A Navajo made his way by the cold light of dawn to the top of a hill. After resting for a moment, he began to utter a prayer, using words and phrases taught him by Mormon missionaries. Before long, two spiritual beings appeared, one of whom was a large, red-bearded man. The Navajo later reported that he was counseled by these men to “give strict heed to my Mormon brethren,” to tell the truth, be kind, avoid stealing, forsake war, and maintain friendship with “the superior race, the Americans.” He was then “carried away in the Spirit” and saw the “earth as a Garden of Eden, a level plain; all things looked beautiful.” The vision next shifted to a scene where he learned that “the Mormons and my people were living on the tops of the mountains and saw the Lord was a little angry with us all not being good and the gentiles [non-Mormons] came against us for our belief and threatened us with destruction and we were entirely surrounded by our enemies and the Indians stood up and pled for the Mormons saying they were good people.” These pleas did not go unanswered; though the gentiles fired their guns, only water poured forth from the barrels, while “our Great Father” watched and laughed. Further prophetic events unfolded, taking a total of seven hours to reveal. The two beings then disappeared after showing themselves to the Navajo’s wives, who saw them “standing in the air above our hut.”

This supernatural experience was recorded in 1881 by Christian L. Christensen, a missionary and interpreter for the Moenkopi settlement of the Little Colorado Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon). The vision encapsulates the fervor that at least some of the Navajos felt...
about their conversion to Christianity, as well as illustrating the bonds of friendship developed in Mormon-Navajo relations, at times to the exclusion of other whites. Yet perhaps the most significant point is that these feelings developed during a period of expansion, as both groups vied for agricultural and grazing lands on the Little Colorado and San Juan Rivers.

This chapter will examine the factors affecting the quality of these relationships and explain why so little friction initially resulted. Due to the scope and complexity of Mormon and Navajo expansion, the primary area of study is the two settlements of Moenkopi-Tuba City and Bluff—the former on the Little Colorado River and the latter on the San Juan. Discussion of Mormon interaction with Navajos in other areas is beyond the scope of this chapter, as are their dealings with the Hopi, Ute, Paiute, and Havasupai, although these groups were also living in this region. Similarly, this chapter will not provide a detailed catalog of towns and personalities associated with Mormon movement into this territory. Instead, the primary focus is on the cultural values that affected the historical experience and the issues of expansion between 1870 and 1900.

By the 1870s the Mormons were ready for a change. The previous decade had been turbulent, with Navajos, Paiutes, and Utes raiding southern Utah to the point that some settlements were abandoned. The practical needs of survival stifled any sustained missionary efforts toward the Navajos. Forays into Indian country were made after stolen stock, not converts, while attempts to keep Navajos south of the Colorado River became a goal of many of the Utah settlements. Even the Mormons' Paiute neighbors feared the activities of Navajos, Utes, and renegade Paiutes, who continually preyed upon them. However, there were some exceptions to this general hostile resentment of the Navajo, the most notable being Jacob Hamblin. But even his main interest and missionary efforts lay with the more settled Hopis to the south.

At the same time that the Navajos were busy raiding settlements, they also faced problems of their own. The 1860s saw many of them surrender to the pressures of both Indian and white attacks launched as part of a campaign to move the Navajos to Bosque Redondo in New Mexico. Those who did not surrender remained in territory peripheral to previous major Navajo activity and cautiously continued their raiding. The triangular area bordered by the Little Colorado, Colorado, and San Juan rivers, including the future locations of Bluff and Moenkopi, served as a refuge.

In 1868, the federal government released the majority of the Navajo population from confinement at Bosque Redondo to return to a reservation that included only one quarter of its original lands. A natural disregard of boundaries and a desire to utilize the surrounding territory for grazing sheep and planting crops allowed the Navajos to view their use rights in the area as a practical and desirable extension of sovereignty. By the mid 1870s, the Mormons, under the direction of Brigham Young, also started to cast their eyes south to the Little Colorado River. Yet the mounting competition for land about their conversion to Christianity, as well as illustrating the bonds of friendship developed in Mormon-Navajo relations, at times to the exclusion of other whites. Yet perhaps the most significant point is that these feelings developed during a period of expansion, as both groups vied for agricultural and grazing lands on the Little Colorado and San Juan Rivers.

This chapter will examine the factors affecting the quality of these relationships and explain why so little friction initially resulted. Due to the scope and complexity of Mormon and Navajo expansion, the primary area of study is the two settlements of Moenkopi-Tuba City and Bluff—the former on the Little Colorado River and the latter on the San Juan. Discussion of Mormon interaction with Navajos in other areas is beyond the scope of this chapter, as are their dealings with the Hopi, Ute, Paiute, and Havasupai, although these groups were also living in this region. Similarly, this chapter will not provide a detailed catalog of towns and personalities associated with Mormon movement into this territory. Instead, the primary focus is on the cultural values that affected the historical experience and the issues of expansion between 1870 and 1900.

By the 1870s the Mormons were ready for a change. The previous decade had been turbulent, with Navajos, Paiutes, and Utes raiding southern Utah to the point that some settlements were abandoned. The practical needs of survival stifled any sustained missionary efforts toward the Navajos. Forays into Indian country were made after stolen stock, not converts, while attempts to keep Navajos south of the Colorado River became a goal of many of the Utah settlements. Even the Mormons' Paiute neighbors feared the activities of Navajos, Utes, and renegade Paiutes, who continually preyed upon them. However, there were some exceptions to this general hostile resentment of the Navajo, the most notable being Jacob Hamblin. But even his main interest and missionary efforts lay with the more settled Hopis to the south.

At the same time that the Navajos were busy raiding settlements, they also faced problems of their own. The 1860s saw many of them surrender to the pressures of both Indian and white attacks launched as part of a campaign to move the Navajos to Bosque Redondo in New Mexico. Those who did not surrender remained in territory peripheral to previous major Navajo activity and cautiously continued their raiding. The triangular area bordered by the Little Colorado, Colorado, and San Juan rivers, including the future locations of Bluff and Moenkopi, served as a refuge.

