (Walker 1943: 23). However, Haven’s recollections are more in tune with the newspaper report and forward the belief that the audience was initially intrigued by his lecture on Galatians 1:8 and that it was not until Smith bore his testimony of Joseph Smith that the any objections were noticed or raised (Haven 1853: 64-65).

continent. There are a number of ways to prove this thesis, such as recounting the movement's conflict-filled history or examining its core tenets, highlighting the chief doctrines and practices that led to anti-Mormon sentiment amongst citizens of America. However, in keeping with the methodological strategies explored in the introduction of this dissertation, I will employ a Chidesterian model of comparative religion and locate the mediations of knowledge production, authentication, and circulation where Mormonism is considered decidedly un-American. This comparative endeavour will rely on contemporary nineteenth-century material, and while some of the sources and comparativists considered may not have been in circulation during Mormonism's initial efforts in South Africa from 1853-1865, only issues pertinent to this experience will be evaluated in order to establish the claim that nineteenth-century Mormonism was perceived both in America and South Africa as un-American.

In 1855 Philip Schaff, a Swiss-born but German-educated scholar and theologian who would later produce an epic, eight-volume history of the Christian Church (1858-1890) as well as edit a major encyclopaedic compilation of religious knowledge (1882-1884), published a highly anticipated book on the political, social, and religious condition of the United States at the time. The work, which grew out of a pair of lectures delivered the previous year in Germany, discussed such important contemporary issues as slavery, materialism, radicalism, and sectarianism. Schaff believed that the final subject in this list, sectarianism, was one of "the chief deformities" of the American nation and "the rocks, on which they [Americans] must ultimately suffer shipwreck" (Schaff 1855: viii). The "SECT SYSTEM," Schaff emphatically stated, "is certainly a great evil. It contradicts the idea of the unity of the church; which we can no more give up, than the unity of God, the unity of Christ, the unity and inward harmony of truth" (1855: xi). Schaff accredited the United States' constitutional allowance for freedom of religion and the separation of religion and political control, which he believed to be both a blessing and a curse, as the reason behind the development of this morally reprehensible system. "It is a fact," Schaff declared, "that the civil equality of all churches and sects in America ... have aroused and are sustaining a great mass of individual activity and self-denial for religious purposes, and an uncommon rivalry" (1855: xi). The "compulsion" to take advantage of this system, he believed, "only produces hypocrisy and infidelity" (1855: xi). However, Schaff did not believe that the European way of combining Church and State was without flaw and although he thought a "Christian government can be made an infinite blessing to a people" and would bring tremendous "joy"

to adherent constituents, he was not hopeful that a utopian nation would ever exist without some sort of divine intervention (1855: xiii-xiv). Ultimately, Schaff blamed not only the structure of America's constitution but also the very nature of Protestantism itself for America's sect-system. What is fascinating about Schaff's views on sectarianism for our purposes here are their relation to the discussion of Mormonism he included in his work and how overtly critical he was of a religion whose followers were more than willing to abandon America's position on a division between the Church and State and who were fully prepared to institutionalise the utopian Christianity Schaff desired but doubted could ever actually exist. Aside from its peculiar beliefs, why did the structure and organizational aspects of Mormonism not appeal to this nineteenth-century scholar of religion? The answer to this question is paradoxical as the main reason for Schaff's dismissal of Mormonism as an important subject of study in his 1855 work on America is because he found it to be the antithesis of what it meant to be American, a proposition based largely on the theocratic nature of Brigham Young's Utah—which for Mormons was considered a utopian community.

"I confess, I would fain pass over this sect in silence," reads the opening statement of Schaff's address on Mormonism. "It really lies out of the pale of Christianity and the church" (1855: 243). Not only did he find the religion not exactly Christian, but Schaff believed that it had not "exerted the slightest influence on the general character and religious life of the American people, but has rather been repelled by it, even by force, as an element altogether foreign and infernal" (1855: 243). As evidenced from these early remarks, Schaff was laying the groundwork of politics of exclusion where a knowledge about Mormonism as un-Christian and un-American is produced, authenticated by his authoritative position as a scholar, and circulated in his published study.

However, Schaff continued his reluctant analysis of Mormonism by admitting that to exclude the religion from a comparative work such as his *America* would frustrate the expectations of his audience. "For concerning nothing have I been more frequently asked in Germany," Schaff confessed, "than concerning the primeval forests and the Mormons—the oldest and newest products of America—as if it had not nothing of greater interest and importance than these" (1855: 243). Clearly the readers of nineteenth-century comparative religion and Americana were intrigued by Mormonism. However, despite this fact, Schaff was remarkably opposed to its popularity calling it a "religious vagrancy of the human mind" as well as the "worst product of America" before criticising his European audience for becoming so fixated with it and for being such a fruitful location for its growth (1855: 243-

244). Schaff's politics of exclusion are summed up in a final plea to his readership: "I must only beg, in the name of my adopted father land, that you will not judge America in any way by this irregular growth" (1855: 250). To a scholar of comparative religion like Philip Schaff, Mormonism was not only on the fringe of Christianity, it was also un-American.

For Schaff, the evidence to prove the assertion that Mormonism was un-American was initially present in its short history. "Joe Smith, an uneducated but cunning Yankee" organized the religion after pretending to discover and translate a book of ancient Israelite scripture that was written by the ancestors of the Native Americans while residing in the state of New York.

This sect moved to the states of Ohio and Missouri; and not thriving there, and encountering violent persecution, they went to Illinois, where they built a city and a splendid temple at Nauvoo on the bank of the Mississippi, in 1839. There they were attacked by a violent outbreak of popular indignation against them, as a gang of shameless impostors and robbers, their temple was destroyed, and their prophet Joe Smith, since venerated by his successors as a holy martyr, was killed (A.D., 1844). The remnant of the Mormons then made a toilsome pilgrimage over the Rocky Mountains to the Great Salt Lake, surrounded by high mountains, in the fertile and mineral territory of Utah ... There they founded the city of the Deseret; a second Solomon's Temple, which, when finished, is intended to surpass everything the world has yet seen in this line; and a theocratic community under the direction of the inspired prophet and priest-king, Brigham Young. (Schaff 1855: 245)

This was the entirety of Schaff's history of Mormonism from its formation to date and served as the foundation from which he built his belief that Mormonism was essentially un-American. The justifiably violent treatment received by the Mormons while part of the United States, including the murder of their prophet and the forfeiture of their temple, forced them to flee the Union and relocate to a stronghold on the far side of the Rocky Mountains. Schaff understood all too well that the "theocratic and despotic" nature of Mormonism's territory would eventually "give Congress great trouble" and perhaps lead to armed intervention (1855:246). "American toleration," Schaff wrote, "has its limits; the separation of church and state by no means involves a separation of the nation from Christianity and Christian morality. The uncommon regard of the American people for the female sex absolutely requires monogamy; and for this reason alone they can never make terms with the

Mormons” (1855: 246).<sup>21</sup> Along with its un-American theocracy, Mormonism also practised a highly un-American religious tenet: polygamy. Schaff’s representative strategy serves as a basis for a discussion of the reasons nineteenth-century Mormonism was pictured as un-American by contemporary comparativists producing, authenticating, and circulating knowledge about the religion in its homeland which will in turn provide a necessary introduction to the transatlantic circulations that resulted in similar conclusions being drawn about the organization in South Africa.

Schaff’s circulation of knowledge about Mormonism can be traced explicitly to informants such as the prophet Joseph Smith himself, whose history of the formation of his faith and the key beliefs it expounds were recorded in Israel Daniel Rupp’s *He Pasa Ekklesia* (1844). Others were local experts of the religion, such as the United States Army’s Captain of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, Howard Stansbury (1852), whose positive and sociable observations of the religion perplexed Schaff greatly.

Further investigation of Schaff’s essay on Mormonism reveals the author’s probable familiarity with works such as David Meredith Reese’s *Humbugs of New York* (1838); William John Conybeare’s *Mormonism* (1854) and Charles Mackay’s *The Mormons* (1852). In order to continue his politics of exclusion, Schaff utilized the designation “humbug,” a taxonomy employed by Reese to label systems of science, philosophy, and religion as “impostures,” by which he means anything which “seems to be what it is not” (1838: vi).<sup>22</sup> In employing Reese’s taxonomy—Reese also included Mormonism in his study—Schaff was circulating the knowledge that Mormonism was a “fake,” not only in terms of its claims to being a religion but in its claims to be American. What Schaff appropriated from Conybeare’s work was an interesting observation that Mormonism could be compared to and linked with Edward Irving’s contemporary charismatic movement in England. “Mormonism,” Schaff wrote, “as a system of religion, strikingly resembles Irvingism” (1855: 248). In fact, according to Schaff, the Irvingites, or members of the Catholic Apostolic Church as they were formally known, actually considered Mormonism a “diabolical caricature of their own figure” (1855: 248). One reason for Schaff’s insistence on comparing Mormonism with the Catholic Apostolic Church may have been to further remove Mormonism from the American religious landscape. If Smith had borrowed his ideas from

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<sup>21</sup> By 1888 Schaff had reassessed his position on Mormonism in America, claiming it now was a significant example of religion and the merits of religious liberty in the country. See *Church and State in the United States* (1888: 35-37); as well as J. Spencer Fluhman’s discussion of Schaff in “*A Peculiar People*” (2012: 137).

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent discussion of Mormonism as an imposture see J. Spencer Fluhman’s *A Peculiar People: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (2012).

Irving, then Mormonism was not actually American but really the product of English spiritual revivalism.

Schaff's final influences in developing his thesis that Mormonism was un-American can be traced to a more prevalent comparison of the religion's non-American connections. For nineteenth-century comparativists, Joseph Smith and Mormonism were another version of Muhammad and Islam, or to use the derivations of the day, Mahomet and Mohammedanism. The latest version of this comparison could be seen in Mackay's title, *The Mormons: Or Latter-day Saints. With Memoirs of the Life and Death of Joseph Smith, the "American Mahomet"* (1852). Modern thinkers might immediately point to the practice of polygamy as the main source of this comparison, and by the 1860s this would eventually prove true; however, in 1852 the knowledge of Mormonism's "spiritual-wife system" was still in its infancy and the comparison was based largely on the perceived congruence of Smith's vision of Zion with Muhammad's Middle Eastern expansion (see 1852: 76-77). Schaff utilized both veins—polygamy and political growth—of the comparison to further his discourse of excluding Mormonism in their homeland (1855: 245, 246-247). Interestingly, after a year in the Cape, President Jesse Haven wrote to his superiors that he felt Mormonism would appeal more to the Muslim populations in Cape Town than the Protestant ones, as he found more points of congruence with the followers of Islam than with the adherents of the Dutch Reformed and Anglican churches (Wright n.d. 1:104-105).

I have belaboured this assessment of Schaff mainly because his work is so contemporary to the nineteenth-century Mormon experience in South Africa and because it illustrates the strategic ways that knowledge about nineteenth-century Mormonism was produced, authenticated, and circulated. Also, the framework he provides for establishing Mormonism as un-American is clearly reflected in the religion's encounter with South Africa. As will be shown presently, the main objections to Mormonism by residents in South Africa were based on the same issues that Schaff used to support his un-American thesis. In South Africa the myth of Zion, which in America meant the eventual overthrow of the government, was negotiated in terms of emigration and the loss of valuable colonial resources—colonials, especially females. Despotic theocracy was an extension of this myth and allowed for Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to govern their people with an iron rod. Not only was this form of government interpreted as un-American by South Africans but even more so as anti-Christian. Finally, the practice of polygamy and the alleged maltreatment of women was something that the Victorian colonials of South Africa could not

tolerate and did not associate with America. Consequently, like Schaff, South Africans considered Mormonism un-American. Before addressing these issues from the perspective of Mormonism in South Africa a contemporary nineteenth-century introduction to the myth of Zion, Mormonism's theocratic tendencies, and polygamy, as found in works seeking to prove Mormonism's un-American designation valid, is necessary in order for the reader to appreciate the less overt but equally present transatlantic circulations that made the journey to South Africa.

During the first week of April 1888 a three-day convention organized by a committee of representatives from the six main Christian denominations in Utah—Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, Baptist, Catholic, and Scandinavian Methodist Episcopal<sup>23</sup>—was held in Salt Lake City to discuss “the special objects confronting, and the special duties devolving upon the Christian Church in this region” and “the best means for removing these obstacles and arousing the churches generally to energetic action” (McNiece 1888: iv). The convention opened on the evening of 3 April with two presentations arguing that the most immediate obstacle obstructing the progress of Christianity in the region was the fact that Mormonism was un-American. The first speaker, Reverend S. L. Gillespie, worked his thesis around the Mormon Priesthood and specifically the goal of the Priesthood not only to govern Utah, America, and the whole earth from a religious perspective, but to also control the world economically and politically as well (Gillespie 1888: 12-17).

The second speech that night was given by Ogden's Congregationalist Pastor A. S. Bailey and was titled “Un-American Influences in Utah” (Bailey 1888: 17-23). In Utah, the Pastor began, there “is a spirit foreign to the spirit of Americans, from which has sprung a system, indigenous indeed, but hostile to American ideas. The root of these un-American influences is an organization known as the Mormon Church” (1888: 17). Bailey's understanding of the American Constitution was that it “provides for religious liberty”, but in order to qualify for the protection this document grants, an organization must first prove itself a religion by definition. According to Bailey, Mormonism fails the definition test because “it is not a church; it is not religion according to the American idea and the United States Constitution” (1888: 18). The main reasons for this disqualification are based on Mormonism's insistence on mixing politics and economics with religion. Bailey summarises these thoughts in the following manner: “It is a theory of Mormonism that all power, religious, business and political, belongs to the church. And if there is any doctrine

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<sup>23</sup> Note the absence of Mormonism from this list and the still prevalent opinion that it was not Christian.

maintained by the church it is this; and this is un-American” (1888: 19). While this idea of power is certainly the main avenue Bailey traverses to support his thesis, he also detours down the alleys of family rights, polygamy, and the use of public funds for the organization’s and not the public’s benefit. Bailey concludes with the following appeal to those in attendance as well as to the rest of America: “These un-American influences exist, and in their very nature they will ripen into rebellion if they are not destroyed. The struggle of loyal Americans in Utah against these evils, must now or in the near future be the struggle of America to maintain the principles of the American government” (1888: 23). For Bailey, like Schaff, the religion was a defiant, un-American organization that took advantage of its location on the periphery to develop and promote doctrines and rituals that fell outside the accepted frameworks for defining religion in America. The most notable beliefs and practices expounded by nineteenth-century Mormonism that support this thesis statement are the theocratic teachings of the myth of Zion and the doctrine of plural marriage.<sup>24</sup>

Mormonism’s emphasis on the immediacy of the looming millennial return of Christ and the establishment of Zion in America resulted in an easily accessible narrative of un-American rhetoric for comparativists to draw from. J. H. Beadle, a local expert, to use Chidester’s typology, in Utah, once summarized Mormonism’s un-American myth of Zion: “War is to go on, they say, till nearly all the men in the Union are killed, and then the Saints are to return and set up ‘Zion’ in Jackson County, Missouri; and the faithful, who have meanwhile gathered, are to possess the whole land, and be husbands to all the widows and fathers to all the orphans” (1873: 235). In *The Story of the Mormons* (1902) William Linn recognized a “spirit of defiance to the United States authorities” in many LDS songs, citing the following lyrics to “Zion”—now called “O Ye Mountains High” and still found in the LDS Hymnbook—which was written by Charles W. Penrose, a noteworthy LDS writer, thinker, and essayist:

Here our voices we’ll raise, and will sing to thy praise,  
Sacred home of the Prophets of God;  
Thy deliverance is nigh, thy oppressors shall die,  
And the Gentiles shall bow ‘neath thy rod. (1902: 498)

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<sup>24</sup> By 1888, a third and extremely prominent theme had also been developed by believers in Mormonism’s un-Americaness, that of criminality as embodied by Danite vigilantism. This subject has little bearing on Mormonism’s experience in South Africa and has therefore been left out of this examination.

The language contained in the myth of Zion is clearly reflected in these two examples. In order for Zion to exist the emissaries of God must separate themselves from the unbelievers, kill those who stand in their way, and take rightful possession of the New Jerusalem. The most un-American aspect of the myth is that the location of the New Jerusalem is to be built, at first, in Missouri, but will eventually encompass the whole American continent. Consequently, in order for Zion to exist in its purest form, all of America must either convert to Mormonism, move across the seas, or be killed.

According to Mormonism, Zion is to be God's Kingdom on earth and a place of refuge for the Saints from the evils of Babylon and it is to be governed as a theocracy at first led by the President of the LDS Church, but only until the time when Christ would return to assume command. Mormonism envisaged this style of government for all of its settlements and attempted early on to establish a theocracy in Missouri and then again in the City of Joseph (Nauvoo) with Smith assigning himself as president of the church, mayor of the city, and general of the army. During Mormonism's pre-Utah period, the religion and its people experienced numerous persecutions from citizens of the United States that, when presented before the ruling bodies—including an appeal to President Martin van Buren—were generally treated flippantly. As a result, when Smith was killed and the rest of the Saints were forced to surrender their city they left the Eastern United States in search of freedom, not necessarily from the Constitution, but from those who were currently interpreting it. In Utah, Brigham Young became the new Joseph Smith and ruled over the Saints in politics, economics and religion.

With Young on the throne in his valley fortress, Mormonism and the State of Deseret (Utah Territory) became a place of desired seclusion for the adherents of the new religion, and even though they were technically still part of the United States—Utah Territory was formed in 1850—Young maintained his theocratic rule by being elected the first Governor of the Territory. Young remained in total control of the Territory until 1857 when President James Buchanan was elected and declared Utah to be in open rebellion of the United States. In appointing a new Governor to usurp Young, President Buchanan openly challenged the theocracy that the myth of Zion espoused and that Young's followers supported. Understanding the difficult situation in which he was putting the new Governor, Alfred Cumming, Buchanan sent 2 500 troops to assist the new official in enforcing the changes he wanted, most notably the end of the theocratic rule of Young. Once aware of the President's plans and the military force he was sending their way, Young and his fellow

Mormons dug in their heels and prepared for a war; they did not want to be uprooted again. At one point Young declared martial law in the Territory and made plans to implement a “scorched earth policy” that would have resulted in all the Saints gathering in Provo and burning their homes in Salt Lake City. However, a peaceful resolution was reached in April 1858, with Young being pardoned of treason but having to relinquish his official position as Governor. The Utah War, which lasted from 23 July 1857–12 April 1858,<sup>25</sup> was defined more by sabotaged supply trains and the anticipation of war rather than physical confrontation; however, the accounts of the conflict had long-lasting results, with Mormonism being decidedly pictured as an un-American religion.

Adding to the clarity of Mormonism’s un-American image was the religion’s morally reprehensible practice of plural marriage. An analysis of the practice itself will have to wait until the following section in order to focus the discussion specifically on the circulations regarding polygamy that made the transatlantic journey and effected the representation of Mormonism in South Africa. In accordance with the methodological guidelines laid out at the beginning of this section, the discussion of polygamy that follows is informed from contemporary sources whose general thesis is to present Mormonism as un-American.

In 1882 Jennie Anderson Froiseth, the editor of the *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, a monthly magazine printed in Salt Lake City from 1880–1883, published a collection of histories and essays called *The Women of Mormonism; Or, the Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves*. The work was a continuation of Froiseth’s editorship at the *Standard*, which was mainly a forum for women who had negative personal experiences with polygamy as well as other anti-polygamists to voice their objections to the practice. In fact, the first edition of the magazine was prefaced with remarks from Harriet Beecher Stowe—the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) and a staunch defender of human rights for the subaltern populations in America—who petitioned “all the womanhood of the country” to unite against the bondage of polygamy. In the *Women of Mormonism*, Froiseth mirrors Stowe’s appeals by stating that the main objective of the work is to persuade “Congress to do something for the redemption of the thousands of women who are slaves in the heart of the Republic!” (1882: 22). This idea of comparing polygamy, especially in regard to the female victims of polygamy, to slavery is a running theme throughout the anti-polygamy campaign which began in 1862 when Congress passed the first anti-bigamy act (Morrill Act) and culminated when the Edmunds-

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<sup>25</sup> This is the date Young was informed of Buchanan’s plans by Porter Rockwell and Abraham Smoot and the date when Alfred Cummings arrived in Salt Lake City as Governor of Utah Territory.

Tucker Act (1887) was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1890, disincorporating the Mormon Church and seizing all its property over the value of \$50 000.

The most popular way of comparing the two un-American practices was made famous during the 1856 Republican Convention in Philadelphia when it was declared:

That the Constitution confers upon Congress sovereign power over the Territories of the United States for their government, and in the exercise of this power it is both the right and the duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those *twin relics of barbarism—polygamy and slavery*.

([http://www.ushistory.org/gop/convention\\_1856\\_republicanplatform.htm](http://www.ushistory.org/gop/convention_1856_republicanplatform.htm))<sup>26</sup>

As the “twin relics of barbarism”, polygamy and slavery became two contemporary issues that demanded immediate attention from the government and the citizens of the United States. P. T. van Zile, the United States District Attorney assigned to Utah in the 1880s, wrote an essay which Froiseth included in her work. His essay is titled “The Twin Relics” and includes a verbatim copy of the GOP’s 1856 resolution cited above (1882: 313) and although van Zile’s citation occurs over 25 years after the comparison was announced, the exactitude of the reproduction illustrates not only how circulated the comparison was but how determined government officials were in dealing with the ‘Mormon Problem’—as it was popularly known. That van Zile considered polygamy un-American is exemplified overtly when he states: “Polygamy is in every sense of the word an ulcer on the body politic. It does not belong in America, and should not be tolerated in America; and if there is no other way, we should apply the knife and carve it out” (1882: 322). Van Zile’s essay is just one of many that present polygamy and Mormonism as un-American in Froiseth’s work, which in turn was just one of many in circulation during the nineteenth-century.<sup>27</sup> According to van Zile, Froiseth, and Stowe, along with numerous others, polygamy was an un-American stain on an otherwise picturesque landscape.

With its history of persecution, central millenarian myth of Zion, theocratic system of governance, and peculiar practice of polygamy, Mormonism was constantly being defined as un-American by comparativists like Philip Schaff, A. S. Bailey, J. H. Beadle, and Jennie Anderson Froiseth. By beginning this section with an examination of Schaff’s 1855 assessment and then immediately fast-forwarding through time nearly thirty years to A. S.

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<sup>26</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> The more well-known examples include Fanny Stenhouse’s *Expose on Mormonism* (1872), and “*Tell it All*” (1874); T. B. H. Stenhouse’s *Rocky Mountain Saints* (1873); and Anne Eliza Young’s *Wife no. 19* (1875).

Bailey's speech, I am aware that I may be pushing the limits of contextualization to its bursting point. Circulations of nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa began only mid-way through 1853 and were exhausted by the end of 1865. According to this timeline, Schaff's observations are completely relevant, especially since he and his work were models of transatlantic circulations. Schaff began his education in Europe, he then crossed the Atlantic to complete his training in Pennsylvania where he conducted the research for his studies before travelling back to Europe to deliver the lectures *America* is based on; the book itself then journeyed back to New York where it was published by Scribner and Sons. Schaff's interpretation of Mormonism as un-American is exemplary of the methods and themes utilized by South Africans which I am arguing resulted in their perception of Mormonism also being unassociated with America. However, in 1855 these themes were just starting to be produced, authenticated, and circulated and it was not until a few years later that studies and comparativists like those mentioned above began fully to develop an un-American thesis regarding Mormonism and it is for this reason that I have extended the definition of contemporary. With consideration to the introduction just proffered, the history of nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa, when viewed in an un-American light, becomes an intriguing case study for those concerned with Mormon peripheries as well as those interested in the debatable issues being negotiated by Western missionaries in South Africa.

### *Nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa*

The first wave of American religious presence in South Africa lapped onto Natal's coastline in February 1835. The six missionaries sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) had answered the call of Dr. John Philip, the superintendent of the London Missionary Society (LMS), to assist the existent European missions in civilising and Christianising the indigenous populations in South Africa (Etherington 1970: 63). Despite being a non-denominational organization like the LMS, the ABCFM accepted Philip's invitation on the basis that the "American missionaries would work alone in areas not threatened by white settlement or British government" (1970: 63). Along with the desire to avoid British imperialist centres of influence, the American missionaries came to South Africa with the desire of propagating a distinctly American version of Christianity, politics, and economics. Norman Etherington, a modern scholar of the history of religions in South Africa, has expertly summarized the ABCFM's ideal vision of their mission to South Africa:

Settling among the Zulu people well beyond areas of white settlement, the missionaries would convert whole tribal groups, which would then be reformed into evangelical communities of monogamous and industrious families. Each community would be guided in spiritual matters by an African pastor, liberally educated by the missionaries, but supported by the contributions of his congregation. Once established, the evangelical communities would turn to organised benevolence in the form of temperance, tract, and mission societies. A central body would coordinate the missionary activities of the evangelical communities, and send teams of African missionaries to the north, where the whole process would begin again with a new people. Once the cycle had begun, the conversion of Africa would be assured and, although the bonds of sympathy that united evangelical America with converted Africa would never weaken, the American Board would be free to divert its resources to other parts of the globe. By this plan, the evangelization of the earth would be swift, inexpensive, and permanent. (1970: 62-63)

Ideally, the ABCFM wanted to empower their converts with a lasting faith in Christ, developed in a community that encouraged self-reliance and self-governance. This was a major difference to the outlook of most European missions and it began with the fundamental belief that within each indigenous South African was the potential to become equals with all other individuals, especially white Americans (1970: 64). While the conversion of an individual was always important to the missionaries, it was the main goal of the Americans to endow entire nations with a new, American outlook on religion, politics, and economics. Consequently, all un-American beliefs, practices, and traditions such as “witchcraft, bride price and polygamy, round huts and the Zulu language were all slated for early demolition” (1970: 66).

In order to accomplish this task of generating self-sufficient communities of equals, the Americans sought out areas untouched and uncontrolled by Europeans. While this initially was not a difficult task, Etherington points out that by 1843 when the British and Voortrekkers occupied more or less the whole of South Africa, the ABCFM seriously considered closing their missions and moving on (1970: 63). The lack of space to establish their ideal mission communities was not the only or even the largest obstacle standing in the way of the Americans’ success. Soon after arrival it became evident that Zulu nationalism, traditional values, and religious beliefs were not as easily replaced as they had first

anticipated. The American utopian dream for South Africa depended on their missionaries' ability to convert, train, and ordain the Zulus in a timely and efficient manner. On paper this seemed like an easy enough chore, but in reality the first Zulu pastor was not ordained until 1869, over thirty years after the ABCFM missionaries first journeyed into Zululand (1970: 67). Along with a lack of religious success, the American missionaries also had to alter their political and economic ideals as well. After only a few short years of operation among independent Zulu nations, such as those led by Dingaan and Mpande, it became evident that the Zulu were wary of white, outside influences in their communities and if any converts were gained at all they came from the outcast and servant populations (1970: 68). Consequently, the imagined reformation of the South Africans political and economic structures could never have taken place. In the end, the missionaries moved their stations within the British-controlled areas and adopted a pro-imperialist vision of South Africa's religious, political, and economic future.

When the vision and reality of the ABCFM's nineteenth-century experience in South Africa is compared with that of the Mormons we once again reach the conclusion that nineteenth-century Mormonism was not American. First and foremost, the target audience of Mormon missionaries was not the indigenous, godless heathens, but the 'Romans', as Joseph Richards described the European inhabitants of South Africa (Richards 1852: 541-542).

While the third chapter of this work will go into greater detail as to the origins and history of Mormonism's racial policies, for our purposes here it is enough to acknowledge the fact that the Mormon map of South Africa included only settlements with large white populations—a map that was unrecognisable to the ABCFM. Originally the Mormon map included regions populated by Afrikaans adherents to the Dutch Reformed Church, but after several unsuccessful treks into places such as Stellenbosch, Paarl, Malmesbury, and Durbanville, Jesse Haven realized that in order to convert the Afrikaner one had first to disprove their religion and second persuade them to leave the land they considered their own—both, Haven observed in letters sent to Salt Lake City, nearly impossible tasks (Cannon 2007: 454). Compounding the difficult nature of preaching to the Afrikaans communities in South Africa was the fact that none of the Salt Lake City missionaries spoke the newly developing language or its closest relative, Dutch. However, one of the earliest converts to the LDS Church in Cape Town, Thomas Weatherhead, was bilingual and was used by Haven on multiple occasions as both an oral and transcript translator (see Cannon 2007). Unfortunately, despite Haven's efforts to produce his pamphlets in Dutch, very few

Afrikaans converts were gained, and eventually the missionaries focused their efforts almost entirely on British colonies such as the English suburbs of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown, and Queenstown.

Besides ignoring indigenous communities and failing among the Afrikaners, nineteenth-century Mormon missionaries had to negotiate their relationship with one other group of South Africans, and once again their experience supports the conclusion that Mormonism was not American. As the first missionary president in South Africa, Jesse Haven was charged with the responsibility of not only preaching Mormonism, overseeing the affairs of his two subordinates, but also with observing and reporting on the various physical, cultural, political, and religious conditions of the mission. In Chidesterian terminology, Jesse Haven was a local expert on religion in South Africa who circulated his findings across the Atlantic to Utah where they were interpreted at the centre by LDS policy makers. In an early letter addressed to the Second Counsellor in the First Presidency of the LDS Church, Willard Richards, Haven observed that the city and surrounding areas of Cape Town had approximately 30 000 residents, around half of which were “colored people—being all shades, from jet black to almost an European complexion” (Wright n.d. 1:81). Haven further observed that many of these “colored” individuals were emancipated slaves and were polygamy-practising “Mahometans.” In a letter summarising his anthropological assessment of South Africa written after he had already returned to America, Haven provided a more in-depth analysis of the Muslim population in the Cape: “Those of them called Malay, are Mahometans, and according to their religion, they are permitted, and do have a plurality of wives. Sometimes the English that emigrate to that country intermarry with them, and then adopt their religion. They are generally very quiet people, attending to their own business, though they occasionally practise witchcraft on those with whom they get offended. *Lefs drunknefs* and *licentiousnefs* [sic] among them than among the whites, or Christians” (Wright n.d. 1:81-82). Haven had circulated a similar observation in 1854 that simultaneously illustrated a comparative allegiance with Islam and a sardonic distaste of immoral Christianity. “There is a class of people here called Malays who believe in the Mahomedan religion ... They are a very civil and quiet people. I never to my knowledge have received any insult from them since I have been here. But the good, holy, pious, devout and reverend Christians have frequently insulted me as I have passed the streets, crying out, ‘Mormons! Joe Smith! Seven Wives!’ The Malays believe in the plurality of wives which does not exactly coincide with the pious notions of the learned, good Christians in this place” (Wright

n.d. 1:104-105). After calling attention to an upcoming parliamentary conference to discuss passing a law to make polygamy illegal, Haven cheekily writes, “I expect they [Christian government officials] intend to make the Malays put away all their wives except one, and get them to conform to their most holy practices: to be married to one wife, but seduce and be with as many other women as they pleased” (Wright n.d. 1:105). By framing his observations through comparison, Haven was establishing a foundation for his leaders to understand why he would later suggest in his post-mission summary that it was his “opinion that many of them [Muslims] will yet receive the Gospel.” To support this claim Haven again reverts to comparison: “I believe they are descendants of Abraham by his wife Hagar, that is, those who are the pure blooded Malays. They have long, straight black hair, skin darker than the American Indians, none of the Negro features in them. They practise circumcision on their male children about 13 years of age, or from 13 to 16” (1:82). Haven, the local Mormon expert of religion in Cape Town, wanted his superiors to know that the Muslim population were worthy recipients of Mormonism based on the fact that despite their dark skin they were physically distinct from the cursed indigenous population and should actually be considered more like American Indians, a population very much of interest to nineteenth-century Mormon missionaries.<sup>28</sup> Haven even provides an example where he was treated kindly by a Muslim ‘priest’ who, after teaching the missionary about the six great prophets—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad—was intrigued by the possibility of Joseph Smith being a seventh (1:82). Haven left the man with one of his pamphlets<sup>29</sup> that Weatherhead had translated into Dutch—Haven further observed in his analysis that few Malays spoke or read English—but there is no evidence to suggest the priest ever converted to Mormonism, nor, for that matter, are there recordings of any South African Muslim joining the LDS Church in the nineteenth century.

By producing comparisons between Mormonism and Islam, Haven was inadvertently contributing to the greater nineteenth-century discourse that utilized this comparison to forward the belief that Mormons were not Christians or Americans, but actually Muslims. By circulating the observation that Mormon and Muslim polygamy was morally superior to Christian infidelity, Haven was furthering this process of ‘othering’ that was regularly exploited by comparativists to argue Mormonism’s un-American status. As will be shown in the following section of this chapter, Americans in South Africa were just as adamantly

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<sup>28</sup> See Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton’s chapter “Mormons and Native Americans” in *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (1979: 145-160).

<sup>29</sup> See David J. Whitaker’s PhD dissertation “Early Mormon Pamphleteering” (1983).

opposed to polygamy as their countrymen at home. Thus once again the nineteenth-century Mormon experience in South Africa is best viewed in opposition to that of mainstream America, at this time exemplified by the ABCFM. As has been shown, the two missions were inherently different from each other, based primarily on the fact they came to the country to convert and associate with two contrasting populations of people. The Mormons arrived in 1853 eager to testify about their new prophet to non-African communities such as the British, Dutch, and Malay, while the ABCFM tried desperately to avoid locations that had been influenced by any of these non-African populations. Aside from this fundamental variance in ideological outlooks the two missions taught drastically different forms of Christianity.

The second point of departure between the ABCFM and the nineteenth-century Mormon mission occurs at the doctrinal level. The ABCFM taught a non-denominational form of Christianity that was meant to inspire indigenous converts with the desire to focus on achieving an American-style of living that would alter their entire worldview. Beginning at an individual level of conversion, the ABCFM quickly sought to expand their vision for South Africans to encompass the family, the community, and eventually the nation. Doctrinally, the ABCFM's missionaries preached a standardized American version of evangelical Protestantism that emphasized faith in Jesus Christ's grace, a New Testament understanding of the Gospel, and the potential for equality among all converts. Mormon missionaries in South Africa, exemplified most prolifically by the pamphleteering efforts of Jesse Haven, circulated a drastically different form of Christianity with a recognized prophet and hierarchy, a new canon of scripture, and an emphasis on works and not faith alone as the saving grace of Christ. The most crucial incongruent doctrines between the ABCFM and Mormonism are the same beliefs and practices that were utilized by scholars of religion like Philip Schaff and comparativists such as J.H. Beadle and Jennie Anderson Froiseth to forward the position that Mormons and Mormonism were un-American. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to examining the South African interpretations and circulations of the Mormon myth of Zion, the theocratic rule of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and the controversial practice of polygamy.

Unlike in America where the threat of Mormonism's myth of Zion was perceived as a direct threat against the government and the citizens, in South Africa the myth of Zion was negotiated in terms of emigration and the loss of one of the most valuable colonial resources: colonists, and more specifically female colonists. In his first pamphlet, printed within a few months of his arrival in the Colony, Jesse Haven, expanding upon Joseph Smith's thirteen

‘articles of faith’, circulated thirty-three of the core doctrines of Mormonism to assist the missionaries in concisely defining the tenets of their religion, four of which directly address the myth of Zion and emphasise the importance of the ‘gathering’. The first is a definitional statement of what the myth of Zion actually is and is a reproduction of Smith’s tenth article: “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes. That Zion will be built upon the American continent. That Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiac glory.” Later, Haven expanded on the doctrine of the gathering and wrote: “We believe as soon as a person receives and obeys the Gospel, it is his duty, as soon as circumstances will permit, to gather out from amongst the wicked, and go to the place the Lord has appointed for the gathering of His people in the last days.” While it was considered a commandment for all able-bodied individuals to emigrate to Utah, the substitute Zion for the time being, Haven taught that the myth prophesies that women would play a special role in the gathering: “We believe woman is naturally more virtuous, pure, and religiously disposed than man, therefore, more women than men, will receive and obey the Gospel in the last days, and be gathered to Zion” (1853b: 3), and “We believe on the account of the wars that are soon to be amongst the nations of the earth, that the wicked will slay the wicked—men will be killed off, and the women will flee to Zion for safety.” To conclude his work Haven includes a poem written by Mormonism’s most accomplished female poet and plural wife of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Eliza R. Snow, addressed to the Queen of England. Two of the stanzas read:

O would she [the Queen] now her influence bend—  
The influence of royalty,  
Messiah’s Kingdom to extend,  
And Zion’s “nursing mother” be.  
Thus, with the glory of her name  
Inscribed on Zion’s lofty spire,  
She’d win a wreath of endless fame,  
To last when other wreaths expire.

Snow’s lyrics show how universally Mormonism’s myth of Zion was interpreted and that even at the height of her empire, Queen Victoria would either have to emigrate across the

Atlantic where she could reign under the command of Christ or forfeit her power to the same fateful demise as all the unconverted.

As one might expect, South Africans did not view the myth of Zion in positive light. With frontier battles and wars one of the few constants in colonial life, the loss of men, women and the children that would have been raised in the Colony was treated seriously. Objecting to the transatlantic appropriation of valuable human resources, South Africans produced and circulated articles such as “Female Emigration: Under the Especial Patronage of his Satanic Majestic and all his Royal Family, For Zion, that Remarkable Vessel, ‘Sanctified Licentiousness.’” According to Haven the work, which the missionary included in a letter to the First Presidency in June 1854, is indicative of the types of tracts that “were printed and put in circulation by our enemies.” Although this particular example “rather overshot the mark” and did not make a lasting impression among the people, it is an excellent and cleverly creative example of a South African interpretation of nineteenth-century Mormonism that is fundamentally critical of the religion’s emigration policies.

Tender to the Ship Mormonism: (A full description of the first named has just been published by one of her officers). Both vessels are insured in Pandemonium, i.e., forever. Registered Burden—by those who have felt its weight—Intolerable.

The parent vessel was constructed in 1830 by the celebrated Joe Smith from material borrowed or stolen from an American novel, and the Holy Bible. The framework composed of the former, the carving, gilding and painting, which though roughly put on, have proven serviceable by preventing the raw materials from falling into decay, of the latter.

She has a full complement of officers, having a ‘goodly fellowship of prophets’, ‘a glorious company of apostles’, besides a ‘noble army of martyrs’, together with ‘patriarchs, priests, presidents of seventies, etc., etc.’

She was originally commanded by the Prophet and General, Joseph Smith, who, sad to relate, one very stormy day fell overboard, or rather, jumped out of a prison onto the earth into the unseen world.

Her present commander, Brigham Young, is an ardent admirer of the fair sex, and passionately fond of children: ninety of the former, (with power to add to their number), and a continually increasing supply of the latter, comprising his domestic establishment.

After having been tempest tossed and driven from place to place, she (has) at length been guided by the chart of the Book of Mormon, and the compass of New Revelation, to Great Salt Lake, where she now lies as a depot. It is expected that her next movement will be to the Great Brimstone Lake, “which is the second death.”

The above tender has been despatched to this Colony for the conveyance of passengers; and as she is very accommodating, the agents hope that many will avail themselves of this opportunity, as no other will ever be offered.

Persons in the proportion of “seven women to one man” willing to proceed to Zion are requested to feed, clothe, lodge, listen to and believe the agents; when a passage to that fair Haven – the prison in which Smith and his followers are said by their friends, and believed by all to be Walkers –, will be certainly secured.

N.B. She, the tender, carries an unexperienced (sic) doctor, who cures all diseases; the only medicine he uses being a pot of oil, the only instrument—his hands.

“Terms: Be sweetly baptized by immersion for yourself first, and afterwards for you dead relations and friends; feed and lodge the elders and saints; believe in Joe Smith; believe in the Book of Mormon; sell all you have here, and go, and give all to Zion.” (Wright n.d. 1:69-70)

The significance of the voyage metaphor is only fully appreciated from a colonial perspective where settlers were considered essential commodities. As evidenced from the first parenthetical comment in the article, the piece was written as a response to one, or more probably all, of Haven’s pamphlets. The resulting satirical article is an especial South African understanding of the history of Mormonism and its current emphasis on emigration. The final *nota bene* of the essay summarises what is required of South Africans who wish to convert to the American-based religion and concludes by suggesting that ultimately what one commits to when joining Mormonism is to uproot oneself completely, leave South Africa, and “give all to Zion.” Although emphasising different aspects of the myth of Zion, both Americans and South Africans objected to its teachings; similarly, responses to Brigham Young’s theocracy floated across the Atlantic and while South Africans were less vehement in voicing their objections to theocratic rule, they certainly questioned the veracity of a religion that allowed its leaders to rule in such despotic fashion.

By the middle of December 1855 South Africa was once again devoid of official Mormon representation in the Colony and it would take six years, almost to the date, before missionaries originating in Salt Lake City would have the opportunity to climb the slopes of Mount Brigham, Heber, and Willard. However, there was no shortage of missionary work being conducted in the Colony during this official absence, most notably by local converts like John Wesley, and in fact the European Mission spared the local South African missionaries two of their elders, Ebenezer C. Richardson and James Brooks, in 1857 for a short, nine month check-up. News of the arrival of the four new Utah elders spread quickly in the Cape and on 7 January 1862 the *Cape Argus* announced their arrival, drawing special attention to the fact that two of the missionaries, Henry Dixon and John Talbot, had been born in the Eastern Cape, near Grahamstown, and were returning to their former abode “with a view of promulgating Mormon doctrines and winning over converts to the Mormon faith.” Despite their South African origins, the paper declared the elders now to be citizens of the United States. Attempting to capitalise on their American status, from a place of serious interest and intrigue since the outbreak of civil war, the Mormons requested that the editor of the *Argus* include an 1832 prophesy of Joseph Smith that foretold of the impending war between the northern and southern States. The missionaries’ interpretation of the revelation fervently declared that Utah stood on the side of the Union and that the Mormon citizens of the Territory were “prepared to pay its quota towards carrying on the war ... and will stand by the constitution to the last.” Hoping to locate their religion as a part of America that the settlers of the British colony would sympathise with, the Mormons clearly found it favourable to emphasise their American origins in the Colony in an attempt to rebrand their image in the settlements as Americans and not immigrants, as Americans and not an independent nation led by a despotic ruler, and as Americans and not polygamists. In order to investigate whether their strategy was successful, we will examine the circulations about Mormonism, America, and South Africa located in Natal newspaper articles while Henry Dixon was busy establishing a branch of the mission there during the first several months of 1863.

