

*Chapter 2*

# Joseph Smith's Legacy in Latin America and the Pacific

*Grant Underwood*

MUCH IS BEING said about the Prophet Joseph Smith, the man who “has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). I wish to add a single furrow to that well-ploughed field. I will do so not by reviewing the impressive though well-known numerical growth or extensive construction program of the Church in Latin America and the Pacific, but by focusing on the undergirding vision that for many years motivated the outreach to these areas. I speak of Joseph Smith's remarkable conception of the identity and destiny of the indigenous peoples of Polynesia and the western hemisphere.

Before doing so, I desire to express my profound gratitude for having had the extraordinary opportunity these past four years of working closely with all the known private and public papers of the Prophet Joseph Smith. How my love for him has deepened is best illustrated by an experience I had before my mission. As a youth, I had never met my Uncle Harold Nelson, because he was shot down over the North Sea just six weeks before V-E Day. However, my grandparents lovingly kept his four slender mission diaries prominently displayed on one of their bookshelves. As I was preparing to serve a mission, I asked if could read Uncle Harold's diaries. They gladly

consented, and over the next few months I became well acquainted with him.

I read of his triumphs and his challenges, as well as the humor and heartache in his mission life. I felt I glimpsed something of his personality as well as his spirituality, and I grew attached to him. The same outcome has resulted from my recent work with the Joseph Smith Papers. Though I have been involved in religious education for more than two decades, the Prophet has come alive to me in a way he never had before. Scrutinized at the closest range, I can say that not only was he a remarkable prophet and gifted Church leader, but he was also a very appealing human being, a man whom I have come to love and admire deeply.

To segue into my presentation, I would say that, for me, one of Joseph's most attractive attributes was his sensitivity to the poor and oppressed. Nowhere was this more powerfully expressed than in the exalted vision he communicated of the true nature of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. In an era that was dominated by negative stereotypes of the Indians, bloody conflict and territorial acquisition, and too many "trails of tears," Joseph Smith set forth a dramatically different vision of who the Native Americans were and what their future should be. He infused new life and meaning into the biblical image of Gentile "nursing fathers and mothers" and left a legacy of compassion and nurture that continues to inspire us today. Of course, as President Boyd K. Packer reminded us in the April 2005 general conference, ultimately the credit goes not to Joseph Smith but to God, who is love. Still, Joseph as prophet was no human fax machine. He was a unique human being who had to have the cluster of personal qualities and the kind of heart that could receive and promote such a vision.

That vision was first set forth in the Book of Mormon. Indeed the book itself was destined to play a pivotal role in helping reverse the fortunes of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas and the Pacific. When the book's first 116 translated pages were lost, the Lord severely chastised the Prophet but affirmed, "Nevertheless, my

work shall go forth, . . . and for this very purpose are these plates preserved, . . . that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord” (D&C 3:16, 19–20).

Later, Joseph translated the book’s title page. It boldly announces that while Jew and Gentile would also benefit from its message, it was particularly “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel . . . to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever” (Book of Mormon, title page).

Anyone who has read the Book of Mormon knows that it consistently places ethnic Israel at the center of human history. One of the book’s prophecies goes so far as to justify the formation of the United States in terms of its potential service to the indigenous remnants of Israel. Christ tells Lehi’s descendants that in the future the Gentiles would be “established in [America], and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that [the Book of Mormon] might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which hath covenanted with his people, O House of Israel” (3 Nephi 21:4). Envisioning the foundation of a free country in the Americas to facilitate the carrying of the restored gospel and its accompanying text to native peoples was a rather remarkable inversion of the social hierarchies of the day. The Gentile colonizers—white Americans—could repent, “come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob” (3 Nephi 21:22), but their blessings were to come through adoption into the house of Israel by being numbered with Indians and islanders, not vice versa (see 1 Nephi 14:1–2; 2 Nephi 10:18–22; 2 Nephi 30:1–2; 3 Nephi 16:13; 21:6, 22–24; 29:1–9; 30:1–2, for examples of Book of Mormon passages where this perspective is evident). In the Book of Mormon, Gentiles are portrayed as servants, not masters, as nursemaids to royal heirs, and as adopted rather than natural children.