In 1868, the federal government released the majority of the Navajo population from confinement at Bosque Redondo to return to a reservation that included only one quarter of its original lands. A natural disregard of boundaries and a desire to utilize the surrounding territory for grazing sheep and planting crops allowed the Navajos to view their use rights in the area as a practical and desirable extension of sovereignty. By the mid 1870s, the Mormons, under the direction of Brigham Young, also started to cast their eyes south to the Little Colorado River. Yet the mounting competition for land
never erupted into an armed conflict. The distrust and fear of Mormons by gentiles could have encouraged Navajo warfare, but did not. Even Mormon missionary efforts that ran contrary to Navajo beliefs proved acceptable and encouraged religious conversion of some Indians.

The first and most obvious reason for this lack of hostility was that the Navajos, and most Indian people, held a special place in Mormon religious teachings as expressed in the *Book of Mormon*. This, coupled with a renewed religious fervor, encouraged individual Mormons as well as groups to re-evaluate their faith and dedication with new earnestness. The United Order, a plan of communal living and profit sharing, was one of the tools of frontier expansion to foster close bonds in a challenging situation. Although the Order was past its period of greatest popularity in Utah, some of the Mormon settlements in the area of the Little Colorado still accepted it as an organizing principle. While neither Bluff nor Moenkopi were United Order settlements, each had individuals who had practiced or at least were familiar with its goals and objectives. The period from the 1870s to mid-1880s was one of intense religious dedication for many of the Latter-day Saints in this region.

The same sort of fervor, however, when viewed in other religions, was seen as superstition. The Mormons failed to see that the Navajos had their own ways of expressing important beliefs that were central to the maintenance of their culture. Both groups had their myths—sacred stories or ways of explaining the unexplainable, which connected believers to supernatural power. Neither group had a “corner” on truth or the only “correct” lifestyle, although both thought they did.

Navajo religion is a complex, sophisticated system of beliefs that incorporates animism, animatism, and prescribed ritualized behavior. Failure to follow correct practices leads to the supernatural displeasure of the gods and subsequent consequences. Central to these beliefs is the maintenance of harmony or balance between man and natural or supernatural forces. While Navajo beliefs were very different from those of the Mormons, there were also some interesting parallels.

For example, the Navajos have always seen themselves as a chosen people. According to their sacred beliefs, the gods gave them protection by allowing two boys, Monster Slayer and Born of the Water, to make the earth safe from evil incarnate. The twins’ success in doing so is attested by the bodies of slain monsters (large rock formations) found throughout Navajo land. These two gods also provided the Navajos with many religious teachings, among which was that of how to stay pure from non-Navajo corruption.

Even the name *Dine* reflects the idea of being special and chosen, separate from the other “earth surface” people. If contact was made with the impure, a ceremony called the “Enemy Way” cleansed the person from corruption. The Navajos used it particularly when they came in contact with Utes or white men. The restoration of purity and harmony came through performing the ceremony, so that the individual could continue to live in a holy and sacred
universe. Thus, the gods prescribed the tenets of Navajo religion and, through Navajo myths, fostered their belief of being a chosen people.

Mormons held similar beliefs. From the beginning, Joseph Smith preached the doctrine of the Mormons as a special, chosen people, a "light on the hill," and a group that God watched over as long as the members kept His commandments. Revelation after revelation in The Doctrine and Covenants taught this principle, so it is little wonder that the pioneers gave credit to God's influence in their lives. Brigham Young and his successor, John Taylor, sent forth settlers with a sure knowledge that they were a part of God's eternal plans in Utah and Arizona. Young encouraged this belief in his response to a letter from the newly formed settlements in Arizona: "We thank the Lord that all is well with you as it is, and we pray that your efforts to accomplish the purposes of God in the direction in which you are now called to labor may be crowned with abundant success. . . . We desire that the settlements in the Little Colorado be built up to the Lord in righteousness, wherein an example will be set to the surrounding tribes of the Lamanites, and indeed to all others of the way the Lord will build up Zion."7 Mormons preached similar beliefs as they entered Bluff in 1880. Revelations called them to perform the honorable task of controlling the Indians and settling an area of God's kingdom on earth.

In viewing the role of God in selecting His people, one finds that Mormon beliefs functioned in much the same way that Monster Slayer and Born of the Water served the Navajos. For instance, angels and spirits visited Joseph Smith to initiate the gospel plan for the Lord's chosen. But even before these visitations took place, Christian teachings explained the role of man on earth and the basic concepts of evil and good which he must confront. Unlike the physical monsters the Navajo gods faced, the mythological heroes of Christianity fought an unseen evil. Speaking of Adam before the world was created, Mormon theology taught that he participated in a council of gods in which he helped them organize materials of the earth under Christ's direction. He was also foreordained as the first human being to wage war against Satan and his helpers who rebelled against God. This war continued on earth in the form of good versus evil and as angels opposing Satan's spirits.

The view of good and evil arising from the actions of the gods influenced the belief of the Mormons as a chosen people and as fighters against evil. One irate missionary working with the Zuni in New Mexico wrote a letter to the editor of the Deseret News on March 18, 1877, complaining that although his efforts to convert Indians were progressing, "the enemies of God's work have done all in their power to hedge up the way of our mission. We feel assured of success, and this because of the signs and powers of darkness raging against us."8 Thus, Mormon efforts and activities placed in a larger, cosmological framework the powers of good pitted against evil in a divine scheme ordered by deity.

An important concept shared by both religions was that of a promised
land. The Navajos felt a powerful need to have a sacred homeland, one given to them by the gods and closely associated with their mythology. The four sacred mountains—Blanca Peak, Hesperus Peak, Mount Taylor, and the San Francisco Peaks—were made by First Man and First Woman with the materials they brought from the fourth underworld. The place of emergence from this other sphere, located around the Navajo Dam area in northwestern New Mexico, was another site of holy ground. All of these locations served as powerful driving forces behind Navajo actions and beliefs. Although they were not aggressive "Zionists," the Navajos had lands designated by the gods for their use and ownership.

