

Over the Rim: Why Faithful Latter-day Saints Would Engage in Mass Murder

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Arts

with a

Major in History

in the

College of Graduate Studies

University of Idaho

by

Larry Matthew McCune

Major Professor: Richard Spence, Ph.D.

Committee Members: Katherine Aiken, Ph.D.; Matthew Fox-Amato, Ph.D.

Department Administrator: Ellen Kittell, Ph.D.

Authorization to Submit Thesis

This thesis/dissertation of Larry Matthew McCune, submitted for the degree of Master of Arts with a Major in History and titled "Over the Rim: Why Faithful Latter-day Saints Would Engage in Mass Murder" has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

Major Professor: _____ Date: _____
Richard Spence, Ph.D.

Committee Members: _____ Date: _____
Katherine Aiken, Ph.D.

_____ Date: _____
Matthew Fox-Amato, Ph.D.

Department
Administrator: _____ Date: _____
Ellen Kittell, Ph.D.

Abstract

On 11 September 1857, fifty plus priesthood holders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ended a five day siege of a California bound wagon train. They lured surviving members out with a story of protecting them from an on-going Indian attack and a promise of safety back in Cedar City. Just a short distance outside their wagon fort, all the survivors except for the children under the age of eight years old were murdered brutally in cold blood, buried in shallow graves, and their living children were distributed among Mormon families along with possessions and livestock from the Fancher wagon train.

What would make members of the LDS church, whose beliefs include murder being the unforgivable sin, participate in a massacre of 140 plus men, women, and children who were simply trying to pass through Utah Territory to California? In this thesis, the social, political, economic, and religious considerations that drove this event and allowed the killers on the ground to act in apparent contravention of a deeply held faith are examined. Wagon train captain, Alexander Fancher is used to give us a lens into mainstream American pioneers and as emblematic of his wagon train. John D. Lee, the man in command of the massacre participants on the ground and the only man tried for the crime is used to give us a lens into the lives of the killers, the LDS church as a whole, and the conditions in Utah Territory in the 1850s.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge first of all, the faculty of the History Department at the University of Idaho and particularly my committee members, Rick Spence, Matt Fox-Amato, and Kathy Aiken for their help, suggestions, and encouragement over several years of study. Second, I would like to acknowledge the work of historian Will Bagley and the late David L. Bigler whose extensive writing on the topic of the Mountain Meadows Massacre made this thesis both possible and exciting for me to pursue as a topic. I would like to acknowledge the librarians of the University of Idaho, especially Rochelle Smith, who helped me track down useful and necessary information when I wasn't sure where to look. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Special Collections Department at Southern Utah University for helping me research and better understand some of the participants of the Mountain Meadows Massacre during a summer research trip.

Dedication

To my wife and children for putting up with me as a non-traditional undergrad and again as a graduate student.

To Dave and Jenny who talked me into college and who encouraged me much along the way.

To Jim and Dot who let me know that I mattered when I was a teenager.

To my mother who said she was proud of me and my late step-father who showed me the same.

Table of Contents

Authorization to Submit Thesis.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Chapter One: Biographical Sketches	8
Alexander Fancher	8
John D. Lee.....	14
Similarities and Differences	34
Chapter 3: Early Mormonism and Protestantism in 19 th Century America.....	37
Alexander Fancher	40
John D. Lee.....	41
Mormonism	45
Chapter 4: Economic and Political Issues	65
Emigrant Trail Trade	65
Mining	67
Agriculture.....	69
Pay.....	72
Immigrants to Utah Territory	74
Indian Relations.....	76
Official Persecution.....	81
Chapter 5: The Wagon Train and the Massacre	90
The Cost of Going West.....	92
Wagons.....	94

Draft Animals	95
Firearms	96
Manpower	98
Livestock	100
Wealth	101
The Massacre	102
Chapter 6: Conclusion	131
Bibliography	137

Chapter 1: Introduction

On 23 March 1877, John Doyle Lee sat on the edge of a coffin. He was surrounded by soldiers, a chaplain, a photographer, a few journalists, and his lawyer, William W. Bishop. Lee's deeds at this place nearly twenty years previously had hounded and haunted him. He now faced the fate decreed for those deeds stoically as his picture was taken one last time and he was allowed to say his final words, "I have but little to say this morning. Of course I feel that I am upon the brink of eternity; and the solemnities of eternity should rest upon my mind at the present. ... I am ready to die. I trust in God. I have no fear. Death has no terror..."¹ The orders to the firing squad were given by the commander and the rifles thundered. John D. Lee fell back into his coffin, dead before he completed the fall.

The deed for which John D. Lee had been convicted was mass murder. He and approximately fifty other Mormon priesthood holders acted on orders from above and massacred a wagon train of 140 plus men, women, and children, sparing only those thought to be under the age of eight. Lee was the only man ever tried for the crime and a conviction in his second trial led to a sentence of death.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre has remained a controversial event to the present day. In the past, Mormon apologists and historians have worked very hard to throw the blame on Lee and to disown him for the crime. Non-Mormon apologists and historians have worked hard to paint a picture that puts the blame on the General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ

1 Juanita Brooks. *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), 1950, p. 151.

of Latter-day Saints and possibly on Brigham Young himself.² Mormon and non-Mormon historians alike have made a more balanced approach beginning with Juanita Brooks in 1950. Recent discoveries by historians, both professional and amateur, have shed new light on the topic of the Massacre. For example, in her book *House of Mourning: A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*, author Shannon Novak makes a critical examination of the extant remains of the massacre victims.³ Their dental work tells a story of relatively wealthy and well fed wagon train members as compared to the remains of Mormons in southern Utah who had poor dental work indicating a poor diet and impoverishment. These recent discoveries and the analyses that have come from them have allowed for a more nuanced and considered exploration of the causation of this event. The Mountain Meadows Massacre was made possible by religious, social, political, and economic events that came to a head during the period of the so-called Utah War of 1857. If any one or two of these elements were removed, it is entirely possible that this horrific event would not have happened. The current flagship title on the topic of the Mountain Meadows Massacre is Will Bagley's, *Blood of the Prophets*, which I find to be the single most comprehensive work on this topic.⁴ Due to the depth of

2 Popularly known as the Mormon church. For brevity, hereafter I will use this term. "General Authorities," is a Mormon term that refers to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' president, his first and second counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the First Bishopric, and the First and Second Quorums of the Seventies.

3 Shannon A. Novak, *House of Mourning: A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008.

4 Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets : Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

research included in that topic, it will be cited frequently, along with a related work by Bagley and co-author, David Bigler, titled *Innocent Blood*.⁵

The earliest works on the topic of the massacre were typically written by either Mormon dissidents and apostates, like Fanny Stenhouse, who wrote several chapters on the topic in her book *Tell It All* in order to condemn Brigham Young and paint him as a tyrant.⁶ Others included similar partisan works by Charles Penrose, taking up the defense of the Mormon church and attempting to place blame outside of its borders.⁷

This thesis will explore and examine those events and contingencies and examine how they combined to create the circumstances necessary for the tragedy of the Massacre to have happened. It will do so through the lens of two men: Alexander Fancher, one of the wagon train captains and massacre victim, and John D. Lee, a major in the Nauvoo Legion in command of the troops who committed the massacre on the orders of one or more General Authorities of the Mormon Church. Both of these men were frontiersmen who were engaged in the dynamics of the Westward Expansion. Each of them gives us a window into the larger

5 Will Bagley, and David L. Bigler, Eds. *Innocent Blood: Essential Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier, Volume 12. (Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 2008.)

6 Mrs. T. B. H. [Fanny] Stenhouse, "*Tell it All*": *The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism, an Autobiography*. (Hartford, Connecticut: A. D. Worthington and Co., 1873.)

7 Charles W. Penrose, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Who Were Guilty of the Crime? An Address Delivered by Elder Charles W. Penrose, October 26th, 1884*. (Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1899.)

picture of American West in the middle of the 19th century as well as the specifics of both sides of this conflict and both men serve as stand-ins for those larger groups.

Fancher was a successful rancher who built his wealth on the opportunities offered by the frontier and by easy land acquisition due to his service to the government. He capitalized on markets to the government itself as well as to miners who took advantage of placer mining laws in California. Lee was a farmer who was known for his work ethic, reliability, and skill in farming, but was driven from place to place by his religious beliefs. At first the persecutions of the Mormons drove him from place to place. Later, his devotion to his Mormon faith and his trustworthiness to Church leaders like Brigham Young and George A. Smith caused him to uproot before he could properly settle and capitalize on the opportunities he may have had in any given location. Fancher is an example of someone who made good with the help of the federal government. Lee is an example of someone who was unable to make good and saw government as an enemy that stood in opposition to his faith, his success, and peace. Both are emblematic of larger forces active in America's westward expansion in the middle of the 19th century.

What this thesis will not attempt to do is place the ultimate blame for the order to commit the massacre. There is simply no extant "smoking gun" evidence to give us a clear picture of who gave the order to murder 140 plus men, women, and children. This point has been debated widely and the evidence is circumstantial at best. For those wishing to examine this topic, I

would recommend starting with *Innocent Blood*, chapters 13 to 16 and the afterword, where a wide variety of evidence on both sides is presented and finally examined.⁸

The first chapter will give a brief biographical description of Alexander Fancher and then of John D. Lee. This is intended to give an overarching picture of their lives and helps place them in the context of 19th century America and the westward expansion. It will also help to contextualize both of these men as the protagonist and the antagonist through whom the larger issues explored in this thesis are being illustrated. An examination of their similarities in life and livelihood followed by a comparison of their differences will round off that chapter.

The second chapter is about religion. It will describe 19th century American Protestantism as it existed from around 1800 to 1860. A discussion of religious dissent and toleration during this period will be given. Against this backdrop, the unique claims of Mormonism and its reception by the American public will help set the stage for Mormon missionary efforts and conflicts specific to the Mormon experience and how that led to the assassination of Mormon Church founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. and how that fueled Mormon grievances. The final part of this section will deal with the Mormon Reformation in the 1850s after the arrival of the main part of the Mormon Church membership in Utah Territory. Understanding the Mormon Reformation will give important contextual information regarding the Massacre.

The third chapter will give an examination of economic and political issues that contributed to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The opening of this section will be made on the mining

8 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 391-474.

industry, comparing especially the 1849 California Gold Rush with the relatively unsuccessful mining industry in southern Utah. This will demonstrate the relative wealth in California and contrast that with the relative poverty in nearby southern Utah.

Agriculture will also be examined. Alexander Fancher will be used to illustrate successful and profitable livestock ranching operations that supplied both the government and civilian markets, including two successful cattle drives from Arkansas to California. Against this, the unsuccessful record of John D. Lee will be used to illustrate the failures of Mormon agricultural efforts due to both near constant migrations and also to environmental conditions in Utah after the Mormon Exodus. These economic issues will be tied in to the relative poverty of Mormons, especially in southern Utah.

An examination of the relationship of Mormons and non-Mormons to American Indians, and to the Paiute tribes of southern Utah in particular, will follow. The non-Mormon attitudes toward American Indians will be contrasted with the Mormon attitudes toward, and religious identification with, American Indians in Utah.

The vast distances of the American West and the relative isolation of Utah from the rest of the nation will be discussed next. The relative isolation both allowed the Mormons a respite from religious persecution, but also hindered them economically and politically. The Utah War and its causes will give the immediate political and religious context to the Massacre and will be used to round off this chapter.

Chapter four will be a description of the Mountain Meadows Massacre itself. It will open with a description of the Overland Trail system with particular focus on the Old Spanish Trail from the Salt Lake Valley into southern California. The cost of making the overland journey

and the comparative wealth of the Fancher wagon train will be discussed.⁹ The importance of examining the wagon train and its journey is important to examining avarice as a potential factor for some of the massacre participants. Following this, a discussion of Fancher's original intended trail and how the emigrants were diverted down to Mountain Meadows. This will segue into the conflicts and rumors on the trail, the Mormons' preparation for the massacre, and finally the massacre itself.

A conclusion will follow, wrapping up the previous chapters. An attempt at creating a basic tapestry of these complex subjects and how they interweave will be made.

9 For the sake of this thesis, the wagon train will be referred to simply as the Fancher wagon train or Fancher party. Historically, it has been called the Baker wagon train or the Baker-Fancher wagon train. John T. Baker and Alexander Fancher are both considered as captains over the wagon train, and current thinking holds that Baker may have been captain over the wagons while Fancher may have been captain over the livestock and herdsman. Because this thesis looks primarily at Fancher, but does not discuss Baker significantly, the wagon train will be collectively referred to as the Fancher wagon train or Fancher party both to avoid confusion and to simplify the nomenclature.

Chapter 2: Chapter One: Biographical Sketches

Alexander Fancher

Alexander Fancher¹⁰ was born on 6 September 1812 during an aftershock of the famous New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812 in Sinking Cane, Tennessee.¹¹ While his mother, Anne Tully Fancher was giving birth, his father, Isaac was off horse trading. Isaac's brother, Alexander, together with his nearly blind mother, Sarah Journegin Fancher, midwifed Alexander's namesake nephew.¹² One branch of the Fancher family claims to have been descendants of Puritans from New England, and another branch claims to be descended from French Huguenots who settled in the South. Whatever the case may be, the Fanchers became Methodists some time after the Revolutionary War.¹³

Alexander's paternal grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War.¹⁴ His father and two of his uncles fought in the War of 1812. Isaac was a veteran of the Battle of New Orleans. As a result, future president Andrew Jackson was a family friend.¹⁵ Although his father was frequently gone on horse trading trips, the extended family stepped in to help care for young Alexander. He learned to hunt and to love frontier life from his uncle, Thomas Hampton

10 Pronounced "fan-SHEER."

11 Burr Fancher. *Captain Alexander Fancher: Adventurer, Drover, Wagon Master, and Victim of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Portland, Oregon: Inkwater Press, 2001), 1, 4.

12 Ibid., 1-2.

13 Sarah Barringer Gordon and Jane Shipps, "Fatal Convergence in the Kingdom of God: The Mountain Meadows Massacre in American History." *Journal of the Early Republic*, 37, no. 2 (Summer 2017), 314.

14 Fancher, 7.

15 Ibid., 4, 8.

“Hamp” Fancher.¹⁶ Shooting, self-reliance, patriotism, a strong frontier work ethic, and helping others were all lessons that young Alexander saw demonstrated from his earliest days.

Another uncle, Grey Bynum Fancher, taught Alexander the trade that was to make him not just successful, but moderately wealthy: livestock ranching. Grey Bynum Fancher raised free range hogs. He would fatten them up in the woods where they could feed themselves on beech nuts, walnuts, grubs, and other wild foods. A handful of corn was offered to each hog on a regular basis to keep them from going feral. Then, at market time, they were herded to the slaughter house 150 miles away in Nashville.¹⁷ Between his father’s horse trading trips and his uncle’s free range ranching, Alex learned the secrets of making an honest living with livestock.

