Brigham Young Wanted Every Thing from the Indians

Will Bagley, ed. *The Whites Want Every Thing: Indian-Mormon Relations, 1847–1877*. Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2019. 559 pp. Hardcover: $55.00. ISBN: 978-0-87062-442-1.

Reviewed by Corey Smallcanyon

Will Bagley is a historian who has written and edited more than a dozen books on Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) history and the American West. His best known work is his book *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (2002), which won multiple writing awards. Working with the Arthur H. Clark Company, he launched *Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier*, a sixteen-volume documentary historical series with Bagley as the series editor. *The Whites Want Every Thing* is the concluding volume in the series.

The increasing availability of new sources over time is "the key reason this volume is needed," writes historian Floyd O'Neil in the introduction (17). With the introduction of "long-sequestered primary sources" such as the 2016 publication of the Council of Fifty minutes by the LDS Church, it would be beneficial for the reader to know what additional sequestered documents are being introduced by Bagley (20, 59). The years of meticulous research collecting documentation from journals, letters, reports, recollections, and much more offer the reader a glimpse into the complex issues with the confrontation of ideologies among the Native Americans, Mormons, and other Americans. This

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is not a history to promote faith but to provide a perspective from the people who experienced it.

Bagley makes a bold claim and advertises that the book's "primary focus is on Native perspectives after 1847" to "let long-silent voices speak" (20). The issue of whose voice is actually being used is a concern: Bagley admits that some may not be Native at all, since the "sources, collected over decades, are mediated translations of white records of what whites said Indians said" (20). He apologizes, writing that "if ends justify means" by amplifying forgotten Native voices, then it's okay (25).

The book consists of eleven chapters, which could be divided into three sections: colonization, conflict, and resistance. The book is organized in chronological order, starting in 1847 with the arrival of the Mormons into the middle of Native American lands that the Mexican government claimed control of, and chronicling the Mormons' interactions with the Natives until Brigham Young's death in 1877. Chapters 1 through 10 discuss the interactions from 1847 to 1859, covering at least one or two years in each chapter. Chapter 11 is packed; Bagley tries to cover multiple key events from 1859 through 1877 to quickly conclude the book.

As Bagley points out, "The wealth of available material imposes its own problems" (20). The amount of subject matter that needs to be covered during the time frame Bagley has chosen warrants at least two books. A number of Native interactions that merit coverage are glossed over or neglected completely, including Native-Mormon interactions on the Mormon Pioneer Overland Trail, Brigham Young's Indian farms, the call for missionaries to intermarry with Native women, the various Indian missions, the interaction with the Navajo, the interactions with the Hopi, Brigham Young's time serving as the superintendent of Indian Affairs in Utah, and the Church's multiple attempts to relocate Natives living in Utah onto reservations away from Mormon communities.

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In this volume, Bagley reintroduces a greatly debated issue: what is the Church's doctrine and policy toward Indigenous peoples? Here, he deals specifically with Brigham Young and the Natives located in the boundaries of the State of Deseret who were living along the main roads of travel. Bagley shares a quote from religious studies professor Peter J. Thuesen, who told the *New York Times* in 2013, "There's this paradoxical sense in which the Lamanites are both a rebellious and wicked people, but they're also key central actors in the Mormon scriptural drama" (523). Within the Native-Mormon narrative, Natives are divided into the Spiritual and Secular worlds with polarizing views:

> Spiritual: peaceful, good, noble Indians; Lamanite brothers; assimilated converts; white and delightsome; obedient Indians.
>
> Secular: violent, bad, ignoble Indians; bloodthirsty savages; segregationist non-converts; dark skin is a curse; disobedient Indians.

The Whites Want Every Thing starts with Joseph Smith prophesying that Native Americans were to hold a special role within the Mormon Church. This prophecy was twofold: first, in the spiritual view, Natives were to help usher in the Millennium, the Second Coming of Christ (42). Second, in the secular view, the newly converted Natives were to assist the "destroying angel" in ridding the nation of Gentiles (non-Mormons) by becoming the "battle axe" of the Lord (46). Bagley refers to the latter as "secretive Lamanite teachings," which gives a glimpse into the Mormon belief that Natives were to help lay waste from coast to coast (57, 59).

Bagley concludes that Joseph Smith's hope of having a militarized Native American front is evident beginning with the first LDS mission to the Natives, and even the Church's theocratic organization known as the Council of Fifty was supposedly used to "enlist Native allies" (54). With the Church being pushed farther and farther west, it came closer and closer to Indian country, which encouraged the Church to find the Native group who would help bring in the Millennium. Even the death

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of Joseph Smith couldn't stop the Church's twofold mission. Brigham Young claimed that he was then given "the keys of the Kingdom to the Lamanites" (58).

One of the problems Bagley runs into with having a supposed secretive teaching is that there is little documentation to support some of his claims. "What practical results did Joseph Smith's secretive Lamanite teachings have during his life?" he asks. Besides agitating people, "not much" (57). This is not a new idea per se: numerous government officials and military leaders made multiple complaints about the Church's attempts to create allies with Native Americans and use them to attack their non-Mormon neighbors. Since a large portion of the book consists of quotations, little room is left for exploring some of these ideas.

Bagley writes that after Chief Walkara, a prominent Ute leader, died, Young was upset because he lost a military foe, and one of the reasons they tolerated Natives was because "[b]y and by they will be the Lord's battle ax in good earnest" (338). As the hysteria of the Utah War confronted the Mormon kingdom, Bagley states that Young attempted to enlist Native support, but "Young's Utah War strategy collapsed when the raid on Fort Limhi ended his dream of a Lamanite alliance" (456). Once the Utah War came to an end, "Native people joined the ranks of Mormon villains" because they did not follow Young's orders (459).

One of the more controversial statements in the book is that Young's failed attempts to militarize the Natives "blunted the murderous edge of genocide practiced across the American West" (527). This can be interpreted as such; even though one might not see Young as a savior to the Natives, his actions still saved the Natives. Bagley also claims that Young's actions "encouraged the racism that still thrives in Mormon Country." This history created an environment that has allowed Mormons to "erase history" and decry "cancel culture," forgetting its violent past and creating a new mythology that incorporates "almost every pioneer Mormon family" in faith-promoting stories about Native interactions (527).

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The more significant question that Bagley asks is: was Brigham Young a friend of the Indians (522)? Summing up Young's relationship with the Indigenous community, Bagley writes, "It often seemed the left hand of Mormon Indian policy had little conception of what its right military fist was doing" (212). Just as Mormons had a binary view of Natives, so did the Natives toward the Mormons. As Walkara and Young tried to reconcile relations, Walkara said that Young's "message seemed heartfelt, but he spoke with 'two tongues and two hearts'" (300). The simplest answer to Bagley's question is, "The sources are rife with contradictions," and in any case, the "Mormons did not spare Native people from the abuse that tribes suffered elsewhere" (525, 521).

This book is a welcome addition to our growing understanding of Utah's Native history and Native Americans' relationship with the Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. With a large portion of the book dedicated specifically to quoting numerous primary documents from Mormons and Native Americans, *The Whites Want Every Thing* offers a vital resource to the ongoing discussion and debate about Brigham Young's Indian policy.

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