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RESEARCH ARTICLE



A Kaupapa Māori Intervention on Apology for LDS Church's Racism, Zombie Concepts, and Moving Forward

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ABSTRACT

This intervention paper, based on the Kaupapa Māori writing inquiry, aims to offer an alternative path forward to the idea that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should apologise for its racism. It argues that an apology is redundant to the Indigenous World. The goal is for better Church-Indigenous relations in the face of racism rooted in The Book of Mormon, Church Policy, doctrine, teachings, and theology. The author develops a positionality and outlines mahi tuhituhi as a Kaupapa Māori (post) qualitative writing inquiry. The Author then moves to contextualise these issues by framing them with what sociologists describe as Zombie Concepts. A brief overview of the Book of Mormon and its significance in Mormonism is provided. Following that, an understanding of the connection between Aileen Moreton-Robinson's white possessive and Lamanitism is provided. Hagoth and his relationship with Tāngata Moana (Māori and Pacific Peoples) is then addressed. Recent remarks by Thomas Murphy to help readers understand the racism in the Book of Mormon. Other issues for Indigenous Peoples are highlighted, with an emphasis on anachronisms and the Book of Mormon's plagiarism. The investigation then shifts to provide Veracini's commentary on settling to build relationality is discussed from the viewpoint of Aotearoa New Zealand. A discussion of the issues is followed by an outline of the research's consequences, which include seven issues that need to be addressed as part of the relationality building in order to create a collaborative future values-based project to move Church-Indigenous relations forward in a positive way.

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The pursuit of 'decolonisation' is not an aesthetic or political choice but a fundamental and ontological necessity for Indigenous peoples. (Simon 2022b, 1)

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Dedication: This research is written in loving memory of Te Reoirirangi Wall, e te whaea moe mai, haere atu ki a rātou mā, kia tau to moe.

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Introduction

Christianities have a long history in Aotearoa New Zealand, and they were part of a colonial civilising project that tried to control Māori culture through a Eurocentric moral and spiritual authority (Aspin and Hutchings 2007; Colvin and Dewerse 2022; Simon and Le Grice *forthcoming*). Some Māori communities have accepted features of this new religious perspective, so much so that some may view it as an intrinsic part of their cultural identity. Indeed, Māori academics frequently identify similarities between Christian and Māori ideologies and strive to expand the room for Māori methods inside both religious systems (Aspin and Hutchings 2007; also see Rangiwai 2018; 2019, 2021, 2022). Tania Ka'ai (2008), for instance, describes Indigenous scholars as change agents for our communities, communicating our approaches, needs, and ideas to the religious and religious scholars.

In addition to Ka'ai's (2008) suggestion Manuka Hēnare (1998) comments that Māori religion is not found in a set of sacred books or dogma; the culture is the religion. History points to Māori people and their religion being constantly open to evaluation and questioning in order to seek that which is tika, the right way. In relation to non-Indigenous peoples the assertions made by Ka'ai (2008), Hēnare (1998), and Little Bear (2012) argue that, as Indigenous scholars, it is our responsibility to clarify and outline our peoples' critical views and analyses, in this case in relation to The Mormon Church (as cited in Simon 2022b). Furthermore, it is essential to stress that, in terms of scholarly practice, being pro-Indigenous or an Indigenist does not make me antagonistic towards Mormons; rather, it indicates that I have spent a considerable amount of time contemplating and desiring conversation with the Church and its academics and members. In actuality, it has taken me over a decade to seriously consider and write these papers (Simon 2022a, 2022b).

However, more recently I was questioned by a Church historian and scholar, who shall remain nameless. They stated that what I was doing was technically a waste of time. My response here to that suggestion is that I totally agree. The power dynamics of the Church are not going to change rapidly or in reality any time soon. However, there is one thing that is guaranteed in any social setting and that is change. As society moves towards 'liberalising', the Church has always responded bemoaningly with change. Like with my Indigenous politics work I am fairly aware that the Church operates like the white possessive government here in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is where the power of the status quo is maintained through ideas and policy. In the case of the government, this includes discourses around Te Tiriti of Waitangi while in The Church it is the Lamanite identity politics. With the government and the realisation of mana motuhake, I openly state that I am aware that some of this content may seem tactically unfeasible. If asked, I will respond. I work for the future. They will complete my task and achieve the impossible. My job is for 30 years after the [political] climate changes. Despite government policy, Māori have done a lot in 30 years. Dreaming is our only hope. I want to restore hope; what colonisation took away (Simon 2016, 91–92).

I am here to advocate, and if required, facilitate intercultural dialogue between Indigenous Peoples (based on Kaupapa Māori framework and worldview) (See Simon 2022a) and leadership, members and scholars of the Church. Part of this involves outlining ways in which the Church can be(come) post-colonial move towards relationality and anti-

racist ontology with Indigenous and other peoples of colour. Opponents of this line of scholarship that privileges Indigenous perspectives, ontology, and culture must consider why the church is experiencing a rapid exodus of members, how its ontology of ignorance, racism, white supremacy and possessiveness, spawned by ideas such as ‘follow the prophet,’ (See Alder and Edwards 1978; Benson 1980) and a position of retaining members at all costs contributes to how activists, YouTube vloggers, and scholars like myself are ‘winning’ the argument for the Church to become more ethically sound.

To assist in our understanding, I have previously encouraged scholars in Mormon and Lamanite Studies to identify where they sit in relation to decoloniality and the Church (Simon 2022b). I clearly position myself as seeking decolonisation for all Indigenous Peoples (see Simon 2022b). In this case that would be for the allowance of Indigenous People to follow the original instructions, as described by Melissa Nelson (2008), of their respective cultures. However, as I have previously stated that for critical Indigenous scholars, full decolonisation is ideal. However, I am realistic, though. Religion has wide-ranging effects. No one exists in a social vacuum. Mormon leaders teach abandoning Indigenous culture when it hinders submission to Jesus, church leaders, or patriarchy. This is necessary to enter the celestial kingdom. High-demand religions like Mormonism demand full adherence to the Church effectively colonises and possesses your Indigenous soul. I have suggested that the next best alternative to a decolonial church is to be post-colonial and Indigenous inclusive church (Simon 2022b).

Indigenous people face obstacles to decolonisation. Being Indigenous is difficult, so people may move along the spectrum line throughout their lives. Language, culture, identity, and knowledge access are barriers to this. The Church must be honest with its members to find a middle ground and ethical approach (Simon 2022b). Therefore, within this proposal for engagement and dialogue is a recognition for the Church to change and affirm a place for Indigeneity within and outside of it that honors that sovereignty or mana.

There are eleven sections to this essay. Since I am looking to introduce Critical Indigenous Studies theory to Mormon and Lamanite Studies the sociological theory of ‘*Zombie Concepts*’ will be introduced.¹ Following this, I will provide an explanation as to what is the Book of Mormon (hereafter, BOM) and what role it plays in Mormonism. The relationship between Lamanites and Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s White Possessive will then be explored in this article. A discussion of how the BOM character Hagoth connects Lamanitism to Tāngata Moana² will be provided. It is essential to provide Thomas Murphy’s emerging arguments on how the BOM is racist towards Indigenous Peoples. Outlining some other problems for the BOM will be provided to the reader. From here a discussion on relationality based on his recent political works, focusing on Lorenzo Veracini’s Commentary on Settling and the Collective Future. This will include commentary on Carwyn Jones’ Māori Constitutional Values. Lastly, a discussion of the issues raised and the implications of this research will be given. The Author will then provide eight suggestions towards building a collective future values-based project to move Church-Indigenous relations forward based on being post-colonial. The next section will outline the Kaupapa Māori (post) qualitative methodology as Mahi Tuhituhi.