Because of these beliefs concerning mythological boundaries and the sacred mountains, curing ceremonies or "sings" were more powerful, travel safer, and activities blessed when performed within these bounds, while all that was outside was insecure and in the control of foreigners. A good example of the power of these beliefs occurred when General James H. Carleton urged the Navajo Manuelito to surrender and come to Bosque Redondo. The chief replied that he was not going to cause trouble but that he also believed in the traditions of his people which forbade living across the Rio Grande, San Juan, and Colorado Rivers beyond the sacred mountains.9

On a local level, the lands around Navajo Mountain, Utah, were also sacred for the chosen people. Buck Navajo, a practicing medicine man from this area, states that the "Blessing Way" and "Protection Way" ceremonies were performed for those who crossed the San Juan and Colorado Rivers, while the "Enemy Way" and "Evil Way" pertained to the area on the other side.10

This region served the Navajos as a refuge from their enemies as early as the Spanish and Mexican occupation of New Mexico. During the Kit Carson campaigns (1863–64), a severe dislocation of settlement patterns forced many Navajos into this area. It was at this time that the old mythological heroes, Monster Slayer and Born of the Water, were again called upon to protect their people. The Navajos needed a special explanation for the role of Navajo Mountain. Earlier, it had been viewed with disdain as a land to which Monster Slayer banished the ancestors of the Paiutes.11 Now, religious justification was needed to show that this region was foreordained for the protection of the Navajos—a chosen land.

Briefly, the medicine men said that the decisive battle had already been fought before man was on the earth. A group hostile to Monster Slayer stood on the San Francisco Peaks and shot arrows at him, which today are seen in the form of tall pine trees growing on the mountain. These arrows represented the safety from harm that Monster Slayer enjoyed and so were proof to the Navajos during the 1860s, that this region also served them as an area of protection.12 Thus the faith of the people was tied to geography. Today, Floyd Laughter affirms that "Monster Slayer did indeed catch these projectiles and plant them on this mountain. And these were designated to be medicine. They were also designated as a shield behind which we can run."13
Thus the four sacred mountains that supernaturally circumscribed Navajo lands remained a vital tenet in their beliefs but did not eliminate the possibilities of expansion beyond those bounds. The Four Corners region was one such area that saw continued use and increased control by the Navajo, who tied into the main body of ceremonial knowledge places and events involving supernatural beings. The San Juan River, Navajo Mountain, Monument Valley, the Bears Ears, as well as many springs, rock formations, and canyons, all held special religious significance on a local level. The four sacred mountains continued to be central to the beliefs of these Navajos, but additional places and subsequent justification allowed those living on the periphery of tribal lands to enjoy the same religious experience as those living in other parts of the Navajo domain.

The Mormons also believed in sacred lands that served as a direct link with a religious and mythological past. Although these beliefs did not promise the same type of protection and were not acted out in ceremonies, they were still an important part of Mormon teachings. According to Mormon thought, the concept of a Garden of Eden or chosen land where God and Adam (First Man) interacted was located in Jackson County, Missouri, the center of the Garden. After God expelled Adam from his presence, the exile returned to Adam-Ondi-Ahman ("the place or land of God where Adam dwelt") and there held a great spiritual gathering.

On May 19, 1833, Joseph Smith took a group of associates to Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, and pointed to a pile of rocks that had once been Adam's altar. The prophet then declared that this place was central to the Garden of Eden in the past and would be the meeting place for a great council to be presided over by Adam just before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" occurred to usher in a millennial reign. Therefore, from the very roots of Mormonism, comparisons can be made to Navajo beliefs of a chosen land.

But the idea did not stop in Jackson County, Missouri. With each successive expulsion and consequent move west, the Saints became increasingly convinced that they would find a place that God had prepared for their protection. Joseph Smith received a revelation concerning western lands as early as 1832, signifying that there was a place "appointed unto you, and it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the most high God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there." Another prophecy given ten years later told the Mormons that they would "suffer much affliction, and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains . . . and see the Saints become a mighty People." Thus the Mormon God was with His elect, guiding and directing them to the lands in which they were to live, just as the Navajos were supernaturally guided and protected in their territory.

There is little wonder that when it came time to call the Mormons from Parowan to settle along the San Juan, the Church gave the same justification
used in settling Jackson County, Missouri; Far West, Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; and Salt Lake City, Utah: It was part of the Lord's plan, and as chosen people the Mormons participated in an important step not only in geographical but also in spiritual terms. Henry Lunt of the Parowan Stake Presidency "stated that the march of the Saints today was toward the Center Stake of Zion. . . . The colonists might very well be the first vanguard of Saints to begin the great trek eastward—back to Missouri."  

Lunt was not alone in his belief. Kumen Jones, an early Bluff settler, recorded in his journal that his going to the San Juan area was divinely inspired. God's will became manifest to this servant as he told his wife of a dream on December 19, 1878, just a week before being called on a scouting expedition to the Four Corners area. He related the main features of the dream as follows:

In company with others, most of whom were strangers to me including Indians, we were busily engaged at the building of a large stone building, in which the Lamanites were deeply interested. The country was strange and new to me. Near the place of our operations was a river that I could see, the water of which was not quite clear. As this dream had left quite an impression on my mind, I asked our mother to interpret it for me, and without hesitating, she said, "You will be called with others to go and live among the Indians."  

Other Saints had similar feelings of obeying a divine will, as evidenced by Elder James Davis, who was warned in a dream that he would be required to go and live in the "Arizona Country."  

Although there were many who did not want to go, and even more who did not want to stay in Bluff once the colony was settled, it was the "voice of the Lord" as expressed by Church authorities that kept them there. After some discouraging years, President George A. Smith and Apostle Erastus Snow blessed the members during one of their visits to Bluff: "I promise those who are willing to remain and face this difficult situation that they will be doubly blessed by the Lord." Turning to Jens Nielson, the man added, "For your obedient and steadfast response at this time, you shall be blessed and prospered of the Lord both in spiritual and temporal ways." The above prophecy and promise came to pass every whit.  

Some Navajos even prophesied the Mormons' coming. Jacob Hamblin reported one such revelation during a conference in 1878. He said that a great change had occurred in the Indians' attitude over the preceding twenty years, at the beginning of which an unnamed Indian had received a prophecy that a "good people from the west would settle on the Little Colorado." Another Native American saw a "strange individual that had appeared to the Indians
in 1875, giving them good counsel, whose name was Nephi," a Book of Mormon character. Also, the vision introduced at the beginning of this chapter shows that the Mormons taught enough religion to the Indians for the Navajos to learn the appropriate names and forms used in Mormon prophecy.