Though the Book of Mormon presents Israel's current condition as a faint shadow of its former self, the book is also replete with promises of its restoration, both spiritually and temporally.<sup>1</sup>

In the heyday of "manifest destiny," such rhetoric was not calculated to win friends for the Prophet. And it certainly was out of tune with the tenor of the times to assert, as did Joseph Smith, that America actually belonged to the Lamanites and that one day it would be their millennial inheritance. Some of the Prophet's associates, fired with his grand, if unconventional, vision, interpreted portions of 3 Nephi in ways that now seem overenthusiastic. Parley P. Pratt, for instance, assured the Native Americans that with respect to the dominant white population, "The very places of their dwellings will become desolate except such of them as are gathered and numbered with you; and you will exist in peace, upon the face of this land, from generation to generation. And your children will only know that the Gentiles once conquered this country, and became a great nation here, as they read it in history; as a thing long since passed away, and the remembrance of it almost gone from the earth."<sup>2</sup> Another of the Prophet's followers warned his fellow Americans that "the cries of the red men, whom you and your fathers have dispossessed and driven from their lands which God gave unto them and their fathers for an everlasting inheritance, have ascended into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."<sup>3</sup> To say the least, such rhetoric seemed unduly solicitous of the lowly Indian.

1. The Book of Mormon view of the eschatological restoration of Israel and the role Gentiles will play in this is discussed at greater length in Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 29–31, 67–69, 77–83, 90–92.
2. Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York: W. Sandford, 1837), 191. This portion of the text was deleted by Pratt in his second edition (1839) and was not restored in subsequent editions.
3. Charles B. Thompson, *Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon* (Batavia, NY: 1841), 229–30.

## Outreach to the Lamanites

Given such sentiments and given the Book of Mormon's persistent proclamation of the restoration of latter-day Israel, it is not surprising that in this dispensation the first formal mission to a specific group of people was to the Lamanites. Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, and others trudged a thousand miles, mostly on foot, to arrive at the newly organized Indian Territory in present-day eastern Kansas to deliver the message. When just days into their mission the government Indian agent confronted them with the ultimatum to either move east out of Indian Territory and into Missouri or west into the Fort Leavenworth guardhouse, the mission was temporarily aborted. For many Saints, here ends the story of the Prophet's outreach to the Indians. Not so. Fortunately, in recent years, scholars have reconstructed that interesting but little-known history.<sup>4</sup> Suffice it to say, the Prophet never lost sight of what the Lord had in store for the children of Lehi.

A most telling example occurred in the summer of 1843. Because of previously sympathetic dealings with them, a delegation of Pottawatamie Indians sought out the Prophet to be their "father," as they called it to counsel them in temporal affairs. The Prophet replied that he would be pleased to do all that was legally in his power. "I feel interested in the welfare and prosperity of all my red children," he wrote, "and will most cheerfully do them all the good in my power as to do good is what I always delight in."<sup>5</sup> As inevitably has been the case with indigenous peoples the world over, what to do with their land has been a primary concern. The Prophet replied: "In regard to parting with your lands and selling them, I do not think it is best for

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4. Ronald W. Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American during the Joseph Smith Period," *Journal of Mormon History* 19 (Spring 1993): 1–33.
  5. Joseph Smith to Pottawatomie Indians, August 28, 1843, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

you to let them go but to keep them to live upon for yourselves and your children.” After sharing additional counsel, Joseph concluded with a statement that epitomizes the legacy he has passed on to generations of Latter-day Saints who have labored in the Americas and the Pacific. “The Mormons,” he wrote, “are your friends and they are the friends of all men, and I have the very best of feelings to all men and especially towards you my children. I wish you well, and hope the great God will bless you and abundantly supply you with every good thing, and that peace and prosperity may forever attend you and your children.”<sup>6</sup>