Grey Bynum made several exploratory trips to Illinois between 1815 and 1823.¹⁸ His reports helped convince Isaac Fancher to move the family there and take advantage of the land he was eligible for due to his service in the War of 1812.¹⁹ In 1823, Isaac moved his family to the banks of the Kaskaskia River near the outskirts of Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois. Although Isaac had intended to start a proper farm, he continued horse trading as his major occupation and Alexander, now entering his teens, spent many hours listening to his father and other horse traders and learned to judge an animal’s market value.²⁰

16 Ibid., 5-6.

17 Ibid., 9-10.

18 Ibid., 17.

19 Ibid., 18.

20 Ibid., 21.

In 1828, at the age of sixteen, Alexander accompanied his Uncle Grey to St. Louis. He was introduced to the *de facto* gateway to the frontier of America. He was wide-eyed with wonder. Uncle Grey introduced him to many names we now famously know from frontier America: Thomas Fitzpatrick, William Sublette, and Joe Meek, among others. Here he also saw river boats that plied the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.²¹ No doubt, this trip influenced his love of frontier life that he would hold to tightly the rest of his days.

During the Blackhawk War in 1832, at the age of twenty, Alexander and his father mustered into Captain Sam Huston's company in the Illinois state militia's Second Brigade. Isaac was made a sergeant of the company and Alexander was made a corporal. Ironically, John D. Lee, who would murder Alexander Fancher a quarter century later was in the same regiment.²² In yet another connection to famous Americans, Alexander's uncle, Grey Bynum, was in another regiment with Abraham Lincoln, who became fast friends with the Fanchers.²³ Everything in Alexander's life thus far served to make him both patriotic and hardworking.

The strong work ethic made Alexander Fancher a good candidate to marry. After a two year courtship, he married Eliza Ingram before a justice of the peace on 12 May 1836 in Charleston, Illinois.²⁴

21 Ibid., 22-23.

22 Ibid., 23-24.

23 Ibid., 25-27.

24 Ibid., 28.

Once again following Uncle Grey Bynum's lead, Fancher moved with the expanding frontier. In 1841, he moved to Big Richwoods Township in Miller County, Missouri. There he cleared four acres along Tavern Creek.²⁵ Alexander built a simple log cabin for himself and his wife.²⁶ While here, Fancher gained his first solo experience as a livestock man. He raised open range hogs on the acorns, beech and hickory nuts, and other wild offerings of the Missouri Ozarks.²⁷ After two years the timber industry in the area had made open range hog production difficult to continue.

In the Spring of 1843, Fancher moved once more. This time, he joined relatives who had relocated ahead of him to the northwestern corner of Arkansas in Carroll County.²⁸ It is probable that he squatted on government land for the first five years, a common practice in the 1840s. By 1852, however, he had purchased forty acres in Carroll County. This may have been due him for his service in a local conflict called the Tutt-Everett War where he was again mustered for militia duty.²⁹ This would be Fancher's home until he left to move to California in April, 1857.

From this base of operations, Fancher became a successful drover. He would drive herds of cattle to places like Fort Scott, Kansas, Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Fort Gibson, Indian

25 Ibid., 32.

26 Ibid., 32-33.

27 Ibid., 36-40. This section gives a detailed description of the methods used in open range hog production in the early 1840s in Missouri.

28 Ibid., 44.

29 Ibid., 46.

Territory.³⁰ Cattle contracts were typically for 200 head or less for either the Army itself or for the Indian agent stationed at these forts.³¹ While this livelihood paid the bills, Fancher got bored with this lackluster existence. His brother, John, provided the answer to his wanderlust: California. Cattle could be sold to the miners for a 500 percent profit. In the Spring of 1850, Alexander Fancher and his brother John hired a few hands and drove a herd of cattle to California via the California Trail.³² Their wives and children would travel by ship, via the isthmus of Panama, to San Diego where the brothers would meet up with them after selling their herd and paying their drovers.

While on this trip, the Fanchers learned that most crimes that took place on the trail were not from Indian depredations, but from white criminals. In a letter dated 2 June 1850, William Bedford Temple wrote home to his family, “We are about 50 miles from Fort Carney [sic]. ... yesterday morning three of our steers and two of A Fanchier’s were missing. ... In passing up we discovered our cattle brushed in thicket herded by a Whiteman [sic].” A few lines later, he adds, “I would here remark that near all the stealing and killing is done by whites following the trains the number thus engaged [sic] is very great.”³³ This knowledge may have influenced Fancher’s reluctance to surrender himself to the Mormons who were purporting to rescue him in 1857.

30 In present-day Muskogee County, Oklahoma.

31 Ibid., 52-53.

32 Ibid., 60-61.

33 Ibid., 67; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 59-60; Original spellings were retained in this source.

Learning the lessons of the 1850 drive and leaving his brother John in California to improve their newly purchased ranch, Alexander returned to Arkansas and began preparing for a second cattle drive. He spent the Autumn of 1852 and all of 1853 recruiting families who wanted to emigrate to California for the trip.³⁴ Using wagon train members (who often had small herds of their own), Fancher reduced his overhead in hiring hands. His herd numbered about 400 head this time.³⁵ This trip, however, Fancher used the newly-opened Cherokee Trail that followed the East Face of the Rockies through Colorado and joined up with the California Trail near Fort Laramie. He took a different route after reaching South Pass: the Old Spanish Trail. He connected to the Spanish Trail via southern Utah and thence on to the Mojave Crossing into southern California.

After a successful second cattle drive to California, Alexander Fancher returned once again to Arkansas to prepare for one final drive and a permanent move to California with a large seed herd for the ranch he and John had in Tulare County. That third cattle drive took place in 1857 and ended in Alexander's untimely death just days after his forty-fifth birthday.

34 Ibid., 76.

35 Ibid., 77.

John D. Lee

Like Alexander Fancher, John Doyle Lee was also born in the same aftershock on 6 September 1812 near Kaskaskia, Illinois.³⁶ Congress had only created Illinois as a territory three years earlier, but Kaskaskia had a century of history already. It was very much still the frontier to the young United States.³⁷

Lee's maternal grandfather, John Doyle, came to Kaskaskia in July, 1778 under the command of George Rogers Clark to take the fort from the British during the Revolutionary War.³⁸ Under a land grant of 1787, Doyle returned to Kaskaskia and obtained 400 acres. He then became one of the first school teachers in Illinois.³⁹

Lee's mother Elizabeth Doyle was a widow whose first husband had been murdered in a land dispute. She married Lee's father, Ralph Lee, in February, 1811. Little is known for certain about Ralph Lee, though family tradition holds that he is a second cousin to Robert E. Lee.⁴⁰ Elizabeth died in November, 1815 after giving a deed of trust to Dr. George Fisher to hold for John D. Lee and his older half-sister, Elizabeth Reed.⁴¹

36 Ibid, ---; Juanita Brooks. *John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat*. Western Frontiersmen Series, vol. XI (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1962), p. 18.

37 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 18-19.

38 Ibid., 19.

39 Ibid., 20-21.

40 Ibid., 21.

41 Ibid., 21-22.

In October, 1819, Lee became the ward of his aunt and uncle, Charlotte and James Conner. He would write bitterly about this period in his young life. He had gone from being a sole child cared for by a black French-speaking nurse, to being one of six children in an English speaking household. Lee's Aunt was impetuous and quick to strike wayward children and his uncle was an alcoholic whose drunkenness only further angered his aunt.⁴²

Despite the ugliness of his home life, he learned to work hard on chores around the farm from that early age. He learned to use and repair farm tools and machinery. He also learned to fish and hunt with good skill in his free time along the Mississippi River bottoms. He had nine years to learn these traits.⁴³

At the age of sixteen, he left his aunt's and uncle's home and returned to Kaskaskia. He obtained work as a mail carrier. The route paid seven dollars a month plus board and clothing. After six months, he returned to his uncle's farm for a visit and was enticed by an offer to work it for pay while his uncle was working in the lead mines in Galena, Missouri. Lee operated a dirt farm solo for the first time that summer with good success. While he did not make much money, he did raise enough to feed everyone and the animals besides. His uncle was so impressed, he talked him into staying the winter and getting an education. It was the only three months of formal education Lee was to receive.⁴⁴

42 Ibid., 22.

43 Ibid., 22-23.

44 Ibid., 24.

On 15 May 1832, Lee mustered into Josiah Briggs' company of the Third Regiment, Second Brigade, of the Illinois Mounted Volunteers for service in the Blackhawk War. James Conner was listed as his guardian and also enlisted with him. They were mustered out of service on 17 August 1832.⁴⁵

On 24 July 1833, Lee married Aggatha Ann Woolsey after a brief courtship.⁴⁶ In 1837 Lee met Elder King.⁴⁷ King stopped to beg food for his family while traveling west to join his fellow Mormons in western Missouri. Lee wrote that he talked King into staying for the winter and offered provisions to his family. King agreed and it would change the course of the Lees' lives forever.⁴⁸ After a Methodist meeting was held in Lee's home, Elder King was invited to speak for half an hour. According to Lee, it was the first time he had heard a Mormon sermon and it "put an end to all other denominations preaching in my house."⁴⁹

Lee's best friend, Levi Stewart, also became interested in the Mormon faith and took a journey to Far West, Missouri, where the Mormon church had been most recently headquartered. Upon his return, he gave a copy of the *Book of Mormon* to Lee, along with

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 26. Different sources provide different spellings for Aggatha's given name. For clarity, this spelling will be used throughout this thesis.

47 Ibid., 27. Juanita Brooks insists that Lee would not hear of any preaching from King at first, but was later convinced by his sincerity. In *Mormonism Unveiled*, Lee asserts that he allowed all kinds of itinerant preachers to use his home to hold meetings (p. 50). Elder King's given name is apparently lost to history.

48 John D. Lee. *Mormonism Unveiled, or the Life and Confession of John D. Lee* (Omaha, Nebraska: F. H. Rogers and Company, 1891), 50-51.

49 Ibid., 51.

copies of a church periodical.⁵⁰ Lee finished reading the *Book of Mormon* the same night that he sat beside his second daughter, nursing her as she died. That night, Lee determined that he believed the message in the *Book of Mormon* and determined to sell out everything and join the Mormons at his first opportunity.⁵¹

Lee arrived at Far West, Missouri on 4 June 1838 in company with his family and friends, including Levi Stewart.⁵² As a farmer, Lee was assigned to pick a plot of land along a stream and begin his homestead.⁵³ He and his wife were baptized on 17 June 1838. Lee wrote of that event, “I was now a member of the Church, and expected to live in strict obedience to the requirements of the holy priesthood that ruled, governed[,] and controlled it.”⁵⁴ It was the beginning of an unflinching, life-long commitment to the Mormon faith that would survive even his excommunication and trial nearly forty years later.

Beginning on 6 August 1838, a low intensity guerrilla war between Mormons and old-settler Missourians, known as the Mormon War, flared up. Mormons, who were frequently at odds with their neighbors in northern Missouri, determined to go to the polls in numbers for mutual protection. Lee was both a witness and a participant in the fracas.⁵⁵ At some point

50 Ibid., 52.

51 Ibid., 52-53.

52 Ibid., 53.

53 Ibid., 54.

54 Ibid., 55.

55 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 32-33.

between the first and the fifth of August, Lee had joined the secret Mormon militia group dubbed the “Danites.”⁵⁶ When some belligerent Missourians, apparently drunk or at least under the influence of cheap booze, began to attack an elderly Mormon, the Danite distress signal was given. Lee and several others jumped in. Several Missourians responded in kind. A pile of oak hearts left over from shingle making provided the Danites with handy bludgeons. In a few minutes, the tumult ended with a Mormon victory, but it was only the beginning of the conflict.⁵⁷

The Mormon War of 1838 ended in a decisive victory for Missouri’s old settlers. Lee recalled that as the Mormon War escalated Joseph Smith had ordered the Mormons to take their removable property and resettle in one of two fortified towns, Adam-ondi-Ahman or Far West, Missouri.⁵⁸ Lee had removed to Far West, which was near his homestead his wife went to Adam-ondi-Ahman. They were surrounded by the Missouri state militia, commanded by General John Clark, who was in possession of Executive Order Number 44. That order stated: “I have received ... information of the most appalling character, which entirely changes the face of things, and places the Mormons in the attitude of an open and avowed defiance of the laws, and of having made war upon the people of this state. Your orders are, therefore, to hasten your operation with all possible speed. The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace—their outrages are

56 *Ibid.*, 57; cf., Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 32.

57 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 32-33; Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 57.

58 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 78-79.

beyond all description.”⁵⁹ Mormons have pointed to this order since 1838 as evidence of nefarious intent on the part of Governor Lilburn Boggs. Lee would later state that he believed that “Missourians had determined to exterminate the whole of the Mormon people.”⁶⁰ It is reasonable to believe that all the Mormons of the time viewed it in a similar light. However, the extermination did not happen.

Joseph Smith sent Mormon Colonel George M. Hinkle to seek terms from the Missourians. If a few select leaders of the Mormons would surrender themselves for trial, the Mormons surrender their arms, sign over deeds to their property to the state, and agree to leave the state no later than spring, 1839, no further harm would come to them.⁶¹ Brooks states that Lee gave up a Kentucky rifle, a brace of pistols, a sword, and signed all the papers required of him. One of the Missouri militia officers striking up a conversation, tried to convince Lee to renounce Mormonism and settle in peace there in Missouri. Lee responded, “Well, if I am ever convinced that Joseph Smith is an imposter, I shall admit it freely and separate myself from his followers, but until that time, I expect to stand by him and his cause.”⁶² A week later, Lee was given a permit to join his wife and child in Adam-ondi-Ahman so they could begin preparing to quit the state.⁶³ Authorities permitted him to take two horses, a good wagon, and whatever kit he

59 John P. Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons, or Latter-day Saints from the State of Missouri Under the “Exterminating Order”* (Cincinnati, Ohio: R. P. Brooks, 1839), 26.

60 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 79.

61 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 37.

62 *Ibid.*, 39.

63 *Ibid.*, 40-41.

wished to leave the state with.⁶⁴ John D. Lee and his family would return to Vandalia, Illinois, where Lee had relatives he could stay with temporarily in December, 1838.⁶⁵

Much had happened in the few months between leaving Illinois and returning. Lee had become convinced of the new religion, joined it formally at the cost of selling out and moving across the frontier, and then fought for it at arms. Now, Lee began to fight for his new faith in a different way: as a missionary. Almost immediately after settling in, Lee began his first of several missionary trips through the Midwest and upper South.⁶⁶ Lee returned to Vandalia on 1 October 1839. By early 1840, Lee had heard about Joseph Smith, Jr.'s escape from the jail in Liberty, Missouri, and the founding of the new town on the banks of the Mississippi, Nauvoo.⁶⁷ It was here that Lee would become part of the extended inner circle of Mormon leadership.

For the period between 1844 and 1846, Hosea Stout's journals record numerous instances where he and Lee met and talked about police matters.⁶⁸ Lee uses the term "city guard" and

64 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 90.

65 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 44; Lee asserts that it was about the middle of February, 1839 before he left to return to Fayette County, Illinois (p. 96).

66 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 98. Lee would go on to justify his continued faith in the Latter-day Saint religion by recounting several events he considered miraculous, including suddenly meeting friend persons who housed and fed him and his friend, Levi Stewart, after days of privations. He does not note that these were common actions in 19th century America.