Naturally, one of the primary tools necessary in this process was language. At first, some of the Mormons chosen for exploration and early settlement trips had to have the ability to speak Spanish, a sort of lingua franca in the Southwest because of previous Spanish and Mexican occupations. But before long, instructions came from Church headquarters encouraging the settlers to learn Navajo. This charge sprang from both a practical and religious need as Brigham Young pointed out that "poor, vicious or ignorant interpreters may do and no doubt have done us considerable harm and retarded us in our efforts to unite in friendly intercourse with the Indians." Only a few took this directive seriously, such men as Jacob Hamblin, James S. Brown, Thales Haskell, and Christian L. Christensen. All of these men became valuable assets to their respective communities—Hamblin being a spokesman between Mormons and Navajos (though he also used Paiute interpreters), Brown bringing Navajo leaders to Salt Lake City in 1876 to air grievances to Brigham Young, Haskell smoothing over differences concerning horse stealing incidents in Bluff, and Christensen acting as the Indian Mission President for the Little Colorado Stake and often translating in church services. Mormon traders also learned the Navajo language, thus exerting an influence in economic relations, but in general, the majority of official and religious communication was handled by a small minority.

Navajos were first instructed in Church doctrine; the next step was baptism. Perhaps one of the most effective and best-recorded missionary efforts involved Christian L. Christensen. In his journal he reported that between November 3, 1879, and August 8, 1882, he baptized eight gentiles and ninety Indians. Two years later, during the month of April, he and his associates baptized forty Navajos, the average convert being twenty-four years old. A normal spread of ages, ranging from eight to eighty, indicates that there was no special emphasis on baptizing children or young adults. Rather, baptism was most likely performed on families. Also, there were as many women and girls baptized as there were men and boys. And finally, according to Christensen and others, baptism was a welcomed, voluntary event.

Ammon Tenney, another missionary, tells of journeying from the Little Colorado to the area around Zuni and Fort Wingate, preaching Mormonism to the Indians that he met. On November 25, 1875, Tenney and some Navajos had a meeting which ended in a "splendid spirit and some demanding baptism but . . . being fearful of arousing the officials at [Fort] Wingate and Defiance, I declined. But so anxious were they that they appointed the day to come and be baptized at this place, a distance of twelve miles." Tenney's journal ends this episode abruptly, the next entry dated six months later, but the story does indicate the enthusiasm that some Navajos in 1875, giving them good counsel, whose name was Nephi," a Book of Mormon character. Also, the vision introduced at the beginning of this chapter shows that the Mormons taught enough religion to the Indians for the Navajos to learn the appropriate names and forms used in Mormon prophecy.

Naturally, one of the primary tools necessary in this process was language. At first, some of the Mormons chosen for exploration and early settlement trips had to have the ability to speak Spanish, a sort of lingua franca in the Southwest because of previous Spanish and Mexican occupations. But before long, instructions came from Church headquarters encouraging the settlers to learn Navajo. This charge sprang from both a practical and religious need as Brigham Young pointed out that "poor, vicious or ignorant interpreters may do and no doubt have done us considerable harm and retarded us in our efforts to unite in friendly intercourse with the Indians." Only a few took this directive seriously, such men as Jacob Hamblin, James S. Brown, Thales Haskell, and Christian L. Christensen. All of these men became valuable assets to their respective communities—Hamblin being a spokesman between Mormons and Navajos (though he also used Paiute interpreters), Brown bringing Navajo leaders to Salt Lake City in 1876 to air grievances to Brigham Young, Haskell smoothing over differences concerning horse stealing incidents in Bluff, and Christensen acting as the Indian Mission President for the Little Colorado Stake and often translating in church services. Mormon traders also learned the Navajo language, thus exerting an influence in economic relations, but in general, the majority of official and religious communication was handled by a small minority.

Navajos were first instructed in Church doctrine; the next step was baptism. Perhaps one of the most effective and best-recorded missionary efforts involved Christian L. Christensen. In his journal he reported that between November 3, 1879, and August 8, 1882, he baptized eight gentiles and ninety Indians. Two years later, during the month of April, he and his associates baptized forty Navajos, the average convert being twenty-four years old. A normal spread of ages, ranging from eight to eighty, indicates that there was no special emphasis on baptizing children or young adults. Rather, baptism was most likely performed on families. Also, there were as many women and girls baptized as there were men and boys. And finally, according to Christensen and others, baptism was a welcomed, voluntary event.

Ammon Tenney, another missionary, tells of journeying from the Little Colorado to the area around Zuni and Fort Wingate, preaching Mormonism to the Indians that he met. On November 25, 1875, Tenney and some Navajos had a meeting which ended in a "splendid spirit and some demanding baptism but . . . being fearful of arousing the officials at [Fort] Wingate and Defiance, I declined. But so anxious were they that they appointed the day to come and be baptized at this place, a distance of twelve miles." Tenney's journal ends this episode abruptly, the next entry dated six months later, but the story does indicate the enthusiasm that some Navajos
felt toward becoming members of the Church. In May, 1876, Tenney mentioned that after he had baptized thirty-eight Zunis in three days' time, twenty Navajos stepped forward to enter the water but were denied the privilege. The reason: Tenney was afraid that they did not have a clear understanding of what they were committing themselves to. Thus, a generally conscientious approach to teaching clearly the responsibilities accompanying Church membership characterized Mormon proselytizing efforts.

However, Christianity had a difficult time breaking through traditional Navajo beliefs. The outward appearance of acceptance was not necessarily a conscious attempt to deceive but rather a reflection of Navajo syncretism. Because Navajo religion draws on a large pantheon of both male and female deities, the addition of one more god, in this case Christ, probably was not regarded as a really significant departure from previous beliefs.

This became most evident in the treatment of the sick, a central concern of Navajo religion. To summarize, the Navajos believed that by breaking with practices established by deity, harmony in the balance of nature or man was lost, which in turn caused natural disaster or sickness. Restoration of this balance was of utmost importance; therefore, ceremonies called "sings" were used to invoke the help of the gods. A logical step was to incorporate the Christian God, in this process especially when the normal ceremonies did not appear to have a desired effect. Thus, the Navajos took a rational approach to solving an age-old problem by joining Christ with Monster Slayer to combat sickness and death. This is in capacity that the clearest understanding of the Navajo perception of Mormonism is found.