Such sympathy has tended to characterize faithful Latter-day Saints ever since, with Joseph's successor Brigham Young leading the way. On one occasion, President Young told the Utah Legislature, “I have uniformly pursued a friendly course of policy towards [the Indians], feeling convinced that independent of the question of exercising humanity towards [them], it was manifestly more economical and less expensive, to feed and clothe, than to fight them.”<sup>7</sup> In the 1850s, Young wrote to Ute Indian Chief Walkara. His letter echoes Joseph Smith's earlier expression to the Pottawatamie. Young told Walkara to remind his people that the Mormons “are their very best friends they have on the earth. . . . While the sun shall shine and the moon shall give her light we are still their friends. And the reason, Friend Walker, that I have before told you. It [is] because the Red Men have descended from the same fathers and are of the same family as the Mormons, and we love them, and shall continue to love them, and teach them things that may do them good. And now, Brother Walker, you have never known me to be ought but your steadfast, undeviating friend.”

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6. Joseph Smith to Pottawatamie Indians, August 28, 1843.

7. Brigham Young, as cited in Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 148.

Then, in a gesture typifying the culturally respectful attitude toward native peoples that would be evidenced by generations of Church leaders and missionaries, he added: "I now send you six large plugs of tobacco, that you may smoke in peace with your friends, remembering that I am one [friend] whilst ever you sojourn upon the earth, earnestly seeking your true welfare, and praying for blessings to descend upon you whilst your actions are guided by the Spirit of Truth."<sup>8</sup>

Jacob Hamblin, not a member of the Quorum of the Twelve but popularly known as the "Apostle to the Lamanites," epitomized the best of Latter-day Saint behavior. On one occasion, a group of Navajo came to trade with him. As was their custom, they stopped on a hill just outside Kanab where Hamblin was then living. They built a smoke and with a blanket signaled their arrival. Hamblin sent his son, Jacob Jr., with a pony to exchange for blankets. "The boy, eager to make a good bargain, kept demanding more and more, and the Indian gave what he asked without much protest. When [Jacob Jr.] arrived home, pleased with himself as a good trader, his father looked at the blankets, and without comment counted out one pile. 'You take these back,' he told the boy. 'You charged too much for the pony; this is all he is worth.' At the camp the Indian was evidently expecting him. 'I know you come back,' the native said. 'Jacob your father? He my father, too.'"<sup>9</sup>

At times, it was envisioned that the family relationship might even become literal rather than just figurative. According to a later recollection by W. W. Phelps, when Joseph Smith arrived in Missouri for the first time in the summer of 1831, the Prophet conveyed the

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8. Brigham Young to Chief Walkara, January 22, 1855, as cited in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 217.
  9. Juanita Brooks, "Jacob Hamblin: Apostle to the Indians," *Improvement Era*, April 1944, 253–54, as cited in Arrington and Bitton, *Mormon Experience*, 155.

word of the Lord thus: "It is my will, that, in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites."<sup>10</sup> That directive has been fulfilled off and on over the years, beginning with Benjamin Grouard's 1846 marriage to the Tuamotuan princess, Tearo, during the first Mormon mission to the South Pacific.<sup>11</sup> Wilford Woodruff kept an extensive and detailed diary from the 1830s to the 1890s. In it, he recorded the essence of a speech President Brigham Young gave just days after entering the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. According to Woodruff, Young desired "that our people would be connected with every tribe of Indians throughout America & that our people would yet take their squaws wash & dress them up teach them our language & learn them to labour & learn them the gospel of there [sic] forefathers & raise up children by them & teach the children & not many generations Hence they will become A white & delightsome people & in no other way will it be done & that the time was nigh at hand when the gospel must go to that people."<sup>12</sup>

Once formal missions were launched among western Indians during the 1850s, Woodruff noted, "President Young said He w[an]ted the Elders to marry the squaws of the Tribes to fulfill the commandment of God &c."<sup>13</sup> And in response to a "fuss" being made over John D. Lee's marrying an Indian woman, President Young, with droll hyperbole, said: "We have sent Elders for several years to go among the Indians [to] marry their squaws & identify themselves with the Indians. Go and live with them but up to this day I could not get an Elder to do it I have said if any man could get appointed to take my place I would show them how it was done."<sup>14</sup>

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10. W. W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, Church Archives.