67 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 47.

68 Robert Cleland and Juanita Brooks, eds, *On the Mormon Frontier, the Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-61*, 2 Vols., (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1964). No criminal activity is discussed in these

says that he was among forty men chosen for the job.⁶⁹ Brooks says that Lee was the seventh man chosen for this job on 29 December 1843.⁷⁰ His duties included the guarding of Joseph Smith's house. Shortly before the troubles that led to Joseph Smith's assassination, Lee was sent off on another missionary journey. He was in St. Louis, headed into Kentucky, by 29 May 1844, having left Aggatha behind in Illinois pregnant with their fourth child.⁷¹ It was while out in this mission field that Lee received notice of the murder of Smith. He initially refused to believe it and did not return to Nauvoo until early August, 1844. In his journal he compared himself to the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy sent out by Jesus and he compared Joseph Smith to Jesus being crucified instead of being crowned as the temporal King of Israel.⁷² Lee was now sealed in his faith to the Mormon system of belief, if not always to its earthly leaders.

Lee did not return home in time in time to witness Brigham Young succeed to Joseph Smith's office as head of the Mormon Church. On 8 August 1844, Sidney Rigdon and Brigham Young both addressed a general council of all the Mormons in Nauvoo and the surrounding region. According to Brooks, 8,000 members appeared. Sidney Rigdon spoke all morning making his case that he, as First Counselor to Joseph Smith, as a man privy to all of Smith's plans, and in possession of a revelation about how great the Church would become under his

references, but one might assume this is the same as the body guard position that Lee held for Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and others.

69 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 132.

70 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 57.

71 Ibid., 58-59.

72 Ibid., 60-61.

leadership ought to obtain the mantle of the Church's presidency.⁷³ In the afternoon session, Brigham Young stood up to speak as president of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. This speech has become legendary in the Mormon Church. Brooks records this:

He had not said two sentences before the audience was alert, electrified. Among the multitude were those who declared that he spoke with the voice of Joseph; some sitting on the grass leaped up to see if it were not in reality the youthful Prophet returned. Others thought his bearing was that of the departed leader, while still others thought his face was illuminated with the same supernatural radiance that on rare occasions had lighted the Prophet's countenance. All were agreed that the "mantle of the Prophet Joseph fell upon Brigham," and voiced their approval of him in an overwhelming vote of confidence.⁷⁴

While Lee did not return to Nauvoo for another ten days, he apparently accepted the news wholeheartedly. He had a worshipful attitude toward Smith, but Young he had worked with closely.⁷⁵ For Lee, to transfer allegiance to Young was natural. He had seen Young up close, worked with him, and now hearing reports of a supernatural nature around him sealed Lee's allegiance to Young for many years to come. Lee spoke of being close to Young during this

73 Ibid., 63.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

time, but in retrospect he charged Young with many crimes that he either was unaware of or was willing to overlook at the time.⁷⁶

The remainder of 1844 and 1845 brought a flurry of activity for Lee. Conflict with the Illinoisans had begun to heat up, much as it had nearly a decade earlier in Missouri. A low intensity conflict heated up with frequent raids on outlying Mormon farmsteads by Illinoisans intent on driving Mormons from their state began. By September, 1845, more than 100 homes had been burned. The Mormons were advised to give no resistance in order to show that they were not at fault.⁷⁷ A deal brokered by General James Hardin, Senator Stephen A. Douglas, W. B. Warren, and J. A. McDougal in Carthage, Illinois allowed the Mormons to remain in Illinois unmolested until spring, 1846 in order to give them time to sell their possessions and prepare to move.⁷⁸ From late November, 1845 until the end of January, 1846 Lee spent most of his time in the Nauvoo Temple – first finishing its construction, then participating in its religious ceremonies as officiant, recipient, or recorder.⁷⁹ It was here that his first marriage and some of his earlier polygamous marriages were sealed “for time and all eternity,” as Mormon beliefs dictate.⁸⁰ Another Mormon ritual observed was the sealing of converts to one of the Mormon leaders as family members in a spiritual father-son relationship. Brooks records Lee as Brigham Young’s second adopted son out of a total of thirty-eight. Lee, in turn, had eighteen

76 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 161.

77 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 71.

78 Ibid., 71-72.

79 Ibid., 72.

80 Ibid.

or nineteen others, with their wives, sealed to him as adopted sons.⁸¹ Lee now had a large family of faith to replace the earthly family he had not entirely had good relations with. However, as with earthly families, this spiritual family was filled with sibling rivalries and conflict.

If the pace of 1845 and early 1846 had been intense, it did not let up as Lee and other Mormons began the trek across Iowa and eventually settling into Winter Quarters at modern-day Omaha, Nebraska. In July, 1846 Captain Allen of the US Army arrived in camp asking for 500 volunteers to join the army and help with the Mexican War. Brigham Young cajoled the reluctant Mormon men to join on the grounds that their pay could help everyone finish their migration to the mountains and that the Army would help several get there faster. With winter preparations in full swing in late September at Winter Quarters, many still with no more shelter than a tent or wagon could provide, Lee's families included, Brigham Young ordered Lee to go with another man to collect the pay from the Mormon Battalion. Brooks records that Lee was fully willing to do whatever he was ordered to do, but Lee recalled that nothing would have been more objectionable to him. Either way, he obeyed Young's order.⁸² Lee had been a committed Mormon, but now he was becoming someone Brigham Young could rely on to carry out orders that were both distasteful to others, but also contrary to Lee's own self-interest. Lee recalled saying, "But there is no one more willing to sacrifice himself and his own interests

81 Ibid.

82 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 183; Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 95.

for the benefit of the Church than I am.”⁸³ This pattern of being asked to do things Lee didn’t particularly want to do would continue.

After returning in late November, 1846, Lee was sent on purchasing trips to Missouri in late 1846 and early 1847.⁸⁴ In March, 1847, Lee was once again called upon to make sacrifices for his faith. He had hoped to be among the first to leave for the new Zion the Mormons sought in the Rocky Mountains. He suspected that Young was not going to choose him to go on that first wagon train west. On 23 March 1847, Lee was among 38 adopted sons called into council by Young. A farm was needed to feed the Mormon immigrants who would come after them. Lee was volunteered by Young to stay and start a farm station about sixteen miles from Winter Quarters at a place that would come to be called Summer Quarters, or “Brigham’s Farm.” It was open prairie ground where crops could be put in and still have room left over for family garden plots.⁸⁵ Jealousy among Lee’s wives and disputes with other farmers at Summer Quarters complicated Lee’s situation. By summer’s end disputes between Lee and others, including another of Young’s adopted sons, George Kennedy, had come to blows. Lee had also been called before the High Council of the Church (which acted in *locum tenentes* in the absence of Brigham Young who was with the exploratory mission to what would become Utah Territory) in December, 1847.⁸⁶ Lee was ordered by the High Council to make a full confession

83 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 183.

84 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 105-107.

85 Ibid., 115-16.

86 Ibid., 118-22; For simplicity, the region will be referred to as Utah Territory henceforth, although it did not gain that status officially until 1854.

of guilt in the matter. If he refused, he would be excommunicated which meant that he would lose his wives, his place in the Church, and its promises of eternal blessings. Lee thought he had been ganged up on, but maintained his innocence.⁸⁷ Lee and Brooks both record that a messenger announcing Brigham Young's arrival back from the Rocky Mountains interrupted the proceedings and it was decided to let Young adjudicate the matter. The affair ended with Young accompanying Lee home and mediating between Lee and Kennedy.⁸⁸ No doubt, Lee's rescue by Young increased both his personal loyalty to Young and to the Mormon Church that Young commanded.

On 26 May 1848, Lee set out for the Rocky Mountains as part of Young's massive company of Mormon emigrants to Utah Territory, which would become part of the United States nine days later, due to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.⁸⁹ The wagon trains were organized into companies of tens, fifties, and hundreds following the biblical model from Exodus. Young had chosen Lee to be one of the captains of fifty, but no one wanted to be in his company. Brooks attributes his unpopularity to the reputation he earned for bellicosity in his conflict with George Kennedy the previous summer, although there is no other record of

87 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 208-210.

88 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 123-24; Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 211-12. This would be the last thing Lee wrote of himself in prison awaiting execution. From there, his lawyer, W. W. Bishop, had to reconstruct the rest of the narrative from writings that Lee had made early in the course of his two trials to finish *Mormonism Unveiled*. Lee indicated that there were a few days and a letter invitation between Young's return and visiting Lee at Summer Quarters. Brooks does not mention this.

89 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 129.

him engaging in fisticuffs.⁹⁰ As a result, Lee deferred leadership of the company to William G. Perkins. Perkins' company was two companies in the wagon train to Utah Territory behind Brigham Young's.⁹¹ Lee's popularity would remain high enough that he could hobnob with the Church's leadership, but low enough that he was never invited to exercise leadership among those at the top. This may have engendered frustrations that compelled Lee to work harder than ever to prove himself to those in authority above him.

By November, 1848, Lee had arrived in Utah Territory and had completed two houses, one in Great Salt Lake City and another eight miles away where he had a farm. With winter approaching, both wives, Aggatha and Rachel, were moved to the farm because the oxen were too far spent to haul wood back and forth to both homes for fuel.⁹² In December, Lee met with the Council of Fifty to discuss how to save the Mormons' cattle herds from a devastating winter. He records that the Council ordered all private herds collected into a common herd for the winter with Lee and two others assigned to do the collecting. Collecting private cattle made Lee unpopular with the owners. The same meeting assigned Lee and one other, John Pack, to be captains of "destroyer" companies with the assignment to rid the Salt Lake Valley of various predators and scavengers that could threaten the scarce livestock the Mormons were depending on.⁹³ Lee and Pack sat down and decided to make a contest of it. The captain and team that

90 Ibid., 131.

91 Ibid., 130. It would not become Utah Territory until 1854, but for the purposes of identification of the region, I have used this term, albeit anachronistically.

92 Ibid., 140.

93 Ibid., 140-41.

won would be treated to a fine public dinner by the losing side with its captain. Judges were chosen and a date set for the judging.⁹⁴ The Council of Fifty decided to give one dollar in tithing money for each fox or wolf pelt.⁹⁵

On 1 March 1849 when the count was made, Pack's team was ahead by 1,000 points. Lee objected that his team lived far out and had not had a fair chance. The contest was extended to 5 March. At that time, Lee's team was ahead by more than 2,000 points. Pack would not accept the results since the contest was supposed to be finished by 1 March.⁹⁶ The dispute was never resolved and both men were left in ill repute in Great Salt Lake City.⁹⁷ Hosea Stout writes in his journal for 28 April 1849, "One circumstance took place today which I never saw before[.] John Pack & John D. Lee were each put in for nomination for Majors by regular authority & both most contemptuously [sic] hissed down."⁹⁸

If Lee had lost public favor in Great Salt Lake City, he was at least industrious. By June, 1849 he had rented the houses he had in the city and had moved his families to the farm. He began to haul logs to the local mill to sell for board lumber, while keeping a good supply of the bark to tan leather with. In July, the first of the Forty-Niners en route to California began to appear seeking to trade bacon and other storable food stuffs for fresh vegetables and dairy

94 Ibid., 141.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., 142.

98 Rober Glass Cleland, and Juanita Brooks, *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee 1848-1876*, 2 volumes. (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1955), 351.

products. Some of Lee's wives were able to collect whatever was ripe and in excess of their own needs and sell it out daily in Great Salt Lake City.⁹⁹ On 17 July, Lee set out with his second wife, Rachel, on what he called a "picking up expedition." With three yoke of oxen, he set out to see what valuables he could collect from the Overland Trail as far as the Sweetwater River. With the trail strewn with abandoned items of value, he could be assured of collecting useful items for himself and for sale. Brooks speculates that he may have left at this time to avoid public embarrassment at the upcoming celebration of one year in Great Salt Lake City on 24 July.¹⁰⁰ Whatever his motives, his efforts paid off: he located a Premium Range No. 3 which someone had abandoned near Devil's Gate – a stove which would have cost fifty dollars back in the states. He apparently found some stashes that others intended to return for later as they included ball and powder, coffee, utensils, tools, and other useful items. He also stopped by the grave of one of his wives, Abigail, who had died along the trail and collected a stash that had been buried nearby.¹⁰¹ This resourcefulness in the frontier would prove useful to Lee. It may have also played into his later motivations to cooperate with the massacre. Upon returning home, Lee found that his first wife, Aggatha, had been industrious and led the family's enterprises with good effort and the fall preparations for winter had gone well.¹⁰²

99 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 147.

100 Ibid., 147-48.

101 Ibid., 148-49.

102 Ibid., 149-50.

On 2 December 1850, after a meeting of the Council of Fifty, Lee was approached by Brigham Young. One can speculate on the motives, but Young asked Lee to pull up stakes yet again just as Lee was becoming settled and successful. This time he was asked to move to what would later become Iron County in the southern end of the Territory. An expedition the summer before had located both iron ore and coal in the mountains there and Young and others thought it would be a good idea to get an iron and steel industry started so that outside imports of finished metal products would be unnecessary.¹⁰³ Brooks records Young's words thus:

“John, when I talked about making the settlement in the south, I meant you. If we are to establish an iron industry there, we must have a solid base of farming to help support it. We need men like you to produce for the miners and the mill workers. You know our policy with regard to members of the council taking the lead in forming new settlements. The kingdom cannot grow without men like you.”¹⁰⁴

No doubt, Lee was being asked to make yet another sacrifice for the kingdom of God. Young knew Lee would never refuse anything couched in those terms. Lee objected that he could not possibly leave and offered to outfit someone else up to two thousand dollars for the effort instead. Young refused the offer, saying that George Albert Smith, the number two man in the church had specifically asked for him. Young offered to sell Lee's city homes and settle a bill

103 Ibid., 153-54.

104 Ibid., 154.

to sweeten the deal. Knowing that Brigham Young had ordered him and Smith had specifically asked for him, Lee would not refuse further.¹⁰⁵

Lee left with a company of settlers on 11 December, 1850.¹⁰⁶ Aggatha and Rachel Lee both had recently given birth and were in no condition to travel in the winter. It was decided that they would stay and manage Lee's holdings in northern Utah while wives Polly and Lavina, both pregnant for the first time decided they would accompany their husband to the new settlement.¹⁰⁷ After about a month of arduous travel, the Lees and others in the large wagon train arrived at the future site of Parowan, Utah Territory. On 17 January 1851, elections were held and the town formally founded.¹⁰⁸

In July, 1851, Lee returned north to sell off his holdings and trade for better animals and supplies to take south with him. Brooks recounts him as being successful and preparing to return south after the General Conference in early October. However, at that conference, Lee was proposed by George Albert Smith and Brigham Young to start yet another southern colony at the confluence of the Rio Virgen and Santa Clara rivers. Lee would once again, obey.¹⁰⁹ Returning to Parowan to await further orders, he received new instructions not to proceed that winter. It was a disappointment to Lee who was excited to take his families with him to the

105 Ibid., 154-55.

106 Ibid., 157.

107 Ibid., 155.

108 Ibid., 163.

109 Ibid., 169.

new settlement. He did accompany a scouting party in late January, 1852 to alleviate the winter boredom and in February helped out as the community farm was sowed with corn.¹¹⁰ During February Lee had his first help from local Indians. A group of Piedes had raided into the area, stealing a few cattle, and a few days later, Walker, a southern Paiute leader who had allied himself to Brigham Young chased down the offending band and punished them on behalf of the Mormon settlers.¹¹¹ Walker, however was not held in high regard as he bought and sold children, often for mine work in Mexico. Lee and other settlers would keep a close eye on their children when Walker's band was about.¹¹² Lee surely realized that Walker and his band could be allies when needed and were willing to do work that Mormons or other whites found distasteful.