As a South African American, Henry Dixon’s first objective as a Mormon missionary was to attempt to convert his family to his new faith. and so, with the permission of the mission’s new president, William Fotheringham, he set out for Uitenhage soon after arriving in the Cape. Though they were glad to see him and housed and fed him whenever possible, his family could never accept the practice of polygamy as a tenet of Christianity and Dixon was forced to seek converts elsewhere. In January 1863, Dixon was introduced to a Mormon

sugar cane farmer from Isipingo, Natal named Adolphous Noon who had come to Port Elizabeth to petition President Fotheringham to send a missionary to accompany him back to Natal and assist him in establishing a branch of the Church in that region. Dixon was given the assignment and the two arrived in Durban on 29 January and immediately set out on horseback for Noon's plantation in Isipingo. It is not known how or where Noon was first introduced to the Mormon Gospel, but at the time he appears in the history books in Port Elizabeth he had already converted his brother and a few other residents of Isipingo to Mormonism and was busy making preparations to sell his successful sugar cane operation and emigrate to Utah. While Dixon's home base was certainly Noon's farm, the two and some of the other converts ventured often into Durban, giving public lectures and advertising their new Christianity throughout the colony, including the occasional trip to Pietermaritzburg. By April Dixon felt that the attention the Mormons were receiving in Durban had grown to a level that warranted the organization of an official branch, which necessitated the leasing of a meeting place which the *Natal Mercury* referred to as "another temple" (14 April 1863).

Dixon's journal during this period constantly refers to newspaper articles in circulation at this time discussing Mormons and Mormonism. Evan Wright scoured the archives in Natal and located more than a dozen of these articles, some of which are simply short declarations of faith or announcements on upcoming meetings; however, there are a few excellent examples of transatlantic circulations between America and South Africa. While all of the three themes this section is exploring—emigration, theocracy, and polygamy—can be located in these pieces, a particular emphasis is placed on the actual living conditions of Utah under the despotic rule of Brigham Young.

On 16 April 1863 the *Natal Mercury's* supplement included a letter written by an anonymous South African convert to Mormonism who emigrated to Utah sometime before John Stock's party left in 1860 (see Wright n.d. 1:200-202). The author left South Africa filled with the desire to join the Saints in Utah and "find there the paradise which the Mormon Apostles described." The journey was uneventful until they arrived at the furthest western frontier of America and had to spend "three months making handcarts for emigration across the plains", which delayed their trip until the winter months and the author states that hundreds of the travellers perished and out of the ninety wagons that began the journey only thirty arrived in Salt Lake. Those familiar with Mormon history will know that the author is placing himself within the Martin and Willie handcart companies that struggled to cross the

plains during the winter of 1856. The author situates himself within the greater handcart narrative as well as several other South Africans. “One fine looking girl (Stock’s sister) suffered greatly. If Robert Stock, of Algoa Bay, knew how his sister was treated by them he would curse all the Mormons he ever saw. My wife found her lying sick one morning on the cold frozen snow, with one old blanket for covering, and with some of her toes completely frozen off her feet, not able to help herself. She suffered until about 120 miles off Salt Lake when she was relieved by death.” The author and his wife were among the survivors of the tragedy but were completely disenchanted with the religion, its people, and especially its leader and left the valley after a single season.

The letter included in the *Mercury* was written in 1862 and originally printed in the *Port Elizabeth Herald*. “Dear Sir,” it begins, “I take the liberty of writing a few lines to you, hoping to find you well. I have written to Africa so many times that I have almost given up all hopes of hearing from any of you again. I expect you have heard of my leaving Salt Lake Valley through my letter to John Stock, warning him of the trouble he was about to get into through leaving Algoa Bay with his family to go to the Valley of the Salt Lake, where nothing but poverty and tyranny would await him under the despot Brigham and his council.” He goes as far as to call Utah “the worst place in the world for anyone to live in. They will take the last penny you are worth from you and then you may go where you like. The poor people are half starved and naked, while their superiors are rolling in luxuries derived from the labour of the poor man.” Later the letter warns that Mormons and especially their leaders are “a gang of thieves and murderers. If any of their Elders visit Africa, flog them out of the colony.” Very much aware of the current happenings of Mormons in South Africa, the author continues, “I have heard of a young man named Dixon being sent on a mission to the Bay ... H. Dixon has not sense enough to see how the people are oppressed [sic]. He arrived there one year after me and thinks all is right. The head men tell the poor people that it is the Lord’s will they should work hard and not suffer hunger, and the poor fools believe it, they could not, however, stuff me with that, though I dare not say much.”

While many of the author’s comments and observations were refuted in the *Mercury* two weeks later by Dixon himself—and more could be made at this time by observant historians who would find it difficult to locate any South Africans in the Martin and Willie handcart companies—the fact the piece was originally printed in Port Elizabeth and then recirculated in Durban is indicative of the interest South Africans had in their former fellow settlers. Despite the efforts of Dixon to refute the charges of this author, the piece would

certainly have been deemed an authentic source of knowledge as it was written by a South African for South Africans.

Dixon also objected to another letter included in that same issue of the *Mercury* written by an Englishman who shared similar experiences in Utah with that of the South African. Published under the headline “A Voice from the City of the Saints,” no doubt a reflection of the recently completed work of the British linguist, traveller, soldier, and amateur anthropologist, Richard Burton *The City of the Saints* (1861), is another ‘authentic’ observation of life in Utah under Brigham Young’s tyrannical rule. Pictured in the piece as the despotic commander of the notorious Danites, Young is envisioned as a tyrant constantly manipulating the law and eager to place the blame for events such as the infamous Mountain Meadow Massacre “on Uncle Sam’s shoulders.” The Briton’s circulation concludes with relief that he is now a resident of California, safe in America and far away from the long reach of Brigham Young.

Due to articles such as these, nineteenth-century Mormonism’s emphasis on theocratic rule was negotiated in South Africa in terms of un-American despotism and criminality. With Mormon South Africans and fellow citizens of the British Empire warning their countrymen through imagery illustrating these traits, Mormonism’s chances at success in the colony were not good. Even former Mormon South Africans who returned as proud American Mormons, such as Henry Dixon, could not rebrand their religion’s image in the country, and even if they could have convinced South Africans to view Utah through their perspective as a utopian Zion ruled by God’s prophet, they still had to negotiate the tempest-tossed waters of polygamy, a starkly un-American and anti-Christian practice.

The nineteenth-century Mormon belief in and practice of polygamy was undeniably un-American, but was it un-South African? For white South African Christians the answer is of course yes; however, as was hinted at earlier in the chapter when Haven compared his religion to that of the Malay Muslims in Cape Town, the opposite is true. In addition to Muslims, the vast majority of indigenous South Africans— in other words, the vast majority of South Africans—also practised forms of polygamy. However, the question of whether this is a moot point as the Mormon mission focused solely on preaching to white Christians is a valid observation. In its simplest form—yes, polygamy in Mormonism’s South Africa was un-South African and anti-Christian. However, during Mormonism’s nineteenth-century tenure in the country the legalities and religious definition of the practice were currently under negotiation.

In 1855 the Anglican Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso published a controversial opinion on his interpretation of how Christians should respond to the practice of polygamy among indigenous South Africans, in his case, the Zulu. *Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Cases of Polygamy, as found already existing in Converts from Heathenism* (1855a) caused a tremendous stir among the mission communities in Natal and elicited lengthy and in-depth retorts from various missionaries, most prominently the American Lewis Grout. Grout's *A Reply to Bishop Colenso's "Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Cases of Polygamy, as found already existing in Converts from Heathenism", by an American Missionary* was placed in circulation soon after Colenso's and refuted not only the central thesis of Colenso's sympathetic interpretation but multiple points of doctrine as well. Instead of summarising Colenso's position myself, however, to illustrate just how vigorous the debate about polygamy was in Natal, I will allow H. A. Wilder's *A Review of Dr. Colenso's Remarks on Polygamy, as Found Existing in Converts from Heathenism* (1856) to do so. The essence, Wilder argues, of Colenso's stance on polygamy is summarized by the following four points:

1. Polygamy was tolerated and sanctioned among the Jews, while their government was a theocracy.
2. Christ's words respecting divorce, adultery, and the marriage relation, in Matt. 19 v., 1-12 and kindred passages, were directed against *Divorce*, and not against *Polygamy*.
3. A Bishop is forbidden to be a polygamist, 1 Tim. iii. 2 v.; therefore in laymen, polygamy was tolerated by the Apostles.
4. It is unjust and cruel to make a man put away part of his wives. It does them a wrong—sunders affections—breaks obligations, &c. (1856: 6)

In short, Colenso advocated the acceptance of polygamists into the Christian fold without requiring them to first abandon their plural wives, a toleration that Grout and the Americans could not accept. "The inhabitants of Natal," Grout's 1855 response begins, "both white and colored, have been surprised not a little, of late, by the promulgation of a new doctrine concerning the practice of *Polygamy*. But the general surprise, great as it is, by no means equals the unfeigned grief, which most of the Christian religious portion of the colony feels as the announcement of such a doctrine" (1855: 3). After a stern and pointed reappraisal of the doctrine Grout asks: "By whose, and by what law, is the polygamist lawfully married?" "The encyclopedias," begins his response,

which give us able and learned discussions, on this and other subjects, tell us, that ‘a marriage, contracted while there is a former wife or husband alive, is, *ipso facto*, void.’ The first, last, only law of God, on this subject, as set forth in his word, once and again, teaches that marriage consists in the union of only two persons, one man and one woman, for life. And now, in the solemn and truthful words of the *Prayer Book*, we say—BE YE WELL ASSURED, THAT IF ANY PERSONS ARE JOINED TOGETHER, OTHERWISE THAN AS GOD’S WORD DOTH ALLOW, THEIR MARRIAGE IS NOT LAWFUL.” Here, then, we may rest the question of *law*, concerning marriage and polygamy—so far, at least, as it concerns virtue, religion, man’s moral right and duty. The standard by which the legality of these things is to be tried, is “God’s Word,” not the laws and customs of the heathen polygamist. As in the language of Wayland’s *Moral Science*—“Marriage, being an institution of God, is subject to *his laws*, and not the laws of man. Hence the civil law is binding upon the conscience, only is so far as it corresponds to the law of God.” (1855: 40-41)

According to the Americans, polygamist marriages were not sanctioned by God and thus a polygamist relationship was really just another term for adultery, and adulterers could not be welcomed into the community of Christians.

Colenso was not about to give in to what he viewed was clear misinterpretation of Israelite history and biblical precedence, and before the end of 1855 he had published *A Letter to an American Missionary from the Bishop of Natal* (1855b) reiterating his views that it is unjust to force a polygamist to abandon his plural wives. In 1856 three more responses were written in Natal (Bond 1856; Fowle 1856) including *An Answer to Dr. Colenso’s “Letter” on Polygamy, by an American Missionary* penned by Grout. It is in this second refutation of Grout that we find the first instance of Mormonism’s polygamy intersecting with South Africa’s missionary debate on the subject. Arguing the efficacy of Colenso’s logic, Grout writes: “To this he [Colenso] answers—“I need only here retort your own question, with a slight modification. ‘If it be true that polygamists were *rejected* from baptism in the Apostolic age, why is it that the Apostles and the early historians of the church, in all their writings, have never told us so?’” But is this good logic? Or is it, rather, a genuine specimen of something else? Prove that polygamists were *rejected* from the church, with no proof that they had a sensible existence in its vicinity!! and with no proof, again, provided they had such an existence, that any of them ever offered themselves for admission!! As well

might Dr. C. attempt to prove that idolaters, murderers, and even Mormons and Mohammedans, were admitted to the Apostolic church, by requiring us to show that they were “rejected!” (1856: 65). Grouped with idol worshipers, murderers, and Muslims, Mormons are thrown into the debate as an example of people irrefutably anti-Christian and thus, according to the American Mission, anti-South African.

After 1856 the debate seems to have been settled, until 1861 when Colenso penned another attempt to justify his unpopular stance in *A Letter to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, upon the Question of the Proper Treatment of Cases of Polygamy, as Found already Existing in Converts from Heathenism*. Probably due to a lack of missionary success among the Zulus, especially from what they had originally expected, Colenso’s attempts to persuade England that the tolerance of polygamist marriages entered into before acceptance of Christianity is vital for the future of the mission. Interpreting the practice in opposition to the Americans, Colenso expresses his belief that the indigenous customs and religion of the Zulu sanctify the practice and make it acceptable in God’s eyes because, as heathens, the Zulu did not know any better. Colenso goes as far as to claim a biblical heritage for the practice by stating that Zulu polygamy “very probably derived from the days of Abraham himself, through their Arab descent” (1861: 4-5).<sup>30</sup> However, despite his appeals to the public and to the authorities, Colenso won few followers to his side. One satirical commentator of Colenso’s views asks in the *London Weekly Dispatch*: “Perhaps a Salt Lake Mormon of British origin were to see the error of his ways, and wish to return to the bosom of the church? Shall we show him less favour than a Zulu Kaffir? Is he to retain his wives or dismiss them? Dr. Colenso, perhaps, can suggest the right course to be pursued in such a case. Again, if polygamy is not sinful and wicked in itself, and contrary to all religion, in South Africa, why should it be in this country?”<sup>31</sup>

In 1862, surprised that Colenso had still not dropped the issue, the Anglican missionary Henry Callaway wrote *Polygamy: A Bar to Admission into the Christian Church*, a work that sympathized not with his superior but with the Americans. Responding directly to another vein of justification espoused by Colenso as well as by William Henry Fowle that claimed polygamy was a natural law, Callaway passionately writes: “Let it but be proved that polygamy is in accordance with the law of nature, and the question under dispute is settled! And something further is settled also, that polygamy is not only lawful for the Kafir; but

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<sup>30</sup> Portions of this work, including these pages, were printed in the *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* on 28 September 1861.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted from *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* reprint on 21 September 1861.

lawful also for the Christian; lawful for everybody in every age of the world! The Mormonites may not therefore be so very far wrong after all, and may be in fact really reformers, whose mission is to bring back the human race to the natural law of marriage, from which men have been driven by the puritanical notions propagated by the preachers of Christianity! or which have resulted from Western habits and education! But no, polygamy is not in accordance with nature; it is as much ‘against nature’, as any other of those ‘fruits of the flesh’, which St. Paul enumerates as the prevailing sins of the Gentile world” (1862: 23-24).

This third appearance of Mormonism in the annals of South Africa’s polygamy debate sarcastically reinforces their peripheral status in the colony. By bringing Mormonism into the argument over natural laws, Callaway’s readers would immediately be able to see just how ridiculous the claim was as one would have to accept the former in order to adhere to the latter. Interestingly, Haven and the Mormons were very much aware of the Colenso-American debate as illustrated by the circulation of letter written to Willard Richards by Haven printed in *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* on 7 June 1856. A portion of the correspondence reads, “Missionaries are labouring among them [Fingoes], as well as among the Kaffirs, and trying to convert them to modern Christianity, but their success is limited, for the Kaffirs do not like the idea of giving up all their wives except one, which they must do to conform to the ‘holy religion’ of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The English bishop of Natal has little consistency; he proposes that those who receive the Christian religion, and have already a plurality of wives, should be permitted to keep their wives. I think that this proposition of the bishop’s is a choker to some of the ‘pious, good, sanctimonious’ missionaries of that land” (Haven 1856). Haven’s observations reveal of number of crucial aspects about Mormonism in South Africa. First, the Mormons were not oblivious to the happenings and difficulties being experienced by other missions in the country. Second, the language used to describe Christians is clearly meant in derision while the image of black South Africans is purely ethnographic. Third, and most important, while the Mormons were aware of the practice of polygamy in traditional South African communities, they did not view it as a point of congruence that they could utilize to gain more converts; instead, they employed a strategy of avoidance in regard to black South Africans.

There were numerous newspaper articles, some of which have already been mentioned in this chapter, printed in South Africa during the nineteenth century as well as almost countless references in the diaries and letters written by Mormon missionaries at this

time that make it clear that in South Africa, as in America, the image of Mormonism was negotiated in terms of polygamy. I have offered these brief appearances in the greater polygamy debate occurring in Natal during the 1850s and '60s as they highlight not only the peripheral nature of the religion in the colony but the clear association with and interpretation of the religion's practice of polygamy. However, as a transatlantic circulation originating in America and being brought to South Africa by Mormons, polygamy was not a foreign concept or practice in South Africa as exemplified by the Colenso-American debate.

The idea of 'foreign' when speaking about polygamy is an interesting twist in the narrative being woven here. During his reign as the Chief Justice of the Transvaal Colony beginning in 1902, Sir James Rose-Innes passed a law that opposed the South African Native Affairs Commission's stance that while indigenous South African polygamist marriages "should not be accorded the same status as Christian marriage" they should still be considered a customary union that is better than the alternative "state of licentious confusion" that would ensue if they were legally prosecuted (Chanock 2001: 197). Rose-Innes' court could not stand such a lackadaisical attitude and began prosecuting polygamists based on the English Chancery court decision that stated marriages in foreign countries were not legal unless they conformed to Christianity's monogamous ideals. According to Rose-Innes, Africans living in the Transvaal were actually foreigners in the British Empire and as such their plural marriages were against the law. As a way to prosecute and abolish polygamy from the Empire, Rose-Innes defined the indigenous inhabitants of his colony as foreigners in their homeland (Chanock 2001: 197-199). Although this legal precedence was established 50 years after Mormonism's tenure in South Africa, the idea of Mormonism and African South Africans being considered foreigners in their native lands based on their respective government's interpretation of their religious practice of polygamy is an interesting comparative observation. As foreigners both in America and South Africa, what Mormons in the colony of South Africa should have been doing was seeking out other foreigners—i.e. African South Africans. What follows is a comparative analysis between nineteenth-century Mormonism and nineteenth-century indigenous South African religion that asks: if nineteenth-century Mormonism was definitely not American than what was it? The answer: South African.

### *South African Religion*

In 1994 Dennis L Thomson wrote a comparative reflection of African religion and Mormon doctrine which focused on drawing Mormon parallels to three fundamental aspects of African religious belief and practice: spirits, polygamy, and ancestors. Thomson prefaces his analysis by claiming that he is wary of Alyward Shorter's (1974) warning to avoid the tempting comparative strategy of making "superficial adaptations" that attempt to fit African religion into preconceived and predetermined Christian—or any other non-African religion for that matter—ideals (Thomson 1994: 89). To circumvent this methodological sinkhole, Thomson chooses to address the material from an African religions perspective and then subjects Mormonism to his findings. The essay is not particularly enlightening for Africans familiar with Mormonism nor for Mormons familiar with African religion as his geography is too broad and his analysis too vague; however, the number of students and scholars who fall into these two categories are so few that Thomson's work can be considered as an important introduction and his three areas of focus can be utilized in this section as we narrow the focus of the study to nineteenth-century African religion in South Africa and to the nineteenth-century Mormonism that was being taught in this region.

Building upon Thomson's comparative observations, the noted scholar of Christianity in the Southern hemisphere, Philip Jenkins, has recently wondered about the apparent similarities between African Christianity and Mormonism. After a review of the current trends in African Christianity, Jenkins concludes:

Churches succeed in Africa to the extent that they offer certain things; and if they do not offer them directly, then congregations will act as if they are, in fact, part of the original message. Booming churches are open to prophecy, angelic messages, and visionary experience; they place healing at the center of their mission; they accept the continuing relevance of the ancient Hebrew prophets and patriarchs, with all the accompanying stories of kings and holy leaders; they know and care about temples; and they care passionately about the spiritual fate of their ancestors. (2009: 10)

According to Jenkins' model, one has to wonder, as he has, "Why is the Latter-day Saint tradition not sweeping the continent?" (2009: 10). "In an African context, and specifically in a West African context," Jenkins believes, "Mormonism looks absolutely mainstream" (2009: 10-11). However, despite the obvious points of congruence between African Christianity and Mormonism, the LDS Church's experience in Africa has not been successful. Tabling Jenkins' thesis of examining the reasons for this lack of success, this section will utilise the

categories of congruence found in both Thomson and Jenkins' works in an attempt to produce a picture of nineteenth-century Mormonism using traditional South African religious paint that highlights the missed opportunities that the LDS Church experienced during this era by not proselyting amongst African South Africans. This study should also leave the reader perplexed as to why the Dutch and English populations, especially those involved in the missionizing of the indigenous communities in South Africa, did not recognise the "Africanness" of the Mormon message. In keeping with the methodological structures established earlier in this work, the main sources for information about both nineteenth-century Mormonism and South African traditional religion will be those in circulation during the period in question with modern material being consulted only when further elucidation is required.

In Jenkins' illuminating article, the author presents a number of characteristics, what he terms 'megatrends', that modern African versions of Christianity must possess in order to be relevant and win followers in today's ultra-competitive religious marketplace (2009: 5-10). The quotation above serves more or less as a summary of these tendencies, combining charismatic traits such as visions, healings, spirits, and prophecy with a belief in the consanguinity with ancient Israel including the notion of prophet-kings and temple worship. However, as with Thomson's, Jenkins' observations are not directly applicable to this study as along with their lack of regional specificity they also are being drawn from established African Christian communities and not from traditional or early missionized ones. That being said, if we allow both Thomson's and Jenkins' reports to serve as foundational stepping stones, we can first narrow the field of study to just South African traditional religion (SATR)—though I am fully aware that most, if not all information about indigenous religion has been recorded through foreign perspectives and frameworks. It is therefore prudent to add that the beliefs and practices under scrutiny have been adapted to colonial and Christian encounters—and then flesh out the most pertinent categories for both nineteenth-century Mormonism and SATR.

The categorical parallels between the two religions that have allowed the conclusion that nineteenth-century Mormonism was not American but actually South African, are best highlighted by first examining the concept of ancestors, then transitioning into an analysis of dreams and visions, before concluding with a brief account of polygamy. Each of the categories will be examined not in a definitive manner but with regard to the concept of circulation that I have been developing throughout this work and have been chosen because

they would have been easily recognisable to anyone in South Africa with even the slightest knowledge of either religion. Subsequently, this paper is more interested in the knowledge nineteenth-century informants, local experts, and imperial theorists were producing, authenticating, and circulating about Mormonism and SATR than with newly established verities that disprove or re-evaluate these earlier held beliefs.

### *Ancestors*

In *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1912) Henri Alexandre Junod, a Swiss missionary and observant ethnographer, concluded that the religion of the Tsonga—he called them the Thonga—was ‘Ancestralism’ which he defined as the “belief in the continuation of life after death” ([1912] 1962: 364). According to Tsonga traditional religion, at death the “body becomes rotten, but the shadow goes away and continues its life as a god, *shikwembu*” ([1912] 1962: 364). As spirits, shadows, or shades, the departed remain an integral aspect of the community and as gods, effect and are concerned with the lives of their living relatives. As to the question of where the precise location of the *shikwembu* (ancestor gods) actually is, Junod writes:

Some say the departed go to a great village *under the earth*, a village where everything is white (or pure, “ku basa”); there they till the fields, reap great harvests, and live in abundance, and they take of this abundance to give to their descendants on earth. They also have a great many cattle. The place where they live seems to be a kind of Hades or Paradise. But it would seem, when we consider the funeral rites, that the deceased, on the contrary, remains *in his grave*. Is not his grave his house? Does he not sit on his square, where his mats have been unrolled? Thus the life of the *shikwembu* seems to be the exact continuation his earthly existence ... A third idea, more or less intermediate between the other two, is that the gods reside *in the sacred woods*, and there lead their family life in human form, parents and children, even little children, who are carried on their mothers’ shoulders. Mboza went so far as to say that they are married and bring forth children, as children are seen on their mothers’ backs. Here again, we find the life of the other world regarded as the exact reproduction of this terrestrial existence. ([1912] 1962: 375-376)

In the worldview of SATR, when one dies the spirit of the individual remains on the earth, as part of the same household, or community if one was a leader while still alive. Interestingly, nineteenth-century Mormonism ascribed to a similar understanding of the hereafter. When petitioned, “When you lay down this tabernacle [physical body] where are you going?” Brigham Young stated matter-of-factly, “Into the spirit world,” and “Where is this spirit world?” “It is right here” (Widtsoe 1925: 576-577).

Do the good and evil spirits go together? Yes, they do. Do they both inhabit one kingdom? Yes, they do. Do they go to the sun? No. Do they go beyond the boundaries of the organized earth? No, they do not. They are brought forth upon this earth, for the express purpose of inhabiting it to all eternity ... But where is the spirit world? It is incorporated within this celestial system. Can you see it with your natural eyes? No. Can you see spirits in this room? No. Suppose the Lord should touch your eyes that you might see, could you then see the spirits? Yes, as plainly as you now see bodies, as did the servant of Elijah. If the Lord would permit it, and it was his will that it should be done, you could see the spirits that have departed from this world, as plainly as you now see bodies with your natural eyes. (1925: 577)

In Mormon cosmology, both the good and the evil reside in this spirit world together. In language strikingly similar to that of Junod, Young also stated, “The Prophet lays down his body, he lays down his life, and his spirit goes to the world of spirits ; the persecutor of the Prophet dies, and he goes to Hades; they both go to one place, and they are not to be separated yet. Now understand, that this is part of the great sermon the Lord is preaching in his providence, the righteous and the wicked are together in Hades ... The good and bad, the righteous and the unrighteous must go to the house of prison, or Paradise” (1925: 577-578). Whether this spirit world is considered a form of Hades or Paradise is determined on an individual basis, based on the type of life that was lived while alive. Analogously, in SATR, to become an ancestor god it is generally believed that the individual had to have lived a life in accordance with the community’s guidelines, such as participating in all rites of passage and becoming a fully integrated member of society.

The one true congruence between the two religions’ concept of ancestors, as evidenced above, is in their location. Both sets of ancestors are believed to have abandoned their corporeal bodies at death and now exist solely in their spiritual form, but it is clear that they have not left this terrestrial estate. They dwell on earth, in a parallel sphere impenetrable by

humans, but permeable for the spirits when necessary. However, this is more or less where the similarities cease. The function of each religion's ancestors is not the same; SATR's ancestors serve the living in demi-god fashion where worship, veneration, and a degree of fear are expected. When properly treated, the ancestors can bestow wisdom, knowledge of healing and medicinal herbs, protection, sickness, and even rain on the living. Mormonism's ancestors are too busy proselyting and repenting to be too concerned with their former loved ones. The central ritual of baptism for the dead, which Haven taught in his *Principal Doctrines* (1853a), is a responsibility of the living, but would be irrelevant if the dead were not preaching Mormon doctrine to all the uninitiated souls in the spirit world. However, despite these points of incongruence the centrality of the concept of ancestors in both religions—Junod determined “Ancestralatry” to be the distinct characteristic of SATR, and the belief in the continued existence and purposefulness of the spirit after death is the foundation from which all Mormon temple rituals are constructed, in South Africa this was circulated most overtly in Haven's *Celestial (sic) Marriage* (1853b)—should have been recognized and exploited by Mormon missionaries. Instead, these missionaries ignored the ‘superstitions’ of the indigenous communities in South Africa and held to their racist interpretation of the myth of Cain/Ham. Many of these nineteenth-century missionaries kept daily journals of their activities in South Africa and it is a significant finding that little to no mention of indigenous people can be located.

### *Dreams and Visions*

While establishing a mission in Port Elizabeth, William Walker dealt with a great deal of antagonism from those who did not agree with his religion's teachings. In his most ambitious attempt to counter these circulations, a one-page pamphlet he titled *To the Intelligent Public* (1855), it is discovered that one of the main objections to nineteenth-century Mormonism was its belief in a prophet that claimed to have experienced dreams, visions, and new revelation. “O” says one [disbeliever], “Joe Smith is a false prophet, he is an imposter, a deceiver” (1855). Previously in this chapter it was discovered that the first and principal protest about Mormonism in the country was raised when Joseph Smith's prophetic visions were testified to in a seminar held in Cape Town's Town Hall. It was certainly no secret that Mormons ascribed to a belief in dreams and visions. Jesse Haven, copying directly from Joseph Smith's letter to John Wentworth in 1842, circulated this faith in his *Principal Doctrines* (1853a): “We believe in the gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of

tongues, &c.” One of the most recognisable circulations of this fundamental Mormon tenet was the *Book of Mormon* itself. In the first several chapters alone the main characters, Nephi and Lehi, rely heavily on dreams and visions in order to guide their family away from Jerusalem and eventually to the Promised Land in the Americas. In fact, an investigator would have to read no further than the beginning page<sup>32</sup> to encounter Lehi’s first vision. Also, oral testimony of Smith’s seminal vision from Elohim and Jesus Christ as well as the subsequent dreams, visions, and visitations from Nephite and Israelite prophets were an essential aspect of the mission’s message. Subsequently, it would have been impossible for anyone in South Africa even remotely cognisant of Mormonism not to associate dreams and visions with this new Christianity from America. However, despite its American origins, the reliance on supernatural phenomena was much more at home in traditional South African communities.

For practitioners of SATR the belief in ancestors gave meaning and value to their concept of dreams and visions. E. B. Tylor in the second volume of his *Primitive Culture* (1871) summarized this link in the following manner: “The evidence that the lower races believe the figures of the dead seen in dreams and visions to be their surviving souls, not only goes far to account for the comparative universality of their belief in the continued existence of the soul after the death of the body, but it gives the key to many of their speculations on the nature of this existence, speculations rational enough from the savage point of view, though apt to seem far-fetched absurdities to moderns in their changed intellectual condition” (1871: 1-2). That dreams and visions were a central feature of indigenous religion in South African is evidenced in works placed in circulation by local experts such as Henry Callaway. *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (1868-70) relies on the knowledge of Callaway’s indigenous informants in order to produce authentic knowledge about SATR. Callaway, an Anglican missionary and amateur scholar, begins his study of diviners in a similar manner, with the obvious allowance for rhetoric, in which Mormon missionaries would have formulated their testimony of Joseph Smith’s history. “The condition of a man who is about to be an *inyanga* (diviner or healer) is this: At first he is apparently robust; but in process of time he begins to be delicate, not having any real disease, but being very delicate ... he is continually complaining of pains in different parts of his body. And he tells them [his friends] that he has dreamt that he was being carried away by a river. He dreams of many things, and

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<sup>32</sup> It must be noted that copies in circulation in South Africa in the nineteenth century would not have had verses yet; in today’s versions Lehi’s first vision is found in the eighth verse of the first chapter.

his body is muddled and he becomes a house of dreams” (1868-70: 259-260).<sup>33</sup> The capacity to dream constantly, Callaway’s definition of ‘a house of dreams’ (1868-70: 260), whether wanted or unwanted, was interpreted by the community as a calling from the ancestors to become a diviner; a healer; or in Christian terminology, a prophet. In Joseph Smith’s account of his vision of God and Christ and the many visions involved in locating, acquiring, and translating of the *Book of Mormon* he too experienced moments of weakness and fatigue. I do not want to belabour the comparison as points of incongruence abound, but there are enough similarities in the circulations in regard to the centrality of dreams and visions, for those familiar with both religions to have immediately recognized them. Again, however, this did not occur, and from a Mormon perspective this should be considered a missed opportunity. Practitioners of SATR recognized and understood the importance of dreams; they would have been able to empathise with Joseph Smith and the Nephite forefathers found in the *Book of Mormon*. Imperial theorists of religion such as E. B. Tylor also missed an opportunity to broaden the scope of their works by factoring Mormon doctrine into their assessments of the ‘lower races’ and the ‘savage’ belief in the spirit, ancestors, and visions.

### *Polygamy*

The final and most obvious point of congruence between the religions is of course the practice of polygamy. In an attempt to add especial authority to one of the accounts in his collection, Henry Callaway prefaced the interview by stating that it was “obtained many years ago. It was in fact among some of the very first papers written at the dictation of natives” (1868-70: 83). Although included in his work as an example of the centrally debated issue of the existence and nature of the Zulu God, Unkulunkulu, one of the first statements made by the indigenous informant refers to the practice of polygamy as one of the main reasons his people love and worship their God. “We love Unkulunkulu because we eat corn, and mix it with *amasi*; and kill our cattle, and eat our maize, and our sweet cane. We love Unkulunkulu because he told us to take ten wives. We love Unkulunkulu because he told us to eat our meat.” If we consider the interview between Callaway, his interpreter, and this informant of Zulu religion, as an authoritative example of SATR, then we clearly see just how important the practice of polygamy was to the Zulus. Placed alongside essential foodstuffs such as maize, sugar, and beef, polygamy is considered a blessed commandment

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<sup>33</sup> Chidester has written extensively on this topic. See his “Dreaming in the Contact Zone” (2008).

from the creator; an essential practice as natural and necessary as eating, both for survival purposes as well as for pleasure. It will be remembered that the naturalness of polygamy was an essential aspect of Bishop Colenso's argument that polygamy should be dealt with a degree of empathy and consideration as well as one of the main points of refutation forwarded by the American missionaries and Henry Callaway.

Mormonism also traces its belief in a plurality of wives to a fundamental aspect of God's creation. In Haven's pamphlet, *Celestial [sic] Marriage, and the Plurality of Wives!* (1853b), the matter is laid clear:

That there has been a law revealed, by which a man in Zion, and in Zion *only*, or at the place the Lord has commanded His people to gather in the last days, can have more than one wife, we by no means deny. This law was understood by the ancient Prophets, Patriarchs, and Apostles, and is under the strictest regulations ... This law is not given to gratify the lusts of men, but given for the exaltation of both men and women,—giving to every woman the privilege of filling up the measure of her creation, and lawfully, and honorably, and virtuously obeying the first and great command, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (1853b: 2)

According to circulations of nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa, polygamy was natural fulfilment of God's first and greatest commandment, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”<sup>34</sup>

As highlighted earlier, the debate over how to handle the polygamy problem was a central contestation of nineteenth-century missionaries in South Africa. However, with the exception of a few passive instances, the connection between Mormonism and SATR in regard to polygamy was never developed; nor was it ever exploited by the Mormon missionaries as a way of winning hundreds of thousands of potential converts. One conclusion that must be drawn from these missed opportunities is that despite the circulations that defined nineteenth-century Mormonism as un-Christian most comparativists still categorized the religion higher than the primitive religions being studied in South Africa and therefore were hesitant to make the comparison.<sup>35</sup> However, in an interesting twist to the

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<sup>34</sup> As a final thought on polygamy as a point of congruence with African traditional religion, after the 1978 revelation opened up West Africa as a location for Mormon missionaries to proselyte, African traditionalists recognized in Mormonism an opportunity to embrace Christianity but still practice polygamy; however, despite the practice being legal in countries such as Nigeria, Mormon leaders in America have been adamant about not resurrecting their former tenet (see Quinn 1998: 61-68).

<sup>35</sup> One comparativist deduced that Mormonism ranked higher than African religion by using polygamy as the basis for the argument: “Brigham Young is better off than the King of Ashantee. He can have as many wives as

narrative, over twenty five years after the closing of the LDS South African Mission, a British novelist utilized the comparative themes of mystery and geography to connect the link between nineteenth-century Mormonism and South Africa. The final section of this chapter examines the one source that did not miss the opportunity to exploit these two very popular motifs for nineteenth-century adventure novelists.

### *“Into the Unknown”*

Deep in the uncharted “thousand-hills” territory on the edge of Zulu country, two British adventurers, Richard ‘Dick’ Grenville and Alfred ‘Alf’ Leigh, accompanied by their faithful friend, Myzukulwa, “a magnificent creature, a pure-blooded Zulu chief, descended from a race of warriors, every line of his countenance grave and stern, with eyes that glistened like fiery stars under a lowering cloud, the man having withal a general ‘straightness’ of appearance more easily detected than described,” stumbled upon the entrance of a secret kingdom completely surrounded by mysterious mountains that had been inhabited “For a thousand moons—ay, and for a thousand before that” by a race of men the Zulu described simply as “spooks.”<sup>36</sup> The reason the three were trolling the hills in the first place was due to their unintentional discovery of an “inscription ... scratched with a pin-point on a slaty [sic] rock” at the base of the pass the previous afternoon which read “*An Englishman and his daughter imprisoned in the Hell at the top of this Pass. Help us, for the love of Heaven.*”<sup>37</sup> Owing to an extreme patriotism to Queen and country, Grenville, the leader of the party, could not resist such a plea for assistance, despite an immediate attempt on his life by a security guard charged with concealing the kingdom’s entrance. After disposing of his foe with a single bullet through the man’s skull, Grenville eventually deduced the location of the secret valley’s gate, which in typical nineteenth-century adventure novel fashion was behind a large and resplendent waterfall. During these first two chapters the reader is kept in the dark as to the identity of whom the novel’s protagonists are going to do battle with except that they were a group of white men—a shocking revelation considering the un-colonized terrain the adventure occurs in. However, as the three searched cautiously in the darkness of the cave they entered behind the waterfall, they sought refuge in a ‘cañon’ that

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he wants, while the African sovereign is actually limited to 5,333” (*Union Vedette* 20 May 1864). See also Bringhurst (1981b: 126-127; 137).

<sup>36</sup> Page numbers are not given here as the copy of the novel consulted is an Ebook presented by Project Gutenberg and can be downloaded on archive.org.

<sup>37</sup> Emphasis in original.

was being gradually lighted by the moon, and as the silvery radiance illumined the centre of the gulf, a guarded exclamation broke from the astonished watchers as they saw the “cañon” terminated abruptly some two hundred yards from them in a gigantic wall of apparently solid rock; yet from the very centre of this mighty but otherwise commonplace mass looked out a prodigious and perfect model of a human face, about five times the size of life, complete in every detail, and most diabolical in its expression; the eyes, from which streamed scintillating rays of fire, appeared to be rigidly examining every nook and corner of the cañon, and the cousins, who felt somewhat creepy, almost involuntarily drew outside the entrance and kept close in the shadows. At this juncture a cloud crossed the moon, and it was at once evident that the unearthly-looking figure borrowed no light from the heavenly orb, for the exaggerated lineaments showed up as if cut with a sword of fire out of the inky blackness of the chasm, and on its brow they could now read, in English, the words:—

“The Eyes of the Holy Three are Unsleeping.”

And each knew he was gazing upon the fateful and universally-hated emblem of the false and filthy prophet of the Mormon creed. The cloud passed from the moon, and even as it did so, the light behind the hideous face died out, and the wall of rock regained its normal appearance, scarcely revealing to the straining eyes of the watchers that the counterfeit presentment of the human head had ever existed, save in their excited imaginations.

There, deep in the secluded and unexplored hills of Natal, Lawrence Fletcher, the author of this imaginative novel, *Into the Unknown: A Romance of South Africa* (1892), envisioned a second valley kingdom for Mormons which he calls East Utah. The story is an unexpected addition to the nineteenth-century genre of Mormon adventure tales that typically depict the sect as villainous religious fanatics forcing their rite of polygamy on innocent women and fathers and enforcing their peculiar religion on their victims through the employment of a murderous security force known as the Danites or the Avenging Angels, mainly because it transatlantically transports the religion from America’s untamed West to South Africa’s mysterious interior. This idea, as suggested most overtly in the work’s title, of the untamed and uncontrolled unknown has to be the main reason Fletcher chose to transplant the American religion to South Africa. South Africa and Mormonism were certainly two important and exploited resources for nineteenth-century adventure novelists. Frederick

Marryat's *Monsieur Violet* (1843); Mayne Reid's *The Wild Huntress* (1861); Mark Twain's *Roughing It* (1872); Joaquim Miller's *First Families of the Sierras* (1875); Frank Powell's *The Doomed Dozen* (1881); Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Dynamiter* (1885); Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887); and William Manning's *The Danite Chief* (1887) are just a few of the many works in circulation that exploited nineteenth-century Mormonism as a subject of mystery, adventure, and romance.<sup>38</sup> A similar list can be made of those utilizing South Africa with the many works by H. Rider Haggard such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1885); *Allan Quatermain* (1887); *She* (1887); and *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1905), to name only a few, leading the way with G. A. Henty's *With Buller in Natal* (1901); James Percy FitzPatrick's *Jock of the Bushveld* (1907); and John Buchan's *Prestor John* (1910) adding to mix. However, Fletcher's is the only work that brings the two subjects together by transplanting Mormonism and its evil tyrannical rulers and its despised practice of polygamy into the heart of the unexplored regions of South Africa with its vast gold deposits, mysterious animals like the quagga, and of course the noble, obedient, and cunning Zulu warriors.