Mahi Tuhituhi as (Post) Qualitative Writing Inquiry³

Before reframing ‘apology’ through the ‘zombie’ lens it is important to articulate the Kaupapa Māori approach⁴ that underpins the whole discussion. *Mahi Tuhituhi* is a (post)qualitative⁵ Kaupapa Māori research approach based on the work of Georgina Stewart (2021). Kaupapa Māori research serves the purposes of this article as a fundamental, well-established Indigenous research practice. Indigenous Mahi Tuhituhi is a form of Kaupapa Māori writing inquiry aimed at investigating the use of academic writing as a vehicle for critical Māori ideals and political goals. As a method, Mahi Tuhituhi is consistent with a view of Kaupapa Māori as a use of the written word to speak back to the Eurocentric ‘archive’ underpinning the entire academy (Stewart 2021; also see Simon 2022c).

As Stewart (2021) claims in ‘Kaupapa Māori Research, Understanding Writing as a Māori Method of Inquiry’, the art of writing allows Māori academics to push the bounds of academic traditions and procedures. Writing and research practices of all kinds entail serious ethical considerations and stand to benefit from Kaupapa Māori principles. Foremost among these are principles to commit: (1) to reflexive interrogation of one’s own presuppositions, ideas, and judgments over and beyond—but not to the exclusion of—empirical, qualitative research methods; and (2) to elevate and exercise Māori conceptions of community, ethics, intellectual deliberation and sovereignty within the domain of academia as a means of decentering Western epistemic norms, reclaim control of Māori representation in the public arena, and reposition research within histories and worldviews made by, for, and with Māori (Stewart 2021).

In contemporary social science research, there is a persistent imbalance in favour of empirical qualitative research. ‘Conducting interviews’ has become practically synonymous with ‘doing research’, a broader underlying confidence in ‘empirical data’ and ‘method’ that suggests the lingering impact of narrow scientism (Pipi et al. 2004; Simon 2022c; Sorell 2013; Stewart 2021). This discrepancy is even more prominent in Māori research given the emphasis on foregrounding Māori voices and a cultural predilection for face-to-face techniques; for instance, ‘kanohi-ki-te-kanohi’ or ‘kanohi kitea’ (Pipi et al. 2004). As a corrective to this imbalance, Kaupapa Māori research places the activity, experience, or process of Māori textual production front and centre. In part, the idea is to identify those moments in the act of textual production where calcified or insufficiently dynamic Western academic research norms surreptitiously shape one’s decisions under or as the neutrality of ‘methodology’. This is a step away from being the subject of—or subjected to—others’ research methods and questions and towards reflexive, critical, and constructive participation.

From a Kaupapa Māori perspective, therefore, every research decision should be scrutinised, from the initial choice of topic to the minutiae of methodological and stylistic choices. A crucial part of Kaupapa Māori research is the willingness to question one’s own ideas and judgements (Stewart 2021). As Stewart (2021, 41–42) highlights:

I am bound to write from my identity as a Māori, but my arguments also apply more generally under the umbrella category of Indigenous research ... ‘writing’ (in English, Te Reo Māori or both) is a powerful method for exploring what it means to be Māori: a way to interrogate Māori subjectivities and advance Māori political aspirations. (Stewart 2021, 41–42)

The approach taken in the present article consciously aligns with these principles. Rather than explaining Kaupapa Māori theory and methods at length, the reflections here are guided by Kaupapa Māori theory, in a sense that Stewart has already elucidated.⁶

Mahi Tuhituhi provides me with an alternate approach to responsive Indigenous research grounded in critique. There is a need to hear the voices of Māori communities that were previously silenced or distorted by Eurocentric research or policy approaches like an apology (see Simon 2022c). But this project is incomplete and cannot lay claim to a radical political orientation—as Kaupapa Māori praxis does—until and unless Māori ethical norms, research designs, and spiritual or philosophical orientations are respectfully integrated into the processes of writing and knowledge production. In other words, if uri (descendants) are the reflection of our tūpuna (ancestors) then those his/her stories, realities, whakaaro (thoughts and teachings), pūmanawa (traits), feelings, mātauranga (traditional knowledge), stories and preferences become visible through writing (see Simon 2022c, 123). Without this, Kaupapa Māori research risks succumbing to what Graham Smith (2012) describes as ‘domestication’.

Mahi Tuhituhi provides for reflexive study of Indigenous politics and policy, bearing in mind that Kaupapa Māori research is politically motivated. The reflexive aspect of this (post)qualitative inquiry extends outwards, as it were, to interrogate collective political and intellectual claims to truth and power (Stewart 2021, 41–54). This underlines the importance of the perspective that emulates from Critical Indigenous studies and the overall goal of this series of papers is to introduce those perspectives into Mormon Studies to bring about an engagement and enlightenment or māramatanga.

This is not a case study in the conventional social science sense is an engagement in writing inquiry. The significant difference here is that I am not engaging in methods other than a focus on writing. That writing is based on the phrase ‘He Mokopuna He Tupuna’⁷ is one that provides a cultural framework for understanding the positioning of tamariki within Te Ao Māori. It is drawn from the following whakataukī:

He tūpuna he mokopuna. Mā wai i whakakī i ngā whawharua o ngā mātua tūpuna? Mā ā tātou mokopuna! He mokopuna he tūpuna. [sic] (Cameron et al. 2013)⁸

This whakataukī draws us to the essence of the whakapapa relationship between generations. It asserts that we are all mokopuna and we are all tūpuna. The mokopuna will in future generations take the place of the tūpuna. All grandchildren in time become grandparents. Each generation links through whakapapa to each other and we are a reflection and continuance of our ancestral lines as commented on by Rangimarie Rose Pere in the lines:

He taonga te mokopuna, ka noho mai hoki te mokopuna hei puna mo te tipuna ka whakaaro tātou tātou ka noho mai te mokopuna hei tā moko mo te tipuna anā he tino taonga rā tōna. He mokopuna rā tātou, he mokopuna anā hoki ngā tipuna (as cited in Daniels 2007). [sic]⁹

The fundamental idea here is in the philosophy of the term mokopuna. When broken down it means:

moko Māori skin art (in this case on the face)

puna a pool

Essentially a grandchild is one that you may see the reflection of their ancestor’s moko as if they are looking into a body of water.

Methodologically, the result of this focus on Indigenous Writing Inquiry with mahi tuhituhi being the method is that no data in this study has been collected. It is a continuation of the Author's work with this method. The purpose is to recapture Indigenous politics with Kaupapa Maori research. The series of papers the Author is engaged with aims to lay a foundation so that discussions and dialogue can take place. The usual approach from Anthropology and other social science disciplines that assumes that case studies or interviews are objective is not so. My engagement and upbringing in a rural Indigenous community and my position from that setting and lived experience are important as my point of view is expressed as writing inquiry. Thus it is a reflection of the politics and culture of Te Arawa waka in the first instance and in the second a reflection of the politics of The Indigenous world. The method is self-reliant on the research which means that there is nowhere to hide your politics. It allows for far more transparency and engagement.

Mahi Tuhituhi is a confirmation of generational links through whakapapa and a continuation of critical reflection of who we are as a people that which seeks to reevaluate the Maori ethical standards of tika and pono.¹⁰ From that validity for this form of method is based on a group validity in its acceptance as tika and pono From here the next section will outline a key theoretical concept Zombie concepts.

Zombie Concepts

Zombie concepts were born out of the work of Ulrich Beck. Rutherford provides a useful definition of the term 'Zombie concept' in that there is a contradiction. People's consciousness is changing faster than their behaviour or social circumstances. This mingling of new consciousness and old conditions has resulted in what Beck refers to as Zombie categories: social forms such as class, family, or neighbourhood that are dead but still alive (Rutherford 2000, 37). Over time this idea has morphed into what is known today as 'Zombie concepts' which are ideas or propositions that 'have lost their social purpose' but still allow for a certain 'we'¹¹ to 'gain from their perpetuation' (Brabazon 2016, 5).