Another set of incidents would influence Lee's thinking in regard to the Indians in the region. In early August, 1852 the brother of Chief Ow-wan-op came into the Lee home in Parowan and became argumentative with Aggatha. She ordered him to leave, but he assaulted her with a board and blood began to run down her face. A struggle ensued, but was quickly ended when a neighbor intervened. Three men from Parowan went to Ow-wan-op and insisted that the perpetrator be punished and that the Indians do the punishing. Ow-wan-op agreed and had his brother tied to a pole and used a rawhide whip himself to give forty lashes. Afterwards, the whites sat with the Indians and smoked a peace pipe and gifts were given to establish

110 Ibid., 171-72.

111 Ibid., 172.

112 Ibid.

peace.¹¹³ In December, 1854 the tables were turned. A Mormon man struck an Indian man over the head with a rifle butt and roughed up an Indian boy. The chief insisted that the perpetrator also be lashed. The Mormon was lashed by a fellow Mormon in a fashion similar to the brother of Ow-wan-op and this satisfied the Indians.¹¹⁴ Events like this served to solidify the relationship between the Southern Paiute bands in the area and the Mormon settlers.

By the late summer of 1852, Lee had relocated his families once again, this time to Ash Creek near modern-day New Harmony, Utah. The original town site for Harmony was built here, along with a small fort. In a letter dated 1 March 1853, Lee reported to Brigham Young that everyone in the settlement company had finished shelter and that each of his six wives also had their own homes inside the fort.¹¹⁵ On 20 May 1854, Fort Harmony was relocated at the direction of Brigham Young, who was visiting, to the location of the present-day New Harmony, Utah.¹¹⁶ This would be the home of John D. Lee and his families for many years. He lived here at the time of the fateful massacre just over three years later.

It was during this period that Lee became a Farmer to the Indians and a bishop in the Mormon Church, according to the diary of his wife Rachel Lee.¹¹⁷ As a Mormon bishop, he held considerable influence over fellow Mormons in the region. As Farmer to the Indians, he

113 Ibid., 174.

114 Ibid., 175.

115 Cleland and Brooks, *Mormon Chronicle*, 134-35.

116 Ibid., 135.

117 Ibid. 136-37.

wielded influence over the Indians, learned their language (Southern Paiute, in this case), and served as a liaison between the local Indians and both the Mormon Church and the federal government.

Similarities and Differences

John D. Lee and Alexander Fancher bore a remarkable number of similarities for two men so different and who ended up on the opposite ends of a deadly conflict. Their similarities start with both men being born in the same aftershock of the 1811-12 New Madrid earthquakes.¹¹⁸ Both were born on the frontier to families, Lee in Illinois and Fancher in Tennessee.¹¹⁹

Both men developed strong work ethics. Lee developed the patience of a farmer and apparently had a strong knack for that trade. He was also an able builder and tool worker. Alexander Fancher developed strong ranching skills and the ability to wait as much as two or three years to see a plan through, as he did with each cattle drive over the Overland Trails. Frontier agriculture was the primary employment of both men, but for Lee it was often interrupted or done at the direction of his church leaders for the church's benefit. For Fancher it was done for profit and in the case of his two successful overland cattle drives, that profit was significant.

118 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 1, 4.

119 Ibid.; Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 18.

While no extant evidence suggests that Fancher and Lee knew each other or met, they were in the same part of Illinois for several years and both served in the same regiment in the Blackhawk War and may have crossed paths.¹²⁰

The divergences between these men were as significant as their similarities. As far as we know, Fancher was not a particularly religious man. We do not know whether he had a particular religious affiliation or not. There was at least one Methodist minister in the Fancher wagon train, but that may have been coincidence rather than an intentional inviting of a minister to travel with them. Lee, by way of comparison, was devoutly religious. He was zealous for his religion even though it cost him financially and caused him much distress at times due to conflicts both within and without his faith. He was prepared to do anything his church leaders demanded of him, even if it was not in his own best interests because he was sure within himself that there were eternal blessings and rewards for doing so.

Lee and Fancher could not be more different from one another politically. For Lee, all politics were ultimately about the Kingdom of God and preserving the rights of Mormons to freely work for that goal. The laws of the United States must give way to the laws of God when they came into conflict. For Alexander Fancher, the nearness of his family to Andrew Jackson and to then-future president Abraham Lincoln, service in two state militias, taking advantage of homesteading laws, having family members who did service in the American Revolution and the War of 1812, and doing business with the Army and Indian agents created a sense of patriotism.

¹²⁰ Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 40-41.

Perhaps the sharpest contrast between them was in terms of overall success. Fancher was an example of the rugged individualist who succeeded on the frontier, the self-made man, who took advantage of some benefits he had and turned a profit on them. Whenever the frontier caught up to him, he sold out and moved again and became more successful in his new location. Lee had the potential to be very successful and was a good farmer and he knew it. However, just as success appeared to be knocking on his door, he lost out either to religious persecution driving him out as in the Mormon War and again in Illinois, or at the behest of his religious leaders in Nebraska and Utah. His attachment to his faith cost him everything on multiple occasions.

Chapter 3: Early Mormonism and Protestantism in 19th Century America

Religion in early America was founded on decidedly non-conformist lines. Puritans and Pilgrims in the New England colonies, Quakers in Pennsylvania, and even Roman Catholics in Maryland created what became both a pluralistic and a non-conformist religious milieu in North America. The degree of hierarchy, cooperation with the state, and freedom of dissent varied, but non-conformity was the rule, not the exception.

Noted historian, Gordon S. Wood, tells how that organized religion in America was in disarray by 1790.¹²¹ The Revolution had destroyed churches, seminaries, and disrupted services across America. This was compounded by the disestablishment of religion in virtually every state during the Revolution.¹²² Some of the Founding Fathers, like Jefferson and Washington, were known for their Deist and/or Unitarian beliefs and for their open support of the disestablishment.¹²³ Some, like Ethan Allen or Thomas Paine were openly anti-religious. As Wood notes, church membership in America was a matter of conversion, not of birth, and there were an increasing number of choices for an increasingly mobile populace.¹²⁴ He also notes that in early republican America, church membership was at perhaps an all-time low.

121 Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism." *New York History*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (October 1980): 363.

122 Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*, second edition. (New York: Oxford University press, 2011), 145-48.

123 *Ibid.*, 165-66.

124 Wood, "Evangelical America," 363-64.

Low church attendance, however, did not translate to low belief. According to Lewis Saum, Americans held a providential philosophy of history that was generally optimistic and held progress as its evidence. To the nation that God had chosen for great things, He would vouchsafe to reveal His intentions. Saum states, “Believing its destiny had been determined and made manifest, an assertive and acquisitive people combined condoning word with muscular deed.”¹²⁵ Speaking of Americans’ providential view, John W. Ward said, “In its optimism it firmly believed that God had foreordained its success and it therefore saw God’s hand in the most unlikely places.”¹²⁶ So pervasive is this belief that in June, 1857, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* stated:

*It is sometimes shamefully abused; its significance perverted; its import falsified in the language of lust and licentiousness; its benevolence sacrificed to intensify a plea for piracy; its religion degraded into a superstition that talks of destiny as a Turk talks of fate or a Hindoo [sic] of relentless sovereignty, and whets a filibustering appetite for carnage and conquest.*¹²⁷

For a major publication to produce an op-ed piece about the abuse of this providential view certainly demonstrates how taken for granted this belief was.

125 Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood in Pre-Civil War America*. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 5.

126 John W. Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 110. Cited in Saum, 5.

127 “How Ought American Minds be Cultivated?” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 15 (June, 1857), 121-25, cited in Saum, 9.

Two hymns from the 19th century illustrate both this providential view of history and the Protestant work ethic of the “muscular deed:” “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel, ” by William L. Thompson and “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” by William Clayton. Thompson’s hymn opens the first verse with “The world has need of willing men, who wear the worker’s seal,” and the second opens with “The church has need of helping hands, and hearts that know and feel.”¹²⁸ In this Thompson captures the popular mood of this American religious optimism. The church, and the world it operates in, need Christian men who will do what needs doing. Clayton’s tune, originally titled “All is Well,” was written while fleeing Nauvoo, Illinois in 1846.¹²⁹ The first two stanzas urge the listener on: “Come, come, ye saints, no toil nor labor fear; But with joy, wend your way. / Though hard to you, this journey may appear; grace shall be as your day.”¹³⁰ For mainstream Christians and for Mormons alike, labor for the faith and labor for the nation were nearly synonymous. Since God had providentially predestined America for greatness, to work for the advancement of American society was to participate in God’s handiwork. Both hymns have been adopted by both Mormons and Protestants.

128 William L. Thompson, “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* website music database. hymn #252 retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/put-your-shoulder-to-the-wheel?lang=eng> on 5 October 2018.

129 W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall, *Mormonism: A Historical Encyclopedia*. (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 103.

130 William Clayton, “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* website music database. hymn #30 retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/come-come-ye-saints?lang=eng> on 5 October 2018.

Alexander Fancher

While no surviving writings of Alexander Fancher's give us any clues about his personal views on these matters of faith, he certainly fit the mold of someone who participated in these ideas. Each move westward left him enriched and left land cleared and improved for the next occupant or owner. His cattle drives to California were done for personal profit, but even that was contingent on the gold miners who were taking advantage of God's providential bounty as they plied their trade.

Lewis O. Saum notes that for the common American, many surviving writings tend to portray the more "personal and immediate," which is "approached prayerfully and resignedly" with little mention of "a destiny rendered manifest."¹³¹ This certainly describes John D. Lee's autobiographical details in *Mormonism Unveiled*. He spends little time considering the nation at large unless he is decrying the injustices committed upon him and his fellow Mormons. His focus is on his reward for all that he has had taken from him, all that he has voluntarily given up, and all that he was ordered by Brigham Young to give up for the sake of the LDS church and the posthumous blessings he will receive for these sacrifices.

For both Fancher and Lee, the West was a place of opportunity. Thoreau notes, " 'Every sunset which I witness inspires me with a desire to go to a West as distant and fair as that into which the sun goes down.' ... Thoreau ... combined the west of happiness and eternity, the west of millenium, and that of empire, the west of direction, and the west of place."¹³² The

131 Saum, *Popular Mood*, 6.

132 Loren Baritz, "The Idea of the West," *American Historical Review* 66, no. 3 (April 1961), 639.

western territories of America could, in the 1850s be a place for the religious zealot, like Lee, and those motivated by secular profits, like Fancher.

John D. Lee

Americans, as a whole, in the 1850s were solidly Protestant. Much of American Protestantism remained theologically close to its European roots. Like its European roots, it was wary of, or even hostile to, anything that differed from it. For John D. Lee, this hostility was felt for most of his life. According to Lee, he was born into and baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.¹³³ He claimed that both of his parents were Catholics and he was raised in strict adherence to that faith.¹³⁴ Whether or not he was at any point devout, he was Catholic. Catholics were ostracized and isolated enough that Catholic immigrants began to turn to their church as a defense against abusive employers in much the same manner as they had against the English crown in Ireland.¹³⁵ This was responded to with both nativism against immigrants (especially Catholic ones) and with conspiratorial accusations. Lyman Beecher wrote a book entitled, *A Plea for the West*, where he accuses Catholics of slavish obedience to the pope and he opined that allowing them to settle the western territories would cost the US its freedoms (by the democratic process, no less). Others produced abjectly fictional propaganda tracts like “Six Months in a Convent” in 1835 and “Awful Disclosures of Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal” in 1836 wherein white slavery, sexual promiscuity, and even infanticide were

133 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 27.

134 Ibid., 51.

135 Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. Second edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 250.

proclaimed as regular practices of the church of Rome.¹³⁶ Lee grew up affiliated with a church that was the subject of regular attacks by a Protestant majority. Even if he was not a faithful or devout Catholic, he would likely have been suspected of or even accused of such things by some his neighbors. Whether or not he was personally accused of such things, he knew what it felt like to be lumped in with those who were.

By 1837, Lee was growing lax enough in his Catholic faith to allow local preachers to use his living room for meetings.¹³⁷ Lee allowed an Elder King who was wintering on his farm to preach at various times. He notices how other denominations resist him and the seeds of his conversion begin to sprout. As Wood notes, “hoaxes of all kinds and quackery in every field flourished,” but Lee wanted to be a member of what he believed to be the *true* church.¹³⁸ In other words, he traded one exclusivist claim for another. In the introduction to *Mormonism Unveiled*, William W. Bishop, Lee’s defense attorney and posthumous book editor, points this out in the introductory to that book. “[The Mormons] were infatuated followers of designing leaders ...” and “The Templars ... were no more willing servants of the cross ... than than were the deluded followers of Brigham Young to overthrow all established government, and shed the blood of all who were marked as victims by the false prophet who directed their assassin-like actions. They had no law but the will of Brigham Young.”¹³⁹ With a few changes

136 Ibid., 257.

137 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 52.

138 Ibid., 51.

139 Ibid., 20.

of names, this could easily have been applied to Roman Catholics in the 19th century. Lee, as one of those “infatuated followers” of Bishop’s hyperbolic statement, was assigned to help lead the settlement of southern Utah.¹⁴⁰

Like the Catholics, Mormons in those days were members of an insular, largely immigrant culture. They isolated into separate neighborhoods or communities for support and protection. Kirtland, Ohio and the towns of Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri were founded by Mormons for Mormons. When the LDS church was run out of these towns, they founded Nauvoo, Illinois. After migrating to Utah in 1848, the LDS Church began one of its most successful growth periods ever. “Companion to controversy wherever it appeared in the early days, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nevertheless grew at a phenomenal rate. Hundreds of converts were baptized each month in 1850s England and Wales. But Brigham Young’s Zion—and the new proselytes’ surest refuge—was in America. As noted by Arthur King Peters in his *Seven Trails West*, ‘the Mormon Trail of those years stretched all the way from Liverpool to Salt Lake City, making it by far the longest of any trail west’.”¹⁴¹ Longer trails existed, such as the one my ancestors took from Copenhagen to Salt Lake City, but these trails were all *de facto* extensions of the *Mormon Trail* and they ended in a place where the LDS church controlled the allegiance of the overwhelming majority. If Catholics were

140 Sarah Barringer Gordon and Jan Shipps, “Fatal Convergence in the Kingdom of God: The Mountain Meadows Massacre in American History.” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 37, no. 2 (Summer 2017), 326.