Some positive experiences derived from this situation. Christensen told of an eighty-year-old woman who was so sick with dropsy that she sent her daughter to bring the missionary to her. After begging for baptism, she was lifted onto a horse, taken to a river, and baptized. She emerged from the water on that cold April day, mounted her horse by herself, and went away "rejoicing," much to the relief of the missionaries.

But not all who had dropsy were that fortunate, as is shown in the case of Musher and his wife, both of whom were recent converts to Mormonism. In July 1886 the wife became ill, so Christensen visited the family to see if he could be of assistance. After Christensen had sat by her bedside for a short time, Musher asked the Mormon if he thought the woman would live. His answer, given in Hopi so that the attending medicine men could not understand, was that the woman would die. Apparently using another language did not fool anyone, since the "multitude present" became excited and asked the white man to explain. He reported, "I told them it was a very dangerous disease and not often cured and if she die not to say to anyone it was witchcraft nor anything of that kind. I told them it was the judgments of God upon the earth because of wickedness and they thanked me for my talk." Christensen returned the next day and encouraged the "doctors" to let the woman sleep, something that is not necessarily part of a "sing." But "they
did not dare to stop singing and making medicine on account of evil spirits." The Mormon attempted to use tact, saying that at one time the feathers, paint, and other ceremonial paraphernalia were good and came from God, but not now. They also should "sing" for free because of the "love of their sick and kindred." Turning the tables, however, the medicine men challenged him to sing for free, which he said he could not do, but that he could pray. He then knelt down in the midst of them and asked God to take her away and break up their traditions and bless them with the knowledge of truth, etc. They thought my prayer was short and they asked me my opinion. I told them I thought she would die and if she did, not to tear down the house nor burn the body nor kill horses nor sheep nor goats nor dogs; that she had no need of them the other side of the vail and many other things did I tell unto them always in sighting them to their wicked practices and the necessity of abstaining from them.  

Leaving the group, the Mormon and Musher stepped outside for a short discussion, but the medicine men called the Navajo away because they were "suspicious" of the "privacy."

Christensen recorded a similar incident when he visited a sick member only to find "old men round him singing, buzzing, smoking." The missionary denounced the Navajo traditions, held a prayer circle, then talked and answered questions. As usual, the medicine men felt threatened and "often tried to say something to joke or confound us. But as often as they did they were confounded. I told them I had not come for fun but to do them good." The effect of this speech is questionable, but the missionary reported that in the morning after the group had been chastised by their leader, "they all went their way with very peculiar feelings."

Thus, the Mormon missionaries tried to strike at the heart of the matter by denigrating traditional practices and beliefs. When one considers the complexities of cultural change and the limited exposure of Navajos to white society in general and Mormon society in particular, the amazing thing is that the Saints had as many converts as they did. Monster Slayer was far more entrenched in the fabric of Navajo society than Christ could possibly be.

In discussing historical events between 1870 and 1900 in the Little Colorado and San Juan region, one needs to look at three different groups—Mormons, gentiles, and Navajos. The Navajos, though not organized and controlled with as much clarity of purpose or economic power as the Mormons, nevertheless took an aggressive stance that in many instances proved beneficial to them. The Navajos, instead of being pawns at the white man's bidding, implemented an unofficial policy that joined armed threat, covert manipulation, legal proceedings, and practical friendship in an effective program of
A key to understanding why the Navajos were successful lies in Mormon-gentile relations. For instance, in 1870 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Ely S. Parker, received word that some white men had told Navajos there was nothing wrong with raiding Mormons, who were enemies of the United States. While this misconception was corrected in a treaty signed by Jacob Hamblin on November 5, 1870, gentiles for various reasons, such as economic competition, political fear, and religious self-righteousness, continued to draw a distinction between Mormons and other whites.

One Navajo agent in particular, W. F. M. Arny, clearly exemplified this antagonistic spirit. Problems started in December 1873, when a snowstorm stranded four Navajos in Circle Valley, Utah. They had left the reservation without a pass in order to go on a trading expedition to the Paiutes and Utes. After bartering for a cow with the Utes, they took shelter in a cabin and started to dry some of the meat from the slaughtered animal. A non-Mormon named McCarty, assuming that the beef was stolen, gathered some men and then surrounded and killed three of the Navajos, the fourth escaping across the Colorado River. After a difficult journey, the wounded survivor arrived at his relatives' home and told of the deed. The Mormons were blamed, and eventually talk of war became so prevalent that Jacob Hamblin and two others went out to the Navajos' camp, where they almost lost their lives before they reached an agreement.

While this story is often recounted to illustrate the peacemaking ability of Hamblin, it serves also as a good example of the complexity of Mormon, Navajo, and gentile relationships. Agent Arny sent one of his head chiefs, Ganado Mucho, to encourage peace in the Navajo Mountain area. He reported that the Indians were peaceful but that the relatives of the dead demanded compensation by the government. Arny explained that he could not pay the relatives because the Indians had lost their lives and property off the reservation, even though the treaty of 1868 allowed the Navajos to hunt and homestead on these unoccupied lands.

Within a month, Hamblin wrote to Arny making clear that McCarty and his associates were not Mormons and stating that the incident could be settled if the Navajos came to the Utah settlements with a good Spanish-speaking interpreter. Arny responded that Hamblin and the Navajos should come to Fort Defiance where 'arrangements can be made to protect the Mormons . . . and define where such persons can settle without being molested by the two tribes (Navajos and Moquis [Hopis]).' Otherwise, the agent feared, he could not 'restrain my Indians.' The same day, Arny wrote to the Superintend-ent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico, Colonel L. Edwin Dudley, stating that "the Mormons are so anxious to encroach and settle upon the Moqui and Navajo lands that they are willing to pay for peace with them." After mentioning that John D. Lee of Mountain Meadow Massacre fame operated the ferry across

expansion that added to their land holdings and resulted in the eviction of the Mormons from the Tuba City-Moenkopi area.

A key to understanding why the Navajos were successful lies in Mormon-gentile relations. For instance, in 1870 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Ely S. Parker, received word that some white men had told Navajos there was nothing wrong with raiding Mormons, who were enemies of the United States. While this misconception was corrected in a treaty signed by Jacob Hamblin on November 5, 1870, gentiles for various reasons, such as economic competition, political fear, and religious self-righteousness, continued to draw a distinction between Mormons and other whites.