Zombie concepts are ideas of safety, knowledge, and compliance objects or concepts that moved from the past and continue to live in our present (Brabazon 2016, 5). According to Liotta and Shearer (2008), a concept is in a zombie state when it emphasises the state and thus fails to engage the multiple and interdependent processes of change that we now face (Liotta and Shearer 2008). In other words, these are 'dead' concepts that govern our thinking but fail to grasp the complexities of the modern situation. According to Chan, there are social concepts that are dead but are kept alive by scholars in their use to describe the growing fiction of traditional social institutions (Chan 2013).

Simon Southerton and Thomas Murphy's DNA research that discredited the BOM's historical claims are comparable to the 2014 Te Paparahi o Te Raki report that changed Treaty scholarship and policy in Aotearoa New Zealand (Simon 2016; 2022c) This research and Murphy's comments position zombie concepts in Mormon and Lamanite Studies. Concepts like Lamanites, Indigenous Peoples are Lamanites, that Hagoth is an ancestor of Tāngata Moana, Zelfh was a Lamanite, that salvation is a benevolent gift from the Church, that the Church holds the absolute truth, truth claims about Tāngata Moana and Indigenous Peoples of being a BOM peoples and much more. These ideas challenge The BOM's premise and the religion that was founded upon it.

Like the state, such ideas as church-based salvific truths are essential to the maintenance of the Church's power. Church leadership prioritises member retention 'at all costs.' This includes the embedding of ignorance with tropes like 'follow the prophet,' accept their religious point of view, ontology, and their imposed religio-colonial identity based on the BOM. The acceptance of this identity proves the salvific truth of the Church to be true and validates the claims of the Church (Simon 2022b).

Lamanites in relation to the BOM and Church teachings are irrational, toxic, and weird to hold out hope in the symbolic promises of the former, considering the material failures of the latter. The Church truly needs is rethink, reconstruct, and reorganise its social notions and perspectives to bring these up to speed. Subsequently, if the Church continues to insist that the BOM is true and not written by Joseph Smith, Jr. and it is an ancient Native American document—how then do they explain their centuries of cultural appropriation? I believe that The BOM and its racism should be openly questioned and debated inside and outside of the Church because the white possessive mythmaking that promotes The BOM Zombie concepts, like Lamanites are no longer relevant to the reality of Te Ao Māori and The Indigenous world (See Hernandez 2021; Simon 2022b). They are used to perpetuate and benefit Church power based on racism and white possession emanating from BOM and are to be considered zombie concepts in Indigenous/Māori—Church relations.

As The Author previously points out in a Mormon context, Indigenous peoples are considered descendants of Lehi and thus 'Lamanites.' This is a purely artificial context. It is an unjustifiable assumption about the identity and origin of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island, Pachamama, and Te Moana Nui-ā-Kiwa (Simon 2022b). In other words, religious thought operating within this framework is wrong. Indigenous people have a right to reject this artificial context; a context revising freedom is key to Indigenous empowerment. The Critical Indigenous Studies perspective would argue that there is a need to do away with this manufactured context of Lamanitism (See Simon 2022b). A key point made within the scholarship of Elise Boxer is that when this identity of 'Lamanites' is placed upon a group of Indigenous people the Church commits acts of settler colonialism (Boxer 2009; 2011; 2015; also see Kemsley 2022; Simon 2022b).

With these criteria in mind, the zombie features within the culture of Mormonism of salvation and salvific truth are easily identified. While salvation may have meaning for believing Indigenous and White Mormons alike there is a static theological and doctrinal problem that Indigenous peoples accept their lot as a cursed people that need to be made perfectible. Perfectibility comes of course with the realisation of the Mormon settler/invaser colonialism of the Indigenous person turning white and the building of 'Zion' on Indigenous lands (see Simon 2022b). Such stances contradict Indigenous understanding of how we came to be in this world—our original instructions. The idea and notion of salvific truth is a very narrow interpretation of 'truth,' this highlights an ethical and political renegotiations and reconceptualisation of Indigeneity in a Mormon context (see Simon 2022b). Lamanitism is only 'alive' in the imagined religious community of 'Mormonism.' Like with neo-liberalism in regards to biculturalism, as long as Lamanitism holds promise for Mormonism and its adherents hold the BOM to be truth and the resulting promise of salvation the rule will be Indigenous Peoples consistent annoyance and frustration at this imposed religious narrative and paradigm. To further this dialogue we must explore the Author's previous political work on achieving a collective future and relationality.

What is interesting here is that while I may view Lamanitism as an irrelevant concept from a critical Indigenous studies perspective. This perspective is supported by Daniel Hernandez (2021) work towards Global Mormon Studies. Hernandez's purpose in this work is to use it as a starting point, to give room for how this identity may expand beyond its original geographical, racial, and cultural scope within the church—a form of rebellion and redefinition in resistance to the institution and whiteness (Hernandez 2021). Such research I openly welcome. However, whether or not an Indigenous person wishes to utilise and engage their own identity as a 'Lamanite' as outlined by both Hernandez (2021) and Hafen (2018) or reject it, for a number of reasons, as highlighted in my work. The work of Hernandez, Hafen, and I signals the need for change in the Church to be accepting and more open to Indigeneity. As such there is a significant need for intercultural dialogue between the Indigenous world and the Church. With this in mind, the next section will explore the centrality of the Book of Mormon with Mormonism.

The Book of Mormon and Mormonism

The BOM is regarded as sacred scripture by members of The Church. Mormon, a prophet-historian, is credited with compiling and condensing a record of the history, doctrines, and prophecies of an ancient American people group, hence the book's title (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2023b). The book claims these people are all direct descendants of a family that left Jerusalem around 600 B.C. and made their way to the New World. This book chronicles their past, present, and religious doctrines, many of which have their origins in the divine. Because it is considered a second testament to the Bible and contains the full gospel of Jesus Christ (Book of Mormon Central 2018; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints n.d.). The BOM and its teachings are central to Mormon ontology.¹² It is believed to contain concepts and teachings related to salvation, as well as evidence of Jesus Christ's divinity (See Altayeva et al. 2020)

Mormons believe that the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the BOM with God's authority and that it is a second witness of Jesus Christ (see Brown 2020). The book is considered a crucial resource for understanding the plan of salvation and Jesus Christ's role in the salvation of humanity, and it is also thought to be a record of God's interactions with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas (Reynolds 2020)¹³ The BOM is revered by Latter-day Saints as a sacred text whose ideas and doctrines form the basis of the faith and practice of the faithful. It is believed that one can grow closer to Jesus Christ and better understand God's will for one's life by reading, studying, and putting into practise the teachings found in the BOM (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2023a). This foundational background will allow us to engage further with the problem of racism and the BOM, which contributes to a racist Mormon ontology. With this, we will investigate Lamanite, with Aileen Moreton-White Robinson's (2015) *White Possessive Doctrine* serving as a key theorem for this research.