After discovering that the mysterious land was controlled by the Mormons, a designation the author unfortunately never really defines although the negative connotation of the term is apparent on nearly every page as words such as 'evil ones', 'witch-finders', 'false and filthy', and 'cowardly' are used regularly to describe them, Fletcher's heroes make a pact to free their fellow Briton and his daughter from the tyrannical and despotic rule of these religious fanatics. The exploitation of women and the falsity of the Mormon prophet emerge as the main themes of the novel in regard to Mormonism with the heroism of the British heart and the noble savagery and obeisance of the Zulu two of the most important for those interested in South Africa. It does not take long for the party of three to become five, freeing the father from the 'satanic' Mormon wishing to marry his daughter, as well as discovering Myzakulwa's long-lost brother Amaxosa. While the father eventually is killed, the party is able to free the man's daughter as well as "Rose of Sharon, Queen of the Mormon people by hereditary right" and as a group of two Englishmen, two Zulus, and two young women, the six are able to kill what feels like innumerable Mormons including all three members of the 'Holy Trinity' and many of the leaders next in line. After several months of battle East Utah

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<sup>38</sup> For an excellent work examining Mormons in nineteenth-century fiction see Terryl L. Givens' *Viper on the Hearth* (1997). See also Givens 1997: 168-169, fn 4 for a list of and brief description of four earlier works on the subject including. See Chidester's chapter "Myth and Fiction" in *Empire of Religion* (forthcoming) for an example of the utilization of South Africa and specifically South African religion by nineteenth century adventure novelists.

eventually falls, with credit going to the heroics of Grenville and his Zulu comrades and with extreme amounts of gold, appropriated from the vast deposits the Mormons were hoarding for themselves, the book concludes with the victors leaving the cursed hills behind as they travel towards Durban and the safety of the Union Jack.

The author of this mysterious novel is an Englishman named Lawrence Fletcher, whose notoriety and history comes to us not from his literary accomplishments but from the role he played in the development of the Anfield Bicycle Club and British road cycling during the last three decades of the nineteenth century (Birchall n.d.). His connection and knowledge of Mormonism is not known, though the religion had an established community in the region of his youth, Liverpool, since its infancy in the 1830s. In 1887 Fletcher went into merchant business with a fellow named Fraser and together they specialised in trading gold and rubber along the Gold Coast. He was successful enough to have been named the Honorary Secretary of the Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce and spent a great deal of time travelling between Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and England. Utilising his knowledge and interest in Africa, Fletcher published his first novel, *Into the Unknown* in 1891 and followed it up with its sequel *Zero the Slaver* in 1893. Apparently *Zero the Slaver* was “awaited with considerable interest by students of African fiction” and its popularity resulted in two more novels about Africa, *The Shadow of Death*<sup>39</sup> and *Legend of the Land’s End* (1897). *Zero the Slaver* is of particular interest here as it picks up the story of Grenville and Leigh around three years after the drama in East Utah was completed. Mormons once again feature prominently in this tale as Zero, the story’s slave-trading antagonist, happens to have converted to Mormonism in his early days in the United States before developing a highly lucrative human trafficking business along the equator—hence the name Zero—somewhere in the depths of another secret, mountainous African locality. After it is realized that Zero has taken Grenville and his party of Zulus captive by surprising them one dark night in South Africa and supposedly murdering Leigh’s wife and small child, Leigh commissions New York’s greatest detective, who coincidence would have it also suffered the loss of a loved one, a fiancée, to Zero, to help track down his friend’s whereabouts and revenge the lives of his family. The story continues on the theme of locating Mormonism in Africa, with a new kingdom, Equitoria, being discovered by the courageous adventurers. In this tale Fletcher does not go into polygamy at all but instead frequently calls the inhabitants of the city members of a “Mormon-cum-slaver fraternity” and once again pictures them as villainous fanatics.

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<sup>39</sup> The publication details of this work are not known.

However, for whatever reason, Fletcher's image of Mormons and Mormonism does a complete one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn at the end of *Zero* as the heroes, who have by now rescued not only Grenville and the Zulus but also Leigh's family who, as it turns out, were not murdered but taken captive, are saved by a Mormon Prophet, "a fine-looking old man, with a snow-white beard" who was under the command of the "Holy Three" or the "Holy Mormon Trinity" back in America to stop the unsolicited actions of Zero. While still brutal in carrying out the commands of their superiors, over three hundred of Zero's slavers who called themselves Mormons were executed by a firing squad of over one thousand true believers. One of the final scenes in the book pictures the prophet-emissary clutching the disembodied head of Zero and proclaiming that he would transport it across the Atlantic to prove that justice had been served. Fletcher reinvents the image he previously constructed of the Mormons in *Into the Unknown* by writing that one of the purposes of this party of Mormons was to locate East Utah in Natal and excommunicate and execute this other band of the religion's reprobates and even thanked Grenville and Leigh for publishing their exploits in that kingdom and bringing the atrocities performed there under the banner of Mormonism to the attention of the religion's true leaders in the real Utah.

Fletcher's novels are certainly unconventional contributions to the genre of nineteenth-century Mormonism and South African adventure narratives. For our purposes here, they can also be considered original examples of transatlantic circulations about the two topics, highlighting the transportability of Mormonism based on the themes of mystery and geography. South Africa's kingdom of East Utah resembled America's actual Utah; both were ruled by a presidency consisting of three men and both were protective of their wealth, secrets, and the right to practise polygamy. Hemmed in by mountains and deep gorges, the two locations were inhospitable environments for the uninitiated. However, mystery and geography are as far as Fletcher takes the comparison between the two subjects and he does not bring in any aspects of SATR, except when Grenville's Zulu companions proclaim their utter detestation of the witch-finding Mormons. Perhaps this is another missed opportunity, although in order to receive the maximum amount of readership Fletcher exploited the themes to their fullest extent, as including Zulus with the Mormons would have hindered the overall appeal and picture of the Zulus as unstoppable warriors but obedient subjects of the British Empire.

## *Conclusion*

After following this comparative analysis based solely on establishing and developing categories of congruence, the reader may justifiably ask why such a study can be found in a work claiming methodological heritage through David Chidester and Jonathan Z. Smith, proponents of comparative studies based on juxtaposition and difference. The explanation for this is found in a recollection of the main argument of this chapter on nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa which states that the original Mormon mission and message was not defined nor considered as American by the early inhabitants of colonial South Africa. Because of this proposition, the entire chapter becomes a Chidesterian and Smithian comparative study of religions, as the incongruences between American religion and Mormonism are explored to a point where one is left wondering if nineteenth-century Mormonism was not identified by South Africans as American, then through what framework was it perceived? By juxtaposing Mormonism with South African traditional religion, in reality two starkly incompatible religions, a conclusion is rather enigmatically drawn that nineteenth-century Mormonism is actually South African. However, both the Mormon mission and the European missionaries did not recognise the correlation and missed the opportunity to either establish a successful mission amongst the indigenous communities in South Africa or to include the American-originated faith in the vigorous debates raging along the frontier. As a consequence of these missed opportunities, the Mormon mission and its central messages played an insignificant and nearly imperceptible role in the religious history of South Africa. However, despite dwelling on the far peripheries many of the central concerns of religion in South Africa, such as proselyting, emigration, polygamy, and traditional beliefs in ancestors, dreams, and visions, were central aspects of the Mormon experience in the country, and thus this chapter becomes an irregular exploration of central ideas from the periphery, both for those concerned with the history of religion in South Africa as well as those concerned with the history of nineteenth-century Mormonism.

## Chapter 2: Slave or Saint?

In 2012 American novelist Glen E. Page published a fictitious account of the life of Gobo Fango, titled *Gobo Fango: An Unsung Black American Hero*. The work sets the stage for a storyteller version of the history of Gobo Fango when the invented son of Gobo carries out the deathbed wish of his mother, another imaginary character, by visiting his father's grave in Oakley, Idaho. The old caretaker of the cemetery, Captain Jim, becomes suspicious of the Easterner (the boy's mother had moved to New York State to live with Harriet Tubman while she was pregnant), and once discovering who the visitor is, he proceeds with the narration that constitutes the book. During the course of the novel Gobo is pictured in many different ways. First, as the son of renowned Xhosa soldier; second, as one of the three Talbot musketeers, and thus a beloved member of the family; third, as an accepted black individual in Utah and the American West; and finally, as a black American hero who cherished women's virtue and made lasting friendships with various people.<sup>40</sup>

From Xhosa to American, Gobo's transatlantic journey from the fertile pastures of the Eastern Cape to the sparsely inhabited ranges of the American West as told by Page is the latest example of the reimagining of the life and legend of Gobo Fango. Prior to Page, however, there have been a number of other constructions of Gobo that have focused on different aspects his transatlantic circulations such as Patric Tariq Mellet's emphasis on his status as a South African slave (2009); Tess Hilmo's belief that he was a Mormon pioneer (2003); and H. Dean Garrett's depiction of him as a victim of the lawlessness of America's Wild West (1989). By analysing the incongruences found in these various depictions of Gobo Fango, this chapter emerges as an interlude between the discussion of the nineteenth-century Mormon experience in South Africa just presented and the examination of the politics of race that is about to occur. The life and legend of Gobo Fango occupies interesting, liminal space between these two discourses as he was very much a participant—whether willing or forced is debatable—in Mormonism's nineteenth-century emphasis on immigration and the building of Zion, but was restricted from fully participating in the religion due to the colour of his skin and his African origins. However, despite being offered as an interlude between these two narratives, the life and legend of Gobo Fango is very much a case study of central importance for this work, locating Mormon circulations between America and South Africa and as such a

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<sup>40</sup> These friendships are what allow Page to call him a 'hero'.

thorough, contextual history is presented first before an analysis of the recent constructions, circulations, and incongruences occurs.

In order to appreciate fully the metaphor of cartography in my history of religions, I have chosen to portray Gobo's history by referencing spatial locations that define the conditions and circumstances of Gobo's residences throughout the significant periods of his life. Gobo's first appearance in the annals of history occurs in "the crotch of a tree," and it is in this section that the history of Gobo will be highlighted as a chapter in the history of colonial South Africa and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856-57. From this leafy perch, Gobo's history merges with those constructed by Mormon immigrants and American slaves as he finds himself wrapped in a carpet, hidden beneath the hooped skirts of his female companions, and disguised as a girl underneath an imposing sun bonnet.

Once in Utah, Gobo's tale becomes even more complicated when the question of slave or family member must be addressed as the reality of Gobo's dwelling place, a shed behind the house, collides with the fact that in recent years the descendants of Henry and Ruth Talbot have performed a posthumous ritual that has resulted in Gobo becoming eternally bound, or sealed in Mormon terminology, to his Mormon parents. After losing a portion of his foot to frostbite, Gobo was granted a time of respite in the house of Bishop Edward Hunter where he transitioned from a boy to a man and from a slave to an independent shepherd. Gobo's final resting place is in the Oakley, Idaho cemetery, where he was prematurely sent by a local landowner, allegedly defending his property. Consequently, Gobo's history becomes a history of the Wild West and the range wars occurring between cattlemen and sheepmen. However, despite the untimely death of Gobo in 1886, his tale does not cease at that time and the concluding section of this chapter will be devoted to the analysis of his legend as introduced above.

### *The Crotch of a Tree*

Gobo Fango was born between the years 1853 and 1856 on the contested frontier in what is now the South African province of the Eastern Cape.<sup>41</sup> In the 1850s a new map of South

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<sup>41</sup> The approximate dates of Gobo's birth arise from two conflicting records associated with his death. The first, and most readily available for interested parties, is the inscription on his headstone in the Oakley, Idaho cemetery which states that Gobo was 30 years old when he died on 10 February 1886 (see Weeks 2011: 53 for a photograph of the headstone). At odds with this marker is a court document filed by two of Gobo's business partners, William and Rosel Hunter, which states that Gobo was "the age of thirty two years or thereabouts" at

Africa was being negotiated between the British colonists, the Dutch farmers, and the indigenous inhabitants of the land. In Gobo's case, the indigenous communities relevant to this study are those that constitute or neighbour the Xhosa chiefdom. The appellation Xhosa refers to many groups of people that share a similar language and at times—the 1850s was certainly one of these instances—banded together in order to repel common enemies. When speaking of the Xhosa one is generally referring to the Bomvana, Mpondo, Rharhabe, Gcaleka, Xesibe, Xhosa, and Thembu communities.<sup>42</sup> Today, two other groups are associated with the Xhosa, namely the Bhaca and Mfengu. However, during the 1850s the Mfengu in particular distinguished themselves from the Xhosa and partnered with the British during the frontier wars.<sup>43</sup> Most modern writers, unfamiliar with this history, simply label Gobo as a Xhosa before quickly moving on to the more sensational aspects of his life. In some cases, such as H. Dean Garrett's *The Controversial Death of Gobo Fango* (1989), reference to Chief Sarhili<sup>44</sup> is added for contextual purposes; however, Sarhili's reign over the Eastern Cape communities was so paramount during this period that it is impossible to determine any additional facts about Gobo's origins from this observation.<sup>45</sup>

Ultimately, the community of Gobo's birth is of little consequence to the understanding of his history unless, of course, he was of Mfengu origin. Interestingly, one of the most prominent chroniclers of Gobo's life and legend, Kenneth Larson, believes just that. The Talbot family historian once wrote:

The mother of Gobo Fango was one of that starving horde which swept down on the English settlements. She came begging for food to save herself and her two children. I am convinced, at present, that this little family were Fingos. For, in later life, Gobo exhibited many of the Fingo characteristics, such as fondness for livestock and a crafty, acquisitive disposition, which enabled him to amass considerable property of his own. He grew to be a powerful man, too, a born

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the time of his death (see William E. Hunter and Rosel Hunter, "Petition for Probate of Will," (22 February 1886) in *A History of Gobo Fango* n.d.)

<sup>42</sup> This is not meant to be a comprehensive list.

<sup>43</sup> See Jeff Peires' *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856-7* (2003); and Tim Stapleton's 'Valuable, Gallant and Faithful Assistants': The Fingo (or Mfengu) as Colonial Military Allies during the Cape-Xhosa Wars, 1835-1881 (2009).

<sup>44</sup> Though Garrett uses the nineteenth-century spelling of the name, "Criele" (Garrett 1989: 264).

<sup>45</sup> Patric Tariq Mellet, a South African freedom fighter and African National Congress printing specialist turned historian blogger, attempted to add a noteworthy piece of information to this discussion when as he claimed that Gobo belonged to the amaGcaleka. However, Mellet's only source was Garrett's article, consequently what may appear to be an insightful finding turns out to be just an additional piece of information about Sarhili, who came from the Gcaleka community, and does little to further the knowledge of Gobo's origins (see Mellet 2009).

wrestler and athlete, as my grandfather, Stephen Barton Talbot, who often wrestled with him as a boy, testified. This is a Bantu characteristic, typical, therefore of Kaffir<sup>46</sup> and Zulu alike as well as Fingo. (Larson and Roberts 1952: 432-433)

Whether or not Mfengu personality traits were expressed by Gobo in later years falls outside the boundaries of this study; however, Larson's observation that Gobo may have been Mfengu and not Xhosa illuminates possible reasons for why Gobo's mother abandoned him on the colonisers' side of the boundary, why the Talbots kept him, and, most importantly, the origin of his eventual surname. In the nineteenth century the most common spelling of 'Mfengu' was 'Fingo' and, with allowance for various pronunciations and derivations of the word, it is not outside the realm of probability that Gobo's second name, Fango, was chosen as a marker of his ancestry.<sup>47</sup> While the importance of this observation will be fully fleshed out in a later section of this work, the possibility that Gobo was Mfengu would place him within a different chapter of South African history than if he truly were one of Sarhili's defeated and destitute Xhosa.

Gobo's seminal recording in the annals of history occurs in the following recollection of Henry James Talbot:

I will tell you of a woman that had two children. She left her home and crossed the boundry [sic] and came into the colony. She came to our farm. She tried to git [sic] both of her children to our farm, but she failed. She had to leave one of them on the road. She came to the house and told us that she left it and where she had left it. We sent and got the child, fed him and cared for him; and he was bound to father till he was of age to do for himself. (Talbot n.d.)

To contextualise Talbot's memories of this event is essential in understanding Gobo's cosmogony. The date of the incident is most probably 1857, which would make Gobo, the child who was left on the side of the road, approximately 2-4 years old. The boundary Talbot is speaking about was either the border between the British-controlled Cape Colony and the area being negotiated at that time known as British Kaffraria, or between the Cape Colony and Independent Xhosaland (Peires 2003: 86). Either option is probable as both were devastatingly affected by Nongqawuse prophetic movement and both were in close proximity to the Talbot farm fifty miles south of Queenstown in the Cape Colony. However, this idea of

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<sup>46</sup> It should also be noted that the term 'Kaffir' was used in lieu of Xhosa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is no longer an accepted term and is, in fact, considered hate-speech in South Africa today.

<sup>47</sup> The origin of Gobo's surname is not known, but most accounts agree that it occurred after he reached Utah. However, it is a matter of interest whether he gave himself the name or if it was given to him by the Talbots.

crossing a border does suggest that Gobo's mother was living amongst the Xhosa and not the Mfengu; her destitute state seconds this observation, as during this disastrous time for the Xhosa the Mfengu were living more or less in peace with the British and were staunchly opposed to the cattle-killing prophecies of Nongqawuse.<sup>48</sup>

The Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856-57 was a millenarian-type movement that taught the Xhosa people that if they sacrificed all of their cattle, burned their crops, and built new, larger cattle enclosures the ancestors would rise from the dead, force the British invaders to flee from the land, and bring with them hundreds of thousands of healthy cattle to restore the sacrificed herds and fill the kraals.<sup>49</sup> The movement began when Nongqawuse, the young niece of a respected diviner, was visited by two emissaries from the spirit world who delivered the message set out above. Nongqawuse returned to the home of her uncle Mhlakaza, where she had lived since the death of her parents, and told him of the strange visitors and their message. Mhlakaza became Nongqawuse's first convert and he immediately began to spread the words of the ancestors throughout the various Xhosa communities.

The experience and teachings of Nongqawuse would probably have been considered just the musings of a child if the Xhosa had not been under such strenuous conditions caused by war, famine, and a cattle-sickness that was decimating their herds. Mhlakaza advocated the new religion to the paramount chief of the Xhosa, Sarhili, who, after visiting with the prophetess himself, became the movement's most ardent adherent and with his conversion many, if not most, of the Xhosa began sacrificing their cattle. As history attests, the dead did not return and the 300 000-400 000 cattle that were killed were never replenished, leaving the Xhosa starving and destitute. As a result, of the estimated 105 000 Xhosa that began 1857 roughly 37 500 lived to see 1858, and of that total only 26 000 would live through the year (Peires 2003: 339-341). It is no wonder, then, that Gobo's mother crossed the border into the Cape Colony in search of anything and anyone that would help her and her two small children survive.

The life and history of Gobo is one built on family myths and oral legends. The recordings that deal with the circumstances surrounding Gobo's introduction to the Henry

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<sup>48</sup> Larson erroneously states that the Mfengu took part in the cattle-killing, a fact which he uses to suggest that Gobo was indeed of Mfengu origin. See "Some Research on Gobo Fango," in *The Henry Talbot Association (Research on Genealogy and Family-History)* (n.d.). Also, although the Mfengu had taken the side of the British at this time, they were still subject to the devastating effects of the lung sickness that was affecting huge numbers of the cattle population in Southern Africa.

<sup>49</sup> Jeff Peires has written the most definitive work on this movement and near the conclusion of the 2003 edition of *The Dead Will Arise* he includes a chapter entitled "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the Xhosa Cattle-Killing." Those interested in more information should see this chapter (2003: 327-341).

Talbot family are exemplified by the following accounts written by Kenneth Larson. Although Larson never formally published any of his findings, he is clearly the most knowledgeable Talbot—or Hunter, for that matter—descendent with regards to the history of Gobo as evidenced in the various letters and short biographies he and Arbie Talbot Roberts included in their genealogical work, *The Henry Talbot Association*. After introducing his readers to ‘Chief Dreli’ or ‘Chief Kreli’—both common spellings of Sarhili in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Peires 2003: 292-307)—and the role the leader of the Xhosa played in the cattle-killing movement, Larson writes:

All this is mentioned because Gobo Fango was one of the victims of this disruption. His starving mother, seeking help, became too weak to carry on further. To protect him from wild animals, she secreted him in the crotch of a tree. At the home of Henry Talbot, where she appealed for help, she died after having told them where to find the boy. He must have been about three. The Talbots, out of pity, went back and rescued him. Thereafter, they kept him with them as one of the family. (Larson and Roberts 1952: 486)

In another location Larson again records the traditional belief that Gobo was left at the age of three “in the crotch of a tree” in an attempt to prevent wild animals from finding him before his mother could procure help (n.d., 430). Larson’s letter goes on to state that the fate of Gobo’s mother was unknown and that Talbot family legend is unsure whether she died directly after having received assistance from the Talbot family or if their charity enabled her to move further into the Colony and live a life of indentured servitude. This bonded life, according to Larson and as supported by Henry James Talbot’s history quoted above, was, at least initially, to be the fate of young Gobo and is a topic which will be debated later on in this chapter.

When Gobo was lowered from the crotch of the tree that his mother must have carefully selected for his protection he was no older than three. The toddler could have had no comprehension of how much his life would immediately change. Gobo the free but destitute Xhosa/Mfengu child was about to become Gobo the indentured servant boy of Wellington. The history of Gobo began under complicated and perilous conditions and although, for the time being, the threat of hunger and wild animals might have been abated, the complicated habitats that circumstance would find him in were just beginning.

## *A Rug*

The tale of Gobo's 10000 mile journey from South Africa's Eastern Cape to America's Utah began the day the Talbots plucked him from the crotch of a tree that was located on their farm, 'Wellington'. Henry Talbot and his wife Ruth Sweetnam had both been born in England in the 1810s—Henry in 1812 in London and Ruth in 1817 in Kent—and both had been children when their respective families bade their native land farewell and joined with the other 1820 Settlers to colonize South Africa's fertile frontier (Makin 1971: 114-118).<sup>50</sup> The two were married in Grahamstown on 20 March 1833 and less than a year later their eldest child, Henry James, was born. In total, Ruth would birth sixteen children, fifteen of them in South Africa and one more, Ruth Sweetnam, once the family reached Utah (Larson and Roberts 1952: 47-52). By the time Gobo joined the family, sometime around 1857, the Talbots were well situated on Wellington, their farm on the Thorn River in the Queenstown district of the Cape Colony. Before this the family had lived on homesteads near Grahamstown, Salem, Fort Beaufort, and Cradock. Henry and Henry James had been awarded Wellington for their service during the Eighth Cape Frontier War that had begun in December 1850 and ended only after the Xhosa had been thoroughly subjugated more than three years later.<sup>51</sup> The farm was located in the foothills of the Amatola mountains, probably very near the present-day town of Cathcart,<sup>52</sup> and by the time the Talbots sold it in 1859 it had over 300 acres of cultivated soil that would grow just about any grain or fruit one planted (Larson and Roberts 1952: 300-301). Besides their crops, the Talbots herded over 1700 head of sheep and hundreds of cattle. Neighbouring Xhosa men and women were employed as labourers and with the exception of the occasional cattle raid, the Talbots lived in relative peace during their years at Wellington. One occurrence of note arose during the height of the excitement over Nongqawuse's Cattle-Killing movement when the Talbots fled north to Whittlesea in order to prepare for battle if, in fact, that is what this new resistance came to (Talbot n.d.). From Henry James' account, it appears as if the family had only shortly re-

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<sup>50</sup> This section of Makin's work is also found in Oakley Idaho's *A History of Gobo Fango* (n.d.). For more information on the 1820 Settlers see the following website: <http://www.1820settlers.com/>.

<sup>51</sup> Formerly known as the 'Kaffir Wars' and sometimes labelled the Xhosa Wars, Talbot served in what has become known as the Eighth War, or Mlanjeni's War—Mlanjeni was a Xhosa prophet who predicted the demise of the British invaders—which broke out in December 1850 and did not conclude until the British had thoroughly subjugated the Xhosa in 1853. See Harold E. Raugh's *Cape Frontier Wars, Southern Africa* (2004); and Keith Smith's *Harry Smith's Last Throw: The Eighth Cape Frontier War, 1850-1853* (2012).

<sup>52</sup> In the annals of history the place name most associated with the Talbot farm is Tusintus. However, I have not been able to confirm the precise location of Tusintus and have cited Cathcart here because of its proximity to the Thorn River, the Amatola (Amathole, Amatole) Mountains, and because of its distance and direction from Queenstown—all factors that are hinted at in the various histories discussing the Talbot family.

taken up residence at Wellington when Gobo's mother appeared on the scene and soon thereafter, still in 1857, though with only a few days to spare, Henry Talbot was introduced to the Mormon Church and the course of his family's life, and consequently the life of Gobo, would be altered forever.

Mormon missionaries first came to South Africa in 1853 when Elders Jesse Haven, Leonard Smith, and William Walker arrived in the bustling city of Cape Town on 18 April. Despite great efforts, which included a number of original tracts published by Haven, relatively few converts were found in the shadows of Table Mountain and it was not until Walker made the trek along the now well-trodden *Voortrekker* trails from the Cape to the settlements around Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, and Grahamstown, that more success was found. Walker took with him one of his first converts from the Cape, John Wesley, and it was together that they introduced the Mormon message along the frontier of today's province of the Eastern Cape (Walker 1943; and Wesley n.d.). In total, more than two-thirds of the baptisms recorded during the first three years of the Mormon Church's existence in South Africa were conducted in these frontier zones.

Walker and his fellow Utah missionaries, Havens and Smith, would serve in South Africa until the last few weeks of 1855 when they left the future of their Church in the hands of converts such as John Wesley.<sup>53</sup> However, during his tenure in the Colony, Walker planted the seed that would eventually germinate into the conversion of Henry Talbot, thus attributing to Gobo's exodus from his native land. On 31 January 1855 Walker split up with his companion Wesley, and joined George Wiggill<sup>54</sup> on the mountainous journey from Winterberg to Queenstown (Walker 1943: 44). The next day Wiggill introduced Walker to his brother, Eli, a more religious-minded man than himself. Eli Wiggill was immediately drawn towards the Mormon Church and even purchased a copy of the *Book of Mormon* from Walker before they parted ways. However, Wiggill was a thoughtful man and even though his wife commented, "I believe you are converted to 'Mormonism' already" when he returned from his first conversation with Walker, he did not get baptized until 1 March 1858 (Wiggill n.d.).

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<sup>53</sup> Smith and Walker left together on the *Unity* on 28 November 1855 and Haven followed them shortly aboard the *Cleopatra* on 15 December 1855. The mission would be without official representation from Salt Lake City until 1857 when Ebenezer C. Richardson and James Brooks arrived in Cape and spent six months in that city reorganising what was left of the Church there. In 1861 four new missionaries arrived and served for substantial lengths of time in the colony, revisiting the Eastern Cape as well Natal. Interestingly, among these missionaries was Henry Talbot's son, John.

<sup>54</sup> Wiggill is spelled various ways in the histories and genealogies cited in this paper: Weigle, Wiggil, Wiggel and Wigle.

The Wiggills, both George and Eli, were long-time acquaintances and friends of the Talbots. All were children of 1820 Settlers and thus would have farmed and fought together numerous times. In fact, during the Seventh Frontier War (1846-47), the Henry Talbot family had abandoned their homestead and sought refuge with George Wiggill's family, as was the seemingly common practice during that time in order to gain the numbers necessary to stay safe (Talbot n.d.). Interestingly, it was in the home of Eli Wiggill, despite that fact that Wiggill was not yet a convert, that Henry Talbot was introduced to the Mormon Church on 20 December 1857 in the company of John Wesley, Elder William Walker's convert and missionary companion (Wesley n.d.). Wesley and Talbot must have hit it off right away because Wesley records in his journal that Talbot invited him to make the 48-mile journey from Wiggill's property in Bongola<sup>55</sup> to Wellington as soon as possible. Wesley agreed to make the journey under one condition, that Talbot commit beforehand to being baptized when they got there. Talbot accepted the missionary's terms and on 30 December 1857 Talbot was baptized in the Thorn River by Elder John Wesley.<sup>56</sup> Talbot was the only member of his family baptized that day, but within six months he would be joined by his wife and each of his eligible children.<sup>57</sup>

In South Africa, as in most other areas of the world, converting to Mormonism in the 1850s and '60s meant more than just having an additional book of scripture to read; it meant emigration. For the Talbots, Wiggills, and the many other convert families, this policy was treated with both excitement and apprehension. In preparation, the Talbots sold Wellington in 1859 and moved to join one of the larger congregations of the Church in Queenstown. This move was short-lived, however, and early in 1860 the family, along with their young servant-boy Gobo, had relocated for the final time in South Africa to Port Elizabeth (see Wiggill n.d.). The purpose of this move was to secure passage on a ship that would take them to America where they would then begin the arduous overland trek to Utah.

By May of 1860 Eli Wiggill's<sup>58</sup> family had joined Henry Talbot's and together they purchased passage on the barque, *Race Horse* that would set sail for Boston, Massachusetts

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<sup>55</sup> Near present day Bonkola Dam?

<sup>56</sup> Most accounts place the date of Talbot's baptism as 28 December 1857. Not knowing exactly where this date comes from, I have chosen to use the date located in Wesley's journal.

<sup>57</sup> Another Mormon family originating from this region at this time were the Princes who emigrated from South Africa on 5 April 1860 aboard the *Alacrity* in a group totalling 70 Mormons. Their story, which includes intersections with many of people in Gobo's life, can be found in Stephen L. Prince's "George Prince, Convert Out of Africa" (2002) and *Gathering in Harmony* (2004).

<sup>58</sup> George Wiggill and his wife were baptized during Elder Walker's tenure in the country, in February 1855. However, there is no record of them immigrating to Utah or of their continued membership in the Mormon

on 20 February 1861 (Wright n.d. 1:274). The two families spent their time in Port Elizabeth getting their affairs in order by selling any unwanted and non-essential possessions. For the Talbots this meant offloading their indentured servant, Gobo. From Henry James Talbot's autobiographical reminiscences quoted above, we know that Gobo was 'bound' to Henry Talbot "until he was of age to do for himself." Talbot's account continues with a description of the practice of indentured servitude at the time in the Colony: "Many of them [indigenous South Africans] went to the agent and bound themselves five and ten years if he would let them stay with us for their bord [sic]. But there was so many that we could not keep them ..."

What Talbot is referring to is an act passed by the Legislative Council in 1856 known as the Masters and Servants Act. Clifton C. Crais describes this act in the following passage found in his *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (1992: 194):

Tied to five-year contracts, workers were also subject to severe punishments for desertion, 'laziness' and 'disobedience'. The act also permitted masters to detain children against their and their parents' will; they simply had 'to show magistrates that it was for the benefit of the child to remain with the employer.'

In 1834 slavery was formally abolished in the British Empire when a four-year apprenticeship programme was introduced for the purpose of slowly weaning slave owners of their dependence on free manual labour (see Crais 1992: 64-86). The completion of the programme was celebrated on 1 December 1838, Emancipation Day, as the official beginning of a new, slave-free era throughout the entire Empire. However, in just three short years the Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1841, the foundations of which were routed in the 1834 Vagrancy Act, was instituted, resulting in business and landowners continuing their dominant control of the labour market (1992: 140). In 1856 the law was once again amended in favour of colonials, due in large part to the Xhosa uprisings in the 1840s and '50s now known as the Seventh and Eighth Cape Frontier Wars. The Masters and Servants Act of 1856 was the most severe and lopsided to date and gave near total freedom to landowners with respect to the amount of labour they could demand from employees and the amount of remuneration they could dole out. Because of the continued resistance from the local inhabitants in South Africa, the law was meant further to secure the land for the colonials and effectively conquer

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Church. See William Holmes Walker, *The Life Incidents and Travels of Elder William Homes Walker*, 45 for information on their baptism.

the native South Africans.<sup>59</sup> This 1856 version of the legislation governing the interactions and treatment between colonial and indigene was ultimately what would have governed the Talbot response to Gobo and their future treatment and definition of him as an aspect of their household.

What is known of the psychological condition of the Talbots in regard to Gobo at this time is contained, once again, in oral traditions passed down through generations until finally collected and edited by Kenneth Larson and Arbie Talbot Roberts. Larson wrote Gobo's history many different times, but of this event his typical narrative, educated by family tradition no doubt, reads:

And when they [the Talbots] were about to sail, they took Gobo Fango along. Being little and scared, he cried so desperately at the last moment, that, though it was illegal to take him away from his native Africa, they smuggled him aboard the ship rolled up and hidden inside a rug, which two men carried up the gang-plank (Larson and Roberts 1952: 487).

In another location Larson furthers his narration by stating, "At sea, his presence was discovered, and, then a child of seven, he was allowed to help tend the livestock in the hold of the vessel" (1952: 430).<sup>60</sup>

The circumstances surrounding Gobo's departure from South Africa as located in the excerpts provided above, with consideration for historical context, can be summarized in the following manner. First, Gobo was legally bound to the Talbots while they lived in the British colony of South Africa. Second, it was illegal for them to take Gobo to America as an indentured servant because of an 1807 law passed in England prohibiting the trade and transport of slaves throughout the British Empire. Third, family tradition suggests that Gobo wanted to remain with the Talbot family; however, they had, at least initially (though it is difficult to picture the circumstances where Gobo would have had the opportunity to cry so "desperately" that Henry Talbot would have taken the risk to bring him along), decided to leave him behind. Fourth, Gobo was rolled up in a rug and carried on board without the knowledge of the ship's captain or crew. Fifth, the Talbots kept Gobo hidden long enough that by the time he was discovered the captain, though understandably upset, had no choice but to let him stay aboard. Sixth, Gobo was put, the account quoted says "allowed" but reason

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<sup>59</sup> This strategy was largely successful and it was not until 1877 when the Xhosa made one final attempt to rid themselves of the British (see Raugh 2004: 79-80).

<sup>60</sup> For similar versions of this event see Larson and Roberts 1952: 300-304; and Wiggill n.d.

would suggest he was made to do so since he was still an indentured servant, in charge of the livestock that were kept on the ship to provide the crew and passengers with fresh meat on their lengthy voyage.<sup>61</sup>

Smuggled in a rug, Gobo the servant of Wellington was now Gobo the *Race Horse* shepherd. At this point Gobo was leaving his complicated South African life behind; however, there was one aspect of his relationship to his homeland that he could never be free of and the faster the barque raced towards Boston the closer Gobo a member of the Talbot party came to becoming Gobo the illegal Negro slave.

### *Hooped skirts and sun bonnets*

The *Race Horse* docked in Boston Harbour on 19 April 1861 after a fairly smooth eight-week voyage with the only real danger occurring when the barque, now guided by a Boston pilot, collided with a schooner, the *Fenmore*, six miles away from the Boston lighthouse and harbour (see Wiggill n.d.).<sup>62</sup> After the accident, the *Race Horse* had to wait for a tugboat to tow it the rest of the way and though the immigrants from South Africa arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup> they did not abandon their berths for another week, giving them time to locate suitable accommodation and contact local Mormon leaders, who advised them to stay in the city until the next shipment of Mormon immigrants from England arrived.

For the Talbots and Gobo the company's date of arrival in Boston was less than auspicious. Barely a week had passed since the Southern Confederates had opened fire on Fort Sumter in the Charleston, South Carolina harbour (Gallagher 2001: 20-21). The battle itself was short-lived, as Major Robert Anderson of the Northern Unionists was forced to surrender and abandon the Fort after only 36 hours of fighting. However, the effects of the brief conflict were to be felt throughout the Northern States almost immediately as the very next day, 13 April, President Abraham Lincoln "issued a proclamation that declared a state of insurrection and called out 75 000 militia from the Northern States" (2001: 21).

Wiggill, in his autobiography writes: "When we first landed, the whole City was in excitement enlisting soldiers for the war. Recruiting parties in all directions, falgs [sic] flying,

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<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Larson commented on this by stating, "Even on the boat coming over, he [Gobo] is supposed to have been put down in the hold, to tend the livestock. A job, no doubt, which, because he was a bantu [sic], he found quite delightful, for his people loved livestock above everything else in life."

<sup>62</sup> A few days prior to this collision the ship got caught in an intense storm that nearly capsized the barque and caused the passengers much cause for worry.

bands of music, more especially the fife and drum.” However, for the Talbots, who were in possession of a young black boy whose status in the family was undefined at best and that of a slave at worst, the impending civil war would have caused a lot of stress and anxiety.

By 1861 the Mormon Church had an established system for transporting their immigrating converts across the country (Hulmston 1990: 32-48). The groups were met at their port of entry by an agent, often a missionary labouring in that city, who assisted them in finding lodgings and purchasing railway and ferry tickets to get the groups to a Western outpost, in the case of Gobo’s company, to Florence, Nebraska. It was a common practice for the new converts to travel in large companies together for safety, convenience, and especially cost. The Church’s Perpetual Emigration Fund had been in place since 1849 and could be utilized by the immigrants who could not afford any or all of the costs of relocating to Utah. Richard L. Jensen writes: “In the 1850s and 1860s there were three categories of immigrants: the independent, who paid their own way to Utah; ‘states’ or ‘ordinary’ immigrants, who paid only enough to reach a port of entry or other intermediate stopping place in the United States, hoping to earn enough there to finish the journey; and PEF immigrants, assisted by the Perpetual Emigrating Fund” (Jensen 1992). From all accounts it is safe to label Gobo’s company of South Africans as ‘independent’ immigrants as it appears they were fortunate enough to be able to shoulder the costs of their travel on their own.

Due to the outbreak of the Civil War and an increased vigilance by soldiers and citizens in regards to race relations and the appearance of slavery, the journey from Boston to Florence, Nebraska was filled with anxious moments for Gobo’s associates. Eli Wiggill writes,

We passed through Chicago and Hannibal. Now began [sic] the trouble with our having a black boy with us. Some colored man, seeinghim [sic], accused us of having a slave. They tried to get him away. We then dressed him in girls’ clothes, putting on him a huge sunbonnet, to hide his black face. At Chicago Railway Station, some men were determined to have him. This caused quite a disturbance. One lady of the company hid him beneath her crinoline, until the men had searched all the cars, and we had no more trouble, and finally reached St. Joes (Wiggill n.d.).

Wiggill’s account is similar to those found in the Talbot family histories compiled by Kenneth Larson. Larson’s version reads,

Later, in America, the family boarded a train for Missouri, where wagon-caravans took off for the last lap of the journey to Utah. During that train-ride, an excited mob, at one of the stations, stopped the train and came aboard to search for the “little Negro slave” who was being “smuggled through.” For somebody had caught a glimpse of Gobo, and the rumor had spread, probably by telegraph, all along the line. Feeling was running high on the slavery issue, for the Civil War had just commenced. Ruth Sweetnam Talbot’s presence of mind, however, saved the day. For she quickly concealed Gobo by popping him under her big hooped skirts. (Larson and Roberts 1952: 430)

In another retelling of these events, Larson dramatically concludes that “Ruth Sweetnam Talbot, wife of Henry, saved him [Gobo] by promptly flipping up her ample hooped skirt and secreting him in the dark, roomy region beneath” (1952: 487).

In a biography of her mother, Susanna H.A. Bates recalls the following story of this journey:

From Boston they went by train to Florence, Nebraska. This trip was a source of worry. It was during the Civil War. Grandmother had a little negro boy of 12, \*\*\*\* who, when a tiny baby, was given to her by his dying mother. They had intended leaving him in Africa, but they could not resist his crying and pleadings to come with them. So to keep him from being taken from them while crossing the country, they dressed him as a girl and had him wear a veil. (Larson and Roberts 1952: 321)

Secreted under the skirts of Ruth Talbot and disguised as a white girl by the shadows of a large sun bonnet, Gobo traversed nearly 1 500 miles of the continental United States, all the while avoiding detection from concerned citizens and soldiers. However, it remains a matter of debate whether this accomplishment was a negative or positive triumph for Gobo. As will be discussed presently, once Gobo reached Utah he was clearly treated as a second-class member of the Talbot family; he was, in the words of Kenneth Larson “quite naturally regarded as a kind of flunky in the Talbot home. He did not, in any sense, have the status of an adopted child, a member of the family” (1952: 433).

Once the company reached Florence and even more so, once they had crossed the Missouri, Gobo’s presence was no longer a danger. In an interesting contextualization of this narrative, research suggests that Gobo was not the only black South African to cross the

Great Plains in Mormon companies. In “The Negro Pioneer” section of Kate B. Carter’s voluminous collection, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, we learn that there were at least three other “colored pioneers” that came from South Africa (Carter 1965: 545). In one narration told by Thomas Alston, an 1865 pioneer, we read: “Our train was composed of an independent company in charge of one Captain Walker. Among the members of the company was a family from South Africa named Kershaw; there were *two colored men* who strenuously objected to being called niggers, saying they were Kaffirs” (1965: 545). The names, tales, and fates of Alston’s companions have not yet been discovered by historians, but this is not the case of the third black South African mentioned in Carter’s work. Jane Harris was born on the British-controlled island of Saint Helena the same year Napoleon Bonaparte died there. The histories are silent as to her time on the island or how and when she relocated to Cape Town, but we do know that it while residing at the Cape that she met and was baptized by Leonard Smith and William Walker in 1853. Harris’ relationship with the former missionary must have been substantial because after she made the arduous trek to Utah in 1861 she immediately moved in with the Elder and his family in Tooele County. After hearing rumours that a more substantial community of ‘colored people’ could be found in Montana, Harris moved further north where she became intimately acquainted with a former Virginian named William Walter Dykes. It is not clear whether Dykes was a member of the LDS Church at the time they married, but soon after their nuptial Harris moved with her husband back to Tooele County, adopted “a little white girl,” Cora, and lived the remainder of their lives—Dykes dies in 1900, Harris five years later on July 27, 1905—as faithful Latter-day Saints.<sup>63</sup> Although Gobo would live the majority of his life in Tooele County as well, it is not known whether the two ever developed a relationship based on their common ancestry.