One Navajo agent in particular, W. F. M. Arny, clearly exemplified this antagonistic spirit. Problems started in December 1873, when a snowstorm stranded four Navajos in Circle Valley, Utah. They had left the reservation without a pass in order to go on a trading expedition to the Paiutes and Utes. After bartering for a cow with the Utes, they took shelter in a cabin and started to dry some of the meat from the slaughtered animal. A non-Mormon named McCarty, assuming that the beef was stolen, gathered some men and then surrounded and killed three of the Navajos, the fourth escaping across the Colorado River. After a difficult journey, the wounded survivor arrived at his relatives' home and told of the deed. The Mormons were blamed, and eventually talk of war became so prevalent that Jacob Hamblin and two others went out to the Navajos' camp, where they almost lost their lives before they reached an agreement.

While this story is often recounted to illustrate the peacemaking ability of Hamblin, it serves also as a good example of the complexity of Mormon, Navajo, and gentile relationships. Agent Arny sent one of his head chiefs, Ganado Mucho, to encourage peace in the Navajo Mountain area. He reported that the Indians were peaceful but that the relatives of the dead demanded compensation by the government. Arny explained that he could not pay the relatives because the Indians had lost their lives and property off the reservation, even though the treaty of 1868 allowed the Navajos to hunt and homestead on these unoccupied lands.

Within a month, Hamblin wrote to Arny making clear that McCarty and his associates were not Mormons and stating that the incident could be settled if the Navajos came to the Utah settlements with a good Spanish-speaking interpreter. Arny responded that Hamblin and the Navajos should come to Fort Defiance where 'arrangements can be made to protect the Mormons . . . and define where such persons can settle without being molested by the two tribes (Navajos and Moquis [Hopis]).' Otherwise, the agent feared, he could not 'restrain my Indians.' The same day, Arny wrote to the Superinten-ent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico, Colonel L. Edwin Dudley, stating that "the Mormons are so anxious to encroach and settle upon the Moqui and Navajo lands that they are willing to pay for peace with them." After mentioning that John D. Lee of Mountain Meadow Massacre fame operated the ferry across
the Colorado, Arny accused the Mormons of encouraging Indians to steal from gentiles. The agent concluded, “The Mormon leaders find that some of their followers, influenced by their zeal and cupidity, made a mistake . . . which in my judgment should be used in a peaceful way to prevent the settlement of the Mormons too near to either the Moquis or the Navajo reservation.”

The Navajos also wanted to use this incident to their benefit. Two chiefs, “Peoken” and “Katcheena,” demanded payment from the Mormons of 192 horses, 100 cattle, and “other property” to help ease the loss of their three men. The Navajos were aware of the friction between Mormons and gentiles and capitalized on it by boasting that arms and ammunition were supplied by the “Americans” to wage war against the Mormons. They made no mention of three Mormons—Dr. James Whitmore, Alexander McIntyre, and George A. Smith—killed in two separate incidents within the past ten years. In a week’s time, the indemnity jumped to 400 cattle for a “deed our people never committed.” The Mormons sent a letter to the chiefs of the Navajo Nation encouraging a few leaders to come to the settlements, but to no avail; the Navajos played hard to get.

By May, the two-month deadline given the Mormons to pay the Navajos was fast approaching. Major William R. Price, Commander at Fort Wingate, held a council in which the Navajos agreed not to fight as long as they received corn and beef. Arny and the Navajos still insisted on blaming the trouble on the Mormons and saw the impending war—costing “hundreds and thousands of dollars”—as a natural result. To avoid this, the agent recommended that the government pay money for food to be issued and that $7,500 for train tickets to Washington be provided for ten Navajos, four of whom were close relatives of the deceased. The intent was to mollify the bereaved and give the incident a chance to quiet down. Arny later filed a claim for reimbursement of $17,364.71 for food issued to the Navajos who threatened the Mormons.

The matter moved to its conclusion with Arny requesting a company of troops to go with him to Lee’s Ferry for a council of peace with “Indians, Mormons and others interested.” Dudley responded by telling Arny that he could not authorize the agent’s leaving the reservation and that, in his opinion, Arny was not the man to bring about peaceful relations. Thus the affair ended in a stalemate. The Navajos did not receive the 400 cattle from the Mormons, Arny did not go on his “essentially necessary” peace-keeping mission, and the impending war fizzled. Arny did, however, go to Washington with his Navajo delegation. The most instructive aspect of this incident is the Navajos’ use of threat and manipulation to achieve their ends. Arny’s fear and prejudice encouraged the course they took and provided them with the extra rations they desired.

In other cases, Mormons and Navajos worked together. Starting in September, 1875, Brigham Young gave James S. Brown the special assignment to work with the Navajos. Although his health was poor, he accepted because Young told him that the “spirit does and has dictated to me all the time to
send you to take charge of a mission in that country.” Perhaps it was that same spirit that prompted a highly dramatic (as told by Brown) episode on the Rio Purco. As Brown and two other men traveled across the reservation, a Navajo emerged from some bushes and asked who they were. Upon hearing they were Mormons, the Indian signaled for others, to the count of 250–300, to come out of hiding and hear the “history of our forefathers.” Brown related stories from the Book of Mormon while “tears came to the eyes of many in the audience” and others declared, “We know that what you say is true, for the traditions of our good old men who never told a lie agree with your story.”

This incident occurred in June 1876, and by August 15, Brown and sixteen Navajos were in Salt Lake City to meet with Brigham Young. The discussion centered on supposed wrongs suffered by the Navajos in the Little Colorado area. While the actual topics discussed were not recorded, the Navajos “made a good peace” and returned home satisfied. Brown, however, toured the Utah settlements in search of those “willing or desirous of helping to build the Kingdom of God in that region . . . and extend the curtains of Zion in that direction.” He lectured sixty-five times, garnered eighty volunteers, and fulfilled the prediction expressed in his letter of support from Brigham Young that “we have no fear that too many will respond.” Moenkopi, officially established in 1875, served as a way station for these settlers as they moved on to the Little Colorado to take up residence.

The next ten years, 1875–85, were generally peaceful and productive, encouraging Mormons and Navajos to work together. Missionary zeal, the spirit of the United Order, the isolation of the settlements, and the struggles to eke out an existence kept the Mormons humble in demeanor and dependent upon good relationships. The Navajos became the recipients of this goodwill and the objects of baptism. Their response was favorable. Lot Smith reported in 1877 that “our relations with the Lamanite continue of the most friendly nature. We, I think, will have to use caution as they are not at all backward in telling the gentiles that they do not like them and that the Mormons are their good friends. Quite a number of the Navajos keep telling us they are coming to live with us.”