11. Addison Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, ed. S. George Ellsworth (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 275-77.

12. Wilford Woodruff Journal, July 28, 1847, Church Archives.

13. Woodruff Journal, September 16, 1857.

14. Woodruff Journal, November 18, 1858.

## Missions to the Pacific

How did the Lamanite work come to be extended to the Pacific? In the 1840s, converted whaler Addison Pratt told Joseph Smith he thought the Hawaiians were related to the American Indians. This may have prompted the Prophet to authorize a mission to the Pacific Islands as a significant step toward implementing his stirring April 1843 challenge to the Quorum of the Twelve: “Don’t let a single corner of the earth go without a mission.”<sup>15</sup> Less than a month later, the Quorum met in the Prophet’s Nauvoo office and called Addison Pratt, Noah Rogers, Benjamin F. Grouard, and Knowlton F. Hanks to the Pacific Islands.

On June 1, 1843, without fanfare, but not without deep feelings about leaving loved ones, Pratt and the others quietly commenced their journey to Massachusetts, whence in October they set sail on the whaler *Timoleon* bound for the Pacific Ocean. Nearly seven months would elapse before Pratt disembarked on the island of Tubuai and commenced his mission in what is now French Polynesia. Pratt knew some Hawaiians from his whaling days, and Grouard learned the local tongue quickly and began teaching the gospel to the islander population. It was the first mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in which proselyting was systematically carried out in a language other than English. It was also the first mission outside North America to a non-European people.

From the beginning of the work in the Pacific, the elders felt they were dealing with the house of Israel. When challenged about the value of teaching the native population, George Q. Cannon, one of the original missionaries to Hawaii in 1850, replied, “The soul of a Sandwich Islander or a Lamanite is as precious in the sight of the Lord as the soul of a white man, whether born in America or Europe. Jesus died for one as much as the other.”<sup>16</sup>

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15. Pratt, *The Journals of Addison Pratt*, 114.

16. George Q. Cannon, *My First Mission* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1879), 57.

From such modest beginnings, great things have come. Today, there are hundreds of thousands of Pacific Islander Latter-day Saints, and their faith is legendary in the Church. Samoa was the first country in the world to be completely covered by stakes, and before the recent surge in temple building, there were more temples per capita in the Pacific Islands than in any other area of the Church. Sixth-generation Latter-day Saints can be found in a number of places around the Pacific. Have you ever wondered why it is that the highest national percentages of Church membership today are found in the Pacific Islands or why the only branch of BYU located outside the Intermountain West is located in Hawaii? Is it because Church leaders were looking for a resort location where they and the students could enjoy sun and surf? Have you ever considered why it was that the first temple built outside western North America just happened to be located in the same place?

At first, the connection between Polynesians and the Book of Mormon may not seem obvious. Yet the link noted by Pacific Islanders is to Hagoth and the several boatloads of people who set sail and “were never heard of more” (see Alma 63:5–8). Over time, Hagoth’s voyagers would come to be considered part of Polynesians’ ancestry. In 1913 a group of Maori Saints made the long and arduous voyage from New Zealand to Utah to go through the temple. When they arrived on the West Coast, they telegraphed the First Presidency, “Who knows but that some of Hagoth’s people have arrived, *pea*.” Their leader, Stuart Meha, wrote, “I added the little word ‘*pea*’ (perhaps) not because of any element of doubt on my part but I wanted to raise comment which I succeeded in doing.” Upon their arrival in Utah, leading Church authorities, including President Joseph F. Smith, held a reception for the Maori Saints. Among other things, President Smith said, “You brethren and sisters from New Zealand,