Lamanites and the White Possessive

The LDS Church's teachings about Indigenous people as Lamanites are problematic for Indigenous people because they perpetuate the idea that Indigenous peoples are inferior

and less civilised than white people (Simon 2022c). The Church's teachings also suggest that Indigenous peoples are descendants of an ancient Israelite group called the 'Lamanites,' which many Indigenous peoples find offensive and untrue (Simon 2022b, n.d.; Crowfoot 2021; Murphy and Southerton 2003; Southerton 2004, 2020; Murphy 2002, 2003a, 2005, 2006; Murphy and Baca 2016, 2020; Murphy et al. 2022a; Tenney 2018; Mormon Stories 2017, 2018d, 2018e, 2018f). Additionally, the Church's teachings have been used to justify the forced conversion and assimilation of Indigenous peoples into white American culture, which has led to the loss of their land, culture, and identity (Nelson 2008). For Indigenous peoples, the main problem with Mormonism a significant problem is its founding in whiteness and white supremacy (Colvin 2015; Simon 2022b). However, I have argued that the actual problem is the entirety of the religion and its operations are encapsulated in white possession (Simon 2022b). In recent years, 'Gospel culture' has led the Church to challenge Māori reality and the current cultural revival. With this revival of settler/invasor colonial actions like the implementation of Gospel Culture the Church is trying to maintain its relevance in modern Te Ao Māori via the maintenance of the imposed Indigenous people's religio-colonial identity as 'Lamanites.' Lamanitism opposes 'original instructions' and decolonisation of Indigenous peoples (see Simon 2022b). I also affirm that the Church's teachings make my identity and culturally-informed ontology an offence because they contradict its authority, salvific truth, and power. It challenges the Church's image of Indigenous as lost in a moral and cultural wilderness (see Simon 2022b). A target for white religious perfection.

The Church and White possessive government(s) operate in a similar fashion on Indigenous lands. Like the 'Crown' tells Māori to believe 'treaty-truth,' we're told to trust another colonially abusive institution and its 'Salvaic truth.' Lamanitism is the Church's 'solution' to indigeneity: absolute obedience (Simon 2022b). I argue that Māori and other Indigenous peoples are being asked to believe in 'patriarchal white salvation' an adaptation of Moreton-Robinson's (2015) concept of 'patriarchal white sovereignty.'¹⁴ We are courted by a Church whose structures and beliefs are built on white supremacy; its administration, thinking, practices, doctrine, and ordinances rely on white (and generally middle-class) men who exercise possessive logic otherwise known as patriarchal white salvation (Simon 2022b).

'Our salvation' in Mormonism as Indigenous peoples is based on the notion that we are part of the 'wilderness,' and it is reinforced by the church's adoption of manifest destiny—to locate and preach to the 'Lamanite,' claiming and owning my Indigenous spirituality and belief system. The Church says a white man/missionary/bishop or temple baptismal font will possess my soul which is in the wilderness; I will, as an Indigenous person, always be treated as if I were subhuman and unable to understand their soteriological truth. 'Lamanitism' considers Native Americans and Tāngata Moana racialised tribes (Simon 2022b). Southerton calls the Church's othering of Polynesia is covert racism (as cited in Simon 2022b, 359).

Hagoth

According to The Church and The BOM Indigenous peoples of Te Moana-Nui—Kiwa, Turtle Island, and Pachamama are descendants of Lehi and thus connected to The BOM, according to Mormon universalism. They are chosen people (Aikau 2012, 43; Hernandez

2021; Simon 2022b). Recent genetic testing has disproven any connection between Tāngata Moana, Indigenous Americas, and the BOM; this has resulted in a rise in critical responses to the concept of Lamanites (Murphy 2002, 2004; Murphy and Baca 2016; 2020; Murphy, et al., 2022a; Murphy and Southerton 2003; Southerton 2004; 2020; also see Tenney 2018; Mormon Stories 2017; 2018d; 2018e; 2018f).

According to Robert Parson:

The story of Hagoth is recorded in just six verses (4–9) of Alma 63 [of The BOM]. Great wars between the Nephites and Lamanites had just concluded and there seemed to be a restlessness among the survivors. At that time thousands ... migrated to the land northward. In 55 BC, Hagoth built an ‘exceedingly large ship’ and launched it into the West Sea by the narrow neck of land and went north with many men, women, children, and provisions (Alma 63:5–6). This ship returned in 54 BC, was provisioned and sailed north again never to be heard from thereafter. An additional ship was launched that year, and it also was never heard from again. (Alma 63, 4–9; Parsons 1992)

Loveland explains, ‘What we have here is an account of a colonising movement of men, women, and children who presumably sailed into the Pacific Ocean on ships.’ (Loveland 1976, 59). According to the implicit Mormon belief, Hagoth sailed into the Pacific, where he and his shipload or shiploads of people became at least some of the ancestors of the Polynesian peoples (Simon 2022b). According to Aikau (2012, 42), Mormons believe that Te Moana-Nui—Kiwa and Turtle Island descend from the same lost Israelite tribe. Mormons believe Polynesians originated in the Americas and not via the Western Pacific via Asia. Marjorie Newton states, ‘Although the Church provides no official interpretation of the Hagoth legend [*i.e.* a Nephite from whom Polynesians are allegedly descended], it has been used by Mormon missionaries from Hawai’i to New Zealand to give thousands of Indigenous Peoples worldwide misplaced false hope that they can become ‘white and delightful’ once more (Newton 2014, 24)¹⁵ Māori Religious Studies scholar Gina Colvin comments that

The Hagoth myth is as intransigent as the Great Fleet myth and the Moriori myth. All of which have been largely discredited or bear some very prominent question marks over them. However, all of them have held because they serve some function in either the cultural politics of New Zealand or the religious politics of the Church in New Zealand. (Colvin 2012)¹⁶

Mormonism mimics this process by promoting a religious ideology in which the superiority of Nephites as the ‘good’ people from the BOM is encoded as ‘white and delightful.’ Indigenous populations are also considered to be part of the ‘chosen people’—as Lamanites—but their non-White skin is believed to reflect a curse and a history of spiritual corruption and evilness (Simon 2022b, 366–367).

Emerging Arguments of Racism in the Book of Mormon

2022 marked the 20th anniversary of the pivotal essay *Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics* (Murphy 2002, 44–77) by Thomas Murphy which was followed by the groundbreaking *Dialogue* article entitled, *Simply Implausible: DNA and a Mesoamerican Setting for the Book of Mormon* in 2003 (Murphy 2003b, 109–131). Murphy’s recent re-entry into the realm of Mormon Studies after a hiatus where he focused mainly on Indigenous Environmental Anthropology is a cause to be watched with diligence and interest for

those in the critical, progressive, or decolonial-minded persons with interests in Mormon and Lamanite Studies. More recently, Murphy has been collaborating with others in The Mormon Volggersphere, namely *Mormon Stories* and *Mormonism Live*, to update and showcase his most recent research outcomes. Of most interest to this essay is the Mormon Stories vlog Episode 1646: *Is the Book of Mormon Racist?—Dr. Thomas Murphy Pt. 2* (see Mormon Stories 2022e).

Key to understanding Mormon theology that surrounds his comments in this episode is the phrase ‘mistakes of men’¹⁷ in relation to the BOM refers to any errors or inaccuracies that the human authors or scribes of the text may have made. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consider the BOM to be a sacred text, but it is also acknowledged as a human work subject to the imperfections and fallibilities of its authors. Examples of such errors include typographical errors, misspellings, and translation mistakes (see Murphy 2005; 2019; 2020; Mormon Stories 2022e). Murphy contends that the concepts of race and gender in The BOM reflect the nineteenth-century errors of men ... These concepts provide us with valuable tools for determining when the BOM was written. Because race and gender concepts evolve over time. Consequently, we can date them to the 1820s based primarily on the history of ideas. They also remove men’s errors in the sense that they are false. The concepts of race and gender as they are presented in the BOM do not correspond to what we know today through Biological [and Genetic] sciences. Regardless of whether you believe these ideas originated with Joseph Smith, Mormon, or Nephi, they are the mistakes of men. The BOM admits that it may contain ‘the mistakes of men.’ (Mormon Stories 2022e).