141 Cited in “The Convert Immigrants.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 1 August 2013. Retrieved from <https://history.lds.org/article/pioneer-story-the-convert-immigrants-?lang=eng> on 30 December 2018; Arthur King Peters, *Seven Trails West*. (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996), 137.

beholden to their pope over their elected leaders as Beecher asserted, Mormons were worse because their prophet was also the appointed territorial governor and their church leaders were in almost unanimous control of the territorial legislature and many of the courts.¹⁴² The officers of the Nauvoo Legion, the territorial militia were all Mormon priesthood holders, too.

For Lee, this must have felt like the democratization of his religion. For outsiders like his defense attorney, William W. Bishop, it must have seemed frighteningly totalitarian. Bishop speaks of no one that leaders in southern Utah had marked being safe. The civil probate courts and the church's bishops' courts alike were used against those so targeted.¹⁴³ Beecher's warnings against the Catholicism that Lee grew up in could well have been reworded or reapplied to the Mormonism that Lee embraced as an adult.

In 1857, that democratized faith came to a cross-roads: would the LDS people submit to the law of the land or would they secede and form a kingdom of their own? On 2 August 1857, with knowledge that the US Army of the West was on its way to depose him, Brigham Young gave a sermon saying, "The time must come when this kingdom must be free and independent from all other kingdoms ... Are you prepared to have the thread cut to-day?"¹⁴⁴ The Protestant claims of an impending uprising against American freedom by Catholics appeared to be about to happen in Mormon controlled Utah Territory.

142 C. P. Lyford, *The Mormon Problem: An Appeal to the American People*, (New York: Philips and Hunt, 1886), 18-19, 38, 72, 261.

143 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 275.

144 G. D. Watt, J. V. Long, et al., editors, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5 (Liverpool, UK, 1858), 5:98-99.

Mormonism

Palmyra, New York is recorded as the birthplace of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' formal existence as a legal entity. It is perhaps a bit ironic that it lies in the same region of the "Burned-Over District" of New York where Methodism picked up steam and that it shares many of the same traits in different form. If not the edge of the frontier in 1830, western New York was certainly still a backwater region where people were free of some of the constraints of more settled society. Gordon Wood notes that there was generally a lack of trained clergy and many of the clergy who were available had only minimal training. Some of these ministers among the Methodists conducted "love feasts" using whatever bread was available and a shared chalice of water.¹⁴⁵ The LDS church has continued to use common household bread and water in its Sacrament Service each Sunday from the beginning. They have also steadfastly refused to accept a paid clergy of any type to the present. Some of these groups sought a Utopian society – the Shakers, for example. Mormonism would also seek a utopia, though it did so in a form that theoretically allowed friendly outsiders to live among the faithful. Some of these groups were licentious in nature, sharing sexual partners.¹⁴⁶ Mormons would later be accused of licentiousness because of their polygynous marriages.

Although many uniquely American varieties of religion like Mormonism started in this region, others clung tenaciously to some form of their European origins. Methodism,

145 Dave Patterson, "Methodist History: The What and the Why of the Love Feast." United Methodist Church. General Commission on Archives and History. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/methodist-history-the-what-and-why-of-love-feasts> on 30 December 2018; Wood, 370-71.

146 Wood, "Evangelical America," 374.

originating in Great Britain was one of these, though in a more American form. It had moved away from the Anglican parish priest model and centered itself more on circuit riders who used Evangelical preaching. They denounced the dissolute living they saw in society around them and condemned drinking, gambling, and other vices.¹⁴⁷ Mormonism also condemned some of the same things. In the Word of Wisdom, for example, alcohol, and “hot drinks” (i.e., coffee and tea), and tobacco were condemned or restricted to very narrow specific uses.¹⁴⁸

Gordon and Shipps go to some length to make a comparison between the Mormonism of John D. Lee and the Methodism of Alexander Fancher. Focusing on the latter for a moment, Methodists referred to themselves as a “distinctive” people. They had gone through the fires of social persecution and were twenty years ahead of Mormons on the road to respectability. They were trying to build a Zion in America rather than waiting on a “Jesus in the clouds” Second Coming.¹⁴⁹ The Methodists were unrivaled in evangelical zeal. In the year before Alexander Fancher’s birth, the Methodists had doubled their membership in the region around Fancher’s birthplace of Sinking Cane, Tennessee. The New Madrid earthquakes, the appearance of Haley’s Comet, and other portents that year made for great evidence of the end of times’ approach, and thus material for conversions.¹⁵⁰

147 Ibid., 373-74.

148 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price*. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 2013), Section 89, p. 176.

149 Gordon and Shipps, “Fatal Convergence,” 314.

150 Ibid., 314-15.

The Fancher family, in an apparent abandonment of their Huguenot Calvinist origins, converted to Methodism at some point after the Revolution.¹⁵¹ Gordon and Shipps claim that Fancher attended religious services in the home of Fancher's uncle, James, after settling in Arkansas though they do not cite where this information comes from.¹⁵² This religious belief would travel with Fancher and those in his train after leaving Arkansas, which testifies to some degree of devotion to Methodism on Fancher's part. When trouble began to brew between members of the wagon train – say over the abuse of an ox or over the choice of a camping location – Fancher would use the twin weapons of music from his fiddle and religious services to calm the tempers.¹⁵³ Fanny Stenhouse reports second-hand information that the Fancher train stopped every Sunday for religious observances in camp.¹⁵⁴ Gordon and Shipps have interpreted these rituals “of meaning and devotion” as a weekly reminder that they were conquering the land for Jesus, giving meaning and context to their labors.¹⁵⁵

For Mormons, conquering the land was also a part of their faith. However, it was seen more as a *restoration* of the land for the faith. Mormonism, aligned itself with some of the ideas of the Restorationist Movement of the early 19th century. Prominent men like early Mormon Apostle, Parley P. Pratt came out of the Campbellite movement which was part of the Restorationist movement. The Cambellites, founded by Scots-Irish immigrant, Alexander

151 Ibid., 313.

152 Ibid., 332.

153 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 81-82.

154 Fanny Stenhouse, *Tell It All*, 325.

155 Gordon and Shipps, “Fatal Convergence,” 324-25.

Campbell sought to eliminate denominational lines altogether and unite all of Christendom by having Christians read their Bibles “as if mortal eyes had never seen it before.” Banking on the Protestant pillar of *sola scriptura*, he believed that reading scripture without any human traditions or speculative theology would solve all denominational squabbles and debates. The Campbellites, while eschewing the religious elites and the formal clerical education many of them held, also eschewed the emotionalism of the Second Great Awakening, especially that sort used by the Methodists.¹⁵⁶ The Restorationists sought to restore what was lost in the intervening centuries between the Apostolic times and the 19th century Protestant church.

Mormons, like the Restorationists, found a necessity to restore the Gospel as they understood it. It was not enough to proclaim scriptural themes. Restoring, for Latter-day Saints, meant looking back to pre-Reformation times. In the Mormon case, it meant appealing to their new scripture book, *The Book of Mormon*, and through its lens, back to the Old Testament for *authority*.¹⁵⁷ Parley P. Pratt, heard the Campbellite message in around 1820. He was amazed but ultimately found it lacked the apostolic authority he believed was necessary. He found that authority in the LDS claims of Joseph Smith.¹⁵⁸

156 Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. Second edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 202-03.

157 Wood, “Evangelical America,” 383-84.

158 Parley Parker Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Embracing His Life, Ministry and Travels, With Extracts in Prose and Verse, fro His Miscellaneous Writings*, Parley P. Pratt [son of the author], editor. (Chicago, Illinois: Law, King, and Law, 1888) pp. 32, 39, 43.

William Bishop noted that “Mormonism came into existence to combat the doctrines of Protestants and Catholics alike.”¹⁵⁹ After all, if, as Pratt claimed, they all lacked authority, then these other denominations were deceived at best and charlatans at worst. In fact, Joseph Smith’s First Vision account says exactly that. Smith recorded the revivalistic meetings that took place in the neighborhood of Manchester, New York in the period of 1819-1820. He became partial to the Methodists, but noted that Presbyterians and Baptists also sought converts in the area. Not being sure which sect to join, he retired to the woods to pray. He was favored with a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Jesus told him in that vision that he was to join none of those other sects, that “they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.’”¹⁶⁰

“The power thereof,” for early Mormons included the miraculous.¹⁶¹ What mainstream Christians call the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Mormons took as evidence of the rightness (and righteousness) of their faith. Yet Methodists, like most Christians in this period, denied that the gifts of the Holy Spirit continued past the Apostolic age. One Methodist preacher said of Smith’s claim to have had a vision, “it was all of the devil, that there was no such thing as

159 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 20.

160 LDS Church, Joseph Smith – History 1:5-19, *Pearl of Great Price*, 47-49.

161 LDS Church, Articles of Faith, 1:7, retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/a-of-f/1.1-13?lang=eng> on 11 January 2019.

visions or revelations in these days, that all such things had ceased with the apostles and that there would never be any more of them.”¹⁶² This helped cement a fast growing animosity between the two major faiths. It didn’t help that Methodism provided the single largest slice of converts to Mormonism in its first years.¹⁶³ Lee claimed to have accepted the LDS faith based on reason alone and declined to attend a meeting where signs and wonders were expected on that basis, but without denying the existence of signs and wonders. Later, he claimed to have performed some miracles through prayer and laying on of hands.¹⁶⁴

“The power thereof” was, for Mormons, given through revelation and through the priesthoods of the LDS church.¹⁶⁵ The founding revelations of the LDS church led to the restoration of the priesthood authority of the early Christian church on earth.¹⁶⁶ These priesthoods being restored, displaced the need for any other church or its clergy. In fact, strict obedience to those in authority replaced the pluralism of American religious culture. Devout

162 Gordon and Shippis, “Fatal Convergence,” 317, citing Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Autobiographical and Historical Writings*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT, 1989), 1:273.

163 Gordon and Shippis, “Fatal Convergence,” 317; cf. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 394.

164 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 54, 175, 178,

165 LDS Church, Articles of Faith, 1:5. The LDS church has two priesthood classes, the Aaronic and the Melchizedek, each with three offices. Those who progress through the first can then be admitted to the latter. Today, that journey begins when boys are 12 years old, but in the 19th century this journey usually started when the convert was an adult due to the majority convert demographics of the LDS faith at that time.

166 Ibid., 1:6; Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods,” retrieved from https://www.lds.org/ensign/1996/12/the-restoration-of-the-aaronic-and-melchizedek-priesthoods?lang=eng&_r=1 on 11 January 2019.

Mormons gave complete political, economic, and spiritual loyalty to their church.¹⁶⁷ Lee spoke frequently of priesthood authority, even assigning blame for his deeds to obedience thereto. “My sins, if any, are a result of doing what I was *commanded* to do by those who were my superiors in authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (italics in original).¹⁶⁸ However, as Wood notes, in the LDS church, every man is his own priest – a sentiment that was already established in Fanny Stenhouse’s time – and that would leave Lee without the excuse of merely obeying orders from above.¹⁶⁹

For Protestants and Catholics in America, the canon of Scripture was closed. While Protestants and Catholics could argue about whether that canon contained sixty-six or seventy-three books, they could both agree that the canon was closed and needed no further additions. In the LDS Articles of Faith, verse eight, we read: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God insofar as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” Not only was an entire collection of new books being offered as scriptural, but the established books of Christianity were being called into question. This was a major point of contention between Mormons and their Christian neighbors.

One of the points of contention between Mormons and their neighbors was with the *Book of Mormon*’s treatment of the identity of American Indians. For most Americans, American Indians were lazy, theft-loving, and bloody savages. This stereotype was so embedded in the

167 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 371.

168 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 36.

169 Wood, “Evangelical America,” 384; Stenhouse, *Tell It All*, 301.

American imagination that Army officers and their wives were often surprised by Indian guests or contacts. One officer's wife was surprised to see Indians sit in her parlor "as if they had been born there."¹⁷⁰ In contradistinction to the uneasy relations that most Americans felt toward American Indians, Mormons held a decidedly different view. The *Book of Mormon* identified American Indians as descendants of the Hebrew people, making them spiritual kinsmen of the Mormons.¹⁷¹ Like their Hebrew brethren in the gospels in the Bible, the American Indians had been visited by Jesus Christ as well. The book of Third Nephi in the *Book of Mormon* tells of a visit to the western hemisphere by the resurrected Jesus Christ in chapters eleven to twenty-six. Mormons hold this to be the fulfillment of John 10:16.¹⁷² The "other sheep," according to LDS teaching were the native inhabitants of the Americas.

There are other religious connections with the western hemisphere, as well. Two locations hold especial importance for Mormons. First is a historic site, Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri about five miles south of the present-day town of Jamesport. According to Leland Homer Gentry, this is where God had driven Adam to after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, which Joseph Smith claimed was in Jackson County, Missouri.¹⁷³ The other location is Independence, in Jackson County, Missouri. In 1831, Joseph Smith claimed to receive a set of

170 Sherry L. Smith, *A View From Officers' Row: Army Perceptions of Western Indians* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 28-29.

171 Bagley, *Innocent Blood*, 25; See also LDS Church, 1 Nephi 1:1-4, *Book of Mormon*.

172 See also LDS Church, *Doctrine and Covenants* 10:59.

173 Leland Homer Gentry, "Adam-ondi-Ahman: A Brief Historical Survey," *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1973), 566; cf., *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 116.

revelations about Jackson County, Missouri and was commanded by God to build the Latter-day Saints' Zion there to prepare for the Second Coming. It was to be “an everlasting inheritance.”¹⁷⁴ These claims were in conflict with mainstream Christian belief that the Second Coming would occur in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives.

Mormons in the 19th century, as they are today, were known for their prodigious missionary efforts. Mormon missionary efforts were paying off in places like Great Britain where hundreds from the working classes were converting, many of them gathering in Nauvoo, Illinois, and later Utah Territory.¹⁷⁵ Missionary efforts at home were paying off, too. Mormons frequently targeted Methodist gatherings to make converts.¹⁷⁶ John D. Lee himself mentions one such occasion that Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011 he found himself in the midst of an emotional Methodist meeting. It is one of the first times he mentions having received spiritual power (in this case to cast out a demon) and having made at least some converts. He mentions other former Methodists who had joined the Mormons in Tennessee as well.¹⁷⁷ For Lee, this had the effect of strengthening his belief in the LDS faith. Fanny Stenhouse believed those that were perceived as weak in the faith, “bad depraved men,” or those who were a little too youthful and wild were sent on missions.¹⁷⁸ There’s no evidence to

174 LDS Church, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 57:2-5; 45:66-71.

175 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 14.

176 Gordon and Shipps, “Fatal Convergence,” 316.

177 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 127-128.

178 Stenhouse, *Tell it All*, 314.

suggest Lee was weak in faith, but there are no surviving records to say he was not at some point. If he was weak in faith earlier on, Brigham Young certainly did not think him weak enough to send on any further missionary journeys the remainder of his life.