I want you to know that you are from the people of Hagoth and there is no ‘pea’ about it.”<sup>17</sup>

Two years later, speaking at the October 1915 semiannual general conference, President Smith declared, “Away off in the Pacific Ocean are various groups of islands, from the Sandwich Islands down to Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga, and New Zealand. On them are thousands of good people . . . of the blood of Israel. When you carry the Gospel to them they receive it with open hearts. They need the same privileges . . . that we enjoy, but these are out of their power. They are poor, and they can’t gather means to come up here to be endowed, and sealed for time and eternity, for their living and their dead, and to be baptized for their dead.”<sup>18</sup> So he proposed that a temple be built for them, and a sustaining vote was called for. Interestingly, such a prospect had been entertained almost from the beginning of the work in the Pacific. In 1852, less than two years after the first contingent of missionaries arrived in Hawaii, they held a conference at which John Stillman Woodbury spoke in tongues. Elder Frances A. Hammond gave the interpretation, which he recorded in his journal: “The Lord is well pleased with the labors of his servants on the islands and angels of the Lord are near us, that the people we are laboring among are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, that they would be built up on these islands, and that a temple will be built in this land.”<sup>19</sup>

17. Stuart Meha, “The Origin of the Maori,” address delivered April 15, 1962, in *New Zealand: A Short Collection of Items of History*, ed. Glen L. Rudd (Salt Lake City: privately published, 1993), 4–5. Non-LDS support for this position is assessed in Jerry K. Loveland, “Hagoth and the Polynesian Tradition,” *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 59–73.

18. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1915, 8.

19. Francis A. Hammond Journal, October 6, 1852, as cited in Joseph H. Spurrier, “The Hawaii Temple: A Special Place in a Special Land,” 1986 *Mormon Pacific Historical Society Conference Proceedings*.

## Work in the Southern Hemisphere

A similar interest in the seed of Joseph motivated the beginning of the work in this hemisphere south of the United States. It was part of what led Elder Parley P. Pratt to sail to Chile in the 1850s, and it contributed to the early forays into Mexico several decades later. Politics and an entrenched cultural Catholicism made matters difficult in Latin America, but the legacy of Joseph Smith's concern for the children of Lehi persisted. By the twentieth century, other circumstances and motives would blend to expand the work to all peoples of the Americas. Nonetheless, though the initial and ostensible purpose of the first mission to South America was to work with the German immigrants around Buenos Aires and in southern Brazil, there was an early and aborted attempt to take the gospel to the Indians of northern Argentina.

That such people would eventually constitute the greater part of the Latin America harvest was the hope and faith of Elder Melvin J. Ballard, who inaugurated the work in South America. In 1931 he wrote an impassioned interpretation of the several revolutions that had taken place in South America. Recalling the interference the missionaries had received when attempting to reach the Chaco Indians and reflecting on the recent revolutions, Elder Ballard remarked: "Liberty must come before the Gospel message can be very effectively proclaimed among the millions of Indians who are descendants of Father Lehi and members of the House of Israel. The growing demand in all those South American republics for the separation of the church from the state is a very hopeful sign." Then referring to the Book of Mormon, he declared: "This record of America's ancient inhabitants was given to the Latter-day Saints, not essentially for themselves, but chiefly for the benefit of these descendants of Father Lehi, the American Indians. It must go to them, but it cannot go until God has prepared the way. This he is now doing. These numerous revolutions are steps towards that end. The Latter-day Saints do

not, therefore, see disaster in these political disturbances, but rather progress, growth, and development.”