Unlike in previous years, the journey from Florence to Salt Lake City in 1861 was relatively easy for the immigrants. On 28 February 1861 President Brigham Young had instituted a system for assisting the tired and usually poor immigrants across the Great Plains that came to be known as the ‘Church Train’ (Hulmston 1990). The structure of the new system involved hundreds of ox-driven wagons to be fully furnished with food, clothing, blankets, arms, ammunition, tools, and other essentials in Utah using donations, tithes, and goods from the Bishop’s storehouses. Once loaded, the carts were driven in companies of fifty wagons staffed by fifty-five men to the outposts along the Missouri where they would

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<sup>63</sup> Information on Harris can be found in Carter (1965: 545) as well as online at <http://blacksinthescrptures.com/latterday-saints/>.

pick up the awaiting groups of immigrants and return with them to Salt Lake City. The companies departed the valley in April and hoped to return by the end of October at the latest.

Gobo's company was one of the first Church Trains ever and was captained by Homer Duncan (Wiggill n.d.). As mentioned above and as evidenced by Wiggill's *Life Sketch*, the South African pioneers had little difficulty in crossing the distance between Florence and Salt Lake City and besides the occasional broken axle, seemed to actually enjoy sightseeing on their new continent. Wiggill does not record the exact date they reached Florence, but we do know that they had to wait there for three weeks while all the wagons were fitted and final preparations made. The next year, 1862, Duncan's company traversed the distance in the extraordinarily fast time of 65 days (Hulmston 1990: 42). Clearly the company Gobo travelled with did not accomplish the task this quickly or they, too, would have been mentioned in the annals of history, but we do know that they reached Emigration Canyon with only a few days of September to spare. Therefore, in just over seven months, seven-year-old Gobo had travelled over 10 000 miles from South Africa's Eastern Cape to America's Utah.

Gobo the Negro slave had evaded the eyes of Lincoln supporters and now, amongst the Mormons, once again became Gobo the Talbots' servant boy. It is difficult to image the psychological state that Gobo must have experienced as he made this trek alongside the Talbots and the other Mormon converts. Did he, perhaps, feel like a wanted and loved member of the family when the Talbots risked their own freedom to keep him from gaining his? There can be no doubt that he wanted to remain hidden beneath Ruth's skirts and the girl's bonnet, but was this really what was best for the boy? Or am I wrong in labelling Gobo's position in the Talbot family so explicitly as that of servant and nothing more? The following section of this narrative continues to examine Gobo's complicated history by looking in the shed behind the Talbot house for answers to this final question.

### *A Shed behind the House*

After the initial elation of joining the Saints in Utah, the Talbot family and Gobo moved a few miles north of Salt Lake City to a farm near Kaysville where Henry purchased a tract of land that had already been cleared and cultivated. Come spring, this would allow for his family to transition easily with the unfamiliar growing season but in preparation for the fast-approaching winter months, Talbot also bought a variety of livestock, including sheep. It was

the sheep that Gobo was put in charge of and there is no evidence or tradition to suggest that this did not start immediately, at the age of 7 or 8.

Very little is actually known about Gobo's life in Kaysville with the Talbots, but there are a number of details to be deduced when one confronts the histories and traditions. First, Gobo slept either in a shed behind their house or out in the fields with the sheep. Second, his days were spent almost solely in grazing, herding, and shearing the Talbot sheep. Third, he never received any schooling as suggested by the simple 'X' he scribbled years later at the bottom of his last will and testament which was orated by Gobo to Claus Karlson as he lay dying in the Mathews house.<sup>64</sup>

Of course, Gobo would not have been the only one who was subjected to manual labour on the Talbot farm. With 10 boys in the family, eight of whom were older than him,<sup>65</sup> Gobo almost certainly had many companions as he performed his obligatory responsibilities. However, as Larson suggests, Gobo's status in the family was not the same as the other boys'; he was a 'flunky' and considered a second-class member of the family at best. One of the clearest evidences for this is the fact that he was obviously not adopted, as indicated first of all by an absence of documentation; second, by any substantial oral evidence; and third, by Gobo's acquisition of a second name, which was either given to him at this time by Henry Talbot or perhaps chosen by himself. Kenneth Larson believes in the former option, as seen in the following footnote:

Gobo, I believe, was his Bantu name, and the Henry Talbot family, who took him on as an indentured servant after he was abandoned by his mother, during Chief Kreli's 'Cattle Killing Delusion of 1857', added Fango in order to give him the lacking surname. The word was probably, in the beginning, Fingo, the name of the tribe to which he belonged, which is a small branch of the Bantus. 'Fingo' is a Kaffir word meaning 'beggar'. (Larson and Roberts 1952: 428)

A more accurate interpretation of 'Fingo' (Mfengu) in Xhosa is 'wanderer', though perhaps Larson had oral evidence to support his theory that the Talbots thought of Gobo, or maybe his mother, as a beggar and that is where his interpretation comes from.

Alternatively, Gobo may have chosen the surname on his own as a way of distancing himself from his owners. Or perhaps the Talbots had taken to introducing him as 'Gobo the

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<sup>64</sup> See "Gobo's Will," in *A History of Gobo Fango* (n.d.).

<sup>65</sup> This is assuming Stephen, born in November 1855, was younger.

Fingo' in recognition of his South African ancestral roots and the name stuck, with a slight variation in spelling. In any case, no matter the etymology of the appellation, the surname seems to have accompanied him from this stage of his life until his death in 1886 and is found not only on his gravestone but also on all court records and his will.

That Gobo was definitely not considered a member in full standing in the Talbot home is even more strongly supported by one of the most commonly known and tragic events in Gobo's life. In a letter written to Kenneth Larson, Louisa Hunter Hale, a personal friend of Gobo, records the following observations:

Dear Mr. Larson:

... My father, Edward Hunter, had two families, and it was with the other family that Gobo lived ...

When he came to our place, his feet were badly frozen, and he was a cripple until his death. My first recollection was always seeing him wrapping his feet with cloths, and later I remember he had boots ...

We have had my husband's sister here this week. She is older and remembers Gobo well. She says when she was in Kaysville, one time, she met a brother Roberts or Robbins who, when he found out she was from Grantsville and knew Gobo, told of how the Talbots made him herd sheep or cows, I forget which she said, in the winter, bare foot. And one tome [sic] he was called there, and the boy was just screaming. He had frozen his foot, and when he came in where it was warm, it started to thaw out, and, "OH" he cried.

He had one shoe on. The folks told him to cut it off, and he cried harder than ever, saying he would rather have part of a foot than none at all ...

She remembered Gobo taking off his boot and showing her brother his foot. The heel was all gone, and he had wool in his boot so his foot would fit better. That was some time after the accident, of course. (Larson n.d.; and Oakley Free Library n.d.)

Larson attempts to lessen the blow of mistreatment whenever the revelation about Gobo's frozen feet is brought up by stating in more than one location that it was because of the scarcity of boots that Gobo as well as the other Talbot boys went without footwear, even in winter, and had to settle for wrapping their feet with gunnysacks to ward off the wet and cold

(see Larson and Roberts: 487). However, none of the Talbot boys seem to have lost portions of their feet.

In other versions of the narrative it is unclear whether Gobo lost his heel or his toes, though the consensus does appear to be his right heel. It is also not made certain the circumstances involved in the lost appendage and is a matter for debate whether it was due to guarding the sheep in the snowy pastures or if his foot simply froze because he slept in the shed behind the house. Regardless of how the damage was done, it can be stated without a doubt that the effects stayed with Gobo for the remainder of his life, as from the time the injury healed until his death he walked with a noticeable limp.

In the jargon of Kenneth Larson, Gobo was a “flunky,” “bondsmen,” and an “indentured servant” on the Talbot farm. In more blunt and realistic terminology, Gobo was a slave. Utah became a United States Territory in September 1850 and as such Brigham Young’s theocracy was granted the authority to institute its own slavery laws (Washington 2007: 240). With regard to Gobo’s status in the Talbot family, the 1851 Utah Act states: “That any person or person coming to this Territory and bringing with them servants justly bound to them, arising from special contract or otherwise, said person or persons shall be entitled to such service or labor by the laws of this Territory” (Lythgoe 1971: 51-52). Consequently, in Utah, as was the case in South Africa, Gobo was the legally bound to the Talbots. However, as legal property of the Talbots Gobo was entitled to “comfortable habitations, clothing, bedding, sufficient food, and recreation” (1970: 52). Were the Talbots in violation of the fifth section of this law when Gobo was forced to sleep in the shed, live on the open range, and wear gunnysacks as boots during the snowy winter?

What truly complicates this assessment of Gobo’s servant/slave status in the Talbot family is that the descendants of Henry and Ruth Talbot have claimed him as an adopted child and think of him as one of their own. Even Larson, who once made the claim that Gobo “did not, in any sense, have the status of an adopted child, a member of the family,” and in another instance stated that Gobo “was neither fish nor fowl in the family ... he was a Negro, not a white brother,” showed moments of inconsistency when he observed that despite his status the way the Talbots treated him was “more like that of an adopted child” (see Larson and Roberts 1952: 433; 487; and 430). This traditional reimagining of Gobo is most visibly apparent in Tess Hilmo’s *Friend*—the official magazine for LDS children—article “Gobo Fango” (Hilmo 2003: 28). “Based on a true story,” Hilmo’s narration is set in the Oakley Cemetery where a genealogical story is told by a reverent and appreciative mother to her

inquisitive daughter. “Who is Gobo Fango?,” the young girl asks. “Gobo was a valiant Saint,” began the mother’s reply, “a courageous child from South Africa. He was one of the first African pioneers to join the early Saints in the West, and he is a member of our family.” Bypassing the question-and-answer segment of the article, the narrative eventually addresses Gobo’s history from a decidedly LDS perspective and favourable to Talbot. After setting the scene of abandonment, Hilmo writes: “Ruth Talbot soon found the starving boy and gently coaxed him from the tree. Tired and cold, little Gobo climbed down and into the arms of his new mother. The entire Talbot family cared for Gobo as one of their own.” Once having converted to Mormonism and making the decision to immigrate to Utah, the Talbots were left pondering what to do with Gobo. After consulting with God through an earnest prayer, the narrator exclaims, “An idea came to Brother Talbot—his prayer was answered! He would roll Gobo into a large rug and smuggle him on and off the ship.” Although “Gobo was afraid to be wrapped inside the dark, heavy carpet ... he had faith in the prophet’s counsel to go to America, so he remained very quiet.” Hilmo’s account makes it appear as if Gobo remained wrapped in the family rug for the entire voyage, picking up the story after the he arrived in Boston and the journey west was already underway. In addressing the slave status of Gobo, Hilmo’s mother states that “Gobo was not a slave” and that when the Talbots were confronted by authorities “Sister Talbot lifted her hoop skirt and hid him underneath.” Ruth promised Gobo that things would get better as soon as they were in Utah and that because of a mutual understanding of oppression and persecution the Saints in the Territory would be empathetic to his condition and embrace him as one of their own. “Sister Talbot was right, and as soon as they could, the Talbots adopted Gobo.” The mother concludes her genealogical narrative of Gobo that re-emphasises Hilmo’s thesis that Gobo was indeed a LDS pioneer:

Once in Utah, Gobo grew into a righteous, hardworking shepherd. He was always faithful to his baptismal covenants. In 1886, when a tablet of paper cost two cents, he willed his entire life savings—some five hundred dollars—to help build the Salt Lake Temple. Years later, the temple work was done for Gobo and he was sealed to Ruth and Henry Talbot in the very temple he helped build.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Contrary to Hilmo’s traditional account, there is no evidence to suggest that Gobo was ever adopted or baptized, nor was his entire estate willed to the Salt Lake Temple Fund; and, although he was in fact sealed to the Ruth and Henry Talbot in 1983, this ritual was performed in the Seattle Washington Temple and not in Salt Lake City.

From the evidence available at this time it seems more than reasonable to conclude that Gobo was never considered or treated as a full member of the Talbot family. He was, in all reality, an indentured servant whose only pay came in the form of being provided with the necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter. The histories are silent as to the diet of Gobo and thus no observation of neglect or care can be made on this subject; however, the state of the provisions provided to Gobo with respect to clothing and shelter were completely inadequate for the young South African to survive a Utah winter wholly intact. There was never a Gobo Talbot, only a Gobo Fango.

### *The Bishop's House*

Gobo Fango came to Grantsville as a young boy when Mary Ann Whitesides Hunter wrote to her brother, Lewis Whitesides, in Kaysville, Utah, and asked him to find her a young man to help herd her sheep. At this time Mary Ann's daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret, were herding sheep between Grantsville and Tooele, the sons in the family being too young to trust with this work. Mary Ann began to worry that these girls were having no opportunity to learn skills in running a home well.

Mary Ann drove her wagon to Kaysville and brought Gobo home with her. Her husband, Edward Hunter, paid the 'owner' thirty dollars a month. Gobo had been made to sleep in a woodshed in cold weather at some time and was suffering from frozen feet. Mary Ann doctored his feet as best she could, be [sic] he limped all his life. He lived with the Hunter family for several years, helping with farm chores and herding sheep.

When slavery was abolished, Edward Hunter stopped paying the thirty dollars to Gobo's 'owner' and began paying it to Gobo. The owner sued Mr. Hunter on this matter but was not able to change this.

In about 1880 Lewis and Billy Hunter and Gobo Fango took Edward Hunter's sheep to the Oakley, Idaho area to run them on shares. A sheep and cattlemen's war developed over grazing rights, and Gobo was shot by a man named Bedky, who rode up pretending to be a friend. Gobo managed to crawl to the home of Walt Matthews, but died there a few days later. Before he died he wrote a will leaving some money for Mary Ann Whitesides Hunter and her youngest daughter,

Etta Neilson, and \$500.00 to the Grantsville Relief Society. Mary Ann was president of that organization for twenty-two years (Bennett n.d.).

This lengthy description of the circumstances involving Gobo's move from Kaysville to Grantsville, Tooele County from the Talbots to the Hunters, from slavery to freedom, and from Utah to Idaho is the most detailed and thorough account in existence. The history was provided to the author, a Talbot descendent, by John Paul Millward, a Hunter descendent. One of the most striking details of the history is the revelation that Edward Hunter, who was the Presiding Bishop of the LDS Church, paid Gobo's 'owner' the entirety of Gobo's monthly salary. Gobo's owner was more than likely Henry Talbot, and it is even more revealing as to the slave/servant status that Gobo held in the Talbot family when we learn that Talbot unsuccessfully sued Bishop Hunter over the rights to Gobo's salary after the laws of the land declared the South African a free individual.<sup>67</sup>

The timing of all these events becomes difficult to reconcile as the date that the slavery was outlawed in the Territories, including Utah, by the American government was 19 June 1862. However, there is some evidence to suggest that some of the slave owners in Utah waited until 1865 when the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolished all forms of slavery in the United States and its Territories before allowing their servants to go free.<sup>68</sup> It may be recalled that Gobo and the Talbots entered the valley at the end of September 1861 and we know that it was in the Talbots' care that Gobo was forced to sleep in the shed behind their house and that because of this he eventually lost a portion of his foot to frostbite. Taking this into consideration, if the account provided above is to be fully accepted, then Gobo would have lost his heel during one, perhaps even that initial one, of the first four winters that Gobo was in Utah and it would have been soon after, or possibly because of this event, that Gobo was procured by the Hunters. This supposition seems logical based on the memories provide by Louisa Hunter Hale in the previous section of this paper.

If this was the case, then Gobo was between 7 and 9 years of age when he left the Talbots and Kaysville for the Hunters and Grantsville, which is in contradiction to most of the accounts in circulation today which have reasoned that Gobo was in his early to mid-teens when he was sold. Kenneth Larson, in particular, has written that Gobo "was about fifteen" before his contract of indentured servitude, perhaps signed by his mother, was complete and

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<sup>67</sup> There is one history that states that Gobo was actually working for Lewis Whitesides in Kaysville right before he was acquired by the Edward Hunter (see Carter 1965: 545).

<sup>68</sup> The Bill was passed by the House of Representatives on 31 January 1865 and became part of the Constitution on 18 December of that same year (see Rodriguez 2007: 70).

it was only after this termination that Gobo sought employment away from the Talbots (Larson and Roberts 1952: 433). In one instance Larson writes, “Finally, he [Gobo] left the Talbot home and went to herd sheep for Bishop Hunter of Grantsville, Utah. Henry Talbot, I think, had discouraged him from staying longer, for he was bothered by having a grown Negro lad in daily contact with his daughters” (1952: 430). In another location Larson, writing from the perspective of Gobo for a change, in a letter to Klyda Hunter, states “Eventually, as you know, Gobo left the Talbot home, possibly because of his growing resentment, and finally entered the service of Bishop Hunter of Grantsville, Utah” (1952: 487). One final assessment of Larson provides additional information:

It was only natural, then, for Gobo, after his indenture was terminated, to leave the family and seek employment where he had hope of other remuneration than just board, room, and clothing. He should, then, have been released around 1869 or 1870. And it was only natural, too, that he should have turned, with his inborn love of animals, to the profession of [sic] shepherding. (1952: 433)

It is clear that Larson believes Gobo was with the Talbots until the age of fifteen, which would have been sometime around 1870. Of note is Larson’s prejudice-laden assumption that Henry Talbot was “bothered by having a grown Negro lad in daily contact with his daughters.” This appears to be Larson’s own analysis of the situation as I have not come across any other source where this is even obscurely hinted at. Interestingly though, this deduction is in tune with Larson’s belief that Gobo was not considered a member of the Talbot family for if he was his father would not have worried about him associating with his sisters. Larson’s inference contains other flaws, most notably in regards to the context of slave laws in Utah that have just been considered. Consequently, the Hunter family version of the transfer seems to be more historically plausible than the Talbot (Larson) account.

Gobo’s move to Grantsville saw him become an employee of Edward Hunter, the Presiding Bishop of the Mormon Church. From the histories and traditions in existence it is clear that Gobo resided in, or near, the home of Mary Ann Whitesides Hunter, Edward’s first wife (see Hunter 1970; Hartley 1985). As suggested above, it was Mary Ann who contacted her brother Lewis, who was a resident of Kaysville, and asked him if he knew of a boy who might be able tend the Hunters’ flock of sheep. Edward had a second wife named Martha Ann Hyde Hunter at the time and between the two wives the Bishop had twenty children, with most of whom Gobo became lifelong friends. Unlike the Talbot children, who grew up thinking of Gobo as a servant, the Hunter children created lasting relationships with Gobo as

evidenced by his bequeaths in his will—he left cash sums for six Hunter children and another to one of their spouses, all of whom he calls “friend.”<sup>69</sup> Gobo’s relationship with Edward and his two wives also appears to have been more substantial and rewarding than his association with Henry and Ruth Talbot. Again, looking to Gobo’s will for answers, we discover that he left Edward, Mary Ann, and Martha Ann each a sum of money, though Mary Ann received the most, \$50, with Edward being granted \$40 and ‘Marthy’ Ann \$30. Along with their money, Edward and his sons Rosel and William were appointed the executors of Gobo’s estate; Edward Hunter was also charged with the responsibility of doling out the \$200 that Gobo requested be given to the “needy poor people in Grantsville City,” a duty Edward, as Presiding Bishop, would have performed with efficiency, to say the least.

A final significant aspect of Gobo’s transition from Kaysville to Grantsville was the development of his two most remembered personality traits: his love of children and his generosity. The concluding paragraph of Eldon Talbot Bennett’s *Gobo Fango* quoted above reads, “A few of the older people in Grantsville remember Gobo Fango. One granddaughter of the Hunters says he visited in their home when she was young. She remembers him as a kind and friendly person, always bringing candy for the children.” Another Talbot descendent recalled a similar traditional belief: “Everybody liked him. Was very kind to children, as he grew older, and would treat them with his last nickel” (Talbot n.d.). According to the memory of Louisa Hunter Hale, Gobo’s generosity was not merely limited to penny candy and nickels: “I remember what a feeling there was toward Frank Bedke at that time, as Gobo was such an inoffensive man, kind to children. He was at our house for dinner one day. After it was over, he took my little boy to town and bought him some goods for pants and waists” (Hale n.d.). Despite the struggles he experienced as a child, or perhaps because of them, one of the most prominent lasting impressions left behind by Gobo was his generosity and kindness towards children.

In Grantsville Gobo shed his servant/slave status and began to form relationships with the people he would choose for himself to spend the remainder of his life in contact with. Gobo the servant began the transformation that would eventually see him become Gobo the generous, child-loving shepherd. It is a pity that nothing else is recorded or recollected about his days in Tooele County, especially considering that this was the location he called home for the majority of his life. It is an unfortunate reality that historians and storytellers prefer to discuss the times of turmoil and not the times of relative comfort. This paper now

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<sup>69</sup> A transcription of Gobo’s will can be found in *A History of Gobo Fango* at the Oakley Library.

turns to Gobo's final years and the circumstances that led to his untimely death near Oakley, Idaho in February 1886.

### *Oakley Cemetery*

Although the exact year that Gobo moved to Grantsville is difficult to pin down, the date of his relocation to Oakley, Cassia County, Idaho can be more accurately posited. Louisa Hunter Hale states that when she married and moved to Idaho in 1880, Gobo was still residing with Edward Hunter in Grantsville (Hale n.d.). However, according to the Hunter family account quoted at the beginning of the previous section, it was "about 1880" that Gobo partnered with Hyrum Lewis and William Edward Hunter—both sons of Edward and Mary Ann Whitesides Hunter—and drove their sheep into the Oakley, Idaho area (Bennett n.d.). It would stand to reason that the three sheepmen would not have pushed their flock through the snow during the winter months and that would leave us with a moving date of either mid-1880 or the spring of 1881. This later date emerges as more likely than the former when one considers the history of the colonization of Goose Creek Canyon.

Explorers of America's Northwest naturally followed the meandering 1000 mile-long Snake River as it cut its way across the varied landscape from today's Yellowstone National Park through much of Idaho and parts of Oregon and Washington. Just south of the Snake's path as it flows through present-day Burley, Idaho a number of small creeks and streams drain away into a large valley surrounded by hills and mountains. Though the history of the valley far outdates the arrival of Oregon trailblazers in the 1860s, it is because of these early pioneers that the town named after William Oakley was built along Goose Creek, near the Pony Express station that provided a necessary lifeline for the scattered settlers of the valley (Boothe 1963: 6-21). The area remained small and obscure, boasting only a small schoolhouse, post office, stage station, and general store, until four Mormon colonisers arrived in June 1878 and staked their claim to 160 acres of swampy, willow-filled pastureland. The next spring the Mormons returned to the valley with their families and began the gruelling task of making the existing water sources work in their favour (1963: 23-26). By 1881 word had spread south into Tooele County and the city of Grantsville that the basin offered exceptional pastureland for cattle and especially for sheep. As the Presiding Bishop of the Church and also as a Grantsville rancher, Edward Hunter would have been one of the first

to hear of the new grazing lands and it probably at this time that Gobo and a couple of Hunter sons<sup>70</sup> drove their herds north to Cassia County.

In the small but growing community of Oakley Gobo and the Hunters partnered with another Mormon named Walter Mathews, though the circumstances behind the merger are unknown. During his five or so years in the area Gobo became a fixture along the range and made friends with the many residents in the area, including the McMurrays and Popes. However, as a shepherd Gobo had many natural enemies in the area as well, namely cattlemen and landowners. One of these cattle ranchers who, in particular, had had enough of sharing the grasses with the nomadic shepherders was a Prussian, non-Mormon, immigrant named Frank Bedke (see Bedke 1975). Bedke had arrived in the valley with 35 head of dairy cattle in 1878 and had staked his claim about seven miles east of the village along Spring Creek. According to a family biographer, Bedke was a self-educated man who kept informed of current events and was an active member of the community. Bedke was not only self-educated but he was also a self-made man, economically speaking. After spending his initial years in America's West employed in the mining and forestry occupations, Bedke was proud of his dairy operation and had picked out his future ranch in Cassia County long before he had enough means to settle there. By 1886 Bedke had married Polly Ann McIntosh, who had moved to the area in 1879 from Grantsville with her family, and the two had already begun to raise two of their thirteen children.<sup>71</sup> While a fair bit is known about the life of Frank Bedke and his family, nothing is known of his knowledge of and relationship, if any, with Gobo prior to their confrontation near Bedke's farm that fateful day in February 1886. At least one modern writer has speculated that Gobo had been friends with Polly Ann during their Grantsville days and that Bedke did not appreciate their lingering friendship (Page 2012: 5688-5834). However, there is no evidence other than the circumstantially obvious connection of Grantsville.

What is known is that the conflict that escalated rapidly between Gobo and Frank Bedke is part of a greater narrative in America's Wild West. "As settlers in increasing numbers began to occupy the land formerly used for grazing purposes and the sheep became more numerous, it was natural," Cornelius James Brosnan concludes, "that conflicting claims to the range should be made by the cattlemen and sheepmen" (Brosnan 1918: 158). In an

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<sup>70</sup> Different accounts mention William, Rosel, and Hyrum all of whom Gobo named as benefactors in his will.

<sup>71</sup> Their third child was born sometime in 1886. Glen E. Page uses this birth to set the stage for Bedke's confrontation with Gobo. According to Page's novel, Gobo went to visit Polly Ann, a friend from Grantsville, to see her new baby. Bedke, already not a fan of Gobo's relationship with his wife, returns home and discovers that Gobo had been there and immediately rides off with a companion to find the shepherd.

attempt to keep these clashes under control from an early stage, 1875, the Idaho Territorial legislature passed a law known as the Two-Mile Limit Law. Again quoting from Brosnan's *History of the State of Utah* we learn the parameters of the ruling. The Two-Mile Limit Law

provides that it is unlawful for any person owning or having charge of sheep to herd them or permit them to be herded on the lands or possessory claims of others. It also prohibits herding sheep or permitting them to graze with two miles of a dwelling-house ... This law was passed to protect the rancher from the injury that might result to them if sheep were permitted to graze too near their homes and the surrounding pasturelands. (1918: 157-158)

Brosnan's history unfortunately does not discuss this particular chapter in the cattlemen versus sheepmen conflicts; instead, the author chooses to include the more famous case of 'Diamondfield Jack' Davis which occurred almost exactly ten years later in the same county (1918: 160). In short, Davis was an employee of a large cattle operation and was arrested in February 1896 for the murder of two shearers who were discovered days after their death in the back of their wagon. Davis became the investigators' primary suspect after they found a diamond drawn in blood on a magazine near the victims' bodies. Davis also had the reputation as an enforcer for cattlemen and had wounded a shepherd the year before in an altercation over grazing rights. Although Davis was convicted and sentenced to be hanged the verdict was never enforced and after spending over six years in the penal system he was pardoned for his alleged crime due to a lack of an eye-witness (Grover 1986).

It did not take long for news of the shooting to spread through the valley and soon a local journalist named James Stoddart began reporting the details of the events that occurred that day.<sup>72</sup> Sending his reports directly to the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City, the first Stoddart article written on 7 February 1886 and printed two days later on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the day before Gobo succumbed to his injuries. Under the heading "Homicide at Goose Creek" Stoddart's report read: "We learn that news had just been received that a negro sheep herder, named Gobo, who, it is claimed is well known in certain parts of Utah, has been shot by cattlemen. We are promised the particulars as soon as they can be ascertained." The promised

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<sup>72</sup> As one would expect, there are a number of works in existence that discuss, sensationalize, and analyze the death of Gobo. For the scholar, the most thorough account has been published by H. Dean Garrett and is entitled *The Controversial Death of Gobo Fango* (1989). For the thrill seeker, there are numerous newspaper and magazine articles in circulation such as "The Death of Gobo Fango" by Andrew Weeks (2011); "You Can't Top Gobo Fango's Idaho Story" by Steve Crump (2009); and a variety of pieces put forward by Al Dawson, a Cassia County historian (1970). There is even a brand-new full-length fictional account of the life and death of Gobo written by Glen E. Page controversially titled, *Gobo Fango: The Unsung Black American Hero* (2012).

follow-up ran three days later beneath a headline declaring Gobo's death.<sup>73</sup> While Stoddart's second article is a much more in-depth reporting of the event, a month later Utah readers would be privy to an alternative, and ultimately more trustworthy, version of events when the *Deseret News* published a piece by Claus Herman Karlson's, "a reliable citizen of Oakley, Cassia County, Idaho," and intimate acquaintance of Gobo—he transcribed Gobo's sworn testimony of the altercation as well as his will—on 3 March.<sup>74</sup>

There was a murder committed here a few days ago, which has every appearance of belug [sic] cold blooded and premeditated. About three months ago the negro Gobo Fango and Walter Matthews took Thomas Polton's sheep on shares and they have been herding them in the vicinity of the Little Basin. At the time of the shooting the camp was on top of the main ridge between Land ranch and Little Basin. Last Sunday morning (7<sup>th</sup> inst.) about 9 o'clock, Frank Bedkie and one Jones<sup>75</sup> from Wood River country, came riding up to the negro and ordered him off of that part of the range. The negro (who had a gun on his arm) refused to go. Bedkie then got off his horse, left the animal for Jones to hold, told the negro he wanted to reason the matter with him. Gob [sic] sad [sic] "All right." Bedkie then got close to him, knocked the gun out of his hand, pulled out a derringer and opened fire. Gobo fell and tried to get up again, but Bedkie knocked him over with the pistol at every attempt that he made to get up. Finally Gobo told him he would get even with him; then Bedkie fired on him again. Jones then told Bedkie to stop; he had punished him enough. Bedkie said, "No, by G—d, I will kill him right here!" He then shot the negro in the head and the latter knew no more for a few moments. When he came to, Bedkie and Jones were some distance away. He heard Bedkie say, "He will die right there." Jones asked, "What are you going to do with the gun?" Bedkie said, "Let's throw it on the side hill."

The negro got up and walked to Walter Mathews' place, about four miles distant. At the afternoon meeting last Sunday, the Bishop requested me to go up and see that his deposition was taken, which I did, and the above is the negro's story.

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<sup>73</sup> This would have been an editor's addition as the article itself reports that Gobo was still alive.

<sup>74</sup> Karlson would later testify and provide his written account in court as a Territory's witness against Frank Bedke.

<sup>75</sup> John Jones did testify in behalf of the defendant, Bedke, at trial, though in short history of the trial written by Herman E. Bedke in a Bedke family genealogical work titled *They Called Me Bedke*, Frank's companion that day was not Jones but one J. Cawfield. Cawfield also testified at the 1886 trial. Interestingly, neither Jones nor Cawfield testified in the 1887 trial.

Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup>, I was sent for to come and make the negro's will as he was not expected to live, which I did. He has two bullet holes in his body, one in the right side of the navel and the other on the left side, in the abdomen. One bullet had struck the skull over the left eye, and glanced off, and one had struck him on the right side of the head near the top, and ranged down and lodged below the right ear, near the jugular vein. Both wounds in the abdomen were mortal. He died about 10 o'clock yesterday [February 10] morning. (Karlson 1886)

Karlson's letter continues by stating that this tragic confrontation was a "result of bitter feeling between cattle and sheep men" and warns that "the results will be disastrous to our people if something is not done to check it." By "our people" Karlson meant Mormon sheepherders as it appears from his account that the majority of sheepherders were Mormons and the majority of cattle ranchers and landowners were not.

After shooting Gobo, Frank Bedke rode directly to Albion, the county seat at the time, and told his version of the story: that Gobo had fired on him first and the resulting death was an act of self-defence. After gathering all the evidence possible, the Territory of Idaho charged Bedke with the murder of Gobo and a trial commenced on 21 April 1886 in Albion. Testimonies were heard over the course of four days and the result was a "hung jury." In March of the following year a second attempt to convict Bedke occurred but after a week of hearing the various accounts of the event the jury found Bedke not guilty.<sup>76</sup>

In the case of Gobo's death there have been a lot of sensational traditions passed down by the Talbot and Hunter families. James Austin Hunter stated that "Gobo managed to crawl back to camp where he found a piece of paper and, dipping a small stick in his own blood, he wrote a will" (Carter 1965: 545). Another traditional version dramatically adds that Gobo had to crawl the four and a half miles from the place of the shooting to Walter Mathews' house while "holding his intestines in with his hands and a piece of sagebrush" (Larson and Roberts 1952: 428). According to speculation passed down in the area, Gobo chose to bypass the McMurray homestead in order to reach his partner's house because he knew that his friend Charles McMurray's, wife was pregnant and he knew "what a frightening sight a wounded man in his condition would be, a situation that could cause a miscarriage, he made the supreme effort to go on" (see Dawson n.d.; and Dawson 1970). A local Idahoan historian wrote the following conclusion to this tradition, fanning the flames of Gobo the Generous'

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<sup>76</sup> See "Notes from the Trails of Frank Bedke," in *A History of Gobo Fango* (n.d.).

reputation: “It is only conjecture, but many have said that this desire to save a woman and her expected baby cost this courageous Negro his life” (Dawson 1970).

Besides Gobo’s heroic feat in reaching the Mathews’ home that day the other most discussed aspect of his death in family tradition is his will. Some traditions claim he left the entirety of his estate to the Salt Lake Temple fund; others state that he gave it all to the Grantsville Relief Society. Fortuitously for the modern scholar, a transcript of Gobo’s will that was originally handwritten by Claus Karlson and then copied as best as possible by Carl Turnblom in October 1986, can be found in Oakley Library’s file on Gobo and at least one aspect of Gobo’s complicated history can be put to rest. After dispersing various amounts to his individuals friends—William, Rosel, Edward, Mary Ann, Martha Ann, Rosetta, and Hyrum Hunter; as well as Mary Ann Hunter Martin; Walter, Marthy Ellen, and Harrison Mathews; Louisa Hunter Hale; Charles McMurray; William Pope; and Lorenzo Martin—he left \$200 to the “needy poor people” in Grantsville and then he willed the remainder of his estate to the construction of the Salt Lake Temple. Also contained in the Gobo file in Oakley is a list of Gobo’s post-mortem receipts and disbursements which once mathematically analysed, reveal that Gobo’s estate was left with only \$28.62 to divide between the poor and the temple.<sup>77</sup> However, it appears as if Edward Hunter and his two wives did not claim their allotted amounts and it is quite reasonable to conclude that Bishop Hunter took possession of Gobo’s remainder and disbursed it to the poor in Grantsville according to Gobo’s wishes. When thinking about his assets Gobo probably did not take into consideration the \$500 attorney’s bill that would be awaiting his estate after his death, otherwise he might have been able to make the sizeable donations that he had wished to.

Gobo the murdered shepherd is a resident of Oakley Cemetery. He was between 30 and 32 years of age when he was sent there by a disgruntled cattleman and landowner named Frank Bedke. On 7 February 1886 Bedke fired his derringer pistol four times at Gobo; one shot glanced off the side of his skull above his eye, the other three tore holes through his head and body, leaving him mortally wounded. After the shooting Bedke and a companion rode away from the site and Bedke turned himself over to the county authorities, claiming self-defence. He did not expect to have his word questioned, thinking that he had left his victim dead on the range. But Gobo did not die instantly and after recovering from the initial shock

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<sup>77</sup> See “A List of the Assets, Disbursements, and Court Costs of Gobo Fango”; “Gobo’s Medical Expenses”; “Gobo’s Will”; “Petition for Probate of Will”; Certificate Approving Petition of Probate of Will”; “Testimony of Subscribing Witness Certificate of Proof of Will”; and “Testimony of Subscribing Witness,” in *A History of Gobo Fango* (n.d.).

and pain he managed to traverse nearly five miles of hilly terrain before coming to the homestead of his friend and partner, Walter Mathews. Mathews and his wife sent for Dr. Gotfried Spoerry who arrived as swiftly as one could in those days of horses and wagons and began to treat the wounded man. Spoerry did his best to delay Gobo's inevitable death but after nearly four days the man who originally journeyed over 10 000 miles in his lifetime passed away. During the four days Gobo lay suffering in the Mathews house he was able to relay his version of the conflict to Claus Karlson as well as vocalise his final will and testament to that same man. By 10 am on Wednesday morning Gobo Fango was dead; however, his legend was just beginning.

### *Legend*

Throughout the course of this chapter the reader has been introduced to the various sources that contribute to the legend of Gobo Fango. Beginning with oral and diarized tales told by Talbot and Hunter descendants, the legend of Gobo was passed down from generation to generation until Kenneth Larson included many of them in his historical genealogy of the Talbot family. Kate B. Carter also included a brief reflection on the Gobo's life in the 'Negro Pioneer' section of her epic *Our Pioneer Heritage* (1965). In 1971 the first non-Mormon, non-American-focused account of Gobo was published by Allen Makin in his *1820 Settlers of Salem* and it was about this time that local Idahoan Al Dawson wrote two very inaccurate and sensationalized newspaper articles about the African. Finally, in 1989 the historian H. Dean Garrett scoured library collections and produced an excellent narrative of Gobo that focused largely on his death and the subsequent trails of Frank Bedke.<sup>78</sup> With the recirculation of Garrett's work in *Utah's Lawless Fringe* (2001), Gobo's popularity began to increase with Tess Hilmo publishing her pioneer account in 2003. 2009 saw Patric Tariq Mellet blogging his version and Steve Crump wondering why the story had lingered in obscurity for so long; and finally, after another magazine article printed in *Wild West* (Weeks 2011), Glen E. Page published his full-length novel in 2012. A natural result of the increase in attention to Gobo's life and history is the emergence of various differing representations of his legend. Page pictures Gobo as a black American hero; Mellet as a South African slave; Hilmo and most Talbot/Hunter family traditions as a Mormon pioneer; and Garrett as a victim of America's Wild West. By filtering each of these circulations of Gobo through

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<sup>78</sup> Garrett cites a number of sources that I have not.

Chidesterian methodology and by interpreting the remains as circulations between Mormonism, America, and South Africa, the situation is further complicated in hopes of providing glimpses of clarity as to the procedure of producing and circulating knowledge.

In many ways Page's account of Gobo Fango is one of the best in circulation as it provides the audience with much needed contextualization that most other versions simply glance over. Yet due to the very nature of the work as a highly sensationalized novel, much of the needed contextualization is either unfounded or dramatized to a point where the historian no longer finds it of value. However, if we confront Page's work as a circulation of knowledge between America and South Africa and locate it in a discourse on Mormonism in South Africa, his thesis that Gobo is a black American hero is of central importance to the historian of religions. In stating what Gobo is, Page is also stating what he is not—a Mormon pioneer, a South African slave, nor a victim of America's Wild West. Consequently, Page's Gobo becomes a modern circulation of an adopted American whose origins may be traced to South Africa but whose purpose could only be realized and fulfilled in America. When compared with the discoveries of the next chapter where observers fail to find any noticeable contribution by Mormons to the South African struggle, Gobo's heroic friendship—which culminates in marriage—to the daughter of a black prostitute who desires nothing more than to join Harriet Tubman in the struggle for the rights of African Americans, is a surprising reimagining of this South African as a contributor to the American struggle. While the map Page constructs is in reality a fake, the existence of it as a circulation in this discourse is an authentic source of knowledge about Gobo that can be traced as a sensationalized account from Page, to Dawson, and all the way back to the overly dramatic oral accounts of Gobo's self-professed adopted family.

Mellet's Gobo Fango could not be more different than Page's. As a circulation of knowledge, Mellet's map is drawn exclusively from Garrett's account which means it does incorporate some aspects of oral tradition as well as Makin's white South African history; however, the ANC printer interprets the territory differently than any other observer before and constructs a map with South Africa at the centre, that pictures the transatlantic journey of Gobo as just another in a long list of slavery expeditions between America and Africa. The location of Mormons and Mormonism on this map can be found when searching for slave-owners and facilitators of racial discrimination. Unfortunately, for our purposes anyway, Mellet displays no knowledge of the religion or of its racial policies, or the post might have been that much more interesting and pertinent as a segue from the previous discussion of

nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa to the examination of the politics of race that follows. However, Mellet's construction and imagining of Gobo solely as a South African slave who was smuggled from his homeland, inhumanely treated by his Mormon owners, and eventually killed is an important circulation regarding the Mormon experience in South Africa because it is one of the few that originates in South Africa and is intended for those who view the world through a non-white, South African lens. In a comment seemingly written specifically for my work, Mellet remarks "this son of the eastern Cape died and was buried on US soil." Subsequently, the legend of Gobo Fango as constructed by the South African Patric Tariq Mellet envisions a shackled slave from the Eastern Cape torn from his homeland and forced to reside for eternity in a foreign land away from his ancestors.

If the centre of Page and Mellet's maps are African America and non-white South Africa respectively, Tess Hilmo's is Mormondom. As a culmination of the most produced and authenticated thread of knowledge about Gobo Fango, Hilmo's picture of Gobo as a Mormon pioneer circulates the belief that although Gobo was born in South Africa he was at the very core a Mormon. "It is important to remember that pioneers came from all areas of the world," Hilmo's narrator lectures, "North America, South America, Europe, and Africa." As a Mormon pioneer narrative, the legend of Gobo Fango originates in a South Africa starkly different from Mellet's and even Page's—Page does not even mention Mormonism until the Talbots and Gobo have already arrived in Boston. Hilmo's South Africa is a land inhabited by potential Mormon converts and as such the bonding of Gobo with the Talbots is represented as a blessed, God-sanctioned union. Hilmo's America is also imagined differently and is denoted as a place of persecution that must be endured in order to reach Zion. Reflecting back on the previous chapter, Hilmo's account is in tune with its conclusion that South Africa was actually the sacred space for Mormonism and not America. As we look ahead to the proceeding discussions of race, Hilmo's Gobo becomes the most improbable to believe actually existed. Nineteenth-century and the majority of twentieth-century Mormonism did not condone the inclusion of black Africans and although a handful of examples exist of non-white African Mormons, there is no evidence to suggest that Gobo was one of these. So once again we find a constructed legend of Gobo Fango that is a fake; however, once again, the circulation of this Gobo is an authentic source of knowledge not only about the individual but about the nature of the relationship between Mormonism and South Africa.