The Deseret News also carried words of hope during these years, such as: “The Navajo chief Comah said he was pleased to have us come live here.” “The Navajo chief Comah and the Moquis’ chief Nahie having visited us sometime since, expressed their pleasure at our presence and a hope that the land would suit us. We have no fears whatever that the Indians will trouble us, believing the Lord will preserve us.” “As far as my knowledge goes, all of the Navajos are pleased at our being in their midst.” Brigham Young and John Taylor, encouraged by this response, saw it as an answer to prayer and a fulfillment of prophecy in which “the very nature of our enemies has changed through the influences of the holy spirit; those who thirsted for our blood come bending unto our brethren desiring to know the truth.”

This goodwill took various forms. For instance, in March 1878, a Nava-
Jo named Pal-Chin-Clan-Na arrived in Moenkopi with news that he had fifteen Mormon horses that had been stolen from southern Utah by renegade Navajos and Paiutes. He said that he had attended the 1876 meeting in Salt Lake City with James Brown and Brigham Young and that he desired to keep the peace by living in friendship with the Mormons. He also advised that the operator of Lee's Ferry be more discriminating about letting Navajos come into Utah, since some illegally bought and sold or stole livestock. Pal-Chin-Clan-Na returned the horses, was eventually baptized, and attended a Mormon temple (probably in St. George) where he received his endowments, a series of Mormon sacred ordinances.

One of the most important principles of Mormon-Navajo relations was the help and instruction given in planting crops and in home industry. In advice given to new settlers in 1876, Brigham Young, counseled them to treat the Indians with kindness and to teach them to avoid gambling, war, and stealing. He went on to say that "you, on the other hand, will give them all the encouragement, help and instruction they need to perform and improve the habit of their lives, and that your helping hands will be extended to aid them in becoming good and useful citizens of the Kingdom of the Father."

This practical help to Navajo economy arrived in a variety of ways. John W. Young, Mormon leader and entrepreneur, established a woolen mill and trading post in Moenkopi in 1879. He hoped that he could capture much of the Navajo trade of raw wool and then manufacture clothing for the Mormons on the Little Colorado. Although unsuccessful and quickly abandoned, this enterprise attempted to integrate the local Navajo economy with that of the settlers. Agriculture was another means of teaching and helping the Navajos. The "Minutes of the Little Colorado Stake Conference" make frequent mention of the Indians planting and harvesting crops. In August 1883, Bishop A. L. Farnsworth stated that at Moenkopi the Navajos and Hopis raised 5,000 bushels of grain.

Aside from these outstanding efforts, it was most likely the daily help and interaction that fostered friendship during these years. Christensen provides a good picture of this activity. For example, in November 1883, he took 1,400 pounds of wool belonging to the Navajo Musher and hauled it from Moenkopi to Provo, Utah, where he sold it for seven cents a pound. He did this as a favor. Christensen also took an old gun that Musher left in his house for months and exchanged it for a newer rifle for his Navajo friend. Musher, however, was upset at the transaction and complained until the Mormon bought him a gun similar to the one traded.

Helping the sick, serving as a court of complaints, giving counsel, and feeding visitors comprised the fabric of Mormon daily life. Mormon cooperation with the Indians was so prominent that even outsiders noticed it. In an annual report, Major General John Pope commented that the Mormon "affiliations with the Navajos and other Indians are very close and intimate, and they
appear in all cases to make common cause with the Indians.”57 This attitude of brotherhood, however, did not last indefinitely.

There were several causes for the deterioration of Mormon-Navajo relations between 1885 and 1900. Among them were a decreasing interest in missionary work, an increase of economic problems culminating in the depression of the 1890s, the dissolution of the United Order by the end of the 1880s, an influx of new settlers who did not have much interest in the Navajos, and the lessening of isolation because of improved transportation facilities. But the two most prominent areas of conflict arose from gentile animosity and diminishing natural resources.

Ever since the Mormons had moved onto the banks of the Little Colorado, sharp lines of demarcation had divided them from non-Mormons. The close relationships with the Navajos bred fear of conspiracy, a common theme that accompanied Mormonism before it ever reached the Salt Lake Valley. The Mountain Meadow Massacre increased mistrust, as did other incidents—some real, some imagined—so that by the 1880s accusations about conspiracy were familiar fare. For example, in 1883, General Pope believed the Mormons encouraged the Navajos to acts of hostility and resistance and “if serious trouble with the Navajos should ever arise, there is little doubt that the Mormons will be found largely instrumental in bringing it on.”58

A year later the Secretary of War, Robert T. Lincoln, received word that the Mormons had formed a “coalition” and that a “breakout,” expected at any time, would endanger every gentile’s life. In order to avoid being massacred themselves, the Mexicans and Americans planned to strike first since “law abiding citizens are tired of being run over and having their property stolen and they will resort to the shotgun as our courts are a farce where Mormons are on the jury.”59 This report came from a stock rancher, George A. McCarter, and was most likely a bid to bring pressure on the Mormons and their landholdings. Further investigation proved there was no foundation to the rumor of Mormon missionaries inciting the Navajos against the gentiles. In fact, Navajo Agent John H. Bowman said of the Mormons that “they readily acquire their [Navajo] language, use the Indians well and fairly and . . . get along better with the Indians than most gentile settlers. . . . The only objection I can see to them is their great eagerness to convert them to their own peculiar faith.”60

One of the greatest “peculiarities” of the Mormon faith at this time was the institution of polygamy. Both Bluff and Moenkopi served as a refuge for polygamists during the 1880s, when increased pressure to stop the practice drove many into hiding. The Navajos, like the Mormons, had multiple wives and so shared similar thoughts and feelings on the subject. When Bowman sent a Navajo scout to investigate Indian activity in the Moenkopi area, he hoped also to obtain information about Mormon polygamy. The scout questioned Christensen, saying that the Navajos, like the Mormons, were counseled to keep only one wife and, like the Mormons, they did not think this appear in all cases to make common cause with the Indians.”57 This attitude of brotherhood, however, did not last indefinitely.