Missions were not limited to white peoples of European descent. For LDS theology, American Indians hold a central place. According to the *Book of Mormon*, American Indians are descendants of the Hebrews who left the Holy Land and arrived by ship in the New World around 600 BC. These ocean-going Hebrews soon divided into the righteous Nephites and the wicked Lamanites. In order to prevent intermarriage between them, God put a curse upon the Lamanites so that “a skin of blackness did come upon them.”¹⁷⁹ In the arc of narrative, the righteous Nephites lose a centuries-long war with the Lamanites and the final Nephites, Mormon and his son, Moroni, engrave the history of their peoples and the struggles they had on plates of brass and bury them, knowing God will lead a future prophet to find them. Part of the future prophecy of Mormonism is that the American Indians – the Lamanites, or “Brother Lemuel” as early Mormons euphemistically referred to them – would be restored to faith in God.¹⁸⁰

With this anticipated restoration to faith in God, American Indians were expected to be part of an apocalyptic reckoning in the Mormons’ favor against the federal government. Many Mormons began to think of Indians as a tool placed in their hands by God.¹⁸¹ The close

179 *Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 5:21.

180 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 25-26.

181 *Ibid.*, 36-37.

relationship that some tribes had with Mormon missionaries can only have exacerbated this notion.¹⁸² In the *Book of Mormon*, in 3 Nephi, a prophecy that a “remnant of Jacob will be among the Gentiles as a lion among the sheep, who ... treadeth down and teareth in pieces,” is a nearly verbatim repeat of the same prophecy in Micah 5:8 in the Old Testament.¹⁸³ While such ideas are not widely accepted today, they held currency in 19th century Utah Territory. William H. Dame received a patriarchal blessing that included the following: “Thou shalt be called to act at the head of a portion of thy brethren and the Lamanites in the redemption of Zion and the avenging of the blood of the prophets upon them that dwell upon the earth. The Angel of Vengeance shall be with thee.”¹⁸⁴ Many believed that Indians and white allies preying on wagon trains were acting on LDS orders. Brigham Young acknowledged the suspicious nature of these raids.¹⁸⁵

The relationships that Mormons had with the Indians were not the only points of resentment and distrust between Mormons and non-Mormons. As Gordon and Shipps note, there was significant distrust between Mormons and Methodists who shared a significant overlap of belief and practice. As noted above, the founding myth of the LDS faith, the First Vision, declared that all other sects were false “and all their professors corrupt.” Another point of contention was the point of origin for many converts. The British Isles, especially the rapidly

182 *Ibid.*, 87.

183 *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 20:16, cf. Micah 5:8

184 William H. Dame Papers, February 20, 1854, MS 2041, LDS Archives; cited also in Bigler, *Confessions of a Revisionist Historian*, 137 and Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 87.

185 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 47.

urbanizing districts of England, were fertile grounds for Mormon proselytization. A great many of these early English converts arrived before the assassination of Joseph Smith and maintained lifelong levels of devotion from personal exposure to him.¹⁸⁶ The relationship between the US and Great Britain in the mid-19th century was not the “special relationship” that the two nations enjoy today. Both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 loomed large in the minds of many Americans, including men like Fancher who had family ties to men like Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. The US and British dispute of the Pacific Northwest had only recently been settled, as well. “Fifty-four forty or fight!” was a slogan many adults in the US still remembered well. To see what must have looked like a mass migration of English to a distrusted religious community in the mid-19th century can only have exacerbated the feelings of those who harbored resentments toward either or both.

By far the largest point of contention for Mormons was the assassination of Joseph Smith. Brigham Young’s fury was very high. Lee remembered him saying, “I swear by the eternal heavens that I have unsheathed my sword, and I will never return it until the blood of the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum [Joseph’s brother], and those who were slain in Missouri is avenged. This whole nation is guilty of shedding their blood...”¹⁸⁷ Young would go on to add an oath of vengeance to the Endowments ceremony in the LDS temples.¹⁸⁸ Bagley and Bigler

186 Ibid., 14.

187 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 160.

188 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 21. The oath reads, “I pray, and never cease to pray, and never cease to importune high heaven to avenge the blood of the Prophets on this nation, and I will teach this to my children, and my children’s children unto the third and fourth generations.”

note that this oath of vengeance included Parley P. Pratt, the Mormon Apostle murdered by an aggrieved husband in Arkansas a week or two after the Fanchers left.¹⁸⁹ If, as Young insisted, the whole nation was guilty of Smith's blood, it would easily explain the apparent ease with which women and children in the wagon train were also killed once the killing began. The idea was certainly in currency in Iron County at the time of the massacre. Lee recalled recalling telling Isaac Haight that if the Indians were induced to commit the massacre and whites didn't intervene, innocent blood would be shed. Haight replied that "there will not be one drop of *innocent* blood shed if every one of the d__d pack are killed for they are the worse [sic] lot of ruffians I ever saw in my life."¹⁹⁰

Perhaps the single biggest contributor to the Mountain Meadows Massacre was the Mormon Reformation. Coming on the heels of two consecutive years of drought, the Mormon Reformation was used as a tool to whip Mormons who may have grown lax in their practice or weak in their faith back into shape. Launched in late September, 1856, about one year before the Massacre, this revival was meant to merit God's blessing in the impending millennial conflict with the federal government. It sparked a cycle of mass confession, repentance, rebaptisms, and general fear in the settlements of Utah Territory.¹⁹¹ Jedediah M. Grant, Brigham Young's Second Counselor, spearheaded the effort and wrote a "catechism" of 18

189 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 26; Gordon and Shipps, "Fatal Convergence," 325; and Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 160-61.

190 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 220-21. Italics and underscore in original.

191 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 60.

piercing questions to be asked of every baptized member in the Territory (and, one presumes, outside of it, too).¹⁹²

Historian Mark P. Leone notes that in Utah Territory the religious utopia of Mormonism was “governed by priests whose authority was derived ... mainly from the fact that everyone believed the same version of the supernatural.”¹⁹³ Joseph Smith had preached a faith that demanded absolute obedience to God’s commands given through His priesthood. Any who would not obey would “be cut off” in God’s due time. Smith’s own failure to conquer Jackson County, Missouri in 1834 for the Mormon faith was attributed to the failure of the Mormon people obey their leaders. They needed chastening for a time first.¹⁹⁴ Dissent was simply not tolerated. This general lack of dissent would lead Fanny Stenhouse to say that “Mormon husbands are so influenced by their religion that they neither act nor think like other men.”¹⁹⁵

One example of how this played out in real life was the use of the stake high council to try cases internal to the church members. One half of the council would serve as defense and one half as prosecution. Before the verdict of the stake president was announced, a vote of as many members as possible “sustaining” the council (that is, establishing the authenticity of its

192 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 50.

193 Mark P. Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3-4.

194 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 12-13.

195 Stenhouse, *Tell it All*, 256.

authority) would be taken.¹⁹⁶ Dissent was very rare. By this use of a social control mechanism, the judgment of the stake president was established as authentic before it was even announced. In the case of John Lathrop, the stake high council tried him for insubordination. He did not sufficiently bend his will to that of the LDS community. The local council decided to levy a \$1.50 fee per family to contribute to a monument to Brigham Young in Salt Lake City on the fiftieth anniversary of Young's arrival in the Great Salt Lake Valley. Lathrop refused to pay, seeing a monument as a non-necessity. The \$1.50 was important because men appointed by God had levied it, not because of what purpose it had been levied for. If God had appointed them, one councilor said, then it was to argue with God Himself if one refused to participate.¹⁹⁷ In this same way, the "catechism" of Grant was simply not questioned. It was not its purpose that mattered nearly so much as who ordered it distributed and imposed upon the membership – in this case the number two man in the LDS church.¹⁹⁸ If Grant's credentials were not sufficient, Brigham Young himself endorsed the necessity of acting on the faith and not merely assenting to its tenants.¹⁹⁹ According to Fanny Stenhouse, the "burden of every sermon was unquestioning obedience." The "catechism" was brought into every Mormon home and husbands were questioned in front of their wives and children.²⁰⁰ This would serve to reinforce

196 Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism*, 119-120. The stake is the LDS equivalent of a Catholic or Orthodox diocese. The stake president was the rough equivalent of the diocesan bishop.

197 Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism*, 125-27.

198 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 50.

199 Watt, Long, et al., *Journal of Discourses*, 3:122, et freq.

200 Stenhouse, *Tell it All*, 315.

the social control mechanisms at the most basic level of the family. Brigham Young admonished the members to get re-baptized.²⁰¹ Often, entire wards got re-baptized. In Farmington, Utah Territory, all 406 members were re-baptized after one of Grant's preaching visits.²⁰² The orders of those in authority were simply not questioned.

John D. Lee recalled that when Isaac C. Haight arrived in Cedar City just before the Massacre, he told Lee that he had already consulted with William Dame, his immediate superior in both the church's chain of command and in the Nauvoo Legion. This was followed by "I expect you to carry out your orders." Haight then gave instructions on getting the local Paiute bands prepared to attack the wagon train. Lee stated that he asked if it was not better to consult with Brigham Young about what to do first. Haight is recorded as replying, "No, that is unnecessary, *we are acting by orders.*"²⁰³

Those orders were to carry out one of the most controversial of early Mormon practices: the doctrine of blood atonement. The Reformation that was meant to cleanse the sins of the Mormon people and prepare them for the Second Coming, saw some sins as so deep that they could not be cleansed by re-baptism. For these grievous sins, only blood atonement would do: the sinner's own blood had to be spilt in order to save them from hell.²⁰⁴ Jedediah Grant preached, "We have been trying long enough with this people, and I go in for letting the sword

201 Ibid.

202 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 50.

203 Lee, 220.

204 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 26; Stenhouse, *Tell it All*, 310-11.

of the Almighty be unsheathed, not only in word, but in deed ... Brethren and sisters, we want you to repent and forsake your sins. And you who have committed sins that cannot be forgiven through baptism, let your blood be shed ... as an atonement for your sins.”²⁰⁵ Stenhouse records that blood atonement was taught as an “act of love” if anyone had apostatized from the faith or appeared about to apostatize.²⁰⁶ Mormon apologists have long insisted that the blood atonement doctrine was merely a rhetorical tool, but Brigham Young’s words tell a very different story.²⁰⁷ The same day as the above sermon by Grant, Young taught, “There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground ... as an offering for their sins.” Grant urged such sinners to plead with Brigham Young to appoint a committee to see to their cases, select a place, and shed their blood. He insisted that there were some among them “who need to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are of too deep a dye.”²⁰⁸ William Bishop,

205 “Remarks by Jedediah M. Grand, Bowery, Sunday Morning, Sept. 21, 1856,” *Deseret News*, Great Salt Lake City, 1 October 1856. Cited in Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 61.

206 Stenhouse, *Tell it All*, 312.

207 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 51; Sermon of Jedediah M. Grant, 21 September 1856, in Gene A. Sessions, *Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 211. For an LDS attempt to refute the literalness of this doctrine, see Charles W. Penrose, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Who Were Guilty of the Crime. An Address Given by Elder Charles W. Penrose, October 26, 1884* (Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1899).

208 “Discourse by President Brigham Young, 21 September 1856,” *Deseret News*, 1 October 1856. Cited in Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 63.

Lee's attorney believed that Young was behind every act of blood atonement.²⁰⁹ In at least the sense of endorsing the policy, he was. Fanny Stenhouse records a sermon of Young's where he preached, "This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, *help him*; if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on earth in order that he may be saved, *spill it*. ... Now, brethren and sisters, will you live your religion?"²¹⁰

The Mormon faith was a product of the Second Great Awakening in the northeastern United States. Like some other faiths founded in that region during that period, it was utopian. However, like others, it was also pragmatic. It was, however, in fundamental conflict with all other sects despite the similarities it shared with faiths like Methodism. Holding that all other sects and those that professed those faiths were corrupt and lacked God's priesthood authority created this fundamental conflict.

The Mormon War in 1838 in northern Missouri and later conflict in Illinois after the migration to Nauvoo placed Mormons in conflict both with religious sects around them and with the more secular people alike. The governments of the States of Missouri and Illinois had both called out the state militias against the Mormon community, placing the governments of those states on the side of the sectarians who opposed Mormon beliefs. The federal government

209 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 28.

210 Stenhouse, *Tell it All*, 318. Stenhouse does not cite her source for this sermon, but asserts it is a month after the previously cited sermon from the *Journal of Discourses* in her book, which would place it late in October, 1856, about a month into the Reformation.

later joined the list when President Buchanan ordered the US Army to depose Brigham Young and act as *posse comitatus* for his replacement, Alfred C. Cumming.

Mormon millennialist beliefs held that they would bring the kingdom of God upon the earth and that the American Indians, whom Mormons understood to be the Lamanite peoples of the *Book of Mormon* would be a part of this apocalyptic vision, to fulfill Micah 5:8 and its *Book of Mormon* cognates.

For this kingdom of God to appear on earth, it was necessary for full obedience to be rendered to the priesthood authority of the Mormon church and those who held it, particularly the General Authorities. These General Authorities were Joseph Smith, later succeeded by Brigham Young, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as well as lesser priesthood offices answering to those above. This requirement left members with no choice but to obey, even if they objected to the orders given.

This obedience was necessary because the Second Coming and God's kingdom on earth was immanent. It was a matter of survival because the US Army was coming to commit genocide against the Mormons to fight against God's kingdom arriving.²¹¹ That eschatological fear opened the door for rank and file Mormons to accept the Mormon Reformation and its blood atonement doctrine which particularly targeted apostates and would-be apostates and inferred that other enemies of God might have this applied to them as well.

211 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 219.

It was this demand for unquestioning obedience and the literal understanding of the blood atonement doctrine that opened the door for the Mountain Meadows Massacre to happen. Had it been received as a mere rhetorical device, the massacre would have been impossible to carry out.

Chapter 4: Economic and Political Issues

By 1857, the Mormon people and their neighbors had complex and often contradictory relations with one another. Nowhere outside of theological questions was this more evident than in the intertwined issues of economics and politics. In this chapter I will illustrate some of the major economic and political realities that helped ease the way for John D. Lee to lead others to commit the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

By the mid-1850s, Mormons had a strong foothold in establishing themselves in Utah Territory. However, unlike other territories opened up in the West, Congress made no appropriations for improvements and did not open up land to settlement between 1850 and 1857.²¹² The one exception to this seems to be approximately \$25,000 in road building conducted by a detachment of the Army under Lt. Col. Edward Steptoe in 1854.²¹³ The Mormon people, as well as the handful of Gentile settlers in Utah Territory, had to be self-reliant to an unusual degree. With no federal money for the development of their territory, commerce and local taxation were their only options.

Emigrant Trail Trade

For Utah Territory in the 1850s, commerce centered primarily on the overland immigration trails to California and the Oregon Country. Will Bagley notes:

212 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Pacific States, Volume 21: Utah*. (San Francisco, California: The History Company Publishers, 1889), 485.

213 Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, Second Edition (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1958, 2005), 148.