The final representative map of Gobo under the magnifying glass here is Garrett's scholarly account that focuses on his death and the trial of his murderer, Frank Bedke. While the original itself would be a suitable circulation to analyse here, the reworked edition included in *Utah's Lawless Fringe: Stories of True Crime* is a more pertinent example as it re-emphasises the centre of Garrett's map as being America's Wild West. As an authentic source of knowledge about Gobo's death, Garrett's image of the individual as a victim of the lawlessness of America's western frontier was generated from various informant accounts of the tragedy and has since been utilized by modern commentators such as Mellet, Page, and Andrew Weeks, whose article was published in the aptly titled, for our purposes, magazine *Wild West*. By centring his map on America's West and not on Mormondom, South Africa, or African America, Garrett provides another focused representation of Gobo that is best understood transitionally as nineteenth-century Utah, very much an uncontrolled territory on America's western frontier, gradually was conquered by the United States thus allowing for the interpretation of the Mormon experience in South Africa to similarly transition from un-American to very much American, especially when viewing American Mormons in South Africa as ambassadors of American popular culture. Thus, according to my Chidesterian interpretation of Garrett's image, the nature of Gobo's victimhood is only fully realized when viewed as a result of America's Wild West and Mormonism's overall un-American position in its nineteenth-century homeland.

As a circulation between Mormonism, America, and South Africa the life and legend of Gobo Fango is an unparalleled example of the construction of knowledge. The incongruences resulting from the various interpretations of Gobo's history should not be considered as problematic but as illuminating, specifically in regards to the importance of understanding the process of producing and circulating knowledge. This history, contextualization, and analysis of the life and legend of Gobo Fango has been offered as a natural transition between the exploration of nineteenth-century Mormonism in South Africa just proffered and the forthcoming investigation of the politics of race drawn from more transatlantic Mormon circulations between America and South Africa. The nature of Gobo's liminal position in this work is due to the basis of his transatlantic journey originating from Mormonism's nineteenth-century missionary efforts in South Africa, its emphasis on immigration and the building of Zion, and its policies governing the proselyting of individuals of black African descent. However, once the trip across the Atlantic was complete his experiences in America

and among the Mormon communities in the West demand a further analysis of Mormonism's racial policies and how they have been implemented and interpreted in South Africa.

### Chapter 3: Policy and Prejudice

Religious policies that promote prejudice have existed for thousands of years and can be found in the histories of the three main Abrahamic traditions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Scholars such as David Goldenberg (2003), Stephen Haynes (2002), and Edwin Yamauchi (2004) have provided numerous examples of the strategies employed by religious policy makers in order to justify the ethnic and racial prejudices that led to slavery and the discrimination of human beings with black skin. One of the main biblical myths utilized to justify these reprehensible institutions was the curse of Ham, which can be traced further back to the curse of Cain or forward to the curse of Canaan, Ham's son.

While more definitive Mormon accounts could be cited, for our purposes here President Evan Wright's 24 October 1952 District Conference address provides us with a Mormon South African interpretation of the myth of the curse of Cain/Ham/Canaan. "For some time past I have wanted to discuss the unique problems pertaining to the Priesthood ordinations and authority in the South African Mission," he begins his speech. "Because of the fact that Africa is the historic home of the seed of Cain, and because some individuals have noted apparent discriminations, many questions have been raised. This is particularly perplexing in view of the present world trends towards social and economic equality of races" (Wright n.d. 3:421).

Quoting the newly appointed president of the LDS Church, David O. McKay, Wright poetically states, "Answers cannot be found in abstract reasoning. In this case reason to the soul is dim as the borrowed rays of the moon and stars to lonely, weary, wandering travelers" (3:421).<sup>79</sup> His exegetical discussion begins shortly after this introduction as a way to justify his religion's apparent racist beliefs. "One of the saddest chapters in history is the story of Cain. Cain was the son of Adam ... Part of the Plan of Salvation was for sacrifices to be offered to the Lord ... Cain and Abel offered sacrifices. Abel's were accepted but Cain's rejected because they were not made in the right spirit. Cain became angry and jealous. Cain sinned against the light" (3:422). After quoting the biblical account of Cain murdering Abel from the Mormon version in the Book of Moses, the genesis of the *Pearl of Great Price*, Wright continues, "The Lord cursed Cain and set a mark upon him ... Cain was cursed with a black skin and became the father of an inferior race which was then denied the privilege of

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<sup>79</sup> McKay was sustained as the prophet on 9 April 1951.

the Priesthood and the fullness and blessings of the gospel” (3:423). The myth of the curse of Ham is then invoked by referencing the second book in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Abraham. “That curse was perpetuated after the Flood through Ham, the son of Noah ... Ham married Egyptus who was a descendent of Cain ... Ham’s posterity [meaning Canaan and all future descendants] was cursed. That of Shem and Japheth was blessed. We have much scriptural evidence that shows it is a grievous sin to intermarry and was prohibited by commandment from God to Moses” (3:423).

Wright’s 1952 explanation was a result of over one hundred years of Mormon policy making and interpretation which had been traced back to the religion’s founder, Joseph Smith, but was more definitively linked to Smith’s successor, Brigham Young.<sup>80</sup> Young’s views that blacks were the cursed posterity of the Cain/Ham/Canaan lineage were a perpetuation of the old Jewish, Muslim, and Christian interpretations of the biblical myth. In a simplistic review of Mormonism’s racial policies Armand L. Mauss, a noted sociologist of LDS race relations, stated, “Much conventional ‘explanation’ for the priesthood restriction was simply borrowed from the racist heritage of nineteenth-century Europe and America, especially from the justifications for slavery used in the ante-bellum South (2004b: 57).” David Goldenberg, the author of *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2003), went as far as to call the Curse of Ham the “ideological cornerstone for the justification of black slavery” (2003: 175).

In Stephen Haynes’ *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (2002), the author unearthed over fifty different documents that specifically named the myth as the main reason Southern whites were permitted to treat blacks the way they did.<sup>81</sup> One such example is found in the teachings of Thornton Stringfellow (1788-1869), a Baptist minister from Virginia: “The first recorded language which was ever uttered in relation to slavery, is the inspired language of Noah” (2002: 86).<sup>82</sup> Another typical American explanation of the religious policy that justified slavery and racial discrimination reads, “the great Architect ... framed [blacks] both physically and mentally to fill the sphere in which they were thrown, and His wisdom and mercy combined in constituting them thus suited to the degraded position they were destined to occupy” (2002: 89). Although Brigham Young

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<sup>80</sup> See the works of Bringhurst (1981b; 1981c; 2004); Bush (1973; 1984); and Mauss (1981; 2003) for the history of the Mormon policy of racial discrimination.

<sup>81</sup> Edwin Yamauchi (2004: 29) was the first to make this observation.

<sup>82</sup> Stringfellow was the author of several treatises on the subject, perhaps his most thorough being *Slavery: Its Origin, Nature, and History, Considered in the Light of Bible Teachings, Moral Justice, and Political Wisdom* (1861).

was not a Southerner, his policy towards blacks was clearly influenced by the greater worldview of his American heritage. Northerners, like Young, were not immune to the defence of slavery and racial discrimination as evidenced by the writings of Josiah Priest, a New York non-fiction author who penned *Bible Defence of Slavery; or the Origin, History, and Fortunes of the Negro Race* (1851). Although Priest refuted the claim that the black race began with Cain, he still supported the view that they did originate from Noah's curse on Ham that was enacted on his posterity through his son Canaan (see Priest 1851: 76-105). As a direct transatlantic circulation of America's nineteenth-century policies of prejudice towards blacks—ultimately meaning 'Africans'—Mormon missionaries arrived in South Africa in 1853 completely uninterested in converting the vast majority of human beings in the country by bringing the curse of Cain/Ham/Canaan with them.

By the middle of the twentieth century the curse was no longer an acceptable interpretation in America of the origins and condition of the black races; slavery had been banished for one hundred years and the Civil Rights movement had resulted in a new American policy towards race, one of equality and acceptance. Although originally mainstream policies, Mormonism's racial prejudices were no longer recognizably American.

However, across the Atlantic in South Africa they were not only still acceptable but were utilized by Mormons to create a comparative framework that they hoped would increase the number of Afrikaners and other white Europeans converting to their religion. When the National Party was elected in 1948 and began to institute their political strategy of segregation known as apartheid, a number of American religions, both in the country and across the Atlantic, began to protest the overt mistreatment of the non-white races in South Africa. However, Mormonism, still holding strong to their now out-dated policies, recognized in the Dutch Reformed Church's theology of apartheid a comparative connection to their own religious beliefs and utilized them in their proselyting efforts. Subsequently, prior to the 1978 policy reversal, Mormonism can once again be defined as South African and not American. However, after the 1978 pronouncement from Salt Lake City that declared all human beings to be equal in the sight of God and the Church, Mormonism once again can be pictured as American as the image of missionaries knocking on township doors was circulated throughout Mormondom.

Reports of Mormonism's new global awareness were filled with accounts of the black South Africans who had readily embraced the LDS version of Christianity. Articles appeared regularly in the *Ensign* and *Church News* and circulated the belief that South Africa was a

goldmine full of black converts. Academics such as Brigham Young University's E. Dale LeBaron, who also happened to be presiding over the Mormon mission in South Africa when the 1978 revelation was announced, added to the breadth of this growing narrative by publishing various personal conversion stories of black South Africans (1989; 1990a; 1990b; 1993; 1999; 2000). By the early 1990s there was such a pervading view in Mormondom that South Africa, and all other once cursed nations in Bringham's case, was fruitful soil for the religion's growth that Newell G. Bringham, the noted historian of Mormonism's racial policies, concluded after scouring ten years' worth of *Church News* articles, that the popular media source had "overstated its case in presenting blacks as prime instruments in aggregate Mormon membership growth" (1992: 121). In a circulation of these over-flattering images in South Africa, a local Pretoria reporter named Chris Mokolatsie investigated the efficacy of Mormonism's claims of "growing fast among black South Africans" and he, too, struggled to find reality in the image (1994: 22). After a long history of racial prejudice in both countries, Mormonism in America was utilizing the establishment of the religion among black South Africans as an example of its global appeal and success. By highlighting the stories of a few individuals, such as Julia Mavimbela, Moses Mahlangu, and most recently Dominic Tshabalala, Mormonism has projected an image of itself in South Africa as equal, unified, and growing; however, the question remains if this image is an accurate reflection of reality.

This chapter is a study of the policies and prejudices involved in Mormonism's experience with non-white South Africans. The first section of the chapter examines the Latter-day Saints' pre-1978 policy of racial avoidance and discrimination, with the second being a comparative analysis highlighting the points of congruence utilized by Mormons in South Africa to link them with Afrikaners, including their religious, social, and political strategy of racial segregation. The concluding portion of this chapter discusses Mormon circulations about black South Africans after 1978 and argues that after years of avoidance, Mormonism utilized the image of black South Africans in order to promote their new policy of equality, unity, and growth. When framing the study within the greater narrative of transatlantic circulations between Mormonism in America and South Africa, this chapter once again complicates and does not clarify the situation. With the territory of race relations in constant flux, in many ways the nineteenth-century map locates Mormonism within America's larger racial narrative. However, as was discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, the Mormon mission in South Africa was nothing like that of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission's in Natal. The twentieth century map is further

complicated as Mormonism can be seen crossing the Atlantic and joining with the National Party's version of South Africa after America began to demand equality for all its citizens.

In 1978 another crossing occurs when the First Presidency in America suddenly reversed their policy of prejudice and the Mormon map in South Africa no longer was confined strictly to white locations. Currently, the most projected image of the religion in South Africa is a global one, with equality and acceptance emanating from Salt Lake City through the circulation of personal narratives of black South Africans. Consequently, while the Mormon experience in South Africa may be located on the periphery, it navigates through multiple central concerns of both America and South Africa.

### *A Policy of Prejudice*

There are a number of seminal dates in the history of the Mormon experience in South Africa: first, 28 August 1852, the date that missionaries were first called to serve in the country; second, 19 April 1853, the day the missionaries actually arrived in Cape Town; third, 12 April 1865, the date the last nineteenth-century missionaries left; fourth, 25 July 1903, the day the mission was revived; fifth, 1916, the year Cumorah, the first LDS-owned property in South Africa, was purchased and dedicated; sixth, January 1954, the month President David O. McKay became the first Mormon prophet to visit the country; seventh, 22 March 1970, the date the first Stake, Transvaal, was created; eighth, 30 September 1978, the day the First Presidency removed the priesthood ban, allowing the missionaries in South Africa to finally be able to proselytize amongst the vast majority of the country's citizens; ninth, 24 August 1985, the date Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Johannesburg Temple.

In order to appreciate the full significance of these events one must also quickly review the religion's membership statistics: 1853-1865, approximately 300 individuals were baptized, with all but a handful emigrating to America; 1903, less than a dozen; 1925, 500; 1950, 1 501; 1978, just over 7 000; 1985, approximately 12 000; 2000, roughly 30 000; and 2013, nearly 60 000.<sup>83</sup> Although not capable of telling the entire story of Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa, these dates and figures do tell a large portion of it, especially when the plot revolves around the prophetic policies defining the religion's conduct towards indigenous South Africans.

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<sup>83</sup> For figures before 1970 see Monson (1971: 144-146), and for more recent records see <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/south-africa/>, accessed 5 February 2014.

On 5 February 1852 Brigham Young, the prophet and leader of the Mormon Church, stood before a joint session of the territorial legislature and declared: “If there never was a prophet or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called negroes are the children of old Cain. I know they are, I know that they cannot bear rule in the priesthood [sic], for the curse upon them was to remain upon them, until the resedue [sic] of the posterity of Michal [meaning Adam] and his wife receive the blessings” (Bringhurst 1981b: 123). Further clarifying the definition of “negro” Young continued, “a man who has the Affrican [sic] blood in him cannot hold one jot nor tittle of priesthood” (1981b: 124). While Young had already and would continue to make similar comments throughout his presidency, 1847-1877, the remarks in his speech before the legislature that day defined Mormonism’s official policy regarding individuals with African blood flowing through their veins during the religion’s nineteenth-century experience in South Africa. As descendants of Cain, the son of Adam who murdered his brother Abel and received a physical ‘mark’ to symbolize the spiritual ‘curse’ God punished him with, indigenous South Africans were not worthy of the priesthood nor any of the rites that came with it, most importantly the rites of the temple. Consequently, though blacks could “be baptised and receive the spirit of God” (Bringhurst 1981b: 125), the nineteenth-century missionaries in South Africa adopted a stance of near total avoidance. In fact, if one were to search the records, journals, and correspondence of these early missionaries as well as their converts, one would have an extremely difficult time locating any mention of even an awareness of the vast majority of inhabitants in South Africa.

The exceptions to this are few and far between. Jesse Haven observed in two separate letters to Willard Richards, the second councillor of the First Presidency, that “Cape Town has about 30 000 inhabitants. Upwards of one half are colored—being of all shades, from a jet black to almost an European complexion” (Wright n.d. 1:79; 1:81). The purpose of Haven’s remarks were, as was shown in the first chapter of this study, to inform his superiors of the Muslim population in the city and share with them his opinion that they would make excellent candidates for baptism mainly because of their conservatism and practice of polygamy. However, unless the Muslims were of pure Malaysian ancestry without a drop of African blood in them, they too, were subject to the curse of Cain.

During Haven’s tenure as the president of the Cape of Good Hope Mission, the official name of Mormonism’s South African Mission during the nineteenth century, there was at least two female ‘coloured’ South African converts and perhaps as many as three others. In

the preceding chapter discussing the life and legend of Gobo Fango, it was learned that Jane Harris, a black woman from St. Helena had joined the religion while residing in Cape Town, probably in 1853 before William Walker and Leonard Smith left the Cape for the colonial settlements surrounding Grahamstown. Walker's journal contains no mention of converting Harris and if Smith kept an account it has never been made available. However, Haven's diary does make at least three references to women of colour. The president's entry on 2 August 1853 begins: "This morning I baptized three, two were coloured women. The other one was Lewis Sykes." Although unfortunately not mentioned by name, one of these women may have been Harris as the next two recordings occur in 1854. The first, logged on 19 March, tells of a priesthood blessing that was administered to a "colored girl" in the home of Thomas Weatherhead, the bilingual convert who translated two of Haven's pamphlets into Dutch. While the entry states that the girl lived with the Weatherheads, the brevity of the recording does not allow for any further analysis to take place and it is impossible to determine if she was a Mormon or not. The final sighting of an African in Haven's journal occurs under the date 15 September 1854. On this day Haven "called on three colored sisters, one only was at home. She said, she wanted her name taken off. She also said she thought her daughter would want hers taken off likewise." Was this mother and daughter the two women baptized on 2 August 1853. Perhaps, however, from these entries and the history of Jane Harris, all that can be stated definitively is that there were some cursed South Africans baptized in the nineteenth century. Despite these few occurrences, the conversion and interaction with non-European South Africans was not the norm for nineteenth-century Mormon missionaries.

Other exceptions can be found in the accounts of William Walker, the first missionary to preach in the Eastern Cape, who commented in letters and in his journal that he was preaching on the borders of 'Kaffir Land' and that wars with the 'Kaffirs' were breaking out along the frontier. Walker's most direct reference to indigenous South Africans was when he accompanied a recent convert, Oliver Lloyd, to the 'Fingo Location' where Lloyd's nephew was stationed as a missionary for the London Missionary Society (2003: 86). William Fotheringham, the mission's president from 1860-64, wrote his superiors about the religion's lack of success in the 'land of Ham'; however, he did not mean this as a failure in regard to preaching to indigenous South Africans, but as a remark suggesting that because the entire continent was cursed through its Hamitic ancestry even the white European colonizers were

subject to experiencing the residual effects of the curse (Fotheringham n.d.: 72-73).<sup>84</sup> None of these exceptions are anything more than references to setting, to a map whose backdrop is Africa but whose symbols and territory are devoid of Africans. This includes *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star's* circulation of a letter written by Jesse Haven to Willard Richard where the president transforms into an amateur ethnographer and produces an account of 'Kaffir', 'Fingoe', and 'Hottentot' culture and history that contains observations of polygamy, circumcision, and physical features (Haven 1856). The nineteenth-century interpretation of Young's policy towards Africans in South Africa was interpreted by the South African mission as a call for avoidance and the result was a mere 300 converts.

When the South African Mission was reopened in 1903 a great deal of conversation had been occurring amongst the religion's leaders in Utah on how to interpret and implement the policy of black priesthood denial. The canonization of the *Pearl of Great Price*, which contained a detailed account of Cain's curse being passed down to Noah's son Ham's wife, Egyptus, and subsequently to Ham's seed, namely Canaan, provided ample scriptural justification to be used in conjunction with Young's overt policies that had by now been traced back to Joseph Smith himself, to ensure the belief was actually considered law (see Bringhurst 1981b: 144-164). By 1908, Joseph F. Smith, the current president and prophet, "formally instructed Latter-day Saint missionaries 'not [to] take the initiative in proselyting among the Negro people ... or [to] people tainted with Negro blood'" (Bringhurst 1981b: 151). Whereas before 1908 mission presidents had the option of advising their missionaries on whether or not to attempt to convert individuals 'tainted' by Africa's curse, after Smith's pronouncement the decision to avoid such people was made for them. Interestingly, between the time of the reopening of the mission and Smith's declaration, Warren Lyon, the mission's leader, personally baptized a black South African man named Dunn (Wright n.d. 2:23). Called the "Zulu prince" by the missionaries, Dunn was a half-Zulu, half-Scottish convert who petitioned Lyon to allow him to translate the religion's missionary tracts into his mother's native tongue and to go and testify of his new found faith "to his people." According to Lyon's journal, Dunn could speak seven languages and was a well-educated man; however, it does not appear that he remained an active adherent of Mormonism for too long as soon after making his initial appearance in Lyon's diary he appears with some frequency for a short time and then disappears altogether (see Wright n.d. 2:23).

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<sup>84</sup> Observations to this effect were made with some regularity by the nineteenth-century missionaries (see Bringhurst 1981a: 17, 21 fn. 20). Bringhurst also records another exception recorded by Adolphous Noon, the Isipingo sugar cane farmer (Bringhurst 1981a: 17).

It appears that the mission's following three presidents, Ralph A. Badger (1906-1908), Henry L. Steed (1908-1909), and Brigham A. Hendricks (1909-1911), also converted a number of individual South Africans affected by the curse. "What are we to do with the people who embrace the Gospel who have intermarried with colored people [the Negro] or who themselves are of mixture blood?" Badger questioned the First Presidency in a letter dated 17 August 1908 (Monson 1971: 43-44). In the same letter, the president also observed that the "colored race, or people of part negro blood, are quite numerous in the south of South Africa [Cape Province], and some are now members of the Church" (1971: 43-44). Perhaps just prior to Joseph F. Smith's official prohibition against actively proselytizing blacks in 1908, the religion's leaders in Salt Lake City wrote Steed that he was welcome to "preach the gospel" to anyone who showed interest in it regardless of colour. However, he was also warned against allowing the cursed Africans to worship alongside Europeans and encouraged him to form separate branches for the different races whenever possible (Bringhurst 1981a: 17). During Hendricks' presidency, black Mormons began to petition the mission to know if they could perform lesser temple rituals such as baptisms for the dead. Forwarding the queries onto Utah, Hendricks received answers from Rudger Clawson, a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, "No work is being done in the Temples at present neither has any been done in the past for the negro saints. Priesthood cannot be given to a negro and this rule appears to hold good regarding other ordinances in the Temple" (Monson 1971: 44).<sup>85</sup> However, it appears that Joseph F. Smith also wrote Hendricks and stated that blacks could, in fact, enter the temple to perform baptisms for their dead relatives but that the First Presidency did not want black South Africans to emigrate to Utah in order to conduct such ceremonies (Bringhurst 1981a: 17). Clawson's response to Hendricks ends with a statement reflective of the new policy of avoidance that the religion was beginning to implement, it was "the obligation resting upon the elders to carry the gospel to the white race and perform ordinances for the ancestors of the white race. If a negro has faith in the Gospel, repents of his sins and applies ... for baptism, he cannot be denied this precious blessing" (1971: 44). These circulations clearly illustrate that there were cursed Mormons in South Africa during the first decade of the mission's twentieth century experience and in fact, these issues of race

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<sup>85</sup> On 1 December 1930 George F. Richards, the Salt Lake City Temple president from 1921-38, responded to a query from Don Mack Dalton similar to the one posed by Hendricks; however, his response was different from Clawson's: "It is permissible to do baptism work for negroes both without and within the Temple, that is as far as we can go in administering ordinances for that race of people" (Richards 1930).

and mixed race were a constant ‘problem’ for the presidents until the policy was finally reversed in 1978 (see Wright n.d. 3:438-448).<sup>86</sup>

That Joseph F. Smith’s 1908 policy of avoidance was circulated and adhered to in South Africa during the 1910s is best exemplified in the following journal entry of June Bennion Sharp, a missionary who served from 1913-1915,<sup>87</sup> dated 19 March 1914: “During the afternoon we called on Bro and Sis Hulett. While there we had to tell Sis Hulett the [sic] we would have to ask her to remain away from the meeting because of her colored blood. It was a hard subject to approach but with the assistance of the Lord all worked well and they took the advice in the spirit it was given.” As evidenced from Sharp’s record it seems that one of the simplest, though initially awkward, strategies was just to block anyone of African heritage from even hearing the message.

A year earlier, on 26 February 1913, Sharp was stationed in Kimberley and took the opportunity to tour the Bultfontein diamond mine. During the visit, the missionary took a great interest in the housing, working, and hospital conditions of the “27 000 Kaffirs” that worked there. His description of the day is lengthy and rather detailed, but despite his attention to particulars such as the cleanliness of the hospital quarters, the missionary treats the entire episode as if he were a union inspector and never alludes in the slightest to the possibility of the 27 000 workers being potential converts. On 21 July 1914, Sharp showed a similar type of apathy towards the conversion of Africans when he and his companion took the train from East London to King Williams Town where they proceeded with a member to the ‘Location’ where they took pictures of “several typical scenes of native life.” “The red blanket natives,” his entry continues, “only wear the blanket about their shoulders and often not that much.” Finished with their tourism view of the location, the Mormons “returned and had dinner.”

Fifteen years later, the interpretation and execution of the policy had not changed in regard to indigenous South Africans; however, the extent of the population of residents, especially in Cape Town, with mixed or undefined ancestry was causing problems. Don Mack Dalton had only been the South Africa Mission’s president for just over a year when he penned a report to the First Presidency in Salt Lake City on 11 April 1930 that stated in part:

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<sup>86</sup> Despite the constant appeals from Cape Town to Salt Lake City for clarification on how to properly interpret in the policy for members affected by the curse, the statistics proffered at the beginning of this section must always be kept in mind. By 1925 the number of Mormons in the country was only 500 and by 1950 that number had only increased by 1 000. The majority of cursed South Africans were baptized before Don Mack Dalton’s presidency in 1929 and probably never accounted for more than marginal percentage of total membership.

<sup>87</sup> Sharp was later asked to return to South Africa and lead the mission, which he did from 1944-48.

It is very evident to me that the work is impaired in Mowbray and Capetown [sic], by reason of the fact that color is so pronounced. Real whites often object to such association and much effort of the elders winds up in disappointment. I have been unable to tell the elders to carry the gospel to the colored with the diligence they work with the whites. Often I think it unfair not to give these good people the full benefit of the gospel because I know they have good Dutch and English blood in them mixed with that of Cain. The gospel appeals to them. No doubt the blood of Ephraim makes them crave for the message of the elders. Fully realizing color blocks the investigators, the elders do not press the work among them. With color already in the branch and District here the work is blocked to a large extent. Even many of the colored become discouraged because they cannot receive the priesthood and have their worthy efforts crowned with that appreciated glory. No doubt the Lord will make manifest the final solution of this problem that involves the souls of so many good people.

In the end, no doubt all things will be rectified, but many a good soul, often followed by family relation, unable to see much farther than present association in life are offended by reason of the colored question, either having color or not in their veins. Your advice would be soothing and very welcome on this matter and an encouraging word to saints and investigators with and without color, would be most fitting.

Oh the joy that filled my heart at our testimony meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup> where all present made an expression. The two extremes [sic] on the racial question, black and white, gave thanks and praise to the Lord in the same meeting. How thankful I was to know the love that was present. There were blacks, colored, and whites present. No distinction, except as 'birds of feather flock together' held its course. It was a joyous meeting. But my eyes clouded with tears when I thought of the number of colored and whites who were staying away because of their weakness to wave the color line in the spirit of gospel love. I admonish the colored as much as I can in meekness to be careful not to offend. I also admonish the whites to be careful not to take offence or to offend. Some have had the same thing done by previous presidents. It has been a problem for years. (Dalton 1930)

Dalton's letter reveals a number of key issues peculiar to the Mormon experience in South Africa. First, there are clearly members in his congregations that have some degree of African

blood in them. In present-day South Africa the term ‘coloured’ denotes a particular race of people whose ancestry can be traced to Europe, Asia, and a variety of Southern African communities such as Khoi (called Hottentot for much of history) and the San (often denoted in the history books as the Bushmen); however, it is unclear whether Dalton is expressing this specific connotation of the term or whether he is using ‘colored’ in the American sense as an umbrella term for any individual of African ancestry.<sup>88</sup> Second, ‘real whites’ frequently took offence to having to associate with these ‘cursed members’ and that more precaution was taken to ensure the whites were unoffended than those the policy excluded. Third, there was a real desire and need for clarification in regard to the ‘colored question’.<sup>89</sup>

Prior to writing this letter Dalton and his missionaries had spent the months of October through December 1929 producing an official reference manual for the mission. Under the heading “The Baptism of Colored People,” *The South African Missionary Guide Book* (1929: 53) states, “Colored people should not be refused baptism but they should be admitted with caution to avoid offending white people who are sensitive on racial matters. Colored people should be counseled [sic] to consider the social effect of their association in the churches with white people.”

The desire not to offend white South Africans by forcing them to attend the same religious meetings as individuals of African descent was most likely the catalyst for the formation of the Branch of Love. In his review of this curious Branch, Evan Wright, the former missionary, branch president, and mission president in South Africa turned amateur historian, phrased his introduction in the following manner: “In South Africa in the 1930s, the [Mormon] Church operated under the program of apartheid. There wasn’t any mixture of the races. Only white people were baptized. There were social problems as well as other ones, and in those days, they just didn’t mix (Wright n.d. 2:248). For a former leader of the LDS Church in South Africa to use the politically charged term “apartheid” to describe his religion’s racial policy is extremely revealing. Wright actually served his entire mission under Dalton’s leadership and would have had intimate knowledge of the interpretation of the policy during this era. The Branch of Love itself was an example of this apartheid as Dalton recognized that the coloured members in Cape Town needed a place to worship separately from white members. After witnessing the repeated discomfort of one coloured member in

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<sup>88</sup> See Mohamed Adhikari’s *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community* (2009).

<sup>89</sup> See works such as John Lund’s *The Church and the Negro* (1967); Bruce R. McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* (1958); and John Stewart’s *Mormonism and the Negro* (1960) for pre-1978 examinations of this ‘problem’.

particular, William Paul Daniels, Dalton organized an unofficial Monday night service for the Daniels family and any other African member or investigator who wished to attend. Stressing the anxiety of Daniels' experience in the Mowbray chapel, Wright writes, "On the occasions when he [Daniels] attended Church, he would sneak in on the back row after the meeting had started and sneak out before the services were over. He felt he couldn't sit among the white people" (2:248). The missionaries and often times Dalton himself would preside over the special branch's meetings, which always included a spiritual message after "wonderful roast beef dinners with yellow rice" (2:256). However, there is no evidence to suggest that this was anything more than just a designated gathering of a few marginalized members and not an official organization of the Mormon Church.

Even before the Branch of Love was formed the tale of William Paul Daniels is of special interest here. Daniels was born in Stellenbosch in 1864 and was an Elder in the Dutch Reformed Church for eighteen years before meeting missionaries in his Cape Town tailor shop in 1915. This was not his first introduction to Mormonism as five years earlier his brother-in-law had been travelling in the United States when he converted to the LDS Church during his visit to Utah. Returning to South Africa for his wife, Daniels' sister, the two took William Paul's son Abel with them. Already planning a trip to Utah to visit his family, Daniels began an intense study of Mormonism which included a visit with the mission's president, Nicholas G. Smith. On the subsequent trip to America, Daniels was baptized and had the rare opportunity to meet with the Mormon prophet, Joseph F. Smith, on two separate occasions. During one interview with the seer, Smith promised Daniels that one day he would be given the opportunity to receive the priesthood. Although Daniels remained a faithful member for the remainder of his life, he died on 13 October 1936 without having this prophecy fulfilled (see Wright n.d. 2:251-259). Wright commented on this in a talk in 1952, "With tears streaming down his face, we have heard him say the he knew he would never receive the Priesthood in this life but that someday in the Lord's due time, he, an unworthy Black man, would be a bearer of the Holy Priesthood" (3:431).

Returning to the interpretation of the policy, *The South African Missionary Guide Book* adds further clarification on the issue of Africans and the priesthood. "No one with colored blood in their veins, or where there is a doubt as to the purity of their blood, is to be recommended for or ordained to the Priesthood. This includes white men with wives not completely white" (1929: 100). Later the *Guide Book* states, "Great care should be taken in ascertaining the true blood of those whom the Elders desire to recommend to be ordained to

the Priesthood. Genealogical work will assist very much in this respect” (1929: 59). According to a letter from the First Presidency included in the work, “It has always been the policy of the Church, and this policy has not been changed, not to confer the Priesthood upon a man who has negro blood in him, even though it may be but slight. Where there is reasonable cause for believing that there is no blood of the negro race in persons, although they may be dark in their complexion, the Priesthood is bestowed upon such men. This is the policy to be pursued by you in the South African Mission” (1929: 52). However, by the year 1952 the policy had changed to such a degree that, “Every single person must clear his own lines” (Wright n.d. 3:434), meaning each individual convert in South Africa must be able to prove definitively that he was of European descent and show no trace of African blood in his veins in order to be ordained to the priesthood.

Several months prior to Wright’s October 1952 speech, the mission president had written Salt Lake City in hopes of obtaining some clarity to the extremely difficult and troublesome chore. “In years past,” he informs his leaders, “men weren’t required to trace their genealogy in the South African Mission to hold the priesthood and apparently if individuals appeared to be pure Europeans, they were ordained.” In other words, if their skin was white they were allowed to partake in the ritual of receiving and practising the priesthood. “As a result many of our brethren,” he goes on to point out, “including some branch presidents and district presidents, haven’t traced their own lines. The sons of some of these men haven’t been ordained to the priesthood which is causing bitter disappointment. However,” Wright continues in a show of solidarity, “if we are going to continue with the instructions that have been given in the past it won’t be possible to ordain such men’s sons to the priesthood until their own lines have definitely been cleared. Do you want to give me any other instructions than received previously in connection with this matter?” (3:442).

In a letter written by Ezra Taft Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Wright had been instructed that in cases where the priesthood was ordained without full knowledge of the individual’s blood lines and when this history was finally obtained and showed irrefutably that the individual priesthood holder was unknowingly tainted with African blood “such brethren are advised not to continue the exercise of their Priesthood” (3:434). One of the most pressing concerns in situations like this was whether all of the rituals performed by the cursed African had to be redone in order to purify the process; however, Benson, for whatever reason, advised against this. Under these oppressive

strictures, the South African Mission had just over 1 700 members the year before David O. McKay arrived in the country in January 1954.

McKay's visit to South Africa was important for various reasons. Not only was he the first prophet to visit the nation, but he came with a purpose of revising the complicated policy examined above.<sup>90</sup> On 17 January 1954, speaking from the pulpit at Cumorah, Mowbray, Cape Town, McKay stated,

Now I am impressed that there are worthy men in the South African Mission who are being deprived of the Priesthood simply because they are unable to trace their genealogy out of this country. I am impressed that an injustice is being done to them. Why should every man be required to prove that his lineage is free from Negro strain, especially when there is no evidence of his having Negro blood in his veins? I should rather, much rather, make a mistake in one case and if it be found out afterwards, suspend his activity in the Priesthood than to deprive 10 worthy men of the Priesthood ... if a man is worthy, is faithful in the Church, and lives up to the principles of the Gospel, who has no outward evidence of a Negro strain, even though we might not be able to trace his genealogy out of the country, the President of the Mission is hereby authorized to confer upon his the Priesthood ... From now on here in Africa, you may treat people just as we treat them in South Carolina, or in Washington, or in New York, or in Salt Lake City, or in the Hawaiian Islands. Unless there is evidence of Negro blood you need not compel a man to prove that he has none in his veins. (Wright n.d. 3:459)

At first glance it appears that this policy change would impact the mission in a huge way, and in many instances it did. First, it lifted the curse from those who were simply dwellers in the land of Ham and not actually Africans. Second, it allowed for the mission president to be the official judge of one's ancestry, which made the exceptional cases much simpler to handle as they did not have to be explained in lengthy letters to leaders who had not and would never meet the individuals. Third, the missionaries' job was now much easier and involved a lot less explanation. However, all of these benefits only aided white South Africans, those without any 'evidence' of being carriers of the curse. The curse from the land may have been lifted, but the curse of skin colour certainly had not. Blacks were clearly tainted, darker

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<sup>90</sup> Along with this policy change in South Africa, David O. McKay laid a number of other foundation stones that eventually led to the 1978 revelation that reversed the policy of prejudice altogether (see England 2000; and Prince 2002).

coloureds as well; light-skinned coloureds and tanned-skinned whites were the cases that needed examining, while the fair-skinned descendants of Abel continued to be blessed. At this point one has to be wondering what possible explanation the Mormons in South Africa were utilizing in order to justify such blatant racism.

In 1929, Dalton informed his missionaries of the following Brigham Young quotation:

The Lamanites, or Indians, are just as much the children of our Father and God as we are. So also are the Africans. But we are also the children of adoption through obedience to the Gospel of His Son. Why are so many of the inhabitants of the Earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death, and when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the Priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to. (1929: 60)

Along with Young's evocation of the myth of the curse of Cain, a more thorough explanation was standardized by the time of Wright's administration. "During our pre-mortal state there was a war in heaven," Wright explains. "In the *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 29, verse 36 we read that one third of the hosts of heaven, all of whom had their free agency, followed Lucifer. Joseph Smith declared that the Negroes were not neutral in heaven, for all the spirits took sides" (3:426). After first establishing a link to the prophet Joseph Smith, Wright continued by referencing Orson Hyde, a well-known nineteenth-century Apostle: "As some spirits were more valiant than others, some were less valiant and determined to take other courses of action. Orson Hyde said that Blacks were converted to the Lucifer plan but did not rebel or participate in the War in Heaven in behalf of Lucifer. They did not forfeit their right to have a body but they forfeited the right to hold authority as advocates of the Plan of Christ" (3:427). Bringing the discussion up to date, Wright then reads from a letter he personally received in 1949 signed by the current prophet George Albert Smith and his counsellor David O. McKay:

The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the pre-mortal existence has some determining effect up on the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality, and that while the

details of this principle have not been made known, the principle itself indicates that the coming to this earth and taking on mortality is a privilege that is given to those who maintained their first estate; and that the worth of the privilege is so great that spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be as to the kind of bodies they are to secure; and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood, is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth. Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the Priesthood by the Negroes. (3:427)

After McKay's visit to the country and subsequent policy change the preaching of the less-valiant spirit theory slowly went out of vogue and by the time Elder Don S. Nelson arrived in the country in 1959 and received the new updated reference manual now called the *South African Mission Study Guide* the theory was not even mentioned. In the section titled "Answers to Frequent Questions," the query of "Why Don't We Preach to the Natives?" was second on the list, after the lingering nineteenth-century practice of polygamy. The advice to the missionaries is as follows:

The holy scriptures say that God is no respecter of persons. Is it not being a respecter of persons to preach to some and not to others?

We do not preach to the natives because we have been told not to, through revelation to prophets. However, it is not a *denial* of the blessings of the gospel but a *postponement*. We read the words of the leaders of the church which tell us that when others have had the opportunities to accept the gospel and the priesthood, then the seed of Cain will be given the opportunity. (The Way to Perfection, pages 101-111)

If this is unfair, then the Saviour was unfair (which is a ridiculous thought) in the New Testament when he told his apostles to take the gospel to the Jews first and then the Gentiles. He specifically told them to 'Go not in the way of the Gentiles' until the lost sheep of the house of Israel had had a chance to accept or reject his words. (Matthew 10:5, 15:24; Acts 16:6)

The Lord has spoken to prophets once again and commanded that the seed of Cain should not be allowed the blessing of holding the Holy priesthood at the

present time. However, they can be baptized and enjoy the influence of the Holy Ghost if they keep themselves worthy. (*Emphasis in original*)

As can be seen, no mention of unworthy spirits can be found. The policy of racism that had existed for over one hundred years was slowly being weeded out of Mormonism and though it would remain until 1978, the harshness of the prejudice was being toned down.

### *Policy and Prejudice in South African Context*

In August 1994, just a couple of months after South Africa's first free elections, Chris Mokolatsie published a South African's perspective on what he had been told was a fast-growing American religion that appealed greatly to black South Africans. Although he attempted to conduct a number of local interviews with members and leaders who attended the newly constructed "red-brick building with neat lawns and a high fence" in the Atteridgeville<sup>91</sup> township west of the South African capital city, Pretoria, his efforts were thwarted at every turn, which "puzzled" him greatly (1994: 22). Mokolatsie's information eventually had to come from the English and Afrikaans translations of the *Book of Mormon* as well as a "small booklet on the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" which had been delivered to him by two "young American missionaries" (1994: 22). The literature was supplemented by a fax sent to him by the religion's publicity officer in charge of that region and at that time he was put in contact with a Mr. Mabungwa, whom he describes as a "black pastor in Mamelodi," though in Mormon jargon he would be referred to as a black priesthood holder, probably holding a leadership calling either in the stake or local congregation.

From the books, Mokolatsie gives his readers a quick review of the history of the organization, emphasizing the current statistics of the religion which he must have received via the fax from the publicity officer. Of special note was his interview with Mabungwa and the Mormon's answer to the question the reporter wanted answered most of all: "[w]hat black Mormons would say about the African tradition concerning ancestors." Mabungwa's answer was standard Mormon fare: "'Those who died without knowledge of the gospel,' can be baptised by proxy centuries after their death. A relative can stand in for them and be baptised on their behalf. Hence the Mormons' great interest in their ancestry and family trees" (1994: 22). However, Mokolatsie was "unable to ascertain how an African Mormon brought up to

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<sup>91</sup> Mokolatsie's spelling is Atteridgeville; however, my research shows only an Atteridgeville at that location.

show great respect to the ancestors, would feel about ‘redeeming’ his or her ancestors by being baptised for them” (1994: 23). The reluctance displayed by the Mormons he interviewed to answer such an intriguing question is really regrettable as the replies would have made for an excellent foundation to a comparative study between South African traditional religion and Mormonism. Instead, and not any less interestingly, Mokolatsie’s article serves as the foundation for the remaining two discussions of this chapter.

The concluding section of Mokolatsie’s report reads in full:

I was told that there are now 22 000 Mormons in South Africa. The first missionaries arrived from America in 1853. As far as I could work out, though, they moved into the townships only recently.

But where were the Mormons during the dark years of the struggle against apartheid?

Most other churches participated in this long painful struggle and spoke out clearly against apartheid as a ‘crime against humanity’. I did not find an answer to my question.

