



Black Mormon: The Story of Elijah Ables

Russell Stevenson

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Drawing on unpublished documents from the LDS Church History Archives, this volume presents the story of Elijah Ables, the first black Mormon priesthood holder. A committed friend of Joseph Smith, Elijah Ables fiercely upheld institutional Mormonism when other Mormons refused. In turn, Joseph Smith faced down criticism from within in order to create a safe space for Ables to thrive. The Saints' memories of their friendship continued well into the twentieth-century. As a man scorned and ostracized, Ables stuck by the faith he loved to the day of his death. Ables' story shows reveals the human struggles of the Mormon community to live up to its founding vision of racial inclusiveness. We see the depths of Joseph Smith's constant battle to defuse the criticism of slaveholders and racists from within the faith, Brigham Young's personal struggles with racism, and the chorus line of ordinary Saints as they tried to live up to Joseph Smith's dreams of a Zion community.

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