In the interview, one of the hosts, Geraldo, states, ‘We live in a time when Church members do not want to discuss race and the BOM at all.’ (Mormon Stories 2022e). Where the Church is reinterpreting racism in the BOM to exclude the concept of a skin curse. Therefore, as future generations mature, they are unaware that the BOM mentions skin. This exemplifies the current direction the Church is taking in regard to racism. Today’s reality regarding the BOM is that members of the Restoration Movement will attempt to reinterpret it, and this gives them permission to do so. Like Murphy, I would advocate for a reinterpretation and reframing of the BOM, using it as a framework to dismantle the racism and sexism it contains. Murphy argues that this is an olive branch of sorts extended to BOM believers. Murphy adds that it enables us to view it in a manner that is less offensive and alienating, as we must make progress with people who are different from us [Mormons] (Mormon Stories 2022e; Also see Murphy 2005).

The conglomeration that is packaged together in the BOM is found nowhere else but in nineteenth-century New York state in the United States in the 1820s; It really pinpoints the date of the production of BOM. Murphy notes that the ideas of race and gender in the BOM do not reflect Indigenous cultures in North America [or Te Moananui-a-Kiwa]. Murphy further argues that because the United States is focused on skin color here is a clue how we know the BOM came from the United States because of the references to skin color as American racial concepts are based on skin color (Mormon Stories 2022e). That is specific to a time and place. It is exclusive to European colonialism. This began in the fifteenth century when Europeans began exploring the world and encountered people with a wider range of skin colour differences. God

cursed the Lamanites, the ancestors of Native Americans [and Tāngata Moana], for their wickedness (Simon 2022b). Rod Meldrum did not invent this concept; it is a widely held Mormon belief. It is found in the BOM. It is a [significantly] racist idea because race is a social construction and does not accurately represent Human Biology (Mormon Stories 2022e).¹⁸

In the interview, Murphy moves to critique the work of Church apologist Rod Meldrum. Murphy affirms that Meldrum blames Jews and Indigenous Peoples for their own genocides . . . to blame the victims of genocide for causing it is gaslighting, it is morally repugnant, and it is biologically unfounded, the idea that Native Americans [and Tāngata Moana] (as Lamanites) got dark skin because they were wicked and their wickedness caused them to have to endure European colonisation. It is morally reprehensible because there is no biological connection between skin colour and morality (Mormon Stories 2022e; Murphy 2005). Murphy comments that ‘I have never seen any scientific evidence linking a person’s morality to the colour of their skin.’ (Mormon Stories 2022e). It is incorrect to say that people are cursed because of their wickedness, whether Nephi, Rod Meldrum, or President Nelson says it. It is a ‘mistake of men.’ These viewpoints justify the crimes committed by colonialists and Nazis. It begins to indicate whose thoughts these are. Who would blame Jews and Indigenous Peoples for their own extinction through genocide? The Assailants, all those with European ancestry in the Americas are perpetrators. Genocide perpetrators attempt to justify their actions by blaming the victims (Mormon Stories 2022e).

In terms of racism, Murphy comments that the idea that native Americans should become ‘white and delightful’ has caused considerable harm. ‘White’, as used in the BOM, is not some status of non-race. When the Church changes the BOM to ‘pure and delightful’ or white and delightful what has that done to the native people of Turtle Island and Te Moananui.

1. Church leaders like Joseph Smith and Brigham Young advocated that white Mormon men should marry Native women to help turn them white. The problem here is that it advocates a way to produce cultural change as a whitening of a population. It is a form of settler/invader colonialism—the idea of displacing a native population with an immigrant population. The problem here is the insistence that descendants should be white (Mormon Stories 2022e)
2. Native women and children became servants and slaves in Mormon homes. The practice of taking Indian Children out of their homes and making them into slaves in Mormon homes as a process of whitening them has caused tremendous harm to Indigenous people. There were hundreds of Indigenous children taken into Mormon homes in the nineteenth century as servants and slaves. This would be continued and formalised into the Indian Placement program. Mormons sanitise and/or forget this history. In that erasure it makes the placement program seem like a charity program in terms of Mormons helping Natives. It was native people being labour for white Mormons (Mormon Stories 2022e; Also see Boxer 2015; Jacobs 2006; Murphy et al. 2022; Brandon 2009)¹⁹
3. LDS politicians backed the termination policy of Native Americans based on their understanding of The BOM. Its purpose was to erase Indians legally if not fact. It was a form of genocide (see Bsumek 2023; Mormon Stories 2022e; Murphy 2020).

These are byproducts of the ways of thinking in BOM the idea to become white and delightful is not neutral, it is not beneficial, and it is actually on a cultural level deeply harmful. It had impacted in profoundly negative ways Native lives since 1830s. Subsequently, the author must outline next some other problems that exist with the BOM.

Other Book of Mormon Problems

In addition to the racism mentioned above by Murphy author of the CES Letter, Jeremy Runnells poses the question about anachronisms contained within *The Book of Mormon* when he asks:

Horses, cattle, oxen, sheep, swine, goats, elephants, wheels, chariots, wheat, silk, steel, and iron did not exist in pre-Columbian America during BOM times. Why are these things mentioned in the BOM as being made available in the Americas between 2200 BC—421 AD? (Runnells 2017)

In addition to this, there are significant and numerous accusations about the validity of The BOM due to the amount of plagiarism it contains. As critical scholars, that have been vilified by Church leadership whose work provides significant light on this issue is that of Gerald and Sandra Tanner (Tanner and Tanner 1998; 2010)²⁰ However, more recently there have been two significant scholarly events in that recent research by Thomas Murphy demonstrates that Joseph Smith misappropriated the history and culture of the Six Nations Confederacy, specifically that of the Iroquois. As a canonical text, The BOM informs Church practices and teachings, but it is neither divine nor historically or scientifically accurate in its alleged origins (Murphy 2019; 2020; Simon 2022b)²¹ To further this dialogue we must explore the Author's previous political work on achieving a collective future and relationality as we move to broaden our understandings.

Veracini's Commentary on *On Settling, Relationality, and the Collective Future*

In relation to issues of reconciliation and apology, Veracini provides insightful commentary on Goodin's ideas in *On Settling* that I use in my work on the political future of Aotearoa New Zealand and the recognition of mana motuhke (see Simon 2016; 2020; 2022c). This theorem is useful for what I term 'the collective future of Aotearoa New Zealand.' (Simon 2022c). According to Goodin, the fifth and final step of settling is the abstract phase of 'settling on' a belief, value, endeavor, commitment, or way of being (Veracini 2014). Goodin believes that anyone can achieve this level of abstract or metaphorical maturity. Indigenous groups will be denied political capacity until the end of the other four stages are completed (Veracini 2014). Veracini maintains that, whether Goodin is aware of it or not, Goodin's explanation of settlement remains essentially territorial (Veracini 2014). Even if the term 'settlement' does not conjure up images of 'empty lands' in the colonial psyche, it should not be interpreted metaphorically (Veracini 2014).

Indigenous displacement and 'patriarchal white salvation' are related as byproducts of the co-invading forces on Indigenous lands, since only settled people are seen as able to 'create narrative identities and live up to them.' No initiative has sought a broad consensus on Aotearoa New Zealand's or the Church's essential principles and commitments,

and no Indigenous nation has agreed, equity, to Lamanitism (see Simon 2022c). Indigenous people do not enjoy political justice and equality, hence we lack political potential. Such principles and commitments must be articulated in the constitution foundations of government and the Church (see Simon 2022c). Because it is a values-based endeavor, the constitutional transformation²² would empower the settler/invader Church and its members to ‘settle for’ it. (Simon 2021; 2022c)²³ Constitutional transformation involves collaborative discourse and consensus on governance and foundational values. Like Aotearoa New Zealand, the Church must comprehend and cease assimilation and recognise mana and mana motuhake (see Simon 2021, 2022b, 2022c). Lamanitism is a Zombie concept discourse about maintaining status quo power making the achievement of mār-amatanga challenging. One crucial component of such understanding is conscious awareness of white possessiveness, ignorance, belonging, and fragility.

