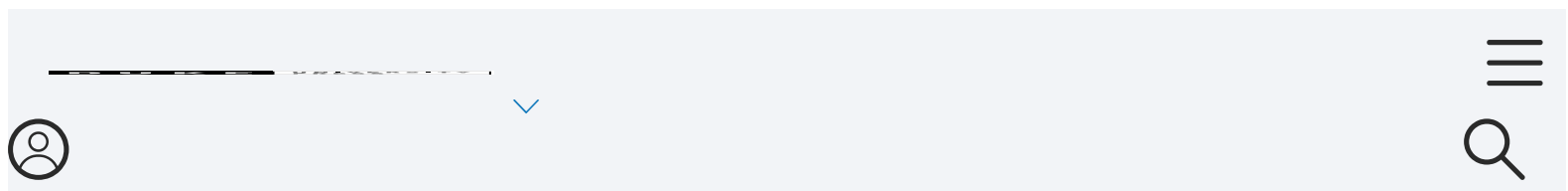


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*The Book of Mormon* is perhaps best known in Americanist circles as a version of the Indians-as-Israelites theory. It features the racialized division of the progeny of the text's founding diasporic Jewish figure, Lehi, into wicked "Lamanites," who are cursed with "a skin of blackness" and were understood by the earliest readers to be the ancestors of Amerindian peoples, and the righteous "Nephites," the fair-skinned narrators of *The Book of Mormon*. This essay shows how *The Book of Mormon*'s foundational raci(al)ist orthodoxy autodeconstructs, and in so doing not only offers a vision of racial apocalypse diametrically opposed to what would come to be known as Manifest Destiny—one resonant with contemporaneous Amerindian prophetic movements—but also challenges the literalist hermeneutics that found warrant for Euro-Christian colonization in the transcendental authority of "the Bible alone."

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