The Book of Mormon predicts both the distress as well as the eventual deliverance of the Indian peoples. Elder Ballard found in the plight of the Indians fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecies. “These predictions have been fulfilled to the letter,” he declared. “No more cruel page in all history can be found than the story of the subjugation of the South American Indian.”

Of course, he felt that the gospel would be the ultimate means of their redemption, but he also hoped that the future would bring what he called “the return of large landed estates to the government for redistribution to the common people.” His Book of Mormon–based concern for millions of disempowered Latin American Indians profoundly influenced his assessment of current sociopolitical affairs as well as the nature of the Mormon mission to Latin America. “God speed every movement,” he concluded, “that looks for the emancipation of the downtrodden and oppressed Indians of South America and prepare us [as Latter-day Saints] that we may discharge our sacred obligation to take the torch of light and truth to them, that they may begin to blossom as the rose and prepare for the return of their former blessings.”<sup>20</sup> What a powerful articulation of the legacy of the Prophet Joseph Smith!

Though in the period following World War II, missionary outreach in Latin America was to all people, many who were taught and baptized traced some part of their ancestry to Father Lehi. Continued interest in the children of Lehi led to the building of secondary schools throughout Latin America and the Pacific. This the Church did in few other areas and never to the extent that it did in the lands of Lehi’s descendants. From the first schools conducted by Caroline Crosby and Louisa Barnes Pratt in French Polynesia in the 1850s to the establishment of schools like Benemerito in Mexico or Lia-

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20. Melvin J. Ballard, “Significance of South American Revolutions,” *Improvement Era*, April 1931, 317–20.

hona High in Tonga in the twentieth century, Latter-day Saints have endeavored to live the legacy of nursing fathers and mothers. And that legacy continues today through the Perpetual Education Fund, though it serves all needy and qualified Saints.

### Socioeconomic Oneness

The Prophet's vision of the Lamanites blossoming as a rose has always fit into an even grander vision of socioeconomic oneness for all God's children. In the same revelation that predicted that the Lamanites would blossom, the Lord warned that "it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore, the world lieth in sin" (D&C 49:20). And elsewhere, with a particular eye to temporal affairs, revelation disclosed, "If ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). Joseph taught that the earth was the Lord's and that its human inhabitants, His children, were stewards who must act with proper regard for the rights of each other. In some of the strongest language in any of the revelations received by Joseph Smith, the Lord warned that "if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion . . . unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment" (D&C 104:18).

This vision has led generations of Saints to sympathize with the socioeconomic plight of Lehi's descendants. Land ownership, as Elder Ballard so poignantly pointed out, has always been at the heart of the tension between indigenous natives and colonizing settlers. Whether it was in reaction to the great *Mahele*, the land division that took place in Hawaii just two years before the arrival of Elder Cannon and companions, or to the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand, Latter-day Saint missionaries have demonstrated solidarity with their indigenous converts on this matter.

In Hawaii, by the end of the nineteenth century, ownership and control of the best agricultural land had shifted into the hands of white men. This was accompanied by the overthrow of the Hawaiian

Monarchy in 1893. However, in the final quarter of the twentieth century, Hawaiian Latter-day Saints themselves would play prominent roles in seeking redress of grievances. A young Hawaiian taxi driver, Sister Louise Rice, was profoundly touched by reading the memoirs of the Queen Liliuokalani. This Mormon mother organized ALOHA (Aboriginal Land of Hawaiian Ancestry) in an effort to improve the situation. ALOHA filed their grievances with the United States government. With the support of Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii, this led to a formal investigation of the overthrow of the monarchy and the illegal possession of Hawaiian lands.