To achieve a true post-settler colonial society or church, constitutional and social values must be built on the base culture. In Aotearoa New Zealand, these can only be Māori values. The Church to move past the racism on which it is founded must allow for new Indigenous values to be at the basis of the path forward (Treaty Project 2015). In relation to Aotearoa New Zealand Jones’s tikanga-based *Māori Constitutional Values* provide guidance (Jones 2014). I have argued that whanaungatanga, mana, utu, manaakitanga, tapu, and noa should underpin Aotearoa New Zealand’s movement toward a settled collective future (See Simon 2020; 2021; 2022c). I have named *The Foundational Constitutional Values of Aotearoa New Zealand* to acknowledge the deconstruction of ‘New Zealand’ as a settler colonial project (Simon 2020; 2021; 2022c). Such approaches and settling the settler/invader may help Aotearoa New Zealand and the Church to move forward constructively toward a collective future (Simon 2021). These understandings must be the backbone of forming a new relationality with the Indigenous world.

Pasifika scholars talk about ‘wayfinding’ and ‘meaning-making’ when discussing the place of Pasifika people in Aotearoa (Fa’avae, Fehoko, and Vaka 2022). Trans-indigeneity encourages Indigenous-to-Indigenous communication across boundaries and thought spaces (Fa’avae, Fehoko, and Vaka 2022). Sua’ali’i-Sauni (2017) suggested finding commonalities. The settler/invader colonial state encouraged Pasifika people to relocate to Aotearoa New Zealand for educational opportunities and employment, and the aim was not to foster ‘whanaunga’ connections with Māori. Pasifika must strengthen our relationships with hapū and iwi. Pasifika must let Māori lead decolonisation and ‘Wayfinding.’ (Simon in press). The Te Ao Māori Foundational Constitutional values for Aotearoa New Zealand are widely acknowledged as applicable, transferrable, and translatable to other Tāngata Moana cultures. Asian and Pākehā ethnicities. In my relationality research, I found that Pākehā ally advocates like Peet and Pasifika intellectuals, want a multiethnic and sustainable future (see Simon in press). Dam (2022), a multiethnic Asian scholar, discusses his ethical and political responsibilities to Māori based on his ethical values. Whakawhānau, or vā or relationality, is at the heart of a future that does not promote white possessiveness or forgetting (Simon in press)

Additionally, engaging in politics and poetics of relationship based on Indigenous communities’ respect, indebtedness, and gratitude. In this sense, ‘relationality’ does not participate in what Eve Tuck and Yang (2012, 19) criticise as ‘settler moves to innocence,’ which comprehends decolonisation in the abstract rather than confronting the

uncomfortable task of relinquishing stolen land. Neither does relationality aim to exonerate settler/invader colonial culpability. According to Simon (2022b) and Malissa Phung (2019, p. 66), the conversation of decolonising Asian–Indigenous relations shifts away from prioritising settler colonial guilt and sorrow, seeking absolution for this (liberal) guilt, and transforming colonial complicity into an actionable project that aims to decolonise and improve relations. I believe this approach should also be adopted by the Church.

Discussion

LDS Church President Ezra Taft Benson once stated that ‘... the BOM is the keystone of [our] testimony. Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the BOM.’ (Ensign 1986). I believe that this statement is made in light of the traditional Mormon belief that The Church is the one true church. Which to myself as an Indigenous scholar is an engagement in Mormon salvific truth.

However, as I commented that in Te Ao Māori it is considered ethical or tika to engage in debate and questioning in order for the group to discover a viable, true, or correct path forwards. This is what the other ethical standard, pono, represents. Our cultural decisions were made for the benefit of the group; everything was governed by consensus. In order to adhere to an ethics-based worldview, the Church would have to abandon the concept of "absolute truth". To this end, I would like to draw more attention to a section of the LDS Church’s General Topic Essays where the Church has moved, in recent times, to accept the more spiritual non-historical nature of the Church and BOM at least on face value (Simon 2022b). Additionally, I would argue that the future non-racist ontology of the church must centre around achieving a form of post-coloniality and relationality towards Indigenous Peoples (Simon 2022b).

Thus, in relation to the notion of apology from any religious institution for that matter, it must be said that it is likely that Indigenous Peoples as collectives are likely to reject such apologies. For religious institutions when engaging Indigenous people with this kaupapa this will be because the institution maybe perceived by us/them to be insincere or inadequate in addressing the harm done to our/their communities. Furthermore, these actions may also be interpreted as an effort to free the Church from culpability or responsibility for its actions and an evasion making meaningful action to address issues. Additionally, Some Indigenous peoples may also believe that apologies cannot undo the damage done and that instead, concrete actions and reparations are necessary to address the harm. More recently, the example that typifies this is the political backlash the Pope and the Catholic Church experienced following the Church’s apology for residential schools in Canada. The next section will outline the implications of this research by beginning a conversation with suggestions on constructing a post-colonial position and relationality with the Indigenous World.

Implications of This Research

I note that these comments come from the perspectives of traditional Indigenous groups like Indigenous nations. Paradoxically, I do believe that where the Church has caused

direct harm to individuals they should apologise individually, particularly for the Indian Placement Program. However, it must be noted that when a religious institution forms a need to apologise to Indigenous People groups they undertake a significant understanding of the Indigenous Grouping they hope to seek reconciliation with. The problem here is that culturally and philosophically the idea of apology and reconciliation is a Christian ethos. For example, the key constitutional value for Te Ao Māori in this area is *utu* or more broadly defined in this case as reciprocity and restitution. From this Indigenous perspective we as an Indigenous group do not need to provide you with a resolution or more importantly for Christian-based religions—forgiveness. In this scenario, it is more important that you restore the *mana* of the parties involved in this ‘hara’ or ‘takahi mana.’ So while you may want to apologise that apology can be considered another form of colonialism and violence against Indigenous Peoples. This is because our way of *being* and *knowing* and our knowledge is once again subjugated to the ontology and epistemology of the religious institution and its colonising power.

From a Māori perspective for this to be productive, the religious institution must begin to build relationality and understanding. This is what Pasifika scholars describe as ‘wayfinding’ and ‘meanfinding.’ (Fa’avae, Fehoko, and Vaka 2022). A significant part of this is that Church members and the Church must relinquish its power and claim absolute truth. They must follow the lead and *mana* of the Indigenous group they are engaging in. The implications from this research for The Church is that it must if it is serious about engaging Indigenous peoples in relationality building, is that its whole ontology must change. To help the Church and its members to engage in this shift here are some practical suggestions to start this evolving conversation.

1. Repatriate all collections of Indigenous ancestors held by the Church and its educational institutions—immediately!

Currently, Brigham Young University holds eighty-one skeletal remains of Indigenous ancestors (see Ash Ngu and Suozzo 2022). Without question, if the nation of the ancestor has been identified all efforts should be made to repatriate these ancestors post haste. This includes surveying Mormon families that participated in graverobbing of Native American ancestors—because they were Lamanite. The ancestor racialised and converted into a non-Native renamed ‘Zelph’ being the key example of this (Murphy and Baca 2016; Timmerman 2020) (Let us call what happened to Zelph what it actually was—Grave Robbing). Education among white Mormons as to why this is imperative is also needed. Additionally, there needs to be within Mormon Studies academic recognition that what happened to ‘Zelph’ was wrong, disrespectful, and despicable. Moving forward ‘Zelph’ should be referred to as a person with more respect like ‘Ancestor’ until his people provide him with a name. Not an objectified sub-human of an Indigenous group that never existed²⁴, that was as far as the evidence would suggest a figment invention of Joseph Smith, that was used to validate Mormon belief systems that are based on white possession and supremacy. Furthermore, the Church must restore the *mana* of ‘Ancestor’. Additionally, Repatriate anything else taken from Indigenous Peoples by the Church including but not limited to lands, cultural artifacts, records, and human remains (Blackstock 2022; Mormon Stories 2022d; also see Murphy et al. 2022b).