Overlanders sought supplies, rest, and restored animals that Mormons could provide, and travelers brought clothing, manufactured goods, and money desperately needed in Utah. Travelers also abandoned immense piles of property “stacked like cordwood” along the trail that the Mormons systematically recovered – stoves, plows, furniture, books, clothes, medicine, and bacon.²¹⁴

Bagley and Bigler say that tens of thousands of overlanders helped Great Salt Lake City survive the next two decades.²¹⁵ This pattern of settler and overlander interdependence was expressed not just through individual trades, but through businesses that catered to the needs of overlanders, like trading posts and forts.²¹⁶ Some of these forts and trading posts, like Fort Limhi and Fort Bridger were operated by Mormons for their own benefit.²¹⁷ Some of the manufactured goods obtained were not done through trade, however. The further west the wagon trains traveled, the more dry goods were left behind to save weight and not sour draft animals. Lee took advantage of this knowledge and went on forays searching for goods left behind. In one such trip, he was able to find a Premium Range No. 3, powder, lead, cooking

214 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 371.

215 Will Bagley and David Bigler, *The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock*. Kindgom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier, Volume 1. (Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 2001.), 323.

216 Bagley and Bigler, *Pioneer Camp of the Saints*, 52 et freq.; Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 371.

217 Fort Bridger, originally owned by famed mountain man, Jim Bridger, was taken over by the Mormons in the early 1850s. The Mormons claimed to have paid him for the fort and its contents. Bridger claimed he was forcibly run out of his fort and never given any compensation for it.

utensils, and assorted consumables that had been cached. He also found a supply of medicines in one cache that he added to his wagon load.²¹⁸ These kinds of salvaging trips were not enough to supply the needs of those settlers in Utah but they did add to the supply of what was available for consumption and trade.

Mining

Although trade remained the mainstay of the Utah economy in the 1850s, Utahns were quick to add other industries, like mining to their economic repertoire. Among the first efforts to add mining to the Mormon economy was a series of missions sent to California as news of the gold find at Sutter's Mill reached Utah.²¹⁹ Six Mormons, former members of the Mormon Battalion, were working with James Marshall when the gold was discovered and themselves went on to discover other gold deposits. However, few Mormons went on to participate directly in the gold rush.²²⁰ With little money from the gold fields of California coming into Utah Territory (which included all of present-day Nevada at the time), it fell on the Mormon people to develop their own mineral resources.

218 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 148-49.

219 Thomas G. Alexander, "Generating Wealth from the Earth 1847-2000," Colleen Whitley, Ed., *From the Ground Up: A History of Mining in Utah*. (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2006), 38.

220 Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*. Second Edition. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1958, 2005), 64-65.

John D. Lee was sent to southern Utah in one of the initial forays into what is now Iron County, Utah.²²¹ He was sent by Brigham Young specifically to be a farmer in order to supply the needs of the miners who were to follow, but would later be assigned as “farmer to the Indians” by Young acting as ex-officio Indian Superintendent.²²² Southern Utah held extractable mineral wealth as well as timber at the higher elevations. Rich deposits of iron and lead were available for the taking. Unfortunately, the geographic isolation and lack of skilled labor prevented a feasible mining industry from forming in southern Utah in the 1850s. The earliest year on record, 1866, saw a combined total of \$86,000 in non-ferrous metals extracted. In 1873, the total gold extracted in Utah was just 0.1% of the US total for that year.²²³ Early attempts at building and maintaining a smelter failed in Iron County due to the lack of skilled labor.²²⁴ Sporadic attempts to mine the region failed and the region remained insignificant before the Denver and Rio Grande Railway built a line into the region in 1882.²²⁵ Prior to that time, what ores were extracted had to be hauled out of the area to the region between Great Salt Lake City and Provo – a distance of 250 miles – by wagon, making for very poor profits.²²⁶

221 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 216; Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 154.

222 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 34-35.

223 Thomas G. Alexander, “Generating Wealth from the Earth 1847-2000,” Colleen Whitley, Ed., *From the Ground Up: A History of Mining in Utah*. (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2006), 37-39.

224 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 31; Alexander, 41. Lee mentions using the failed smelter at Cedar City as a place to have a private all night conversation with Isaac Haight when planning the massacre. Lee, 218-19.

225 Alexander, 38.

226 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 24. Bagley notes that the annual salary for this job was \$600 in gold coin, a small fortune in southern Utah at the time, making overhead very high.

Agriculture

Agriculture was the other major industry of Utah in the 1850s. Settlers needed to supply food for their own consumption and for trade. In the West, where supplies could be scarce, this sometimes led to price gouging. The LDS church's Council of Fifty seriously considered price controls on beef in 1849. Brigham Young objected to this, but did give a fiery sermon about the topic. John D. Lee, who had been sold an ox at a high price was approached later by the seller who told him to slaughter and weigh the animal and then pay what it was worth without naming a price as a result.²²⁷ The high prices in the West, however, were not always a bad thing.

For Alexander Fancher, those very prices are at the heart of his motivation to leave Arkansas and emigrate to California. In early 1850, Alexander's brother, John, reported that drovers who had taken a herd to California had reaped a handsome reward. A profit of 500 percent was reported. The brothers figured they could build a herd of 4-500 animals before the grass appeared for the season and they could use single men headed to the gold fields for cow hands.²²⁸ Alexander and John arrived with their herd in California in August or September, 1850. According to Burr Fancher, their return was over 500 percent. It was enough that they stayed in California a few months, purchased a ranch, and registered the first brand in Tulare County.²²⁹

227 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 142.

228 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 60-61.

229 *Ibid.*, 72-74.

Alexander returned home to Arkansas in early 1851 to build a second herd. This time, he would save even more on his costs of operation by hiring boys from emigrant wagons and getting emigrants to take in the single men to their meals, thereby reducing the overall amount of preparations needed. By January, 1854, Fancher had thirteen families committed to the trip. He saved time (and money) by using the newly opened Cherokee Trail from Arkansas to Bent's Fort in Colorado. From there, he moved north along the east face of the Rockies to the California trail near Laramie, Wyoming.²³⁰ At Salt Lake City a choice had to be made to use the Humboldt Trail or the Old Spanish Trail to get to California.²³¹

In the winter of 1856-57, preparations were made for one final cattle drive. This was to be the final trip west. Fancher was certain enough of the profits to be made that he planned to move his family to California permanently this time. Fancher made preparations for a wagon train that in its final form, would have more than 140 people, some 40 wagons, and a combined herd of around 900 cattle.²³² By all indications, this should have been a very successful venture with a large profit margin.

For John D. Lee, it was a different story. Lee was, by all accounts, a very good farmer. Before joining the Mormons in 1838, Lee had been a successful farmer in Illinois. He was

230 Ibid., 76, 79-81.

231 Sources differ on which choice Fancher made in 1850 and in 1854. Burr Fancher holds that Fancher used the Old Spanish Trail in 1850 and the Humboldt Trail in 1854. Will Bagley holds the opposite. All sources agree that different trails were used in those years. Whatever the truth of it, Fancher likely agreed to go south toward the Old Spanish Trail in 1857 in part because he was already familiar with it and knew the gold field markets in that area and where to dispose of his herd after the Mojave Crossing.

232 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 88.

forced out of good farmland in northern Missouri after the Mormon War. In Illinois between 1839 and 1845 Lee was frequently gone on missions or other assignments for the LDS church, leaving little opportunity for farming. In 1845, Lee was among the first of the Mormons to leave Illinois in the trek west, but was unable to set up a farm after reaching Winter Quarters, Nebraska Territory. When Lee finally did start a farm in 1847, it was not for his profit.²³³ It was on orders of Brigham Young to help feed poor Mormons and to assist with helping converts who were to follow west to Utah later. That farm was very successful, but Lee was ordered west in 1848 with the first wave of the Mormon Exodus to Utah.²³⁴

In 1850 John D. Lee had a farm eight miles outside of Great Salt Lake City.²³⁵ By the winter of 1849, Lee's farm had been very active with a variety of dirt crops stored back, various meats processed, and even raw wool to be processed. This was as close as John D. Lee came to a profitable farm for personal gain after 1838.²³⁶ Even for all this abundance, the majority of it was for the consumption of Lee, his wives, and his children. A small surplus was left over for trade. As noted above, Lee's future farming operations were aimed at supporting a mining operation or teaching Indian tribes to farm. The one area that Lee was known for his success in was denied to him for personal profit.

233 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 115-125; Lee's own autobiographical material cuts off just prior to this in *Mormonism Unveiled* because the executioners had come to escort him to the place of execution.

234 Ibid., 124-25.

235 Ibid., 140.

236 Ibid., 149-50.

Unlike Lee, most agricultural operations in Utah Territory were not high value and most farmers and ranchers did not obtain Indian Agent positions which paid well. Poverty in Utah is illustrated from the 1850 census data. Comparing Utah Territory with neighboring California and Oregon Territory, we find some strong divergence in values. For that year, California had 872 agricultural operations with an average per farm value of \$4,443. These farms had an average of \$118 worth of farming implements and tools. In Oregon Territory, there were 1,164 farms with an average value of \$2,248 and had \$157 in tools and implements. By comparison, Utah Territory had 962 agricultural operations, averaging a mere \$337 per farm in value with \$91 in tools and implements.²³⁷ Having a similar number of agricultural operations was heavily offset by the relative poverty and poor market value of these farms and ranches.

Pay

Wages in California, Oregon Territory, and Utah Territory were similarly disparate. A comparison of farm labor and carpentry (both common trades in all three places) will illustrate this point. For California, a farm hand with room and board was paid an average of \$60.00 per month. A carpenter was paid \$7.60 per day without board. In Oregon Territory, a farm hand with room and board received an amazing average of \$75.00 per month. A carpenter in Oregon

237 J. D. B. DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States: Embracing its Territory, Population – White, Free Colored, and Slave – Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns, and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census; to Which Are Added the Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning With 1790, in Comparative Tables, With Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based Upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information.* (Washington, D. C.: Beverley Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854), 169.

received \$10.00 per day without board. In Utah, a farm hand with room and board received a comparatively paltry \$22.00 per month and a carpenter received \$3.14 per day without board.²³⁸ Mormons and their Gentile neighbors in Utah Territory were typically very poor by the standards of the frontier. For them, the promise of the frontier was much more difficult to make good on. Was this poverty enough to motivate men like John D. Lee and his subordinates to commit the massacre?

Bagley and Bigler note that virtually all the massacre participants were

...baptized as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
... Virtually all of them were decent, God-fearing husbands and fathers, and some of them had sacrificed everything they owned for their religion, not once or twice but three or four times. ... While some believe that the massacre was an act of simple larceny, the notion that some seventy men executed such an atrocity to acquire a few cows and gowns ignores the magnitude of the crime and uses a gross oversimplification to deny its complexity.²³⁹

While this is true, this statement also downplays the significance of that poverty and how it may have played into the motivations of some participants (however reluctantly) to commit the crime. Poverty had followed the Mormons from their earliest days. Josiah Gibbs reports that many of the earliest Mormon settlers in Jackson County, Missouri were poor.²⁴⁰ He also

238 Ibid., 164.

239 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 16.

240 Josiah Gibbs, *Lights and Shadows of Mormonism*. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Salt Lake Pub. Co., 1909), 73.

reports that the majority of Mormons were “miserably poor” and had “wretched outfits” for their journey from Nauvoo, Illinois to Winter Quarters, Nebraska Territory.²⁴¹ Wagons passing along the Oregon Trail from St. Joseph, Missouri found Mormons to have a reputation for robbery. Mrs. Alfred Stanton wrote on 9 May 1847 that her company were often asked if they were Mormons and then accused of being such and not owning up to it. Their interlocutors would then add “I hope you are not; for this road is marked with stolen property and all manner of wickedness.” She was warned that Mormons would rob them, if they had an opportunity.²⁴² While much of what Mrs. Stanton was told was, no doubt, vicious rumor, most rumors have some basis of truth and this may have grown out of the desperate or unscrupulous acts of a few who robbed without regard for the LDS church’s rules.

Immigrants to Utah Territory

If native-born Mormons living in poverty were not enough, every year more were added to the membership rolls. Fanny Stenhouse noted that there were thousands of converts in the Great Britain who were eager to come, but too poor to afford the cost of the journey from places like Manchester or Liverpool to Great Salt Lake City. So much so, that in the mid-1850s, Brigham Young came up with the “Handcart Scheme” that brought over as many as 6,000 poor British emigrants in 1856.²⁴³ Stenhouse went on to say that she believed Mormonism would have died but for the thousands of Scandinavians and English who were

241 Ibid., 143.

242 Phoebe Stanton, “On the Plains: Letter from Mrs. Alfred Stanton, a Well Known Pioneer of Marion County, Oregon,” 9 May 1847. *Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association* (1912): 622-24.

243 Stenhouse, *Tell It All*, 193. This “handcart scheme” is properly known as the Revolving Emigration Fund.

added to the LDS fold yearly due to losses to apostasy.²⁴⁴ These poor Mormon converts created and maintained something of a glut of labor which, in turn, kept wages depressed.

As noted above, the Denver & Rio Grande Railway did not put a rail line into southern Utah until 1889. This was a full 20 years after the Golden Spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, completing the transcontinental railroad. Thus, all manufactured goods and all non-local foods had to be brought in from outside the region in wagons. In the 1850s, the roads into and through southern Utah were little more than rutted wagon trails, making anything imported into the area more expensive for the time involved and the overhead expenses of livestock and hired hands.

Did Mormons participating in the massacre do so out of reasons related to their poverty, such as jealousy or avarice? The claim has been made by a few, but it is largely unsubstantiated. As a secondary motivation, the expectation of booty may have factored in for some. Bagley notes that poverty was “grinding” in southern Utah and the wealth gap between the church hierarchy and ordinary citizens was as wide as it was between the Russian nobles and serfs.²⁴⁵ That makes the claim at least possible, and Lee was later known to have been in possession of property stolen at the massacre as were other participants.²⁴⁶

244 Ibid., 611.

245 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 103.

246 Ibid., 171-175, 239.

Indian Relations

The relationship between white settlers and American Indian tribes was complex from the very beginning in North America. After the adoption of the US Constitution, the federal government became the sole legal arbiter of relations between the tribes and the whites who interacted with them. The case of *Worcester v Georgia*, 31 US 515 (1832), prevented states or territories within the US from regulating any relationship with Indian tribes. Worcester also upheld a previous ruling in *Johnson v M'Intosh*, 28 US 543 (1823), that only the federal government could take or receive lands from Indian tribes whether through transfer of title or war. *Cherokee v Georgia*, 30 US 1 (1831), held that Indian tribes within the territory claimed by the United States held a status of “domestic dependent nations” whose relationship to the federal government was that of “a ward to its guardian.”²⁴⁷

Worcester effectively prevented government from stopping religious proselytization among Indian tribes, those of the Mormon missionaries included. *Johnson* and *Cherokee* prevented Mormons from simply buying or trading for land in Utah Territory without a previous federal government action to secure the title from the tribes and then offering the land for sale. Mormons initially settled in the Great Basin while it was still part of Mexico. Just months later, the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transferred those territories to the US. However, Mormon settlement had already begun in earnest, leaving issues of title to be settled. Mormons never obtained any title to lands from the Mexican government, so there were no land grant

247 This attitude of sole authority over tribes would see its zenith in the case of *United States v Kagama*, 118 US 375 (1886), where Congress was held to have plenary authority “in all cases whatsoever” in regards to Indian law.

claims that the United States government was forced recognize. Under *Johnson*, no title could be granted to settlers until Indian title had been duly extinguished. As a result, the Federal Land Office refused to give title to Mormon settlers until the Indian title was formally extinguished.²⁴⁸ Mormons in the Great Basin were legal squatters on lands they were essentially sharing with Indian tribes.