The publicity officer explained that ‘the church believes in full civil rights and the religious, social and political equality of all people’. But then, why were the Mormons so completely invisible during all those years when the majority of our people were denied civil rights and equality?

Come to think of it, Mormons have always been conspicuous by their absence from any kind of gathering of church: the great conferences of the SACC [South African Council of Churches], the national convention of churches in 1988, the Rustenburg conference in 1990 or the recent Vision [19]94 conference. Perhaps they have never been invited. Perhaps they prefer not to mix with other Christian churches.

The Mormons’ publicity officer said the church was growing fast in the townships. If that is so, I still don’t understand why? (1994: 23)

Although it is twenty years late, perhaps the preceding discussion on Mormonism’s own policy of ‘apartheid’, coupled with the proceeding examination of the representation of black South Africans after 1978, will provide Mokolatsie with the explanations he desires.

“Where were the Mormons during the dark years of the struggle against apartheid” and “why were the Mormons so completely invisible during all those years when the majority of our people were denied civil rights and equality?” The answer is quite simply that they were on the other team’s side. It will be recalled that it was Evan Wright, the former missionary, branch president, and mission president, who stated, “In South Africa in the 1930s, the [Mormon] Church operated under the program of apartheid. There wasn’t any mixture of the races. Only white people were baptized. There were social problems as well as other ones, and in those days, they just didn’t mix” (Wright n.d. 2:248). While the 1930s pre-dated the National Party’s political apartheid, Wright’s utilization of the term came when writing the history of the mission in the 1960s and having served as the president from 1948-53, he would have been fully aware of the implications of using this term.

On 24 September 1948 South Africa’s *Spotlight* magazine ran a three-page review of the Mormon Church which will be reviewed at length in the next chapter on popular culture; however, for our purposes here the following comparison was observed by the editor: “Anyway, all South Africans will be interested to know, too, that the Mormons were the authentic *Voortrekkers* of the States. Salt Lake City and Utah were founded and settled after the God-fearing Mormons had trekked away from persecution in their *tentwaens* in exactly the same way as the independent and hardy Boers settled large tracts of South Africa. And like the descendants of the old Boers they number just about one million today. A big difference is that the Mormons have nothing like the same capacity for creating newspaper headlines” (1948: 3).

This comparison was something that South African Mormons were proud to relate. In 1973, many years into the struggle, Mormonism’s three-year old standard, the *Ensign*, published a thorough account of the history of the LDS experience in South Africa. In this piece (which, besides the histories of Wright and Monson, should still be considered one of the most informative accounts to date), it is discovered just where and what the Mormons were worrying about during the struggle for equality in South Africa. “In 1919 the South African government refused to let the elders enter its country for proselyting purposes, but the restriction was lifted two years later. Then in 1955, when racial unrest was mounting, the South African government refused to grant visas to missionaries of any denomination from foreign countries. However, the Church could send missionaries from the British Commonwealth. As a result, missionaries called from Canada and South Africa spread the gospel message during this period of restriction.”

What were the Mormons doing during those years of “racial unrest” when the Afrikaner government had banned American missionaries from the country because they had the penchant to promote equality? They were busy struggling with their own concerns of not being able to send exactly who they wanted to, to South Africa, not so they could continue to assist the black freedom fighters but so they could continue to try and convert the white elite. Luckily, as the paragraph points out, missionaries could be found elsewhere, from countries that were not known as inciters of disturbing the peace.

Lawrence Cummins’ report continues by embracing the pioneer-*Voortrekker* comparison and again showcases which side the Mormons were on. “Boer frontier farmers, the *Voortrekkers*, who chafed under British rule from the Cape, made a dramatic migration to the north known as the Great Trek of 1835-37. This mass movement of thousands of men, women, and children by ox wagon across vast tracts of land that had been depopulated by the blacks warring among themselves is reminiscent of the Mormon trek westward in the United States a decade later, to avoid another kind of oppression. This common pioneer heritage is a distinct advantage when Latter-day Saint missionaries discuss their story of the Church with South Africans whose cultural ties are deeply rooted in the land.”

In 1973, the same year that the Council for Christian Social Action (CCSA) of the United Church of Christ in the United States and Leon Sullivan, the black American Baptist minister, published their respective works demanding the world and especially Americans to withdraw their economic investments in the country,<sup>92</sup> the Mormons publish this positive comparison between themselves and the South African nationals who supported apartheid the most. The next paragraph settles the matter of whose side the Mormons are on once and for all. “South Africa has a multi-national population, and its government pursues a policy of apartheid or separate development for all of the distinct peoples that make up its population. And while that definition may appear to be simplistic, it is reliable, without going into the many complexities of South Africa’s unique political structure.” Compare this with the CCSA’s *Partners with Apartheid* (1973: 1) introductory statement: “There has been much discussion during the past decade regarding the South African system of apartheid. Apartheid is the name for the policy of systematic political and economic discrimination practiced against non-European groups who compose the vast majority of the population of South

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<sup>92</sup> A great website for information on South Africa’s history, especially during the years of the fight against apartheid is *South African History Online: Towards a Peoples History* (<http://www.sahistory.org.za/>). Reference to the works of the CCSA (*Partners in Apartheid*) and Leon Sullivan (six codes of conduct) can be found here (see <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/liberation-history-timeline-1970-1979>, accessed 1 February 2014).

Africa.” For Mormons apartheid was ‘development’; for the majority of the world it was ‘discrimination’.

There has never been a fully developed comparative study between Mormons and Afrikaners; however, Andrew Clark’s “The Fading Curse of Cain: Mormonism in South Africa” (1994) published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, does provide a number of points of congruence that will prove useful here. The work is an interesting mix of personal reflection and observation with historical contextualization. In a section introducing the readers to Afrikaner history, Clark made the logical connection between their past in South Africa and that of the Mormons in America. “The Mormons’ trek across the American Great Plains followed the *Voortrekker* by only a decade. Like the Afrikaners, the Mormons sought an independent country far removed from ‘imperial’ rule. Like the Afrikaners, the Mormons sought accommodation—through negotiation *and* gunpowder—with native tribes. Like the Afrikaners, the Mormons had a strict moral code and disdained the ungodly world” (1994: 51).

With such similar pasts, Clark was surprised to learn that very few Afrikaners were actually members of the Mormon religion. This fact, however, is the basis of another point of congruence between the two religions: the belief in the absolute correctness of their own respective versions of Christianity and the “chosenness” of themselves and the land they inherited from God. If I may take the liberty to add to Clark’s list: like the Afrikaners, the Mormons believe that their ancestors were chosen by God to inhabit a chosen land of promise. In one of his earliest works, *The Irony of Apartheid* (1981), Irving Hexham comments on these Afrikaner beliefs: “The emergence of the myth of apartheid among members of the Reformed Church becomes understandable when the social dynamics of Reformed Church membership is examined ... This mythology, which saw Calvinism as the one true religion, was the religious counterpart of the national mythology of apartheid developed as a basis for Afrikaner society as a whole by ... leaders of the Reformed Church. The very survival of the Reformed Church depended upon the acceptance by its members of two claims: first, that it was the true representative of the Calvinist tradition in South Africa, and, second, that Calvinism was the purest form of Christianity” (1981: 59). To accept that Mormons ascribed to a similar worldview with only themselves and their religion at the centre one must merely refer to the first chapter of this dissertation and review the section on the myth of Zion.

Continuing his comparative analysis of the religions of Afrikaners and Mormons, Clark writes about apartheid, “literally, ‘separate-ness’ in Afrikaans,” he explains, and the similar habit that the Dutch Reformed Church’s interpreters had with the Mormons in relying on the “‘curse of Cain,’ the ‘lineage of Ham,’ or the ‘seed of Canaan’ to justify the inferior position into which they put the Africans” (1994: 52). On this point of congruence Clark is actually incorrect. Most Afrikaner strategists relied on the first several verses of Genesis and the creation of the earth myth to justify their racist policy of a segregation of the races as well as the idea of separation espoused in biblical passages such as the Babel myth and Deuteronomy 32: 8 (de Gruchy [1979] 2005: 69-70; Yamauchi 2004: 30-31).<sup>93</sup> However, the fact that both held on to such racist policies of segregation and exclusion throughout the majority of the twentieth century is a congruence that cannot be ignored and indeed, as seen from the remarks of Evan Wright, was one of the main similarities between the two movements that pre-1978 Mormonism wished to utilize. Clark further commented on this when he wrote, “This racialistic streak may be the most embarrassing similarity between the Mormons and the Afrikaners” (1994: 52). Of course, Clark was writing after both apartheid and Mormonism’s black priesthood denial had ended and were viewed by the majority as embarrassments; however, during the time both were in practice, defenders of either faiths would not have been willing to concede such a thing.

Other points of congruence that Mormons shared with the Afrikaners, as found in Clark’s study, were the belief in a “divinely inspired” constitution upheld by a theocratic government; and a loyalty to the ruling body defined by “blind obedience.” (1994: 52). In an interesting assessment of the transition of apartheid from a theological principle to a social and political reality, Hexham has written, “[w]hen members of the Reformed Church advocated apartheid at a national level they were simply asking their fellow Afrikaners to practice in politics and society what they themselves practiced in religion. Apartheid was not a new and untried social experiment but a trusted method of preserving religious and social purity. It was proposed not as a theoretical construct divorced from experience but as an attempt to preserve a way of life already in existence” (1981: 60).

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<sup>93</sup> Although I have stated that Clark was incorrect in his citation of the curse of Cain/Ham/Canaan as a biblical justification for apartheid, he can hardly be blamed for such an assessment as many scholars have made similar references to the myths in connection to Afrikaner history. For example, in T. Dunbar Moodie’s *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (1975: 245) it reads, “At least since the establishment of the first Boer Republic in Natal in 1839, this white racism has been expressed in terms of an ideal of segregation and a reality of white domination and black labor. The dichotomy between ideal and reality was mirrored in the vey Biblical imagery used by the frontier farmers. On the one hand, the black South African was a Canaanite and thus subject to the ban; on the other hand, he was son of Ham and so destined to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water for his white compatriot.”

Interestingly, there is little evidence in circulation to suggest that Afrikaners were aware of these various points of congruence. In fact, as mentioned above, one of Clark's central findings was that despite the apparent connections between Mormons and Afrikaners and the emphasis the Mormon mission placed on exploiting them, few Afrikaners were ever converted (1994: 51). A further complication of the relationship between the two groups occurs when one considers that the only two histories of the Mormon Church published in Afrikaans were placed in circulation in 1981 and 1983 respectively (see van Staden 1981; and Steenkamp 1983). Both works are standard examinations of the origins, beliefs, and points of incongruence between the two faiths and do not suggest areas of intersection in history or racial prejudice. What is really a matter of interest is why the two works were published in the early 1980s. One possibility that surfaces from the preceding discussion of representation is that after 1978 South Africa became an example of Mormonism's new emphasis on unity, equality, and growth. As a consequence of the increase in attention given to the country by Mormons, perhaps Afrikaners finally began to take note of this peculiar American religion that was quietly dwelling on the periphery of their nation. One question that must be considered, although it can never be answered, is whether or not a comparative connection would have been recognized by Afrikaners if they had noticed the religion prior to 1978. Further research of this comparison would be most illuminating.

In the conclusion to the section of his work on Mormons and Afrikaners, Clark was disappointed to observe during his tenure in the country in the late-1980s, a decade after Mormonism's policy change, that very few Mormons were attempting "to reach out across that great abyss between white and black" and assist black South Africans in their quest for equality. "In fact," he writes, "for an organized group of 17 000 people, Mormons have lain remarkably low in South Africa" (1994: 53). Even more startling, especially in consideration of the image Mormonism had put on display during this post-1978 era which will be addressed in detail in the following section, was Clark's finding that "Mormons in South Africa speak of 'the blacks,' using the same propagandistic terms that the Afrikaner nationalist government has been feeding to its population for the last forty years. Like other whites in this country, Mormons often see blacks—as a group—as an omnipresent threat. Individual black members, including those who lived in the 'white area' of Johannesburg, were openly fellowshipped into the church in all cases that I saw, but there was almost always an effort, in the whites' minds, to set this person or that person apart from 'the blacks'

as a collective entity. Though prejudiced by their past, South African Mormons are *not* more racialistic than most whites” (1994: 53-54).

Afrikaners and Mormons had spent years developing policies of prejudice that separated and exclude blacks from full membership in religion and society. By the mid-twentieth century Mormonism’s policies were out-dated traditions that were heavily criticized in America; however, in South Africa their history, beliefs, and practices appeared right at home. In respect to these policies of prejudice, pre-1978 Mormonism was not American but actually South African. Consequently, when reporters such as Mokolatsie ask where the Mormons were during the struggle for equality in South Africa, the answer can only be that they were fighting for the other side.

### *The Image of Black South Africans in Mormonism*

Returning to Chris Mokolatsie’s puzzlement over why any black South African would even consider joining the Mormon Church given their absolute absence during the struggle for equality and freedom in the country, this study is ultimately unequipped to fully investigate such a demanding request. To locate a solution to such a problem one would have to probe the very heart of religion itself and discuss matters of faith and the spiritual aspects of religion as opposed to the social and political realms this chapter has been working within. However, where this study may be able to shed some light on the situation (raised by Mokolatsie) is on why the “Mormons’ publicity officer said the church was growing fast in the townships.” In the beginning of this chapter it was learned that in 1978 there were just over 7 000 Latter-day Saints in South Africa,<sup>94</sup>; however, after the revelation removing the restrictions against allowing Africans full membership rights, the number of adherents of Mormonism in the country almost doubled in just seven years, a substantial increase that resulted in the construction of a temple in Johannesburg. In 1994 this number had increased again, and the figure of 22 000 was provided by the publicity officer to Mokolatsie. By the millennium’s end the population was closer to 30 000, with a current membership total reaching nearly 60 000. At first glance these figures seem like impressive growth rates, and in many ways they are.

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<sup>94</sup> The figure is closer to 7 200 but that does include a number of adherents in Southern African countries such as present-day Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia.

However, the noted scholar of Christianity in the Southern hemisphere, Philip Jenkins, is not entirely convinced of this fact and if one looks closer it is realized that a membership of 60 000 is less than 0.5% of the total number of Mormons in the world and represents less than 0.2% of the Christians in South Africa (Jenkins 2009).<sup>95</sup> Of course, these low percentages do not mean the opposite, that Mormonism has been completely unsuccessful in the country either. The fact is the religion has experienced a great amount of growth in South Africa since 1978; the questions this study wishes to address is how this progress was represented by discussing the individuals whose histories were utilized by Mormonism to project an image of the church that did not necessarily reflect reality.

In anticipation of discontent among white South African Mormons after the 30 September 1978 proclamation, the First Presidency organized an area conference to be held in less than one month's time in Johannesburg. It was the first time more than one General Authority had been in South Africa at the same time; it was an historic event as the Mormons began to prepare for what they believed would be exponential growth of the Church in the country. Unlike other areas of Africa, namely Nigeria and Ghana at this stage, Mormonism in South Africa was well equipped to take on the newcomers. With 127 missionaries already in the country, a Stake, and a number of local wards and branches, South Africa appeared to be a prime location for the formerly cursed Africans to embrace Mormonism's Christianity.<sup>96</sup> However, there was one looming problem with the plan; this was South Africa and not only did white members not want to share their churches with blacks, but blacks, as Mokolatsie's report hints and the review above suggests, had no reason to join allegiance with an American religion that prided itself in its comparability to the Afrikaner. Aware of these cultural restraints, Spencer W. Kimball, the prophet and president of the LDS Church from 1973-85, lectured the South African Mormons during the October 1978 area conference against "kicking against the prick," suggesting that opposition to the new revelation was rebellion against God (Acts 26:14). He later warned them not "stifle the work of the Lord" as fighting against the new policy would lead only to "disillusionment and misery" (see Bringhurst 1992: 119). Despite these warnings, the reports of the conference were positive and suggested to the readers that the religion was expecting a great deal from South Africa over the next few years.

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<sup>95</sup> Jenkins has written two significant works on the subject of Christianity's expansion in the Southern hemisphere *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (2002) and *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (2006).

<sup>96</sup> See "News of the Church: The South African Story, 1978," *Ensign*, October 1978.

In September 1986 Marjorie E. Woods wrote an essay for the *Ensign*, Mormonism's official and most circulated magazine, titled "Saints in South Africa: Their Good Hope Is in Christ." After reviewing Mormonism's current condition in the country, which included a reported figure of 12 000 members, as well as a lengthy summary of the history of South Africa and its demographics for the international readership, Woods states matter-of-factly that "LDS missionaries have had success among" the black, coloured, and Indian populations in South Africa. "The extension of the priesthood to all worthy males has opened up great vistas of missionary work among Blacks," remarked Louis P. Hefer, the religion's regional representative. However, Woods reports, "Blacks meet mostly among themselves," although her findings suggest that in all congregations but one, the Soweto Branch, the black worshippers are "still temporarily under white supervision." After this introduction, Woods provides her readers with one of the seminal circulations of two black South African converts who feature so prominently in discourses on Mormonism and South Africa over the next decade that they unknowingly emerged as the principle image of what it meant to be a black South Africa Mormon. Admittedly, Woods' reference to Moses 'Mahlango'—spelling should be Mahlangu—is found in a passing comment made by a white South African Mormon who had been called as a local leader to assist the unexperienced black priesthood holders in the running of the Soweto Branch. However, her circulation of Julia Mavimbela is made with purpose.

"Fluent in seven languages,"<sup>97</sup> Woods writes, "the Soweto Branch Relief Society president Julia Mavimbela accompanies missionaries, translating lessons. People are her life, and where she sees a need, she fills it—supplying and planting trees in otherwise shadeless school playgrounds and public places, for example." Woods' history of Mavimbela continues with a recounting of her former profession as a school principal and the various local shops she owned and managed before three lines of her testimony are offered. At this point in her life Mavimbela was a widow, her husband having died in a tragic car crash in 1955, though she felt connected to him through the temple rituals she had performed for him. In fact, although not specified by Woods, the practice of performing rituals for the dead was the main catalyst in Mavimbela's conversion (LeBaron 1990a). By noting Mavimbela's temple worship, Woods was making a point that not only were blacks allowed to attend the temple now but that blacks in South Africa were making use of the newly dedicated temple in

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<sup>97</sup> The number of languages spoken by black South Africans is something nearly every report cites. It must have been a shock for American Mormons to see the high numbers, because in South Africa, particularly in an area like Gauteng the majority of black South Africans would speak many of the 11 national languages.

Johannesburg. In fact, Mavimbela was one of the first black temple ordinance workers (Stevenson 2013). Woods' last thoughts on this black South African are of Mavimbela's role in the struggle for equality in the country. "Sister Mavimbela serves on the multiracial executive board of Women for Peace and is a member or founder of many women's organizations."

LDS readers of the *Ensign* had to wait nearly three years to learn more about this pioneering black South African in Giles H. Florence Jr.'s article "Julia Mavimbela: Sowing Seeds in Soweto." The piece begins with the shocking revelation: "Hanging prominently on a wall of Julia Mavimbela's house in South Africa is a photograph of a white man with white hair. The picture is a curiosity to visitors who know Julia is a nationally recognized leader and champion of rights for the disadvantaged, especially black women and children."<sup>98</sup> Apparently the photograph of Spencer W. Kimball, the Mormon Prophet at the time the policy of racial discrimination was reversed, was there to elicit queries from non-Mormon visitors to the home so Mavimbela could state: "In the struggle for peace and justice, we must know who our friends are. This man, Spencer W. Kimball, was our friend. He was the Lord's prophet, your prophet and mine." According to the *Ensign*, the missionary tactic worked as "many of Julia's friends and acquaintances in Soweto" had been baptized. Florence's article places Mavimbela on a pedestal, both as a great example and missionary for her religion as well as an exemplary black South African fighting for the rights of her people. Born into a Zulu household in 1917, Mavimbela was educated in a white Afrikaans training facility, the Kilnerton Training Institute, where other black South African activists such as Miriam Makeba and Lilian Ngoyi were also schooled. While attending Kilnerton she qualified in child psychology and emerged as one of the first black female school principals in the nation. In her 60s Mavimbela joined the National Council of African Women, a group that dealt more with social rather than political concerns in the country and was often criticized for its relationship with white liberals, and was elected its president "repeatedly." Florence's report suggests that her role in the organization was community based and that she went to lengths to train children to grow vegetable gardens in order to help supplement their families' food supply. According to the article she also founded Women for Peace, an organization that sponsored children's activities and the building of playgrounds.

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<sup>98</sup> In Andrew Clark's "The Fading Curse of Cain," the author points out that the image of Kimball was occasionally mistaken as a photograph of P. W. Botha, the leader of the South Africa from 1978-89 and a man very much disliked by black South Africans (Clark 1994: 45-46).

Mavimbela joined the Mormon Church in 1981 and later served as the Soweto Branch's Relief Society President. In 1990 Mavimbela made another appearance across the Atlantic in E. Dale LeBaron's, a Brigham Young University professor and the mission president in South Africa when the 1978 policy reversal occurred, collection of personal histories of black Latter-day Saints in Africa. Of Mavimbela, LeBaron writes, "Julia N. Mavimbela has given years of selfless service to her people and to her country. After a career of teaching, she continues to serve in community, national, and international organizations for women's rights and for peace. In spite of tragedies in her life, Julia refused to allow bitterness or hatred to enter her heart. Her life and service have inspired many others" (1990a: 141). In the narration of her own story, Mavimbela states, "I have traveled extensively in Soweto, knocking at doors with the missionaries, and never for one day have we had opposition. I am convinced that the time is right for the Church in my country. Only our fears may be keeping us from success. The devil has put a spell of uncertainty over Soweto to impede the gospel from progressing. Not only should the families in our branch be satisfied by being part of the Church, but also we should be doing more missionary work. We should feel that nothing can shake us; what we stand for is the truth. We only need to know what the Holy Ghost wants us to do in these things (1990a: 149).

During the 1980s, 90s, and even today, Julia Mavimbela's image has been circulated throughout the Mormon world as the representation of a black South African Mormon woman. In 1989 she was invited to speak at Brigham Young University's Women's Conference and with her inclusion in LeBaron's *"All are Alike unto God"* (1990) she quickly became the example of what Mormonism wanted in its black converts. Her image and history were again projected in one of the few academic reports on Mormonism in South Africa, Andrew Clark's "The Fading Curse of Cain" (1994: 43-47). Clark allots no less than five pages of his sixteen page essay to the story of his meeting Mavimbela at the Soweto Branch's church and the subsequent visit to her home where he had the opportunity to sign "her visitor's log (which reads like a Who's Who of international Mormondom)" (1994: 46). Clark's is just another example of the prominent role this seventy year old woman played in Mormonism's quest to present itself as an international religion promoting equality and acceptance.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> See also Julia Mavimbela "I Speak from My Heart: The Story of a Black South African Woman" (1990) in Maria Cornwall and Susan Howe's *Women of Wisdom and Knowledge*.

Two years prior to the publication of Clark's study in *Dialogue*, the academic journal published an important essay by one of the most notable scholars of Mormon history, James B. Allen. The introduction of "On Becoming a Universal Church: Some Historical Perspectives" (1992) is entirely devoted to the circulation of Mavimbela's image. Allen, like those before and after him, utilized Mavimbela's personal narrative to illustrate "just how far the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has come since 1950. Forty years ago, missionaries were discouraged from working among blacks anywhere and, despite Church leaders' stated disapproval of racial prejudice, the priesthood policy not only helped justify some members' biases but also created a public image of a discriminatory Church" (1992: 14). In order to assist in the reversal of this image, Allen's introduction cites Mavimbela as an example Mormonism had changed. "Today official racial barriers are gone," he concludes, "a black was recently named as a General Authority of the Church, and a black woman can be a Relief Society president in apartheid-ridden South Africa" (1992: 14). Mavimbela's personal history was the perfect example of Mormonism's post-1978 emphasis on unity, equality, and universal growth.

From the time of her emergence in Marjorie Woods' *Ensign* report in 1986 until her death on 16 July 2000, Mavimbela appeared no less than six *Church News* articles, each developing the same themes found in the circulations about her mentioned above.<sup>100</sup> As an example of Mormonism, she was an energetic missionary who prayed "daily to the Lord that we can all become members of His Church" (*Church News* 29 April 1989). She attended the temple, volunteered as an ordinance worker in fact; she was part of the stake choir; and she bore her testimony of the gospel often and without fear. As an example of a black South African, she was intimately involved in various women's organizations such as the National Council of African Women and Women for Peace that shied away from violent protest by promoting community activities and events that uplifted the spiritual and environmental conditions of her neighbourhood. As an example of a black South African Mormon woman, she was the president of the Soweto Branch's Relief Society and a caregiver in her community. She had a testimony of the truthfulness of Mormonism and she was willing to travel across the Atlantic both in person and in print to share it. In short, Julia Mavimbela was the perfect image of Mormonism's new, post-1978, campaign in South Africa and a typical

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<sup>100</sup> See "Obituaries: Julia Nompoti Mavimbela" 12 August 2000; "Y. Graduates Urged to 'Make a Difference'— Pres. Faust asks Group to Embrace Spiritual Learning," 26 August 1995; "Monument of Hope: Groundbreaking Ceremony draws interest in South Africa Township," 18 January 1992; "South African Women's Council Elects LDS as its Vice President," 23 November 1991; "Video Tells Story of Church in Africa," 17 August 1991; and "Converts Helps her People: South African Prays Daily that 'All can Become Members,'" 29 April 1989.

finding after sharing her story can be found in the latest projection of her image in Russell Stevenson's "Healing Racial Wounds: The Johannesburg Temple and Apartheid" (2013).<sup>101</sup> Mavimbela "later reflected on the racial unity that the temple fostered: there was 'no touch of Afrikaner [sic]. There is no English. There is no Situ [sic] or Zulu.' The temple became a safe haven in a city where tear gas and mobs flowed through the streets. The South African story compels us both to look at the tragedy and the promise of Mormonism's racial history—and on a global scale." Alongside this projection of unity and promise, the other main utilization of Mavimbela's image was to state, as Clark does (1994: 46), "Zion is growing quite rapidly in South Africa." For Mormons throughout the world, Julia Mavimbela represented growth and unity.

Throughout the 1980s and '90s Mormonism continued to utilize the personal histories of individual black and coloured South Africans to project an image of growth and unity in South Africa. In the February 1993 edition of the *Ensign* R. Val Johnson wrote a lengthy article on the Mormon experience in the country, "South Africa: Land of Good Hope," and relied heavily on this technique. In her concluding section, "Gospel Pioneers" Johnson provides readers with an overview of Mormonism's policy of prejudice in the country prior to 1978 before announcing "With the doors open to all peoples, missionary work among South Africa's diverse cultures has steadily accelerated. Today there are five stakes in South Africa and three missions, with a combined membership exceeding 20 000. Membership continues to increase at a fast rate; in the Johannesburg mission alone there were 1 673 convert baptisms in 1991."

After a timeline of significant events, Johnson relates the personal conversion stories of four individuals and one couple—Eric Zulu, a black member of the KwaMashu Branch in Durban; Jeanette and Laural Natson, Indian members of the Phoenix Branch also in Durban; Lorraine Bibb, a white member with a long history in the Church from Cape Town; and Charles Jacobs, a coloured member from Paarl.<sup>102</sup> Each of these histories is utilized by the *Ensign* to promote Mormonism's campaign of growth and unity in South Africa. While a discussion of each would be interesting, another black South African's personal narrative was circulated with much more regularity throughout this period, and was used by the religion in a similar manner to that Julia Mavimbela's.

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<sup>101</sup> Stevenson states in this blog post that Mavimbela was "a friend of Nelson Mandela's."

<sup>102</sup> The story of Jacobs has a tragic ending as he was murdered in 'Satanic' fashion in Paarl's Mormon church by an ex-Mormon missionary in 2005 (see Alston 2012).

Summarizing the experience of Moses Mahlangu, E. Dale LeBaron writes, Moses Mahlangu, born on 4 January 1925 in Boshhoek, South Africa, to a family of fifteen children, found a Book of Mormon in a library in 1974. As he read it he knew it was true. He had the missionary discussions but was advised to wait to be baptized. For the next sixteen years he distributed copies of the Book of Mormon and other missionary material to his people. Fluent in nine languages, he held regular meetings in his home, where he taught his people from the Book of Mormon. In the spirit of Elias, Brother Mahlangu prepared many of his people for the gospel. He was a true pioneer among the blacks of South Africa. He was baptized in June 1980, and he and his wife, Elizabeth, have three children. He is the elders' quorum president in the Soweto Branch and a groundskeeper at the Johannesburg Temple. (1990a: 153)

Mahlangu's history is an exceptional case study since he was a black South African interested in Mormonism before 1978. As a victim of Mormonism's policies of racial discrimination and separation, in South African terminology, apartheid, Mahlangu was 'advised' not to join the religion when he became aware of as early as 1964.<sup>103</sup> Prejudice, both in South Africa and in Mormonism, prevented his conversion; however, as a representation of Mormonism's post-1978 campaign, Mahlangu's ability to remain faithful during these early years is a powerful image to present to the public. After the 1978 announcement, Mahlangu was baptized into full membership, along with his wife, and several of "his people"—I am assuming this is an umbrella term for all 'black' South Africans and is not based on familial or community relations. The image of Mahlangu pictures the elderly black South African waiting "patiently but persistently" to be allowed to join the church (LeBaron 1990b).<sup>104</sup> Although LeBaron's short introduction to the man in his major work does not mention it, during the 1992 Sperry Symposium on the Doctrine and Convents and Church History at Brigham Young University (BYU), he stated that Mahlangu wrote a personal letter to the First Presidency asking for permission to join the religion, but was told to wait because "of

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<sup>103</sup> LeBaron, the main circulator of Mahlangu's story, is inconsistent with his timeline. In "*All are Alike unto God*" he writes 1974 as the date Mahlangu discovered the *Book of Mormon* in a library. However, in the August 1990 edition of the *Ensign* he writes that the black South African had to wait 16 years for baptism (1990b). In another location he states that it was 14 years after relating how Mahlangu personally wrote the First Presidency of the LDS Church a letter asking for permission to be baptized; he was denied. In Mahlangu's own account in "*All are Alike unto God*" (LeBaron 1990a: 158) he states that it was in 1964 that he first went into a Mormon Church and that this was after he had read the *Book of Mormon* though there is no intimation of how much time had elapsed between the two separate events.

<sup>104</sup> See Tessa Meyer Santiago's personal essay "Brother Wiseman" (1995) for another account of a marginalized black South African pictured as a symbol of humility and faith.

the strict apartheid laws at that time” which made “it illegal for Moses to attend any religious meeting where whites were present” (1992: 203). Circulations such as this, along with LeBaron’s 1989 Sperry Symposium address and his 1999 speech at BYU, enhanced Mahlangu’s image as the example of black South African patience and faithfulness. Currently, Mahlangu even has a page devoted to him on Mormonism’s official website lds.org (<http://www.lds.org/pages/moses-mahlangu-the-conversion-power-of-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng&country=afe>).<sup>105</sup>

Similar to the representations of Mavimbela, Mahlangu’s image was utilized as an example of how fast the religion was growing in South Africa as well. In 2000 LeBaron reported that in South Africa “more than 90 percent of convert baptisms are among the blacks” (2000: 183). While not contesting the veracity of LeBaron’s figures, he was intimately involved the post-1978 Mormon experience in South Africa and as a professor in BYU’s Church History and Doctrine department he certainly would have had access to these statistics, the circulation of them alongside personal narratives of black Mormons such as Mahlangu and Mavimbela was surely a strategy, whether planned or not, to promote the religion’s new emphasis on equality, unity, and growth. LeBaron was never shy about providing statistics that he interpreted as “explosive” (2000: 183) or “rapid” (1990a: 5); however, there have been critics of these types of analyses and the strategies of representation that are utilized to support them.

Prior to Mokolatsie’s 1994 observations in Pretoria, one of the elite scholars of Mormonism’s racial policies also found the images projected from Salt Lake City of blacks to be a misrepresentation of reality. In 1992 Newell G. Bringhurst searched a decade worth of *Church News* articles for any mention of blacks, both in the Americas and in Africa, in order to get a sense of the ways the Mormon newspaper was projecting their image since 1978. He found that in the majority of examples the image being circulated was that the conversion of blacks was one of the main reasons the religion was growing so rapidly throughout the world. In regard to South Africa he highlighted comments from mission presidents and reporters that “attributed Church growth in South Africa” to the proselytizing in black communities such as Soweto in Johannesburg and KwaMashu in Durban (1992: 114). However, citing the personal observations of a Mormon journalist, who was also a former missionary in South Africa, during his return visit to the country in 1986 (Bly 1988), as well as other informational

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<sup>105</sup> One recent circulation cites Mahlangu’s diary and describes a dream he had where he would travel through time envisioning the day blacks would be considered as equals in the Mormon Church (see <http://motabenquirer.blogspot.ca/2013/10/time-travelling-moses-mahlangu-finds.html>).

outlets, Bringhurst's study shows not only that the growth of the religion among black South Africans was misrepresented but so was the image of unity and equality. "By 1982, according to one source," Bringhurst claims, "the number of black South African Mormons numbered 500 out of a total ... South African membership of 8 606" (1992: 119).<sup>106</sup> A total of 500 converts could hardly be considered successful and even the *Church News* had to admit in 1986 that "Africa has yet to become a missionary boom area" (1992: 199).

As for the image projected of an unified religion, such as we have seen in the examples of Mavimbela and Mahlangu, David Bly's work "Hope in a Torn Land" (1988) provides a number of examples of less than enthusiastic white Mormons unhappy with having to share their churches, temple, and gospel with blacks and claimed that some resentful white Mormons even abandoned the religion once the implications of the 1978 revelation were realized. Ultimately, Bringhurst's analysis concludes that the *Church News* "overstated its case in presenting blacks as prime instruments in aggregate Mormon membership growth" (1992: 121); a finding consistent with Mokolatsie's experience in Pretoria with the assessment given him by the religion's publicity officer.

A recent survey of Mormon growth in Africa conducted by Philip Jenkins in 2009 supports the claim that Mormonism has not been successful on the continent and moreover "shows no signs of doing so" (2009: 2). Although not concerned with the image that Mormonism has been portraying in this regard, the study concludes simply that when placed in a comparative perspective and when viewed on its own, the Mormon Church has just not done that well amongst black Africans.

When combined, the results of my own investigation along with those of Mokolatsie, Bringhurst, and Jenkins, allow one to argue that despite its utilization of personal narratives to project the image of equality, unity, and growth, the image that the LDS Church in South Africa is expanding quickly among blacks is not a true reflection of reality. Interestingly, whether accurate reflections of reality or not, Mormons continue to utilize the personal narrative strategy to circulate this image of South Africa throughout Mormondom. One of the most recent images in circulation is that of Dominic Tshabalala, a black South African who grew up under apartheid's prejudiced rule. Describing the reality of the 'armed struggle' for freedom to a *Mormon Newsroom* reporter, Tshabalala states, "We were expecting the day would come when someone would give you an AK-47 [automatic assault rifle] and all you

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<sup>106</sup> Bringhurst mistakenly wrote "out of a total of *black* South African membership of 8606." I have chosen to omit his error from the main text.

would do is shoot ... It was assumed that everybody would participate” (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormons-africa-stories-Hope-Faith>).

After painting a picture of violence and terror, the article continues with Tshabalala conversion story which took place outside the house his mother cleaned during one of their three-yearly visits when he was just 12 years old. He was eventually baptized and the black South African was impressed that “[T]hey taught the same thing to me as the white boy sitting next to me at church. That broke a lot of boundaries for me. That said to me in my heart and mind that we are equal.” As an image of the black South African circulated from Salt Lake City throughout the Mormon world, Tshabalala is one of the most recent examples of Mormonism’s campaign to promote its emphasis on equality and unity as well as growth. On 20 February 2013 Lindsay Maxfield, a journalist for Salt Lake City’s *KSL News*, utilized Tshabalala’s personal narrative to frame her story “LDS Church growth helping make Africa a ‘bright land full of hope.’”

The image of Tshabalala as a man who overcame the racism of apartheid, joined the Mormon faith, and has continued to be an influential member of the religion is used as one example of many that “may be found all across the African continent” in order to present the following finding: “Africa is one of the fastest-growing areas of the LDS Church. The Church’s presence began there when missionaries visited South Africa in the early 1850s, but membership did not begin to increase noticeably until the late 1970s. By the end of 2011, Africa was home to more than 359 000 members, the majority of whom have joined the church in the last 30 years.” Without actually stating it outright, Maxfield is circulating the belief that the reasons Mormonism is expanding so quickly in Africa is because of its appeal to blacks.

### *Conclusion*

From 1853 to 1978 Mormonism in South Africa espoused a policy of prejudice against the majority of South Africans. While originally a central aspect of America’s religious understanding of the inferiority of people of African descent in the nineteenth century, by the middle of the twentieth century the Mormon policy had become an out-dated worldview in their homeland. However, across the Atlantic the policies of prejudice were interpreted and instituted in a manner that was not only still recognizable but accepted in South Africa. Forming a comparative connection with the Afrikaner people, Mormonism’s pre-1978

policies were considered missionary assets by Mormons as well as by South African journalists.

In regard to its pre-1978 racial policies, Mormonism can be clearly pictured as a South African religion as opposed to an American one. This image changed in September 1978 when the First Presidency of the LDS Church pronounced their revelation that emphasised a new policy of equality. Consequently, after 1978 the Mormon Church began a representative campaign that stressed this new strategy. In America, South Africa appeared to be the perfect location for the establishment of this new Mormonism and soon the major print resources of the religion were publishing personal histories of individual converts that projected an image of equality, unity, and growth. Narratives of individual black South Africans such as Julia Mavimbela, Moses Mahlangu, and Dominic Tshabalala were utilized by Mormonism in order to accomplish their goal of reinventing their post-1978 image.

While these circulations are based in facts, the logic that one individual's story represents the whole black community in South Africa is hardly an accurate reflection of reality. However, the Mormon Church has grown in South Africa since 1978 and it cannot be denied that this is due mainly to the new policy of inclusion and equality. Where studies of race and Mormonism in South Africa must probe in the future is deeper into this realm by asking questions such as what was the reaction of white South African Mormons when the 1978 revelation was announced; how do black South African Mormons reconcile the fact that their religion did not openly oppose apartheid; and has integration actually occurred in the religion since 1978 or 1994?

## Chapter 4: Sports and Sundaes

As the RMS *Titanic* slowly slipped into its watery grave during the early hours of 15 April 1915 one of the most famous and well-respected gentlemen taking part in the historical and ultimately tragic voyage was the British journalist, newspaper editor, and social reformer, William Thomas Stead.<sup>107</sup> At the request of former United States President William Howard Taft, Stead was travelling first class to give a speech on world peace at the Great Men and Religions conference being held the following week at New York's Carnegie Hall. A biographer has written that "It was typical of his generosity, courage, and humanity that Stead was last seen leading women and children to the safety of the stricken liner's lifeboats" (Baylen 2004). Other recollections of the sinking of the *Titanic* picture Stead clinging to the side of a life-raft alongside the ship's wealthiest passenger, the American John Jacob Astor IV, before the freezing temperatures caused the two to slide helplessly to their death. Along with being a gifted journalist, editor, defender of women's rights, and an advocate of the "deprived and oppressed," Stead also believed that the globe was currently experiencing an ideological realignment that he termed the "Americanization of the world."

At the turn of the twentieth century, Stead published a detailed account of his belief under this title which analysed the expansion of American business, culture, and philosophies throughout the British Empire and beyond (Stead 1902). Included in his work is a chapter dealing with the future Americanization of South Africa, a difficult piece to write because of the uncertain results of the Boer War which was being fought during the time Stead penned his book (1902: 51-69). However, according to Stead, the lifelong current affairs expert, "The United States has been diligently preparing to invade the South African market as soon as the war affords them an opportunity" (1902: 67). Even before the war began, American interests in South African mining had been established as early as 1880, and according to James. T. Campbell, a leading expert on American and South African relations, "It is no exaggeration to say that Americans built South Africa's gold industry" (2000: 39). In many ways Campbell's essay, "The Americanization of South Africa" (2000), provides the evidence for the fulfilment of Stead's prophecies written almost an entire century earlier.<sup>108</sup> While focused mainly on the economic relationship between South Africa and America, Campbell's work

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<sup>107</sup> For detailed biographical and personal accounts of W. T. Stead see Estelle W. Stead's *My Father* (1913) and Frederic Whyte's *The Life of W.T. Stead* (1925)

<sup>108</sup> Although not widely published, Campbell wrote an earlier version of this paper which linked his work explicitly to Stead's. See Campbell's "The Americanization of South Africa" (1998).

does explore alternative territories, including a variety of transatlantic circulations of popular American culture such as fast food eateries, clothing, and various forms of entertainment including television, movies, and music. If we consider another work in Campbell's corpus, his 1995 study of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, *Songs of Zion*, religion emerges clearly as another way in which an Americanization of South Africa has occurred, which, as will be discovered presently, is another direct fulfilment of Stead's prediction in his *Americanization of the World* (1902).