In New Zealand in the late 1800s, mission president W. T. Stewart recorded in his diary the reaction of many a missionary to the plight of the Maori: “Read treaty between natives & English called Waitanga [*sic*] Treaty, made in 1840. It occurs to me that it is like most of the pacts made between whites & natives the world over, especially the aborigines of America, only monuments of deception and fraud.”<sup>21</sup> In a letter to his wife, Alma Greenwood reported the reasons the Maori gave “for having their attention and interest directed to us and the cause we represent.” Among other factors, “They say the churches . . . have been going up, and we have been going down on our own lands. . . . When the white man came here first, he brought the gun to shoot the man. Next he brought the Gospel to shoot the Maori and his land. But the Gospel which you bring shoots the kings, governors, ministers, churches and all.”<sup>22</sup>

Through speech, action, and especially through scripture, Joseph Smith bequeathed to the Latter-day Saints an exalted view of the identity of indigenous peoples in the western hemisphere and in Polynesia, whom they understood to be the children of Lehi.

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21. William Thomas Stewart Journal, September 14, 1883, Church Archives.
  22. Alma Greenwood to F. M. Greenwood, May 14, 1884, Greenwood Scrapbook, Church Archives. A nearly identical version is found in Greenwood, “My New Zealand Mission,” *Juvenile Instructor*, December 1, 1885, 258.

Such a legacy has made generations of Mormon missionaries noticeably more admiring of Native Americans and Pacific Islanders and more comfortable with their cultures than other people of European descent. As one would expect from Caucasians in the past, the Prophet's people were not immune from the racial assumptions of the age. Yet they wore the "white man's burden" more lightly than their Euro-American counterparts.

More than just a lessening of prejudice, however, Latter-day Saints have absorbed the Prophet's profound faith that the descendants of Lehi were in the Lord's hand in special ways. At a time when Church leaders had little positive to say about alleged visions and miracles among European Christians, Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor in the First Presidency, reflected his uncle's legacy in his reaction to Wovoka, the Paiute prophet associated with the Ghost Dance movement and the Wounded Knee Massacre. As to Wovoka's alleged visions, President Smith wrote, "It is in perfect harmony with the order of heaven for ministering spirits or messengers from God or Christ to visit the Lamanites or any other people, as Cornelius of old was visited, and as Christ visited Saul, and for the same purposes."

With regard to the Lamanites, President Smith spoke of God "hasten[ing] their enlightenment by means of dreams, visions, and heavenly manifestations." Smith also made it clear that "the object to be attained by such manifestations as the Lamanites claim to have had, admitting the same to be true and from God, can be no other than to begin the preparation of the Lamanites to receive a correct knowledge of God and of their fathers, and of the holy gospel already revealed and established among men, that they might believe, obey and be saved thereby."<sup>23</sup> From the Hopi to the Hawaiians, Church history in the Pacific and among Native Americans is replete with such accounts.

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23. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1939), 379, 381.

Time has permitted only the briefest glimpse of the Prophet's legacy in Latin America and the Pacific. Fully told, the story will fill volumes, for in one sense, every aspect of Church life and Latter-day Sainthood in these areas can be linked to Joseph's legacy. Yet behind it all was a vision, a vision of ennobling and enabling self-identity, a vision of covenant and promise that encouraged peoples too frequently demeaned and disregarded by technologically advantaged global neighbors to believe in themselves and, paraphrasing Elder David A. Bednar's words in the April 2005 general conference, choose the Lord so that their own longstanding chosenness could be powerfully manifest in their lives. Today, literally millions of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Latin America and the Pacific trace some part of their ancestry to Father Lehi. This remarkable concentration fulfills another of Joseph's prophecies that the day would come "when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing . . . the house of Joseph, of the gospel of their salvation" and that it would "come to pass in a day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language" (D&C 90:10–11). How fully we are witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy in our day.

I, for one, am greatly inspired by, and profoundly grateful to, the Prophet Joseph Smith for doing something so wonderful for peoples who have so much to offer the human family. What a legacy of love, what a legacy of the power of human potential he has left us! That legacy invites us all to remember the Lord's words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

*Grant Underwood is a professor of history at Brigham Young University. This essay was presented at "Joseph Smith and the World," the International Society's sixteenth annual conference, April 2005, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.*