There were several causes for the deterioration of Mormon-Navajo relations between 1885 and 1900. Among them were a decreasing interest in missionary work, an increase of economic problems culminating in the depression of the 1890s, the dissolution of the United Order by the end of the 1880s, an influx of new settlers who did not have much interest in the Navajos, and the lessening of isolation because of improved transportation facilities. But the two most prominent areas of conflict arose from gentile animosity and diminishing natural resources.

Ever since the Mormons had moved onto the banks of the Little Colorado, sharp lines of demarcation had divided them from non-Mormons. The close relationships with the Navajos bred fear of conspiracy, a common theme that accompanied Mormonism before it ever reached the Salt Lake Valley. The Mountain Meadow Massacre increased mistrust, as did other incidents—some real, some imagined—so that by the 1880s accusations about conspiracy were familiar fare. For example, in 1883, General Pope believed the Mormons encouraged the Navajos to acts of hostility and resistance and “if serious trouble with the Navajos should ever arise, there is little doubt that the Mormons will be found largely instrumental in bringing it on.”58

A year later the Secretary of War, Robert T. Lincoln, received word that the Mormons had formed a “coalition” and that a “breakout,” expected at any time, would endanger every gentile’s life. In order to avoid being massacred themselves, the Mexicans and Americans planned to strike first since “law abiding citizens are tired of being run over and having their property stolen and they will resort to the shotgun as our courts are a farce where Mormons are on the jury.”59 This report came from a stock rancher, George A. McCarter, and was most likely a bid to bring pressure on the Mormons and their landholdings. Further investigation proved there was no foundation to the rumor of Mormon missionaries inciting the Navajos against the gentiles. In fact, Navajo Agent John H. Bowman said of the Mormons that “they readily acquire their [Navajo] language, use the Indians well and fairly and . . . get along better with the Indians than most gentile settlers. . . . The only objection I can see to them is their great eagerness to convert them to their own peculiar faith.”60

One of the greatest “peculiarities” of the Mormon faith at this time was the institution of polygamy. Both Bluff and Moenkopi served as a refuge for polygamists during the 1880s, when increased pressure to stop the practice drove many into hiding. The Navajos, like the Mormons, had multiple wives and so shared similar thoughts and feelings on the subject. When Bowman sent a Navajo scout to investigate Indian activity in the Moenkopi area, he hoped also to obtain information about Mormon polygamy. The scout questioned Christensen, saying that the Navajos, like the Mormons, were counseled to keep only one wife and, like the Mormons, they did not think this
was a good idea. After a long discussion about religion, the Navajo "went away rejoicing." 61

This empathy felt by Navajos for Mormons against gentiles extended to the point where Christensen hid among Indian friends for two years before being caught by federal marshals in Bluff. At times he had difficulty restraining the Indians from shooting his pursuers. 62 Although polygamy was no longer an officially professed belief of the Mormons in 1890, the practice still continued and the stigma remained for some time to come. This was important because as problems between Mormons and Indians developed over resources, the Navajos used gentile prejudice against the Mormons to attain their ends.

Water and land were keys to survival on the Little Colorado, and as use increased and resources decreased bitter conflicts resulted. Navajos let flocks of sheep into Mormon pastures and crops, disputes arose over shares of water, accusations of theft were rampant, and cries of land monopoly prevailed. Incidents multiplied, reaching a new height in 1892 when Lot Smith, an irascible Mormon leader, returned home from his fields to find a herd of Navajo sheep in his fenced pasture. He went to his house, got a pistol, and killed two of the sheep. The Indian version of the story claims that he killed seven sheep and shot at a woman and two children who were trying to drive the animals out of the pasture. Chaehos, the apparent owner of the livestock, then began to shoot at Smith's cows, killing five of them. The Mormon next shot three times at Chaehos, who returned fire twice, mortally wounding Smith. The injured man rode a half-mile to his house, reporting "that he ought to have quit shooting when they commenced shooting his cows but he thought the Indian would not shoot." 63 When a deputy sheriff arrived from Flagstaff to arrest Chaehos, between 100 and 200 well-armed Navajos prevented his seizure. The Indians then aired their grievances, which stemmed from Mormons taking over the land little by little. Chaehos evaded capture, though for at least three years marshals and agents attempted to bring him to trial. 64 Protection by his clan members and residence in the remote Navajo Mountain region ensured his freedom.

Antagonism at Moenkopi increased instead of subsiding. A request for protection from the Navajos and Hopis was sent by Mormons to the Governor of Arizona. The Indians began to mutilate calves on the public domain. Water controlled by Mormon-built dams became an issue. And finally, word spread that the boundaries of the reservation might be extended to include Moenkopi and Tuba City. Investigations ensued for the next eight years. Petitions and letters sent to state and federal officials did not stop the increasing number of Navajos who used the area for herding and agriculture. Thus, the burgeoning Indian population with its growing demand for lands and the conflicts with the Mormons made Moenkopi an area of contention. On January 8, 1900, an Execu-
tive Order added 1,575,369 acres of land, including Moenkopi and Tuba City, to the reservation.

The expulsion of the Mormons from this area largely negated the efforts and sacrifice of earlier years. The Navajos reclaimed what had unofficially been theirs, the Hopis', and the Paiutes' before the settlers arrived, and secured it through legal proceedings in the government. The roots of the Mormons' expulsion lay in their failure to adhere to the original principles of their dealings with the Indians. While the Mormons actively sought to teach and befriend, the Navajos responded readily. However, when the settlers lost the desire to share and turned to more impersonal means, such as court proceedings and laws, then the Navajos ceased to cooperate and played against the Mormons at their own game.

Yet the real lesson of this thirty-year period is seen not in the loss but in the gain. The first fifteen years were a time of peaceful coexistence between two groups expanding their domains. The Navajos welcomed the settlers because of their forthright manner and the practical benefits of Mormon society. But the Indians never lost sight of the fact that they were a chosen people in a land protected by the gods. As the elect, they felt justified in calling upon a variety of diplomatic tools ranging from sincere friendship to overt aggression in expanding their boundaries and enriching their people. And when the land was finally theirs, probably some of the medicine men chanted a song, first used in the days of Kit Carson, to exult in their victory:

I am spared, I am spared.
Enemy has missed me, enemy has missed me.
Today it did not happen, today it did not happen.