Although not specific to his analysis of the Americanization of South Africa, Stead understood that in order for this ideological shift to occur on the scale he was suggesting, America would have to do more than just send businessmen to the far corners of the world. In the third section of his work, Stead explores just "How America Americanizes." The first on his list of seven methods is religion, a placement and conclusion this paper very much agrees with. Stead defines American religion as any form of religion that separates itself from matters of the State (1902: 262), a definition that was utilized in the first chapter of this dissertation to argue that nineteenth-century Mormonism was not actually American; however, twentieth-century Mormonism, which began as early as 1890, was no longer an outcast in its homeland, and when Utah was granted Statehood in 1896 the shift from Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's theocratic rule to a more "American" political system where religion and politics became separate entities, though never exclusive, was solidified.<sup>109</sup> Stead writes, "It was the citizens of the United States who supplied the world for a century and more with a great object-lesson as to the possibility of the maintenance of religion without the intervention of State churches and without the penal enactments of intolerant legislatures" (1902: 262). From within this distinct system, Stead reflects upon four specific movements that he feels exemplify not only American religion but the American religion he hopes will be disseminated throughout the world.

First on his list is Revivalism, which he defines as "the deliberate organization of religious services for the express purpose of rousing the latent moral enthusiasm of mankind" (1902: 268). Stead is convinced that despite the fact that "Revivalists may seem often rude, uncultured, even vulgar," their "untutored eloquence" is responsible for "millions" of men and women throughout the world experiencing "the echoes of the Divine voice that spoke on Sinai" (1902: 269). The second movement on his list is one near and dear to his own religious

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<sup>109</sup> The best study of this time period in Mormon history in America is Thomas G. Alexander's *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (1996).

experience and that is Spiritualism or the belief in an everlasting soul, which may help explain the existence of “psychical phenomena” and paranormal activity (1902: 270-271). Third and fourth on his list again afford the reader a view from Stead’s own perspective, and are respectfully American religions’ role in promoting women’s suffrage and its emphasis on not only converting youth but allowing them a platform to create change in society (1902: 271-273).

According to Stead’s definition of American religion, by the twentieth century Mormonism appears to be completely mainstream. With its continued emphasis on proselytizing across much of the globe, Mormons meet Stead’s criteria as Revivalists and their belief in the continued presence of the deceased here on earth—Brigham Young taught that the “spirit world” was “right here,” meaning on earth, and that the corporeal sphere is separated from this spiritual one only by a thin veil (Widtsoe 1925: 576-577)—certainly fits into Stead’s ideas of Spiritualism. The final two requirements, the promotion of women’s rights, can also be used to describe Mormonism, as Utah Territory was one of the first to allow women the right to vote and in 1896 when Utah officially became a State this right was once again instituted by the Mormon-dominated region (Madsen 1992). As far as youth-centred programs are concerned, the LDS Church organized the Mutual Improvement Association, both for young men and young women, as early as the 1869 and continued to make changes and adjustments to the organizations throughout the twentieth century (Cannon 1992; Hurst and Mitchener 1992). While Stead actually had two specific organizations in mind when he wrote of these final two movements, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavour, the greater themes each represents allows for a more complex sense of Stead’s definition of American religion to be addressed and in turn allows for Mormonism to be clearly included within this framework.

Returning to Stead’s original list of how America was actually accomplishing their Americanization of the world, second on the menu is literature and journalism followed by the world of art, science, and music. Along with these forms of popular culture, number four revolves around America’s specific societal constructs and its marital customs. Of particular interest to the Mormon experience of South Africa is Stead’s fifth way in which America Americanizes: sport. However, the sports that Stead predicted would filter throughout the world were contests such as yacht and horse racing as well as a variety of Olympic track and field events, all of which have no bearing on this particular study which focuses on American sports that were still in their infancy when Stead produced his work such as baseball and

basketball. The final two ways Stead foresaw America utilizing to Americanize the world deal with the “invasion” of American goods, businesses, and economic principles in the global marketplace as well as the resulting physical presence of America and Americans throughout much of the world. According to Stead, America’s infiltration of the world seems to be a universal phenomenon that has the ability to penetrate nearly all aspects of daily life. While it is certainly debatable whether a true “Americanization of the world” actually did occur, the experience of Mormonism in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century is best viewed and analysed in this light.

As an American religion, Mormonism returned to South Africa after a nearly forty-year hiatus in 1903, once again establishing its mission headquarters in Cape Town and then sending individual missionaries and eventually companionships throughout the country. During the first thirty years of the twentieth century very little occurred, baptisms were few and far between, and besides the acquisition of two properties, one in Mowbray, Cape Town known as Cumorah, and the other, Ramah, in Johannesburg, the growth of the religion was nominal, with only 350 members residing in the country in 1920 and fewer than 700 by 1930 (Monson 1971: 144-148). According to Don Mack Dalton, the mission’s president from 1929-1935, the main reason for this staleness was the perennial return of nineteenth-century Mormonism in the public sphere.<sup>110</sup> Polygamy and emigration specifically were utilized by the press on a recurrent basis with the result being a generally negative response to the unrecognizably American religion.<sup>111</sup> However, the image of Mormonism transformed in the early 1930s when Mormons began to emphasize their “Americanness” by organizing and participating in the Western Province Baseball Association. As circulators of America’s favourite pastime, the representation of Mormons and Mormonism in the South African press was reinvented and the American missionaries were now pictured in the maroon and white uniforms of the Cumorahs and not as bearded polygamists stealing women away to their mountainous fortresses in the West.

Building upon the popularity of the sport and their newly acquired positive image, the Mormon missionaries travelled throughout South Africa taking the game with them, organizing teams and leagues in Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, and Johannesburg. In Johannesburg the connection between the religion and its native land was solidified as the

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<sup>110</sup> See Booker T. Alston’s forthcoming work, “The Cumorah Baseball Club: Mormon Missionaries and Baseball in South Africa” for more on Dalton’s attempts to refute bad press coverage.

<sup>111</sup> See Truitje Roermy Nie, “Weekly Wash-tub: Mowbray Mormons,” *South African Review*, 5 November 1930 for one of the most overt examples.

Mormon team labelled themselves the Wembley Americans, a fitting moniker as all but one of the club's members were born across the Atlantic. Three baseball-playing American missionaries had such a positive experience during their tenure in the country that they devised a strategy that would allow them to return to South Africa, continue to play baseball, and build a successful business. In 1936 Layton Alldredge, Clarence Randall, and Evan Wright, all former Mormon missionaries and talented baseball players, journeyed across the Atlantic with a plan to make ice cream, but not just any ice cream, American ice cream that would be served at an American-styled drive-in parlour. The first of seven original Doll Houses opened in the Johannesburg suburb of Malvern soon after the arrival of the Americans and with its initial success the entrepreneurs quickly expanded their chain to Cape Town, Durban, and Pretoria. Eventually, due to complications in travel, rationing, and logistics arising from World War II, the three Mormons sold their business, but the drive-in American ice cream joints known as the Doll House continued to be popular hangouts for South Africans throughout succeeding decades. While certainly an example of American business in South Africa, the innovative establishment of the Doll House by the three missionaries is best considered in this chapter on popular culture as their business model and success was dependent on the popularity of American culture and the gradual "Americanization of the world."

Baseball and ice cream are what transformed the Mormon experience in South Africa from one of negative press and almost no physical existence to one of positive popularity and a gradual presence viewed largely in American light. In order to maintain and expand on their new image and popularity, Mormons once again played a central role in the Americanization of South Africa when they assisted in the development and promotion of basketball in the Union. Beginning shortly after the reopening of the South African Mission after the Second World War in 1946,<sup>112</sup> Mormon strategists once again used a popular American sport to promote their American roots by first organizing exhibition basketball games and demonstrations in 1947 and then participating in various leagues throughout the country in the 1950s. As Americans, the Mormon missionaries had the knowledge and the experience to coach and play basketball, and their most prolific team, which toured Southern Africa playing in cities such as Durban, Johannesburg, and Lourenço Marques, were dubbed the Mormon Yanks by the media. Consequently, when addressing the central thesis question of this

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<sup>112</sup> Although the mission was never officially closed, by the end of 1940 the only two missionaries left in South Africa were the mission president and his wife, Richard and Josephine Folland. The Follands were replaced by the Sharps, June and Ida, in 1944, who were joined by young missionaries in October 1946.

dissertation through the perspective of the Americanization of South Africa in the dissemination of religion and popular culture baseball, ice cream, and basketball emerge as the main territory in which the map of Mormon South Africa is most plainly drawn in red, white, and blue.

### *Baseball*

“Natalie’s Social Round” column in the 3 April 1965 edition of the *Natal Mercury* hailed the return to South Africa of “Mr. and Mrs. Don Mack Dalton, two charming personalities from Pleasant Grove, Utah, U.S.A.” Visiting South Africa as part of a world tour that afforded them the opportunity to travel across the country they had once called home, the Daltons’ trip and historical connection with South Africa was recorded not only in Durban’s *Natal Mercury* but also Johannesburg’s *Rand Daily Mail* and Cape Town’s *Cape Argus*. In these articles, Don Mack Dalton, the former president of the South Africa Mission of the LDS Church was hailed for his role in the introduction and growth of baseball in the Western Province and given the deserved title, “The Father of Baseball in South Africa” (*Natal Mercury* 3 April 1965; *Rand Daily Mail* 8 April 1965). “Baseball pioneer in city” proclaimed the headline of the article devoted to Dalton in Cape Town’s *Cape Argus* (9 March 1965). While there, Dalton had the privilege of viewing Western Province, a team he captained two years in a row, do battle with their arch enemies, Transvaal. The piece gives Dalton credit, along with the American consul at the time, Charles Converse,<sup>113</sup> for organizing baseball in Cape Town and also for spreading the popularity of the game throughout the Union. “Mr. Dalton, as head of the Mormon Church, saw to it that when young missionaries came from America they were baseball players. As a result, the Cumorah team contained top-notch players and was the leading team in Cape Town up to the outbreak of war.” Thirty years after retiring from the game of baseball in South Africa and being replaced as the religion’s mission president, Dalton’s leading role in developing and disseminating America’s favourite pastime in South Africa was not forgotten. As the “Father of Baseball in South Africa,” as an American, and as a Mormon, Dalton’s legacy remained and so too did Mormonism’s

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<sup>113</sup> Charles “Charlie” Converse was an accomplished baseball player himself and played for the Cape Town Nomads, the Cumorahs toughest rivals, during their formative years in the 1930s. A talented first baseman and powerful hitter, Converse’s abilities were also used by Western Province during his tenure in the country and were greatly missed during the 1934 national championship game between Western Province and Transvaal, in which five Cumorahs participated including Dalton, when a side ache that began just hours before the opening pitch was diagnosed as acute appendicitis (*Cumorah’s Southern Messenger* April 1934: 60).

connection to one of America's most popular cultural forms during the first half of the twentieth century.

Baseball is not a new topic for historians of religion, especially for those interested in comparison. In fact, even the main theorist of this work, David Chidester, has explored the definition of religion by reflecting on the myths, rituals, and symbols of baseball in America (1996b; 2005). First, in "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture" (1996) and later as a continuation of this initial study in *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture* (2005), Chidester examines the characteristics of baseball that make it possible for individuals and academics to define it as a religion. Presenting his analyses through the lens of American popular culture, Chidester's focus on comparison through the juxtaposition of visibly incongruent territories results in stimulating and methodologically important studies for the discipline of comparative religion. According to Chidester's works, baseball "is a religious institution that maintains the continuity, uniformity, sacred space, and sacred time of American life" (1996b: 745). As a church, baseball provides its adherents in America with traditions, a sense of belonging, a home base, and a variety of rituals, which when combined allow for the history of religions to verify what the players and fans have been claiming all along: in America baseball is a religion (1996b: 745-749).

Other scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds have also expressed interest in the crossroads between baseball, religion, and American culture. In *The Faith of 50 Million* (2002) Christopher H. Evans and William R. Herzog II compile a number of works that explore these intersections with their combined introduction and Evans' initial essay emerging as the two most revealing examples of just how important baseball is and was to American cultural identity (Evans and Herzog II 2002: 1-12; Evans 2002: 13-34). "In the context of American history," writes Evans and Herzog II, "baseball was indeed more than a game. It was a sport that came to symbolize national virtues of freedom, justice, and equality. Within the popular imagination of Americans, baseball embodied the soul of the nation, distinctively historical yet uniquely transcendent" (2-3). In his own analysis of baseball as an American civil religion, Evans later asks "Why have countless Americans throughout the twentieth century zealously identified baseball as the country's national pastime?" (13). Evans adeptly allows one of major league baseball's former commissioners, A. Bartlett Giamatti, to answer his question by quoting from Bartlett's work *Take Time for Paradise:*

*Americans and their Games* (1989): “To know baseball is to continue to aspire to the condition of freedom, individually and as a people, for baseball is grounded in America in a way unique to our games. Baseball is part of America’s plot, part of America’s mysterious, underlying design—the plot in which we all conspire and collude, the plot of the story of our national life” (Evans 2002: 13).

For scholars such as Chidester, Evans, and Herzog II, baseball and America’s cultural values and aspirations are inseparable and can be studied through and from the perspective of religion, religions, and the religious. However, the main purpose of my own work here is not to analyse baseball as a religion in America but the utilization of baseball by a religion in order to align itself with America. Consequently, this study does not need to examine baseball and America through the use of religious rhetoric, but must highlight why baseball was universally associated with America. The examples above do just that, with the main reasons not simply emerging from the alleged invention of the game by Abner Doubleday in Cooperstown, New York in 1839, but from an introverted assessment of the history, purpose, and presence of the game itself.<sup>114</sup> Order, freedom, justice, and the pursuit of greatness are all inimitable qualities of both American culture and baseball. In support of this conclusion, Steven A. Riess’ findings are admissible here, “The public saw baseball as an accurate reflection of contemporary society. If one accepted the fundamental assumption that baseball was a democratic sport epitomizing the best in America, then it made a lot of sense that the national pastime should and could be utilized symbolically and instrumentally to preserve a familiar social order and indoctrinate youngsters into the traditional value system” (1999: 8-9). Subsequently, when baseball became a popular pastime in South Africa during the 1930s the sport was immediately associated with America. Needing to take advantage of this transatlantic connection, Mormons, under the initial leadership of Don Mack Dalton, became active participants in the game, with several individual American missionaries emerging as elite athletes in the Union. The reinvention of the image of Mormonism in South Africa from an un-Christian proponent of polygamy to a viable version of American Christianity can be traced to the role the religion’s American missionaries played in the organization and dissemination of baseball in the country.

Even though Don Mack Dalton received the praise as one of, if not the, founding father of baseball in South Africa the league he organized in Cape Town was not, in actual fact, the

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<sup>114</sup> For a history of baseball as a key component of American culture see John P. Rossi’s *The National Game: Baseball and American Culture* (2000).

first of its kind in the country. According to the research of baseball journalist and historian, Josh Chetwynd, the first baseball games in South Africa were played in 1895, “when a group of Americans, who had migrated to South Africa during the gold boom just before the Boer War, settled in the Transvaal Province” (2008: 73). Using religious rhetoric, Chetwynd states that the “Americans were true missionaries for the sport, bringing equipment, creating a baseball diamond, and setting up games” (73). Chetwynd’s choice of phrasing and metaphor is quite interesting as nearly forty years after these baseball missionaries first introduced the sport a group of Mormon missionaries would reintroduce it and play instrumental roles in increasing its popularity.

Despite the title of Chetwynd’s work claiming to be “A History of South African Baseball,”<sup>115</sup> the author neglects to give credit to Dalton and the Mormons for the part they played in the 1930s and in fact glances over the time period in just two short paragraphs, claiming only that leagues were formed and baseball was being played (2008: 74). Although Chetwynd’s history contains this serious gap, his research into the inaugural years between 1895 and 1905 is worth noting here and it is because of his work that we know the first official league was formed in 1899 and that the Transvaal Provincial Baseball Association was organized five years later in September 1904. Reports from these games circulated back and forth across the Atlantic with the *Washington Post* reporting on 25 December 1904 that “the players of the different teams [in South Africa] can hit the ball, even if they have not yet attained the accuracy and agility in fielding that their American cousins have reached” (2008: 73). One involved South African, L. A. Servatius, wrote letters to various American newspapers and baseball stalwarts like one-time New York Yankee president Joe Gordon, praising the quality of the facilities, players, and potential of the sport in Johannesburg (2008: 74). Chetwynd must not have known about the noted amateur South African historian, Eric Rosenthal’s *Stars and Stripes in Africa: Being a History of American Achievement in Africa by Explorers, Missionaries, Pirates, Adventurers, Hunters, Miners, Merchants, Scientists, Soldiers, Showmen, Engineers and Others, with Some Account of Africans who have Played a part in American Affairs* (1938) or he would have included in his study that G. H. Capp was the first president of the Transvaal Baseball Association and that “Doc Brennan,” “a genial American physician,” was the “chief driving force in the South African game” during those

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<sup>115</sup> Besides my own article that will be published in the *Journal of Mormon History* in the summer of 2014 there is one other work on baseball in South Africa, though it not so much concerned with origins as it is with the current status of the game. See Alan M. Klein’s *Growing the Game: The Globalization of Major League Baseball* (2006: 196–214).

initial years and was considered a legendary figure who did not hang up his glove until “he was three score years and ten” (Rosenthal 1968: 181). However, according to Chetwynd and Rosenthal, the game never gained notoriety until the 1930s when Dalton and the Mormons started promoting it throughout the Union.

The posters announcing the upcoming baseball series were printed and dispatched all over the city of Johannesburg. “The Mormons are Coming!” they declared jovially, “Transvaal versus Cumorahs (Cape) at the Wanderers at 3 p.m. Saturday, December 31 and Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Come and see the All American Team from Salt Lake City, Utah” (see Noble n.d.: 92). Posters and press coverage such as this could not have made Don Mack Dalton any happier, for this was one of the first instances where Mormonism was pictured in positive light in South Africa and it was all because of its new connection with America’s favourite pastime, baseball. The icing on the proverbial cake was that throughout the country the previously pejorative term “Mormon” was now being associated with a unique *Book of Mormon* place name, “Cumorah,”<sup>116</sup> that held no preconceived negative notions for the majority of South Africans and consequently the positive designations of “baseball,” “America,” and “Cumorah,” were reversing the years of negative publicity for “Mormons” (see Alston 2014). In fact, by the year 1938, when Rosenthal, a noteworthy South African amateur historian, published his much-anticipated coffee table reader *Stars and Stripes in Africa* Mormons received an entire, albeit short, chapter that declared, “the Cumorahs are the Union’s most successful baseball team!” (1938: 103). The inclusion of Mormonism in Rosenthal’s history of America in South Africa is exceptionally important, especially when viewed from the perspective of circulating forms of popular culture. In writing his work, Rosenthal declared it to be a study meant for the burgeoning transatlantic tourist trade and as such the history should really be considered a piece of popular culture itself as it was written not as a definitive or scholarly account but as a tourist reader about America in South Africa for Americans (Rosenthal 1979: 123). The presence of Mormonism, at the time a religion of fewer than 1500 members in the country, is a significant indicator not only of its now central association with America but also of the publicity and exposure that baseball afforded it.

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<sup>116</sup> Cumorah is the name of one of Mormonism’s most sacred spaces, a hill near Palmyra, New York where Joseph Smith unearthed the scripture known as the *Book of Mormon*. As an homage to this location and the history it represents, Nicholas G. Smith, the president of the South African Mission from 1913-1921 christened the first church-owned building in South Africa “Cumorah” soon after it was purchased by the generous donation of Samuel Martin, a Cape Town convert who made a significant amount of money during the First World War in the baking business (see Wright n.d. 2:88-90).

It was in August 1932 that Dalton, with the support of his church leaders and his missionaries, joined a number of fellow members of the Cape Town University Club as well as several other reputable men in the city at the offices of the *Cape Argus* to officially organize the Western Province Baseball Association (Dalton “A Baseball Story”). All in attendance were energetic in their desire to formulate a league and at that inaugural meeting a General Committee was formed, to which Dalton was elected, with the first task at hand being the creation of teams. Dalton, an avid sportsman since his youth which included frequent sparring matches with his friend and neighbour, the American and Mormon by birth heavyweight boxing champion of the world, Jack Dempsey,<sup>117</sup> eagerly volunteered himself and several of his missionaries. It was soon decided that another meeting would be held for those considering joining the Mormon’s team at mission’s home base on Main Road in the suburb of Mowbray which had been christened Cumorah a decade earlier. Besides missionaries, several businessmen, a number of doctors and lawyers, and a variety of other men, including an atheist, attended the formation of one of the league’s first two teams, and after the players were selected with Dalton selected as a playing manager the subject of naming the team was put on the table and after some discussion about the actual significance of the term, Cumorah was elected by popular vote (Dalton “A Baseball Story”).

That inaugural season received a lot of hype and exposure in the Cape Town papers. One of the more colourful and memorable articles was written by the editor of the *Cape Times* and published on 18 October 1932 after taking in a game between the Cumorahs and the Nomads, the league’s two most competitive clubs throughout the decade. “What D’ya Think uv That?” the headline to this piece on baseball’s “snappy expressions” asked. Writing to an audience entirely ignorant of America’s colloquial baseball chatter, the author’s circulation is an attempt to introduce his South African readers to the cultural side of the game. In one instance the writer reverts to comparison to try and explain the strange phenomenon of calling players “doc.” “In the days when a music-hall was the place to go to, there was a ditty which achieved fame because ‘Every one was an ’Enerly.’ But in this ball game on Saturday every one appeared to be a ‘doc’. Well, nearly every one!—and I am not in a position to give away those who were not.” “Well now, what d’ya think uv that? It’s got birdies on it, doc!” the “rooter or barracker” shouts out in “admiration for a fine hit that carried the striker to second base, and made those attending their ceremony of initiation sit up

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<sup>117</sup> The connection with Jack Dempsey is a significant transatlantic circulation as Dalton took advantage of his friendship with the boxing champion to gain interviews with some of the country’s leading sports journalists; a platform which he utilized to promote his religion (Dalton “A Baseball Story”).

and take notice.” If the batter—the editor did not quite have all the lingo down just yet—were to hit a few “foul flies” the appropriate chorus would be either “You’ve got ’im guessing’, doc!” or “That’s a bit uv it!” On the particular Saturday the game being covered was played a little drizzle began to fall and the pitchers started losing their control. Disappointed jeers from the stands rang out with “Aw one more like that an’ he’ll take li’l walk home, doc!” In another comparison, this one sports-related, the article reads: “I don’t know whether the ball is difficult to catch when hit up in to the field. Maybe it is. At any rate, after many chances (chances that a cricket fielder would ask for the ground to open and hide him if he missed) had been gloriously (?) dropped, the silence was broken by: “Say, why didn’t ya bring a couple uv baskets?” The piece is froth with sports culture comparisons such as this, and in the end the writer concludes that the game was great entertainment and although he doubts his fellow countrymen’s ability to “be able to vie with the American in snappy expressions of comment” he is optimistic that the sport will increase in popularity. As a circulation of American culture, expressed in this one newspaper article through the use of baseball-specific jargon, baseball possessed the inherent capability to transform the image of Mormonism and allow for Mormons and their missionaries to become accepted in South Africa, first as American athletes and second as an American religion.

When the Cumorahs made the trek from Cape Town to Johannesburg in December 1932, they did so in order to conduct their annual mission convention, participating in the game advertised above was just a bonus. From the very outset Dalton made it clear that baseball would not interfere with the missionaries’ normal proselyting activities and that it was to be used merely as a tool to first reinvent the image of the religion in South Africa and second as a means to attract potential converts. This theme is reiterated throughout the missionaries’ terms of service as players were constantly being ‘traded’ to other teams in other cities because they were being ‘transferred’ to different parts of the mission. In a letter written to his father and published in a lengthy and descriptive account of his baseball and missionary career, Elder Stanford Smith, the best Mormon pitcher to ever hurl a ball in South Africa, provides his daily schedule. He writes,

Believe it or not, Dad, but only our spare time is put into baseball, and we don’t have much of that. Here is my daily programme:

7.00 a.m.: Out of bed with a bit of a struggle.

7.30 a.m.: Breakfast, morning classes and study.

10.00 a.m.: Out tracing until noon. It's great!

1.00 p.m.: Dinner. It comes none too soon.

1.30 p.m.: Study, correspondence, writing articles, etc.

3.00 p.m.: Visiting Saints.

5.00 p.m.: Baseball practice, Tuesday and Friday only. Other days are spent in tracing.

8.00 p.m.: Visiting investigators. Most interesting.

10.00 p.m.: To bed. And I am glad to get there!

Our baseball games come on Saturday afternoon and so that doesn't interfere with our regular missionary work. I ask you now, Dad, do any missionaries do as much work as we do without playing ball. We are leading in Books of Mormon distributed each month, and are close to the top in the number of baptisms per hundred missionaries. Our missionary work is up to par, and besides that we have made scores of friends through baseball. What do you think?"

During their first complete season the Cumorahs played numerous games against the Nomads. The teams were so evenly matched that the league championship series was decided by the final at-bat of the five-game playoff, with the Cumorahs emerging as the victors due to an unexpected hit from the team's 'suit-rack', the nickname given to a Mormon Elder from America who was not a particularly skilled athlete and was put on the roster simply to fill a uniform (Dalton "A Baseball Story").<sup>118</sup> Over the next three seasons, with Dalton behind the plate and calling the shots, the Cumorahs won the league twice and lost in a hard-fought battle to the Nomads in another eventful final series the other year. Of note during these three initial seasons was the role that Dalton and especially Elder Stanford G. Smith played on the Western Province all-star teams that squared off on many occasions against a select team from the Transvaal. In fulfilment of a dream he could hardly have believed would actually come to pass, Dalton, Smith, and several other Mormon baseball players for Western Province had the opportunity to shake the hand of South Africa's Governor General, before the Sixth Earl of Clarendon took his seat along with nearly twenty five hundred other spectators to watch the first ever South African national championship baseball game

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<sup>118</sup> Evidence suggests that the suit rack was actually Dalton's brother John although he is never named as such outright in Don Mack Dalton's "A Baseball Story"; however, this is not unexpected as Dalton rarely named any of his missionaries, including himself, by name.

(*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* April 1934: 60). Although the boys from Cape Town were defeated that year in 1934, they got their revenge the following season as Elder Smith dominated on the mound pitching a shut-out, while Dalton and the rest of the hitters accumulated ten runs over the nine innings. This was the crowning achievement of Dalton's religious and baseball career in South Africa, and later that month, March 1935, he was replaced as president of the mission and manager of the Cumorahs by another American, Legrand Backman. Smith's tenure was also up after that season and he left South Africa as the undisputed best pitcher and overall player in the country in May of that same year.

Generally speaking, when Mormon mission presidents are relieved of their duties their replacement immediately begins to make changes both in focus and in execution. However, the success and positive publicity of the Cumorahs was to such a great extent that when Backman took over for Dalton, despite his inability to actually play the game, the Cumorahs continued to be led by the Mormons and in fact Backman encouraged his missionaries throughout the Union to organize and play for various clubs. This they did. In Port Elizabeth missionaries as well as a few local converts played for the Red Sox, winning the championship against the Uitenhage Pirates in 1936. By 1939 the game had become so popular in the Eastern Province that along with a number of individual Mormons and missionaries playing for teams in East London, the Elders in Port Elizabeth formed their own squad, the Nauvoo Baseball Club which they shortened to the Nauvoo Legion as an homage to one of the key locations and defence organizations in Mormonism's history.<sup>119</sup> As in East London, a formal club was never constructed in Durban, but many individuals played in the city's league as well as for the provincial team. While the efforts of the Mormons in promoting America's game along the Indian Ocean's coastline certainly added to the religion's portfolio in the country the impact of their involvement in baseball's rising popularity was felt most strongly first, as we have seen, in Cape Town and second, and perhaps more importantly as this was the biggest and most competitive market for the game in South Africa, in Johannesburg.<sup>120</sup>

As the Transvaal Baseball Association prepared for the 1936-37 season three recently returned, former Mormon missionaries from America decided that they wanted to build a team that would be able to compete against the league's best clubs such as the Crown Mine Giants which consisted mainly of American-born miners. Layton Alldredge, Clarence

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<sup>119</sup> For information on the Nauvoo Legion see Glen M. Leonard's "Picturing the Nauvoo Legion" (1995).

<sup>120</sup> For a more detailed account of this expansion see Alston's "The Cumorah Baseball Club" (2014).

Randall, and Evan Wright had crossed the Atlantic in order to establish a chain of drive-in ice-cream parlours, opening their first in Johannesburg just a few months before the start of the baseball season. It was because of their presence and renown as former Cumorahs and excellent ball players that the still active missionary, also a former Cumorah and Western Province star, Howard C. Badger agreed spearhead the formation of the Wembley Americans.<sup>121</sup> The team consisted entirely of Mormons and with the exception of one local South African convert, Bertie Price, entirely of Americans. Badger, who managed the club along with Bertie Price, was the team's best all-rounder with Randall, an accomplished pitcher whose talents as a missionary in 1932 and 1933 were rivalled only by the masterful speed and control of Stan Smith, and another current Elder, Dee Robinson, a close second and third. The exceptional skills of all three Americans were not just recognizable to the Mormon community, as all three were selected to play for the Transvaal provincial team that season. The entrance of the Americans into the association was highly anticipated by the league as well as the Johannesburg press. The 25 October 1936 edition of the *Sunday Express* introduced the team to the fans in the following manner:

Team of non-smokers and teetotallers. American Ball Players at Wembley. Among the new sides competing in the Saturday baseball league are the Wembley Americans, a club that promises to become one of the most popular in the competition. They are known as the Mormons, and for a very good reason, since the majority of the players are young missionaries from the State of Utah, assisting, among other things, to convince the world that Mormons are not polygamists. In every way these Americans can be called a team. They are always in one another's company, they dine together and they play the game in a happy-go-lucky spirit that is certain to appeal. That they should not experience any great difficulty in attaining physical fitness is obvious from the mode of livelihood, for they are total abstainers and non-smokers, while in addition, they do not drink either tea or coffee.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Alldredge served his mission in South Africa before the organization of the Cumorahs, from 1927-1929; however, he too would don the maroon and white colours of the Cumorahs as during his tenure in the country with the Doll House company he often resided for lengthy periods in Cape Town overseeing the management of the businesses' two locations in that city.

<sup>122</sup> This article can also be found in the *Cumorah Southern Messenger*, 10, no. 11 (November 1936): 165 along with two other Johannesburg articles on the high expectations of the Wembley Americans. I have also quoted it in Alston "The Cumorah Baseball Club" (2014).

Across the Atlantic news of the team had also sparked the interest of the Mormon communities in Utah and a large write-up including a photograph of the club was printed in the *Deseret News* on 23 January 1937. After recapping the latest results of the Americans' efforts and commenting on their standing in the league, the journalist writes:

From writings by Johannesburg sports scribes, it is evident that baseball is just beginning to get a foothold in this British colony, although it swept England by storm. It is evident, that the American baseball uniforms are something rare along the Rand in South Africa, for the *Rand Daily Mail* in its sports columns, called the suits of the Wembley team "odd-looking pyjama suits tucked into the sky blue stockings." At present, there are over thirty teams, divided into senior and reserve leagues, playing on the Rand. The senior league comprises the premier teams, of which the Mormons are one, and these eight teams are aiding in developing the weaker or reserve squads. Baseball has been played on the Rand for no more than four years but already they have a baseball commission, known as the Transvaal [sic] Baseball Association and business men and American sports lovers in South Africa, are small-scale, Kensaw Landis's. The type of ball the missionaries play is fast catching the fancy of the colonists. The sports writers characterize it as a happy-go-lucky manner of playing and say that it is certain to appeal. The sportsmanship of the American team also gains wide comment in the Johannesburg press. Much good comment of the team's observance of the Mormon Word of Wisdom has also been written by the scribes. One article says, "That they should not experience any great difficulty in attaining physical fitness is obvious from their mode of livelihood, for they are total abstainers and non-smokers, while, in addition, they do not drink either tea or coffee."

The Americans were a dominant team that inaugural season and lived up to the hype they received, winning the pennant that year in a hard-fought 3-2 victory over the Crown Mine Giants. The club existed for only two seasons, with the expansion of the Doll House causing the three non-missionaries to be unable to commit fully to the programme as well as the difficulties for the missionaries to organize and run an entire team away from the mission home in Cape Town, ultimately resulted in the disbanding of the team with those Mormons who wished to continue to participate in the Transvaal league joining the Wanderers Athletic Club, a team that had great success before and after that 1936-37 season.

From 1932 until 1940 when the reality of World War II's global impact forced the closure of the Mormon mission and the disbanding of the baseball leagues in South Africa, the Mormon baseball-playing missionaries from America were also major players in the general Americanization of South Africa. As disseminators of one of America's most influential popular cultural forms, these baseball players utilized their American roots and culture to reinvent what it meant to be a Mormon in South Africa. Although the image of Mormons as polygamists was never fully erased from South Africa's religious landscape, the prominence of the Cumorahs in Cape Town, the Nauvoo Legion in Port Elizabeth, and the Wembley Americans in Johannesburg, as well as the dozens of individual Mormons who became personally associated with the rise in popularity of the game such as Don Mack Dalton, Stanford G. Smith, Clarence Randall, and Howard Badger certainly gave South Africans an alternative image of this American religion. Due to their prominent role in the development of baseball in South Africa during this decade, Mormons and Mormonism became intrinsically linked with Cumorah, baseball and ultimately American culture. Right from the beginning, as evidence from the *Cape Times* article "What D'Ya Think Uv That?" quoted above, South Africans recognized that through baseball they could intimately view America's distinct and globally-expanding culture. The Mormons were quick to take advantage of this awareness and by utilizing their position as Americans in South Africa with the sole responsibility of promoting their religion, the missionaries succeeding in reinventing their image by emphasizing these cultural traits.

After WWII the Cumorahs were reorganized and participated in the Western Province Baseball League until 1954, when the support and talent was no longer viable to maintain the team's presence. During these post-war efforts the mission experimented with other forms of American popular culture such as softball, musical choirs, and eventually basketball. However, before an analysis of the Mormons' role in the diffusion of basketball in South Africa is proffered, an examination of another circulation of American popular culture brought to South Africa by Mormons in the 1930s must first be reviewed.

### *Ice Cream*

In the introduction to her 1995 history of ice cream in America, Ann Cooper Funderburg observed: "World Wars I and II demonstrated that, somewhere along the way, ice cream had become a potent American symbol" (1995: 2). Although originally a delicacy affordable only

to the wealthy in Europe, ice cream can be traced in America as far back as 1744 when a Scottish colonial named William Black recorded in his journal that a dish of “fine Ice Cream” was served for dessert in the home of Thomas Bladen, the Governor of Maryland (1995: 3). Funderburg’s informative study continues with accounts of the dish being served by and to nearly all of the United States’ presidents including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Maddison. Despite its European origins, Funderburg claims, “Americans improved the texture and taste of ice cream, consumed it in quantities that amazed Europeans, and eventually made it as American as apple pie and Coca-Cola” (3).

The popularity of the treat escalated in the first half of the twentieth century growing from an annual per capita ingestion of 1.9 pounds in 1910 to 17.2 pounds in 1950 (Jakle and Sculle 1999: 179). Reasons for the increase can be traced first to the availability of the product which became more easily manufactured and stored as machines and freezers were invented and placed on the market and second, due to the number of stores and parlours selling it.

Included in studies of American culture arising from the introduction of the automobile such as John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle’s *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (1999), the increased amount of ice cream consumption by Americans seems to be a natural appendage to the drive-in restaurant culture created in that country during the 1920s and becoming a mainstay of American culture by the 1930s. “The popularity of dining in one’s car surpassed most restaurateurs’ expectations but once proven successful,” one historian concluded, “the idea flourished. The informality of dining á la car fit perfectly with America’s new on-the-move attitude” (Heimann 1996: 16). In fact by 1964 America was home to approximately 33 500 drive-ins with 9 000 of those specializing in ice cream or cool drinks (Jakle and Sculle 1999: 55). These roadside establishments took advantage of Americans new desire to eat out, cruise around in their cars, and devour ‘delish’ ice cream, which by the 1930s could be found in malts, milk shakes, cones, and all manner of bars. As symbols of American popular culture, ice cream and drive-ins were sweet and popular tools utilized by three Mormons, Layton Alldredge, Clarence Randall, and Evan Wright in order to create a niche market in South Africa that contributed to both the Americanization of the country as well as to the circulations of Mormons and Mormonism there.

The three entrepreneurs had worked in South Africa before, as missionaries for the Mormon Church. Alldredge, the eldest of the three, had served his religion from 1927-1929, and Randall and Wright nearly simultaneously from 1930-1933. During the years of

Randall's and Wright's volunteership there were never more than 19 total missionaries in South Africa at any one time, and it was no coincidence then that the two were paired as companions in Port Elizabeth in 1932.

In addition to their original service, Alldredge and Wright both accepted the invitation to serve as the branch president of the Ramah Branch in Johannesburg during the 1930s and 40s—Alldredge from 1936-38 and again from 1940-42 and Wright from 1938-40 and 1945-47—as well as to return to the mission and preside over it; Wright first from November 1948 to January 1953 with Alldredge following seven years and two mission presidents later in June 1960 until August 1964. Wright's near continuous tenure in the country from 1930 to 1953 as well as his devotion to producing a three-volume history of the South African Mission earned him the nickname of "Mr. Africa" from Mormon President David O. McKay (3 September 1998 *Deseret News*). Alldredge also had a lifelong connection to the country through his wife, Hilda Hubert, a native of Bloemfontein whom he met and married in Durban soon after the three began operating their business in that city in 1936.

Besides his time as a missionary, Clarence Randall was the only member of the trio who did not fill a leadership calling for the Mormon Church while in the country.<sup>123</sup> However, this does not mean that the man was not respected by his partners. During an interview with Randall's biographer, Helen Erickson Noble, Wright stated, "There wasn't a more honest man in the world than Clarence." Wright later admitted to being jealous of the man because he was "tall and handsome" and unquestionably "President and Sister Dalton's favorite" (Noble n.d.: 30). No doubt this elite status in the eyes of the Dalton's and Wright was earned on the baseball field, where Randall excelled far and above his two associates. Randall was an integral member of the Cumorahs inaugural team, leading off on offence and pitching and playing several different fielding positions on defence. Randall was certainly one of the more talented ball players on the Cumorahs and if his mission had not come to a close in February he would definitely have been selected as an all-star and represented Western Province that first season. However, after Randall's return to the country in 1936 he had the opportunity to continue his prowess on the diamond playing not only for the Wembley Americans in Johannesburg but also for the Wanderers Athletic Club and the Transvaal provincial team. Randall's abilities was frequent fodder for South Africa sports writers like Ken Duncan, who wrote a piece titled "South Africa Made him a Pitcher:

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<sup>123</sup> Records indicate that Randall was also a passionate singer and was in charge of the Ramah Branch's choir for many years (Noble n.d.: 124).

Clarence Randall's Work for Baseball in this Country." The lengthy article, written during the first month of the 1937-38 season when Randall hurled for the Wembley Americans, leads off, "Clarence Randall, tall, lithe Mormon, and one of the best pitchers in the country, gripped the ball for an outcurve, lifted his arm in a half wind and, seemingly stiff-armed, let the ball go ... Another victim had fallen to the pitching skill of the Wembley American" (see Noble n.d.: 155).<sup>124</sup>

One other example of Randall's popularity with the press pictures the ice cream maker dispensing his creation from a Doll House fountain and reads,

Clarrie Randall, the Rand baseball pitcher (he scored 10 strike-outs against Natal at Kingsmead this week) is a Mormon. He tells me that he first came to South Africa as a missionary from Utah. But because he likes South Africa more than the United States, and Johannesburg better than Utah, he decided to settle here. He gave up missionary work and, looking round for a job, he found that no one in Johannesburg had the American technique in making ice cream. So he wrote to two friends in America asking them to join him in Johannesburg and manufacture ice cream. They came, and they made a success of the job. Now Randall is coming to live in Durban, and will soon be pitching for Natal against his old friends from the Wanderers, Johannesburg. In Durban he will play for Central City. (Noble n.d.: 158)

Although Randall is accredited in this article as the partner who first thought up the idea to make ice cream in South Africa, as well as being remembered by a nephew as saying, "They just don't have good ice cream down there, somebody needs to show them how" (Noble n.d.: 123), it was Wright who actually instigated the formation of Doll House Refreshments, Inc. Wright recalled during his eulogy at Randall's funeral in 1980 that, "In 1935, three of us young men, Clarence, Layton Alldredge and I, all of whom had been South African missionaries joined forces to go out and seek our fortunes" (Noble n.d. 123).

Allredge, whom Wright had met while attending the University of Utah, was actually the first man Wright approached with the idea and soon after an initial plan was put together the two contacted Wright's old companion, Randall, who was working for Paramount Ice Cream in Salt Lake City and who Wright knew was interested in going into business in South Africa. With no serious attachments in America, the three hurriedly made preparations to

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<sup>124</sup> Randall had a bad habit of cutting out newspaper articles about himself without the publication details. Noble's biography shares the clippings with the reader but also does not provide the publication details.

cross the Atlantic again with Randall hastening his education of the commercial manufacturing of American ice cream at Paramount. At the time of their departure the three businessmen, relying on Randall's newly acquired knowledge, set out to "seek their fortunes" armed only with desire, a small amount of start-up capital—\$6 000, \$2000 each, according to Alldredge's history, an undisclosed amount of which they received from a silent partner from Provo, Utah named Dan Wanberg—and a handful of Utah's most famous ice cream recipes acquired from Snelgrove's.<sup>125</sup>

By 1 May 1936 the partners were in Johannesburg; Alldredge got a job selling American Chevrolet cars at Dennis Motors, "to put groceries on the table" while Randall and Wright went to work constructing the first Doll House (Noble n.d.: 124). Neither knew very much about construction, but a local Mormon, Dave Banfield, gave them several pointers which apparently worked because, as Wright pointed out at Randall's funeral, "It must have been a pretty good building because it is still standing today and is a drive-in restaurant." (Noble n.d.: 124). That first Doll House, located in the Johannesburg suburb of Malvern, at today's address of 377 Louis Botha Avenue, Highlands North, opened soon after the trio arrived back in the country and was operational before the end of May 1936. The success of the drive-in ice cream parlour was immediate and by 26 June another Doll House was ready for business in Durban (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* July 1936: 128). Within a year the standardized red buildings with their steep roofs and three prominent dormers, which resulted in the shop actually looking like a dollhouse, could be found in Cape Town and Pretoria as well.<sup>126</sup> In all, the three opened seven Doll Houses in South Africa during the 1930s, three in Johannesburg, two in Cape Town, and one in both Durban and Pretoria. By 1940, Alldredge reported that the business was making a net profit of approximately \$60 000 per year, could produce up to 2 500 gallons of ice cream a day, including ice cream on sticks and popsicles, had opened up bakeries at several of the locations, and employed 133 individuals between their new mechanically operated factory and all the shops (Noble n.d.: 133).