2. Support Indigenous efforts worldwide to decolonise and revitalise our cultures and languages particularly where Church teachings by leadership and theological, doctrinal, and cultural practices have impacted these efforts.

The Americentric push towards Gospel culture and developments within the Church historically that have sought to establish ‘whiteness’ as the standard for all members must be reassessed. The impact such policies have had on Indigenous communities has been high. The Church has a responsibility to remedy the impacts of such approaches. Particularly those members of Indigenous nations that are active members, Indigenous people who are ex-member who have decided to leave the Church or those that were ex-communicated. That responsibility carries an obligation to undo harm, particularly towards these aforementioned groups. Providing funding and expertise to increase efforts to decolonise and revitalise our respective cultures and languages is a key part of that; particularly diaspora groups like Tongans in Utah for example. Once again there also has to be an outreach to white Mormons explaining why this is crucial and why it needs a non-missionary approach and should in relation build recognition that this needs to be Indigenous-led and the Church must follow them. Key to this also is that the Church should take significant and positive measures to promote Indigenous People’s rights globally, including the promotion of their self-determined spiritual beliefs and practices (Blackstock 2022; Mormon Stories 2022d).

3. Give back land to Indigenous nations currently held by the Church and help them rebuild.

A key component towards *utu* as reciprocity and restitution is the amount of land the Church holds. If building better relationships with Indigenous Peoples is fundamental for a collective future with the Church this would be a key aspect of it. In philosophical terms ‘following the example set by Christ.’ A good example of this in action would be the actions of the Curate Church in Tauranga. This is where the Church gave the land underneath their only place of worship back to the local *iwi* (See Martin 2022). However, it is more than that. It is one thing to give back land, and possibly lease it off those that receive it. However, what is also required is for the Church to provide economic development funding for Indigenous nations to rebuild economically and reduce economic disparities.²⁵

Additionally, a point of contention for all religious institutions particularly for the Mormons, is that if they made money off stolen or taken Indigenous lands the Church should also share that wealth with Indigenous nations that traditionally held *mana motuhake* and *mana whenua* to the land in question. For example, if the Church had a project where they built a commercial building and sold it or lease it they would be obligated to share that profit.

4. Become Postcolonial

Thomas Murphy recently gave examples and demonstrated how Indigenous peoples hold multiple versions of creation stories, and thus different nations have different narratives on the same subject (Mormon Stories 2022d; also see Deloria 2023; Hafen 2018). Within this is the acceptance from multiple Indigenous nations that each is entitled to

their representative ancestrally-given truth based on their mātauranga. That is unlike the Western Church, which includes Mormonism, which since the enactment of manifest destiny and the doctrine of discovery has been trying to ‘ram’ Christian supremacy and truth down the throat of the Indigenous world. Another example from Te Ao Māori is from Mataatua waka where the debate continues to ask which tupuna wāhine saved the mataatua waka? Was it Wairaka or Muriwai? Depending on which iwi or hapū you ask you will get a different reply (Miles 1999). What is important to this conversation is that there is an acceptance of multiple truths which is important as the Church requires growth and change. Part of that is embracing a postcolonial ontology and doctrine. This would require the Church to find and construct a platform where Indigenous values are accepted within the makeup of the Church. This would be were the Church would ‘open its arms’ for a place for Indigenous Peoples within the Church should they want to remain within its ranks. As I have previously said the best example would be to follow is that of The Anglican Church here in Aotearoa New Zealand (see Cox 2012; Hollis 2013; Kaa 2020; Swain 2015; Te Rire 2009). This would probably also include a Church model that recognises Gina Colvin’s adaptation of ‘the body of the Church’ (Colvin 2017). The main starting point for this project should be to come to a universal understanding the Church is an invading force on Indigenous lands and work from there. Most of all engage in ethical behaviour with Indigenous members.

The nature of The church in The Indigenous World is one that is based on what I term religious capitalism. This is where the Church positions itself as the sole purveyor of the truth attracting people to the church. The focus is on a doctrine bolstered by the message ‘families are forever’ in providing their version of patriarchal white salvation. This is important when we consider the leadership in the structure has a consistent history of not being truthful and being deceitful with the membership. More recently, scandals like child sexual abuse including boy scouts, and more recently the SEC decision to fine the Church for deliberately hiding financial assets to ensure members continued to pay tithing (Wile 2023). Culturally, Mormonism promotes ignorance through messages like ‘follow the prophet’. The combination does not allow members to explore the depth of their faith and to test the truth. For members from an Indigenous background in order to be Mormon they must concede to the truth of the Church and the BOM and adopt a false religio-colonial identity. They must accept this identity, racism, white supremacy, and possessiveness. Lastly, they must sustain unquestionably middle-class conservative old white males as leaders and gatekeepers to the Mormon construction of ‘salvation’. In this construction, all participants must unquestionably, in order to attain salvation must pay tithing to access temple ordinances. These ordinances are bolstered as a necessity by the ontology and doctrine that promises ‘families are forever’.

Lastly, reform LDS teachings policy, and practices that interfere with Indigenous Peoples’ rights, paying particular attention to ensuring that Church teachings do not infringe on the human rights and dignity of all Indigenous Peoples, including women and girls and LGBTQAI2S+ and gender diverse persons (Blackstock 2022, 5–6)

5. Major Change of Doctrine Needed

While the Church has pivoted to stop teaching that Indigenous Peoples will become ‘white and delightful’ there is a need for the Church to own up to its racism based on

the BOM. While this pivot is encouraging its intentions are to mask Church racism. The Church also needs to become ethical with Indigenous adherents, for example:

Stop teaching that Indigenous peoples anywhere are Lamanites

Openly disavow Mormon apologist efforts and Outdated Doctrine²⁶

There is a racist ideology from Church apologists like Rod Meldrum in their defence of church teaching and doctrines. The Church needs to take responsibility for them. As the Church and its leadership set the tone for the colonising culture that is Mormonism. This is regardless of if they are official or not.

6. Advocate for Utu-based reciprocity and restitution for and with Indigenous Peoples in Interfaith dialogue including the rescinding of The Doctrine of Discovery.

Mormonism should consider allying with Indigenous nations and accepting a postcolonial ontology. Taking the lead from Indigenous nations should facilitate and participate in discussions on how Christianity might rescind the Doctrine of Discovery and encourage reciprocity and restitution with Indigeneity. The Church must realise, unlike the Catholic residential school apology, that Indigenous Peoples globally are still affected by it even though it is not a doctrine in 2023. The Western Church must unite to address the Indigenous-led collective approach to the other co-invading force, the settler/invaser colonial state. has a long way to go before forgiveness will ever be on the table. They must start with allies, contemplation, and self-change. As mentioned elsewhere ‘Settlers/invasers must take responsibility for their own being and past and future actions. This is not a job for the Indigenous population. Therefore, settlers/invasers are responsible for their own decolonisation, and every member has a part to play in that.’ (Simon 2021)

7. Protect Children and Other Vulnerable Persons

Leadership of the Church needs to move to protect all children and other vulnerable persons against all forms of abuse and holds perpetrators and those who enable them accountable whilst providing meaningful reparations and supports to victims (see Blackstock 2022, 5–6). This is particularly needed in light of recent law suits brought for their association with the Boy Scouts of America, the sexual abuse hotline scandal, and their failure to address the Sam Young saga over Mormon bishop interview policy of minors are causes for concern that require addressing in the culture of the Church (Knauth 2022; Chase 2022; Jackson 2018; Mormon Stories 2018a; 2018b, 2018c, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c; 2022f).