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<sup>125</sup> The Snelgrove Ice Cream Company was created in 1929 in Salt Lake City by Charles Snelgrove. Snelgrove's ice cream was a favourite of Utahans and Americans from its inception. By 1935 the company had achieved national prominence as evidenced by the fact that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor had its ice cream flown from Salt Lake City, Utah to Warm Springs, Georgia in order to satisfy the cravings of their 375 dinner guests (Funderburg 1995: 126-127). In 1990, under the direction of Charles' two sons, Laird and Barr, the business was sold to Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream; however the company continued to produce ice cream, "specifically flavors such as burnt almond fudge, Canadian vanilla, peppermint chocolate spray, and caramel cashew," based on Snelgrove recipes for residents of Utah until 2008 when Dreyer's finally decided to discontinue the brand (Lang 2008).

<sup>126</sup> As Jim Heimann's pictorial history makes clear, the architecture of one's drive-in was nearly as important as the quality of refreshments (Heimann 1996).

Describing one of the first weekends at the original Doll House, Alldredge wrote:

The parking lot was filled with cars and those on the road were waiting for a place to park. Inside we found every booth full and our small staff swamped. People in white tie and tails were serving the customers in the booths. Everyone was laughing and having a good time. Outside someone with an accordion was playing and they were folk dancing in the parking lot. As the people finished being served inside, they came out to dance and a new group filled the booths. This went on until nearly two o'clock in the morning. It seemed, at a ball held at the Germiston town hall, someone suggested they go over and visit the new 'Yankee' ice cream shop, and so over they came. They came with such friendliness that the bad service was lost in the dancing and camaraderie [sic]. (Noble n.d.: 132)

As an American-styled drive-in serving one-of-a-kind American ice cream "business began to hum" and money no longer became the issue; the problem was how to produce and store enough ice cream to serve all the customers.

"Clarence made his ice cream in a five gallon freezer with a native boy turning the handle" explains Alldredge (Noble n.d.: 132). "We had room in the fountain for four cans, but we didn't have time to harden it properly. So we quickly bought a hardening cabinet where we could harden fifty gallons in ten 5-gallon cans. Clarence now had three or four hand-cranked freezers and a battery of boys lined up cranking for dear life like crows on a limb. Soon we needed another hardening cabinet and more freezers. And so it went. Every time we upped our production, sales increased until we were short. And so it went!"

Prior to the outbreak of WWII, the business of making American ice cream in South Africa was booming, and the three Mormons had the market nearly all to themselves. In fact the success of the Doll House was to such a degree that two more American Mormons decided to cross the Atlantic and try their luck in the same industry. However, J. Golden Evans' and Ariel T. Smith's drive-ins were not prosperous and closed soon after they opened in 1939.<sup>127</sup>

The Doll House appears to have been a success for a variety of reasons. First, it capitalized on the growing number of Americans residing in South Africa, especially in the

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<sup>127</sup> Wright records that despite this failure the two remained in the country for ten years, working in the vulcanized rubber and mining industries. During this time both served their church in various leadership callings (Wright n.d. 2:313).

“American City,” Johannesburg. Second, it took advantage of the growing interest of South Africans of America and American products. Third, it utilized the popularity and intrigue of American popular culture associated with automobiles, drive-in restaurants, and ice cream. Fourth, the business itself ran smoothly with each partner fulfilling their responsibilities. Randall was in charge of the production of the ice cream itself, Wright the sales—Alldredge once joked that “it was said he [Wright] had so many schemes up his sleeve, he needed to wear a kimono (Noble n.d.: 135)— and Alldredge the finances. However, a crack eventually formed in the partnership due in part to the stresses caused by the Second World War as well as to a disagreement between Alldredge and Wright over the speed of expansion.

The outbreak of war in Europe made it difficult for the three Americans to remain in business in South Africa because, as Wright points out, they “were considered aliens” as well as the fact that food rations were restrictive and “it was hard to get the sugar for our ice cream” (Noble n.d.: 125). It was at this stage that the three decided to expand their business across the Atlantic, beginning in Atlanta, Georgia. Alldredge remained in South Africa to run that side of the business while Randall and Wright found a suitable location in Atlanta to build their American Doll House. However, in 1941, just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour Alldredge showed up in Atlanta, stating he had left the business in the hands of the branches’ managers and had arrived to help with the Atlanta project. Still in debt from the start-up and with the new rations put on oil and gas, the Atlanta drive-in never reached solvency and three had to pay nearly \$20 000 each in order to clear their debts.<sup>128</sup>

The Atlanta Doll House was not alone in its struggle for survival during the outbreak of World War II in America. Jim Heimann, in his *Car Hops and Curb Service: A History of American Drive-In Restaurants 1920-1960* (1996), states:

The bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States’ entry into World War II signalled a temporary slowdown in the drive-in business for most of the country. Civilian auto production ended in 1942 and, at the same time, rubber and gasoline were rationed. Recreational driving came to an abrupt halt. Blackouts made night driving a risky proposition until the threat of air raid subsided. Restaurant owners found china plates and restaurant equipment a scarce commodity. Parts couldn’t be ordered and remodelling, expansion, and the replacement of worn equipment had to wait. Rationed sugar was substituted with honey and corn syrup. Nothing

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<sup>128</sup> This was an exceptionally hard pill for Alldredge to swallow as he continually cautioned Wright to move slow and limit the amount of collateral the business had to leverage.

was sacred, not even that hot cup of joe. Coffee disappeared for almost a year, but eventually made it back onto the menu. (1996: 84)

The failure of the Atlanta Doll House was a blow to three entrepreneurs and the lack of knowledge about their branches in South Africa was a constant source of stress, so much so that during the war Wright petitioned a Senator his father knew to give him special permission to make the journey back to South Africa. Travelling on a battleship as far as “Equatorial Africa” Wright had to make the rest of the journey on land and arrived in Johannesburg sick with malaria. He made short work of organizing his employees and after setting all in order boarded a battle cruiser and returned to America to wait out the war. In 1944 he and Randall—Alldredge’s second child was due to be born any day and so he made the decision to wait and join the others a few months later—returned to South Africa, but the business was never as lucrative as it was before the war.

At this point the rift between Alldredge and Wright had become a gulf, during Wright’s war-time trip to South Africa he had decided to do Alldredge a favour by draining the latter’s saving account and bring him back his money in the form of a \$15 000 diamond. Due to currency restrictions, Alldredge had been unable to do anything other than leave his money in a South African bank when he returned to America in 1941 and Wright sincerely thought he was helping him out by bringing back the diamond. However, when Wright re-entered the United States he was forced to pay duty on the diamond, an unexpected cost caused by Wright’s misinterpretation of a law that stated one did not have to pay duty if the individual planned on keeping the diamond for at least three years before selling it. In a panic, Wright sold the diamond at a fraction of its worth, paid the duty and his own expenses and turned up at Alldredge’s house in Utah with a paltry sum of \$500 in cash (Noble n.d.: 139-141). Consequently, when Alldredge did not return to South Africa with Randall and Wright he recognized that his influence was no longer required and soon after the two arrived back in South Africa and had charted a course for the company that Alldredge did not agree with, he asked to be bought out. However, either because Wright was now at the helm or because of the poor conditions caused by the war, the business never regained its former momentum and after being informed that Dan Wanberg, the Doll Houses’ original silent partner, had moved his family permanently to South Africa in 1946, Randall and Wright sold the entire business, including the factory, the machinery, and all seven locations.

While the Doll House certainly took advantage of popular forms of American culture such as drive-in eateries and ice cream, it also served as the setting for a popular Mormon

culture in South Africa: the “Last Laugh” column in the area’s monthly newsletter, the *Cumorah’s Southern Messenger*. The first instance of this utilization occurred in the July 1939 edition of the monthly magazine under the title “The Massacre”:

Elder Dana was very thirsty when he called in at the Doll House to see Sister Hubert one afternoon ...

Elder Dana: “Say, Sister Olga, you have a lot of flies here. If you give me a malted milk, and a little help, I’ll kill them all for you.”

Sister Hubert: “I don’t see how you can do it but they annoy me so I will try anything once.”

Elder Dana (after drinking the malt) took up a position by the door, and after taking off his coat, said: “I’m ready now, you just send them out one at a time.”(*Cumorah’s Southern Messenger* July 1939: 111)

Two years later, in July and September 1941, the author of the column employed the Doll House stage for two more jokes. While the first comic played through a scene between a member and a missionary, these two deal with the relationship between management, in both cases Layton Alldredge, and their employees. “Honesty is the Best Policy” reads:

The Doll House cleaning boy is a pretty shrewd lad. Not long ago he found a sixpence in cleaning Brother Alldredge’s office, and honestly offered it to his master.

“Never mind,” said Brother Alldredge, “you can keep that for your honesty.”

The other day the “boss” missed a pound note. He inquired of Amos whether he had seen it.

“Yes, suh,” said Amos, “I picked ’im up.”

“Well, what did you do with it?”

“Me? Why, I kept it fo’ mah honesty!” (*Cumorah’s Southern Messenger* July 1941: 111)

As a source of popular culture for Mormons in South Africa, the Doll House also provided the setting for another humorous story, “It Can’t Fail.”

Grace works at the Doll House where the staff is encouraged to think of ideas for the smoother running of the business.

One day she went into Brother Alldredge's office and announced that she had thought of a way of insuring that no one would be late in the future.

"That sounds good," said the managing director. "How do you propose to do it?"

"That's easy," said Grace. "The last employee in the office each morning blows the whistle." (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* September 1941: 143)

After the sale of the Doll House to Dan Wanberg the chain remained a fixture on the South African landscape until well into the 1970s, and, in actual fact, the original building on Louis Botha Avenue in Johannesburg is still in operation under its original name. The author of a recent *Mail & Guardian* article, "Parking Eaters: South Africa's Unhealthy Obsession with the Roadhouse Stretches back at least 80 Years," searched for the country's oldest drive-in and discovered the Doll House on Louis Botha Avenue. "Tracing the history of Jo'Burg's oldest roadhouse, the Doll House, on Louis Botha Avenue, proved difficult," Matthew Burbridge confesses, "but it was built sometime during the Thirties. Tony Leca, the manager, said this week the owner was now 'very, very old' and had retired overseas."<sup>129</sup> Burbridge not only failed to trace the origins of the Doll House to the three Mormon entrepreneurs, he also failed to give credit for its sustained appeal to American popular culture, instead choosing to hypothesize its ability to last as either "rugged individualism," the South African "love affair with the car," or "just getting away from your parents."

Burbridge's account is not the only or even the latest circulation reminiscing about the Doll House from South Africa. In May 2013 a South Africa blogger of "quirky and cool stuff in Johannesburg" posted about the one remaining Doll House writing, "Admittedly, its glory day are long—no, really long—gone ... My dad is old enough to have started coming here in the early [19]50s, first arriving with older friends from whom he could bum a lift, and later driving his girlfriends over in his own grey Volla—*left-hand drive* (his emphasis)" (<http://www.bearwithme.co.za/index.php/do/dollhouse/>). The emphasis on the left-hand drive vehicle is a reference to the popularity of American-styled automobiles in South Africa and adds to the argument that the success of the Doll House was based on its appeal to those interested in American popular culture. Other reminiscences of the Doll House recall the drive-in across from the Mouille Point Lighthouse in Green Point and claim that it was a very popular hangout for the residents of Cape Town for many years ([http://mouillepoint-capetown.co.za/listing-category/love-this-hood/#.UvErU\\_ldWYc](http://mouillepoint-capetown.co.za/listing-category/love-this-hood/#.UvErU_ldWYc)).

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<sup>129</sup> Could this still be Dan Wanberg?

From the diamond to the drive-in Mormons were utilizing some of America's most influential forms of popular culture to simultaneously demonstrate to South Africans that they were indeed American as well, prove that they were a respectable American religion and not a polygamist cult.

### *Basketball*

On 24 September 1948 South Africa's *Spotlight* magazine ran one of the most comprehensive and detailed circulations of Mormonism ever printed in the country. In the "What's Inside" introduction to the article, the editor asks his readership, "What do you know about the Mormons in South Africa?" Hinting at the nature of the piece that follows, the editor continues:

This sect has always been more notorious than famous among the sober-sides of the world, thanks to the unfounded belief that Mormons have many wives and are guilty of other forms of hanky-panky denied to ordinary citizens caught up in the toils of our social system. In fact, of course, polygamy disappeared from Mormonism in the long, long ago, and the Church is a model of Christian brotherly love and rectitude. We don't know who brought over the softball craze, but if basketball ever ousts any of our accustomed sports it will have been thanks to the sport-loving Mormons.

A headline on the next page of the magazine, still a turn away from James Arcot's main story, "Mormons Among Us", declares boldly that "Basket-ball, not polygamy, is their gift to South Africa." This second introductory column relates the following story that is telling of the lingering image of nineteenth-century Mormonism among the public in South Africa:

When a Mormon missionary, one morning, called at a house in an Eastern Province town, the housewife, after hearing his business and accepting the tracts he offered her, told him blankly that he'd better return that evening, when her husband would be home.

The Mormon missionary did so. He rang the bell and waited. A burly South African opened it.

"What do you want?" he asked suspiciously.

"I'm a missionary from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ..."

“Oh, you are ?” The South African peered intently. “Is that another way of saying you’re the Mormon who called here this morning?”

“Yes, sir. That is correct ...”

The missionary might have been going to say something else, but the he never got a chance, for, with a grunt, the big South African clenched a fist like sledge-hammer and dealt him a buffet which laid him flat on the stoep.

“Now get out and don’t come back,” he growled, and slammed the door.

This isn’t typical behaviour but it’s factual, and the missionary in question has a scar to show for the memory.

“I’ve learnt since then,” he says with a smile, “that it’s often better to make one’s *first* call when the husband’s at home, otherwise ...”

Exactly. Otherwise the average uninformed South African, who has heard vaguely that Mormons are people with many wives, is likely to put two and two together and make them anything from five to 17.

The author then concludes by adding, “In actual fact, in case anyone cares, Mormons don’t have many wives any longer; now and for more than half a century past they’ve been limited by their own rules to one apiece like anyone else.”

Besides informing the researcher of the enduring impression of Mormons as polygamists, the author also gives to-date estimates of the number of Latter-day Saints in the Union: 400 in the Cape and Western Province; 600 in the Transvaal; 150 in Natal; between 30 and 40 in the Orange Free State; and approximately 500 in the Eastern Province and the rest of Southern Africa including Northern and Southern Rhodesia. The figures correlate well with Farrell Ray Monson’s records as he reports a total membership of 1654 in 1948 (Monson 1971: 146).<sup>130</sup> With these preliminary tidbits out of the way, the main story begins, encouraging readers to consider the Mormons and their missionaries in a new light: “The mission here in South Africa hasn’t any political or racial strings. Their proselytising is directed almost exclusively to the European section. They are practising Christians of a very high moral and active conviction ... and they are quite harmless, so if you get a call, don’t yell for help or knock them down.” The majority of the article is a history of Joseph Smith

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<sup>130</sup> Interestingly, in 1949 the membership decreased by nearly 300 and did not exceed the 1948 figure until 1953.

and his organization of the religion in America. However, as the article comes to a close and circulates back to the status of Mormonism in South Africa Arcot writes,

You've very likely had a visit from a Mormon missionary ... or you may get one. Not being Mormons ourselves, we aren't going to try and do any of the proselytising from them, but we would ask you to deal fairly with them. Besides, having been visited and having made up your mind that your own belief is good enough for you, you'll still find them willing to play ball with you ... very literally. For it is to the American missionaries of this church that South Africa owes its growing enthusiasm for baseball and basketball. They coach and encourage wherever in the Union the games are played, and that's nearly everywhere today.

The headline, "Basket-ball not polygamy is their gift to South Africa," is truly a fitting by-line for Arcot's report. Along with baseball and ice cream Mormons also relied upon other forms of American popular culture to promote themselves as well as their religion, the most important of these being basketball. Although first introducing the Transvaal to the sport in 1939, it was not until October 1948 that the Mormon missionaries helped organize the first basketball league in the Union, in the Transvaal. In that inaugural season a Mormon team not only participated but individual missionaries were put in charge of coaching and officiating league games (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* November 1948: 117-118). Prior to this time the Mormons held numerous exhibition matches throughout South Africa. The first games were played at the Drill Hall in Cape Town, with one particular demonstration taking place over the Christmas holidays in 1947 drawing nearly 250 spectators from the community (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* January 1948: 4). After another successful showcase at the Drill Hall in March 1948 a contributor to the *Cumorah's Southern Messenger* wrote: "This fast indoor sport is slowly but surely taking interest by those who have witnessed the two exhibitions thus far presented" (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* April 1948: 31). In Johannesburg a crowd of 400 were in attendance as the missionaries separated into two near equal teams and played on an outdoor court in April of that same year.

As the popularity of the sport grew across the Atlantic, so did it expand, albeit on a much smaller scale, in Southern Africa. In August 1948, the mission president June Sharp installed "modern bankboards and other basketball equipment" in Cumorah's recreational hall and tasked his missionaries with teaching the game to interested South Africans (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* September 1948: 93). With the new equipment in place, the

missionaries were able to get enough practice in to challenge the U.S. Navy to a two-night exhibition in the Drill Hall in October with the score in both games ending up 45-43 with each night seeing a different victor. The games were covered by the *Cape Times* and as reported in the *Cumorah's Southern Messenger*, the 300 to 400 witnesses were privy to an assortment of standard symbols of American popular culture: “flags, floodlights, a Yank commentator with a ‘Frisco drawl, organized cheering by ‘purty gurls’, pop and peanuts” (November 1948: 116). Finally in the same month, October 1948, after a yearlong build up the Transvaal Basketball Association was officially organized with one missionary, Elder R. B. Herzog being elected as the league’s vice-president. Elder J. R. Clarke was also present at the meeting and was tasked with being the lead coach of the association as well as the organization’s main technical adviser.

The game expanded quickly, though still on a small scale, throughout the Union and the Mormons scheduled exhibition games in most major South African cities. In August 1949 the Mormon “Yanks” tipped-off against Durban’s local “Y” club, beating them in a low scoring game that they led the entire way (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* September 1949: 132). Seven months later, in March 1950, the Mormon Yanks were back in action during a three-day tournament that included an intimidating squad from Lourenço Marques (Maputo) (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* April 1950: 64). In an impressive performance the Mormons not only won the competition but earned themselves an international invitation to visit the Mozambicans in August. Managed by their new mission president, Evan Wright, the team travelled into the Portuguese colony and made quick work of their opponents, winning each game by over twenty points (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* October 1950: 152). The host club, the Ferroviarians, did not expect the Mormons to be so talented and scheduled a rematch tournament in February which the American missionaries won easily once again. However, after the completion of the competition an all-star team was selected from the best that Mozambique had to offer and after the score was tied in regulation, the Portuguese select team pulled away from their American opponents, winning in the end by 7 points (*Cumorah's Southern Messenger* March 1951: 41-42). The Mormons continued to play and promote the game of basketball in Southern Africa through the rest of the decade; however, the tournaments in Lourenço Marques were always considered the highlight.

That basketball would have been considered an example of American popular culture in South Africa there should be no doubt. “Basketball is unique: the only truly American game,” claims Glenn Dickey in the opening lines of *The History of Professional Basketball since*

1896 (1982: 3). “Even the Russians don’t claim it. The English game of rounders may have influenced the invention of baseball, and rugby is clearly the forerunner of football, but there was never a game remotely resembling basketball until Dr. James Naismith invented it in the Autumn of 1891 at Springfield, Massachusetts” (1982: 3).

Of course the sport had spread since its inaugural gym class games held at Springfield’s Young Men’s Christian Association school where Naismith, a Canadian physical education teacher, first developed the game in order to fill the need for an indoor-winter sport and is now played throughout the world. However, Dickey’s comment that the game is uniquely American is not really contestable as only in America was the game so fiercely played and followed. Naismith himself recognized this fact as evidenced from the following quote found in his *Basketball: Its Origin and Development*: “The spread of basketball has been both extensive and rapid. The game was introduced into the foreign countries soon after its origin, and it spread here in the United States so rapidly that I have been unable to determine accurately just when many parts of the country took up the game. There is little doubt but that there are more people playing basketball in the United States than in all the foreign countries” ([1941] 1996: 110-111).

As the popularity of the game spread across the United States during the first half of the twentieth century it quickly became an integral component of American culture with professional, collegiate, youth, and informal leagues cropping up all across the country. The cities, towns, and rural communities in Utah were not exempt from the influences of basketball and like everywhere else in the country, shooting hoops was a prominent thread in the Mormon tapestry (Kimball 2003).

Although the impact the Mormons had on the development of basketball in South Africa was nowhere near as influential as that of baseball, the mission’s continued reliance on promoting and participating in American sports in South Africa is interesting. Of note is that role that Evan Wright played throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s as he was an original member of the Cumorah Baseball Club, a player for the Wembley Americans, a salesman of American ice cream, and as president of the mission during the Lourenço Marques trip, the head coach of the Mormon Yanks. It must also be recognized that the Mormon reliance on American sports was not unique to their experience in South Africa. Baseball, especially in Great Britain, was a popular missionary tool in the 1930s and then later in a controversial program exposed dramatically by the historian of Mormonism D. Michael Quinn in the 1950s

and 60s.<sup>131</sup> However, in a reverse of the situation in South Africa, it was basketball that the greater percentage of Mormon missions utilized in order to further their religion's efforts internationally. For example, during basketball's inaugural year as an Olympic sport in 1936, the host German team was actually coached by four Mormon missionaries.<sup>132</sup> While the history of this encounter is fascinating a more pertinent example for our study is found when one explores the history of basketball in Australia and one of the country's most dominating early teams, the Mormon Yankees. Organized in 1937 in Melbourne, the team began competing against local sides at the city's YMCA and won the organization's tournament the following two years. Similar to the situation in South Africa, with missionaries spread throughout the country other Mormon teams were formed in various cities and the term "Mormon" quickly became synonymous with basketball. The Yankees themselves rose to prominence in 1955, traveling across the country for the next five years competing against the nation's top players and teams. Again like the Cumorahs, the Yankees received large amounts of news coverage and positive publicity for their foreign religion (Woods 2012). The Yankees are an excellent example of how Mormons cleverly capitalized on their American heritage and their cultural appreciation of American sports.

## *Conclusion*

It was through the utilization of three fundamental aspects of American popular culture, baseball, ice cream, and basketball that Mormons finally started promoting themselves as American. The timing of these strategies could not have been better as they rode upon the wave of Americanization that South Africa was experiencing as a result of its booming mineral and industrial economies. The natural result of this was that Mormonism itself transformed into an American religion. With articles like James Arcot's "Mormons Among Us," imploring South Africans to associate Mormonism with basketball and baseball rather than with polygamy, evidence of the effectiveness of Don Mack Dalton and Even P. Wright's

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<sup>131</sup> The programme was instituted by T. Bowring Woodbury and has become known popularly as "baseball baptisms." In order to convert large numbers of individuals, Woodbury authorized his missionaries to play the American game with young teenage boys and then inform them that to continue to play on the missionaries' teams they would need to be baptized. Thousands of converts were gained; but few realized what it was they committing to. See D. Michael Quinn's "I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era" (1993); Richard Mavin's "The Woodbury Years: An Insider's Look at Baseball Baptisms in Britain" (1996); and *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The British Isles* (Cynthia Doxey et al., 2007).

<sup>132</sup> See Richard Ian Kimball's "Making the Most of Leisure: Depression, Recreation, and the *Improvement Era*" (1998) and *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890-1940* (2003); and Jessie L. Embry's and John H. Brambaugh's "Preaching through Playing: Sports and Recreation in Missionary Work, 1911-64" (2009).

strategies was clearly in circulation. Furthermore, Mormonism in South Africa received international circulation when Eric Rosenthal included their history in the country in his book on Americans in South Africa. As a result, the religion's un-American nineteenth century past was slowly slipping away and being replaced by a new image complete with baseball diamonds, ice cream drive-ins, and basketball hoops painted primarily in red, white, and blue.

## **Conclusion: Peripheral Positions, Central Concerns**

This dissertation has attempted to construct a map of Mormonism in South Africa based on transatlantic circulations between America and South Africa in order to discover if the Mormon experience in the country can be considered distinctly American. The results have proven that one conclusive map cannot tell the whole story and that multiple illustrations are required for the full picture to come into focus. The main reason for the varied perspectives is the amount and nature of the territory traversed. From nineteenth-century missions to the establishment of ice cream parlours, Mormon circulations between America and South Africa have left their mark on the nation's ever-changing landscape. Despite the variances in territory the one constant that has remained steadfast throughout the study has been the peripheral location of both the religion in the country and the country within the religion. Mormonism has never played a central role in South Africa, nor has South Africa ever played a central role in Mormonism. However, what this study has revealed is that notwithstanding the views from these peripheral positions, and indeed because of them, important alternative perspectives on some of the most central concerns of America, Mormonism, and South Africa can be acquired.

The very nature of this study demands a methodological understanding of comparison, and the decision to utilize the theories of Jonathan Z. Smith and David Chidester has allowed the work to include analyses of incongruence, juxtaposition, and the process of producing, authenticating, and circulating knowledge about religion, religions, and the religious. Through Smith's understanding of mapping and the acknowledgment that all scholars and their subjects have preconceived maps already in place before research even begins, it is conceded that a map of Mormonism can never be published without America present. However, by employing Smithian and Chidesterian methodologies of comparison, based primarily on difference and the evaluation of two seemingly opposite entities, a map of Mormonism with South Africa at the centre and America on the periphery is not only conceivable but highly revealing. As a consequence of this approach, another main strategy of this work has been to complicate and not clarify the question of whether the Mormon experience in South Africa has been distinctly American. At times the answer has been yes, the most overt example being the Mormon mission's utilization of American popular culture

to reinvent its image during the first half of the twentieth century; and in other instances the answer has been no, perhaps the most glaring case being in regards to Mormonism's policies of racial prejudice that resembled, albeit on a much smaller scale, South Africa's system of apartheid. However, regardless of which country is featured more prominently on the map, the territory traversed intersects frequently with many of the central concerns of both countries, especially with regard to their distinct histories of religion, religions, and the religious.

The first chapter of this dissertation is a clear example of peripheries and centralities. During the nineteenth century the Mormon mission in South Africa never exceeded more than half a dozen missionaries at any one time, and that is if you include local converts operating within their own spheres of influence. During its twelve years in existence, 1853-65, the mission had limited success, converting an estimated number of only three hundred individuals. There are a number of reasons for this. First, despite their calling America home, the missionaries were not viewed as Americans in the country but as an 'other', preaching an unknown and largely unwanted form of Christianity. Second, accepting their message meant emigration from a land that most were still only first or second generation inhabitants of during a time fraught with frontier wars and the desire to protect one's newly acquired property. Third, one of the central messages of the mission was that God had reinstated polygamy, a practice that very few Christians could come to terms with. Fourth, because of the prophetic policy of racial prejudice, the Mormon missionaries largely ignored the vast majority of potential converts in South Africa by only proselytizing to white Europeans residing in the colonial settlements. As a result of their mission, messages, and missed opportunities, Mormonism in the nineteenth century dwelt along the periphery of South Africa. However, its peripheral position did not mean that the religion was absent from some of the most central concerns of nineteenth-century missionaries in the country.

As exemplified by the debate between the Anglican Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, and the ABCFM missionary, Lewis Grout, the South African traditional religious practice of polygamy was a pressing issue for nineteenth-century Christian missions. Colenso advocated a sympathetic approach in which a convert would be allowed to continue to support his multiple wives while living only with his first. Grout and the other Americans were unwilling to allow that true conversion could take place without the total renunciation of all marriages except one. Multiple lengthy works were published by various participants in the debate, with Mormonism—though never specifically Mormonism in South Africa—being

utilized by Colenso's opponents to sarcastically illustrate the ridiculousness of advocating tolerance of such a tenet. Although very much aware of the dispute, Mormons never considered themselves a part of it as they, too, considered South African traditional polygamy as a perversion of their restored and heavenly-sanctioned belief. Even while residing on the periphery of the central debate, the analysis of Mormonism's inclusion should be of interest to those concerned with nineteenth-century Christian missions in South Africa.

The nature of the debate between European and American missionaries in South Africa resulted in numerous transatlantic circulations, some of which were printed in Mormon newspapers in England and the United States. In America, the central concern of polygamy was an even larger issue than in South Africa, with the government picturing it alongside slavery as the two most morally reprehensible institutions existing in the country. In America, Mormonism was at the forefront of this 'problem' and despite its anti-Americanness, Mormon leaders continued to advocate the practice until 1890 when the United States' government upheld the anti-polygamy legislation that would have resulted in the disincorporation of Mormonism altogether. The alternative perspective of polygamy on the periphery in South Africa is an important viewpoint for scholars of the history of religions as it opens the door of comparative analyses between two very different religions—Mormonism and South African Traditional Religion. As a result of my own comparative study of these two religions, the argument that nineteenth-century Mormonism was not American but South African has been forwarded. When coupled with another historically important field of inquiry about America, Mormonism, and South Africa—the nineteenth-century British adventure novel—the concept of transatlantic circulations of missions, messages, and missed opportunities emerges as a central concern.

In America, Mormonism, and South Africa polygamy is still an area of central concern for many. In April 2012 South Africa's president Jacob Zuma married a fourth wife at his palatial homestead Nkandla. One circulation found in South Africa's *Mail & Guardian* attempts to make sense of the place that polygamy has within the country's modernizing society. Percy Zvomuya, the author of the article, concludes that for most modern South Africans polygamy is an acceptable alternative lifestyle but he does not agree with those who immediately refer to past culture as the reason it is still a reality in the country. "[South African men] are in polygamy because they want to be with more than one woman. Let's not drag culture into this, it's just personal preference" (Zvomuya 2012). In today's technology driven society, circulations no longer occur in letters mailed across the Atlantic but in

comments posted on websites. One such circulation is found in the remarks of “Yodie Fishing” on Zvomuya’s stance on polygamy. “There are over a hundred polygamous Mormon sects in Utah where tens of thousands of women and children are stripped of their human rights—sexually, physically, and emotionally abused. The question must be answered: How will a Mormon president protect the rights of women and children in the U.S.?” What begins as an article about polygamy in South Africa suddenly turns into a discussion about Mormons, human rights, and the American presidential elections. Mitt Romney’s 2012 campaign to defeat Barack Obama created huge amounts of exposure for Mormonism both in America and throughout the world.<sup>133</sup> In this case, an editorial conversation about the relevance of polygamy in modern South Africa became a stepping stone for a discussion of Mormon fundamentalist polygamy and the capabilities of a Mormon presidential candidate. While my own study has contained polygamy within an historical comparison between nineteenth-century Mormonism and South African traditional religion, perhaps the next step should be to conduct a comparative analysis between the role of the practice in South African and American society with Mormonism serving as the transatlantic link between the two.

The physical circulation of Gobo Fango from South Africa to America is a fascinating narrative of intersections. Born in the midst of the Cape Frontier Wars and the Xhosa-Cattle Killing Movement of 1856-57, Gobo’s peripheral perspective of life in South Africa is of immediate interest to those concerned with this region and time period. His story soon became a ‘slave and Latter-day Saint’ tale as he was indentured as a toddler to a colonial family who would soon embrace Mormonism and emigrate to America. After smuggling Gobo onto the ship and across the American frontier during the first weeks of the Civil War, Gobo’s owner narrowly avoided his detection by abolitionists on several occasions. In Utah, Gobo continued his life of servitude and was put in charge of the Talbot’s sheep and suffered severe frostbite one cold winter. Thought to be unfit for service, the South African was loaned to Mormonism’s Presiding Bishop, Edward Hunter, to help tend his flock. In 1865 slavery was outlawed in America’s Territories and Gobo was finally free. Years later, around the age of thirty, Gobo found himself herding his own sheep in a southern Idaho valley when a local landowner charged him with trespassing on his property. Gobo knew his rights and believed he was not in violation of any law; a dispute broke out and the rancher pulled a gun on the sheepman and although he survived the initial bullet wounds, Gobo’s life was soon

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<sup>133</sup> For one review of the increase in academic attention see Jennifer Schuessler’s *New York Times* article “The Mormon Lens on American History” (2012).

over. However, in legend his story has been recited and circulated from a number of perspectives in America and South Africa to the point where one is left wondering whether he was a South African slave or a Latter-day Saint. Regardless of which answer one favours, the finding that Gobo's life and legend is filled with transatlantic circulations between America, Mormonism, and South Africa that intersect with such central concerns as emigration, slavery, and the Wild West results in his history being of great importance for historians of the religion and the two nations.

With the publication of Glen E. Page's *Gobo Fango* (2012), the modern relevance of Gobo's American story is clear. As one of the few blacks residing in the Wild West, Page's circulation of Gobo as a "Black American Hero" is telling of the need for modern tales about African Americans on the periphery. In South Africa, the ANC printing specialist, Patric Tariq Mellet has attempted to reclaim Gobo for his country and has pictured him dragging the heavy chains of servitude across the Atlantic. Mormons have also tried to assert the right to possess Gobo's soul and have not only utilized his history as an example of pioneering perseverance but have performed all the sacred rites of the temple for him via proxy. While I have presented these attempts to write the legend of Gobo Fango as strategies of mapping, a scholar like Jennifer Wentzel would see them as an 'afterlife' of a victim of colonialism. The central concern of *Bulletproof: Afterlives of Anticolonial Prophecy in South Africa and Beyond* (2009) is the tracking of the continued existence of millenarian movements—her main case study being the Xhosa Cattle-Killing of 1856-67—in literature that have lingered in the imagination of modern thinkers. In Wentzel's framework, the appearance of Gobo in America, South Africa, and Mormonism is a prime example of the continued existence of an individual's afterlife. In my own study, his legend is considered a central transatlantic circulation between the three.

The third chapter of this dissertation builds upon the two early discussions and examines Mormonism's policy of racial prejudice in South Africa. As a region within Mormonism with little more than 7 000 members by the year 1978, South Africa was certainly never a major concern for the religion in America. Using the same statistic it is also clear that the religion was of peripheral importance in South Africa. However, the matter of race relations, segregation, and discrimination was of central concern for all three. As perpetrators of the nineteenth-century interpretation of Africans as the descendants of Cain/Ham/Canaan and thus the heirs of a curse from heaven, Mormonism's policies of prejudice were originally very much American. Indeed, few societies had relied upon

religious justification for enslaving an entire race quite the way ante-bellum Americans residing in the Southern States had. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, America had rescinded all aspects of their former beliefs and the country was moving towards a worldview where all races were defined as equal. Consequently, Mormonism in America could no longer be viewed as American. Interestingly, across the Atlantic Mormonism's racial policies were very much at home in apartheid South Africa. Segregation, the abhorrence of miscegenation, and the avoidance of blacks in terms of religion were all aspects of Mormonism that resonated with the Afrikaners. Recognizing these points of congruence, Mormons in South Africa exploited not only the similarities between their racist policies but also their shared pasts of oppression and freedom seeking. Based on the Mormons' own willingness to connect with Afrikaners, another comparative study has resulted in the Mormon experience once again being pictured as South African, not American.

After 1978 the status of the Mormon experience in South Africa was altered greatly. The religion no longer believed in the inferiority of the African and consequently Mormonism was no longer South African. Shifting back across the Atlantic, Mormonism has definitely become an American religion in South Africa over the past thirty five years and is comparable to such churches as Seventh-day Adventism and Jehovah's Witnesses (see Clasquin 1999). Still occupying a peripheral position in the country, one of the most central concerns about Mormonism for South Africans is the lack of role played after their 1978 policy reversal in the struggle for equal rights and freedom of all South Africans. In post-apartheid South Africa, Mormons "doggedly keep on going in the face of social disapproval" (Clasquin 1999: 47); however, with very few circulations about Mormonism emanating from South Africa, this "social disapproval" is not defined in terms of former policies of prejudice but in matters of theology and the lack Christian solidarity.

On the other hand, circulations about Mormonism in South Africa originating in America have never been so prevalent. Specifically, since 1978 Mormonism has utilized the image of individual black South Africans with personal narratives that exemplify the religion's new-found emphasis on equality, unity, and growth. Circulations of these black South Africans often give a false impression of the religion's status in the country; however, they continue to be circulated as authentic representations of Mormonism in South Africa. In addressing the central research question of this dissertation, the analysis of Mormons and race

in South Africa has resulted in the construction of multiple maps, with both America and South Africa featuring prominently depending on the time the territory was navigated.

An example of a recent Mormon circulation between America and South Africa examining these themes is Russell Stevenson's "Healing Racial Wounds: The Johannesburg Temple and Apartheid" (2013). Although mentioned above in connection with the image and representation of Julia Mavimbela, the article offers insight into many of the central concerns of Chapter Three such as the history of the policy of prejudice in South Africa, the comparative connection between Mormons and Afrikaners, and Mormonism's post-1978 emphasis on equality, unity, and growth. One of the most revealing subjects the piece discusses is found in the following quote:

In 1981, the Church made a monumental announcement: there would be a temple constructed in Johannesburg. Even more significant, the church announced that it would be a racially-integrated building. Even as the Church made the announcement, racial violence between protesters and police racked the streets of Johannesburg. In 1985, the temple dedication was held on a day of a terror-enforced boycott in Johannesburg; any black found in white areas would likely be identified as a collaborator with apartheid. Committed to attending the temple dedication with her children, Mavimbela wrapped her son's arm with a cloth and told the black guards that she was struggling to reach a hospital (which, fortuitously, was within walking distance of the temple). (Stevenson 2013)

The construction and eventual designation of the Johannesburg temple as a place of equality was a major pronouncement from Mormon leaders in America that Mormonism in South Africa was now a location of central concern. By advocating that black Mormons were welcome to attend, the religion was making one of its most overt statements against apartheid and the discrimination of black South Africans. These intersections between Mormonism, America, Afrikaners, and South Africa require further examinations and would benefit greatly from white South African Mormon perspectives.

The final chapter of this work pictures Mormonism clearly in red, white, and blue. As active participants in the Americanization of South Africa, Mormon missionaries from America assisted in the development of both baseball and basketball in the country. During this same period, 1930s-50s, three former American missionaries in South Africa returned to the country with an idea to manufacture and sell American ice cream in an American-styled

drive-in parlour. As disseminators of American popular culture during a time of Americanization in South Africa, Mormons placed in circulation the image of themselves as distinctly American. As far as sports, entertainment, and cuisine are concerned, baseball, basketball, and American ice cream have never developed into central features of South African society; however, during this time of American expansion in the country, emphasizing these forms of American popular cultural gave new life to the mission when it needed it most. Consequently, the central concerns of this chapter of the Mormon experience in South Africa are those dealing with American and South African relations as well as the expanding narrative of the utilization of sports in Mormon missionary efforts throughout the world.

One of the most direct circulations linking America, Mormonism, and South Africa was produced by Eric Rosenthal in 1938. Rosenthal was a South African lawyer who aspired to be a non-fiction writer. Witnessing the Americanization of his country first hand, the South African seized an opportunity to capitalize on this phenomenon and wrote a book which he aptly titled *Stars and Stripes in Africa*. The work was meant to appeal to the “camera-carrying, gum-chewing” American tourists who were greeted throughout South Africa with great fanfare (Rosenthal 1979: 123). The scope of the research was impressive, beginning with Christopher Columbus and including accounts of mining companies, Daniel Lindley’s ABCFM mission, Marcus Garvey, sports, and the American automobile plants in Port Elizabeth. Somehow, amidst all these great individuals and achievements, the Mormons were allotted an entire chapter; and what is even more impressive is Rosenthal’s research was not concerned at all about the origins of the religion in America like most histories, but dealt solely with the religion’s presence in South Africa. With little more than 1 300 members in the country by 1938,<sup>134</sup> one has to wonder how the religion earned a mention in Rosenthal’s study. Because of the nature of the book, plausible answers can only be viewed through an American lens and in no way were the Mormons more American than in their participation in the game of baseball in South Africa. Although Rosenthal’s work was published over seventy five years ago, the vast majority of all subsequent studies addressing the Americanization of South Africa can be traced back to this seminal effort. Consequently, anyone interested in the history of the relations between America and South Africa has been made aware of the Mormon experience in South Africa. Despite its peripheral position in the country, being

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<sup>134</sup> The figure recorded by Rosenthal was even less, 1 018 (1938: 103).

included in this central transatlantic text has exposed the presence of Mormonism in South Africa to a wide and diverse audience interested in America, Mormonism, and South Africa.

This dissertation is not a history of Mormonism in South Africa but a history of religions analysis of the Mormon experience in South Africa presented through a series of transatlantic circulations between America and South Africa. Can this Mormon experience be defined as distinctly American? At times yes; at others no. As this dissertation has shown, answering this question depends upon tracking historical circulations, mapping changing territories, and engaging in the work of comparison.

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