Conclusions

This line of research is an invitation to discussion, learning, and relationality building for The Church with The Indigenous World. I have clearly demonstrated that racism exists within the BOM and the ontology of The Church. The concepts that emanate from the BOM clearly fit the description of a Zombie Concepts, particularly Lamanites.

I have argued that settler/invader colonialism found within Mormonism must stop in order to achieve a collective future with the Indigenous World. This would include the abandonment of the idea of absolute truth. There is a need to build relationality with the Indigenous world as I have stated an apology for Mormon racism is not enough. To build that new ontology and relationality the Church must demonstrate *utu* in the form of restitution and reciprocity, not the violence again of Christian-based reconciliation. Towards this, for Mormonism, I have initiated what should be an extensive conversation and soul searching for the Church, its leaders and members with the Indigenous World.

Notes

1. For more information on Zombie Concepts see Liotta and Shearer (2008); Brabazon (2016).
2. *Tāngata Moana* is an emerging identity descriptor for peoples of the *Moana-nui-a-Kiwa* (Pacific Ocean). *Tāngata Moana* seeks to (1) acknowledge that the traditional labels in common usage like *Pasifika* are used in settler/invader colonial settings to divide those that belong in the *Moana* particularly between those with *mana* originally from the land the Pacific arrivant communities are settled on. For example, *Māori* and *Aotearoa New Zealand* when using *Pasifika* this is a settler/invader colonial attempt to divide and ignore traditional *whakapapa* links (2) It helps define who belongs in the *Moana* and who holds *mana* within their own islands (3) It recognises a need for peoples of the *Moana* to dismantle structures of oppression created by imperialism and settler/invader colonialism across the *Moana* (4) recognise the need for a more inclusive identity descriptor across the board.
3. This article intends to initiate a global Mormon Studies international dialogue and discussion regarding apology for the racism of the Mormon Church and moving towards a collective post-racist future with the Indigenous world. By detailing this methodology and research theory, as is typical in research outputs. In addition, the approach to the research is novel in that a (post)qualitative inquiry is being conducted. It is essential to give a foundational understanding and growth of *Kaupapa Māori Writing Inquiry*. *Mahi Tuhituhi* is utilised as *Kaupapa Māori Writing Inquiry* because the method permits the author to reflect on and criticise settler/invader colonially-imposed power structures. The author recognises that this is not a research method per se, but rather an approach to qualitative posthuman research.
4. For more information on *Kaupapa Māori Research* and its approaches, refer to Pihama (2010); Henry and Pene (2001); Smith (2015); Cram and Adcock (2022). For a more detailed application of *Kaupapa Māori research* in Mormon and Lamanite Studies, see Simon, 'Hoea Te Waka ki Uta'.
5. (Post)qualitative inquiry is methodological, but without methods, as a critique of pre-described qualitative methods is at the core in post-qualitative inquiry. For an understanding of the author's use of '(post)qualitative' see Le Grange (2018); Østern et al. (2021); Ulmer (2018; 2017).
6. For more information on *Kaupapa Māori principle and theory*, see Smith (2003); Linda Smith, *Kaupapa Māori research-some kaupapa Māori principles*. In Leonie Pihama & Kim Southey (Eds.), *Kaupapa Rangahau A Reader: A collection of readings from the Kaupapa Māori Research Workshop Series*. University of Waikato & Te Kōtahi Research Institute; Simon, 'Hoea Te Waka ki Uta'.
7. *Mokopuna* = Grandchild, *Tupuna* = Ancestor *He mokopuna he tupuna* = A grandchild [is] an ancestor. See Cameron et al. (2013).
8. Cameron, et al., 'He Mokopuna He Tupuna'. *Tu Tamawahine o Taranaki*, 4.
9. A grandchild is very precious, a fountain for ancestral knowledge and an everlasting reflection of those who have gone before. We are all grandchildren as are our ancestors. Daniels (2007).

10. For more information on the workings of tika and pono in Kaupapa Māori Research around Mormon and Lamanite Studies, see Simon, 'Hoea Te Waka ki Uta'.
11. Those in a position of power.
12. For a significant discussion on Mormon Ontology, see Altayeva et al. (2020).
13. For discussion on God's interactions with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas, see Sorenson (1992); Sperry (1995); Hickman (2014); Murphy (2003a).
14. For an understanding of patriarchal white salvation, see Simon, 'Mormonism and the white possessive'. Additionally for a discussion about patriarchal white salvation, see Moreton-Robinson (2015).
15. The Author acknowledges that Hagoth is considered a Book of Mormon character that is Nephite. For a faithful Māori perspective Robert Joseph, in this panel discussion, stated that the modern Māori faithful position considers that because Hagoth was Nephite Māori, by implication, were not Lamanites, per se. This position in conflict was the historical teachings of the Church around Polynesians and Lamanitism. It would be advisable for some faithful Māori or Pasifika scholar to explore this phenomenon and its many contradictions and potential implications. Refer Murphy et al. (2022). Such assertions by Joseph further highlights what Ignacio Garcia terms, "The faultlines with Lamanite Identity." Refer to Ignacio Garcia, 'My Search for a Lamanite Identity.' The Author also points out regardless of the people grouping that Hagoth comes from, as asserted by Joseph, either group from a Kaupapa Māori or non-Mormon perspective is still an appropriation of Indigenous identity (e.g Ngāti Hine to Nephite or Lamanite). The Author also notes that within Māori Mormonism there is a lot of folklore this too is also an area that requires research attention.
16. For an understanding of the settler/invader myth surrounding the Moriori people, refer to King (2017).
17. The main research outcome and source of this phrase within Murphy's work is from his 2005 journal article. See Murphy, Thomas W. "Sin, Skin, and Seed,' 36-51. Also see Mormon Stories, 'Is the Book of Mormon Racist?—Dr. Thomas Murphy Pt. 2,' *Episode 1646*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKlaMAwH8zU>.
18. Murphy's Mormon Stories interview features a discussion of his 2005 journal article, 'Sin, Skin, and Seed: Mistakes of men in The Book of Mormon'.
19. The Author notes that this is a key feature of settler/invader colonialism to disavowel the act and adopt the a position know as a 'move to innocence'. See Tuck and Yang (2012).
20. For a broad history of the Tanner's engagement with Mormon culture and history, refer to Huggins (2022); also see Runnells, 'CES Letter' (2017), <https://read.cesletter.org/>
21. Also refer to this commentary on his research: 'Mormonism LIVE: 072: Neophytes & Lamanites In the Book of Mormon,' <https://youtu.be/phBJt09n9A0>. Unofficial apologists claim victories in some of these items, but closer inspection reveals significant problems. It has been documented that apologists have manipulated wording so that steel is not steel, sheep become never-domesticated bighorn sheep, horses become tapirs, and so forth see Jeremy Runnells, 'CES Letter,' 11.
22. To understand the notion and potential political direction of Aotearoa New Zealand and how this could influence society and the Church more broadly, see Matike Mai Aotearoa (2016).
23. For further explanation of the term 'Constitutional Transformation' in relation to the political future of Aotearoa New Zealand refer to Matike Mai Aotearoa
24. For more on the relationship of sub-humanism in relation to Mormonism from a critical Indigenous Studies perspective see Simon, 'Mormonism and The White Possessive.'
25. One potential model that maybe useful to explore is that of Raven Indigenous Capital Partners. See: <https://ravencapitalpartners.ca/>
26. The Author makes the point here with the term 'outdated doctrine' that it is common for The LDS Church to not engage in a previous endorsed practice. For example, in the context of this essay the idea of a Lamanite has effectively proven to never existed. The Church, in modern time has moved to not teach Lamanite skin curse but will not disavowel the cause being the racism in The BOM and by doing so reframing BOM as a source of spirituality not fact.

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