The economic impact of white settlement among the Indian tribes included trade, learning white industrial and agricultural skills, and the sharing of religion. Starting in the early 1800s, missionaries like Pierre-Jean de Smet and later, Marcus Whitman, had already begun making inroads into the tribes of the American West. They not only brought their religion with them, but began teaching farming, black smithing, and other skills to the tribes they worked with.²⁴⁹ Tribes further south had been evangelized by Catholic missionaries since the 16th to 18th centuries. It is likely that Franciscan, Dominican, or even Jesuit priests had already visited the Paiutes of southern Utah Territory before the arrival of the first Mormons though it does not appear that any lasting success was had with this tribal group.

Indians in the 19th century were frequently stereotyped as lazy, theft-loving, and bloody. However, many Americans, especially Army officers and enlisted men grew to have a great deal of respect for the tribes they encountered. Cordial relations were frequently had between

248 Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan*. (Manhattan, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1975), 66; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Pacific States of North America, Volume 21: Utah*. (San Francisco, California: The History Company, Publishers, 1889), 485.

249 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 390-91.

these men, their wives, and the civilian sutlers and settlers.²⁵⁰ William Bedford Temple noted that most of the crime along the trail was committed not by Indian depredations, but by whites as noted in chapter one above.²⁵¹ Alexander Fancher seemed to have a quiet respect for the Indian tribes along the routes of his travels west. When moving through the Pawnee Nation in 1850, he steered wide of Indians' villages and farms and when confronted with a demand for meat, he shot a steer and gave it to the Pawnees.²⁵² For John D. Lee, the relationship is more complex. He was appointed by Brigham Young as an Indian agent in southern Utah Territory. He was styled "farmer to the Indians" with the ostensible job of teaching agriculture to the Paiute bands in Iron County.²⁵³ As both a political and religious subordinate of Brigham Young, Lee would have been required to help carry out Young's policy toward the Indians of Utah. That policy was to "excite hostile feelings against the United States."²⁵⁴ Lee understood at the time of the massacre that every American wagon train in the Territory was to be "used up with the help of the Indians."²⁵⁵ He was ordered to tell the Paiutes that Americans were their

250 Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 239-41.

251 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 68.

252 Ibid., 68-69.

253 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 178-81.

254 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 74

255 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 87; "Lee's Last Confession. His Version of the Mountain Meadows Massacre," *San Francisco Daily Bulletin Supplement*, 24 March 1877, 2.

enemies and the Mormons were their friends and the Mormons would help them against their enemies in war.²⁵⁶

For Lee, this surely must have been part of the larger eschatological picture. William H. Dame, another Massacre participant, received his patriarchal blessing in February, 1854. The blessing prophesied that he would “be called to act at the head of a portion of thy brethren and of the Lamanites [American Indians] in the redemption of Zion and the avenging the blood of the prophets upon them that dwell on the earth.” Though such language is not taken seriously today, it was in the mid-19th century; it held strong currency in Mormon thought and belief.²⁵⁷ Where Fancher simply tried to avoid conflict with the tribes he encountered, Lee prepared actively to get Indian participation in his faith, which led a few of them to participate in the massacre.

Before 1846 the United States was only just beginning to explore, claim, and settle areas west of the Mississippi River. In October, 1846, the Oregon Treaty settled the question of the United States’ Pacific Northwestern corner, but the border with Mexico remained ill-defined and disputed. When Texas was annexed, that disputed border led to the eruption of the Mexican-American War. In 1848, just months after Brigham Young’s initial settlement in the Great Basin, the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded slightly more than half of Mexico’s territory to the United States. The two treaties more than doubled the size of the United States.

²⁵⁶ Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 223.

²⁵⁷ David L. Bigler, *Confessions of a Revisionist Historian*. Will Bagley, Editor. Utah, Mormons, and the West, vol. 16. (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 2015), 137.

For the Mormons who were seeking to escape persecution in the United States, this put them in a precarious position. Wanting to be left in peace, they had chosen a desolate area that no European or European descended settlers had yet occupied. This relative isolation would allow the Mormons a high degree of autonomy for many years.²⁵⁸ The telegraph did not reach Utah until October, 1861.²⁵⁹ The Transcontinental Railroad did not join in Utah until May, 1869. What Utah Territory did have was the Overland Trails. The California and Oregon-bound settlers had to pass through Utah Territory to reach their destinations. Mormons, as noted above were economically dependent upon the Overlanders, but held little in the way of security for themselves in this.

Most notably, as mentioned previously, the Mormons did not have clear title to the lands they claimed. They were legally squatters. According to Bancroft, Mormons simply had no clear title to the lands they were claiming.²⁶⁰ Brigham Young had assigned surveyors at the county level to designate “inheritances” to loyal Mormons. However, these land claims held no standing in federal courts. David H. Burr, official territorial surveyor charged that he and his men were subjected to a campaign of harassment that included stoning a house he rented in Filmore, Utah and having one of his men beaten nearly to death. Mormons charged that he

258 Mark P. Leone, *The Roots of Modern Mormonism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 4.

259 BYU Virtual Tours. “Pioneer Telegraph Monument.” YouTube video, 1:47. Posted September, 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdXTUFJOljg> on 20 February 2019.

260 Bancroft, *History*, 485; see also Elbert B. Smith, *James Buchanan*, 66.

was there only to preempt and evict the Mormons from their hard won homes.²⁶¹ C. G. Landon, an apostate Mormon who had taken work as a clerk in the federal land office in Great Salt Lake City, was beaten with clubs and stoned while his fellow clerk, the Gentile William Wilson had a gun held to his head while questioning him.²⁶² The significant degree of geographic isolation left many of these crimes unchallenged and unprosecuted. That fact made it easier to commit the massacre in what is arguably the most remote corner of the state. Some participants may have been very confident in their ability to go unpunished.

Official Persecution

Official persecution of Mormons for their faith began less than a decade after their official incorporation as a church. Mormons had been persecuted and driven from western New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and most recently from Jackson County, Missouri. The Mormons had come into conflict with old settlers and were driven out in the dead of winter to neighboring Clay County. The state legislature created Caldwell County specifically for the Mormons to settle in, but conflict with old settlers over the Mormons' habit of voting en bloc led to the Gallatin Voting Day Battle in neighboring Daviess County where many Mormons had spread out to. The melee that day triggered a months-long low intensity tit-for-tat conflict. Although Mormons contributed as much as their Missouri neighbors did, they were particularly shocked by events like the Haun's Mill Massacre that killed several, including an ten year old boy who

²⁶¹ Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 76.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 97.

begged for mercy. Elements of the Missouri Militia crossed a buffer zone between Ray and Caldwell Counties and began harassing and disarming Mormons there. Mormons responded in force, leading to the Battle of Crooked River. The Missouri Militia lost the battle badly and send word for reinforcements to Jefferson City. Governor Lilburn Boggs then issued his infamous “extermination order” and ordered the Missouri Militia to mobilize and that the “Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace.”²⁶³ The militia was able to drive the Mormons back to Far West, where the church was headquartered and to nearby Adam-ondi-Ahman. John D. Lee was present at Far West when Joseph Smith surrendered himself and the town. He remembered that a drumhead court martial had sentenced Smith and seven others to death and that they were only saved by General Alexander Doniphan, a lawyer and sympathizer who refused to allow the sentence to be carried out. Joseph Smith and others were taken to Liberty, Missouri as prisoners awaiting civilian trial instead.²⁶⁴ The irony here is that while Lee and his family were allowed to leave the state with some of their property, he later carried out the complete slaughter of others and the confiscation of all their property.

Mormons fled to Nauvoo, Illinois after the Mormon War, starting in late 1838. However, Joseph Smith and other members of his inner circle were indicted in Missouri on a variety of charges. A change of venue was ordered and Smith and his companions escaped, fleeing to Illinois to catch up with his co-religionists. Both Governor Boggs and his successor, Thomas

263 John P. Green, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons Under the “Exterminating Order”* by John P. Greene, an Authorized Representative of the Mormons (Cincinnati, Ohio: R. P. Brooks, 1839), 26.

264 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 81-85.

Reynolds petitioned for Smith's extradition back to Missouri to stand trial. Multiple arrest attempts were made between 1839 and 1843 with at least three arrest warrants being issued and a second indictment for treason back in Missouri being issued.²⁶⁵ None were ultimately successful, but Mormons believed that this constituted official harassment.

In early 1844, the greatest grievance Mormons held against their Gentile fellow countrymen took place. Joseph Smith had quietly given his revelation about "celestial marriage," or polygamy in July, 1844.²⁶⁶ The revelation stated that "if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory."²⁶⁷ Certain men in the inner circle were secretly practicing this doctrine, including John D. Lee, though it was publicly denied.²⁶⁸ Lee notes that a pamphlet was published and put out in limited circulation as a feeler on the topic, but in the end, only a few Mormons were initially in favor of polygamy and even Hyrum Smith, Joseph's older brother was against it.²⁶⁹ Rumors abounded about Smith's adultery and that of others in his inner circle. Apostate and dissident Mormons started a new newspaper called *The Nauvoo Expositor*. It's one and only edition was largely an exposé of Mormon secret polygamy and decried Smith as

265 "Missouri Extradition Attempts." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. N.d. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/study/history/topics/missouri-extradition-attempts?lang=eng> on 19 March 2019.

266 Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132.

267 Doctrine and Covenants 132:4.

268 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 146, 162, 165.

269 *Ibid.*, 146.

a fallen prophet.²⁷⁰ The *Expositor* included copies of affidavits sworn before a justice of the peace to the effect that William Law, the publisher and his wife Jane had seen documents purporting to be written copies of the revelation authorizing polygyny. Smith, acting as mayor of Nauvoo, convened the city council and after a “trial” they were not empowered to hold, ordered the city police to print the type and burn the press and any news rag found in the offices of the *Expositor*.²⁷¹ Smith was charged with several crimes in response to this event, but was assassinated along with his brother Hyrum while awaiting trial.

The *Nauvoo Expositor* was created by several apostates. William Law had been second counselor in the First Presidency of the church, making him the number three man in the church at the time his excommunication.²⁷² Robert D. Foster had been specifically named by Smith in a revelation that became part of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.²⁷³ Memory of men like these and Oliver Cowdery who had apostatized from high positions and later damaged the church or its leaders in some way left many hard feelings among members. After arriving in Utah, Brigham Young himself threatened to unsheathe his knife on apostates and compel them to leave the

270 William Law, Wilson Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncy L. Higbee, Robert D. Foster, Charles A. Foster. *The Nauvoo Expositor*. 1 issue. 7 June 1844. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/NauvooExpositor1844Replica> on 23 March 2019.

271 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Period I. History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet by Himself* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1912) 430-432.

272 Lyndon W. Cook, “William Law, Nauvoo Dissenter,” *BYU Studies* 22 (Winter 1982), 59-60.

273 *Doctrine and Covenants* 124:115.

territory.²⁷⁴ Lee does not mention apostates specifically in *Mormonism Unveiled*, nor does his editor after his execution, but being part of Young's inner circle and a devout Mormon, it is reasonable to assume that he shares similar sentiments toward them. Similar sentiments must have been felt toward government agents who acted against LDS interests since the two frequently coincided.

Another issue where Mormons were at odds with their gentile neighbors was the issue of polygamy. It was the issue that triggered events leading to Joseph Smith's death. Although the revelation commanding polygyny was put to pen in the 1840s, it was not officially revealed to the public until 1852.²⁷⁵ Although whispered about for at least a decade, the public announcement of the practice was widely denounced in the American public. In 1854 the Republican Party was itself founded on the principle of ending the "twin pillars of barbarism, slavery and polygamy."²⁷⁶ Salacious stories like "Sad Story of Mormonism. – The Mother and Children," in the *New Orleans Bulletin* of 19 December 1856 told the tale of Eleanor McLean who left her husband and married a Mormon polygamist without benefit of divorce from the first husband. The first husband, Hector McLean, would later assassinate beloved Mormon apostle and missionary, Parley P. Pratt on the Arkansas/Indian Territory border in 1857.²⁷⁷ The

274 C. P. Lyford, *The Mormon Problem: An Appeal to the American People*. (New York: Philips and Hunt, 1886), 89.

275 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Marriage: An Eternal Covenant."

276 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 62.

277 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 76-91; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 68-72, 81, 89, 98, 184, 190, 266, 269, 285, 378, 380, 381.

news of Pratt's assassination arrived with Eleanor McLean and O. Porter Rockwell. Rockwell brought news of the canceled mail contract and the approach of the US Army to compel Brigham Young from office. This can only have felt like yet another gentile and government combination rising up against the innocent members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Army's approach was a response to the political turmoil in Utah during the 1850s. In 1854, Judge Brocchus and Judge Brandenburg and Territorial Secretary Harris left Utah under cover of darkness and without notice, fearing for their lives.²⁷⁸ They had been cordially welcomed to Utah but quickly came into conflict with Mormons. According to Fanny Stenhouse, those conflicts lasted years.²⁷⁹ Another federal judge, W. W. Drummond began his tenure by mocking Mormons and their beliefs, especially polygamy creating an on-going environment of mutual distrust.²⁸⁰ After departing Utah, these officials pronounced that Mormon leaders combined efforts to obstruct justice whenever it crossed LDS interests.²⁸¹ When these officials left for Washington, D. C., they kept possession of \$24,000 in territorial funds and the territorial seal as well. When their posts were left vacant for two years, the Utah territorial legislature filled their posts with locals, usurping presidential prerogative.²⁸² By 1857, all the federally appointed territorial officials had been driven out except for Garland

278 Bancroft, *History*, 488; Elbert B. Smith, *James Buchanan*, 66.

279 Fanny Stenhouse, *Tell It All*, 309.

280 Bancroft, *History*, 490.

281 *Ibid.*, 486.

282 *Ibid.* 488-89.

Hurt, an Indian Agent. Hurt was no ally of the Mormons, but tried to leave well enough alone. In early 1857, several of the Indians Hurt helped rushed into his office to warn him that Mormons were coming to assassinate him. He had to be led from the territory across back trails through mountain valleys.²⁸³

The territorial legislature drafted a letter to President Pierce in 1854 stating that they would follow federal law “when applicable,” which Elbert Smith interprets to mean when Brigham Young approved of them.²⁸⁴ The same letter also made clear that only federal officials approved of by the people of Utah would be accepted – another instance of attempting to usurp presidential prerogative. The issue was largely ignored until James Buchanan’s presidency. With the looming territorial division in the eastern US, Buchanan was eager to find something to unite the country over and turned to the Republicans for bipartisan support to suppress polygamy in Utah, which he got.²⁸⁵ Against General Winfield Scott’s advice, Buchanan ordered Brevet Brigadier General Albert Sydney Johnston to lead the 5th and the 10th Infantry, the 4th Dragoons, and a battery of the 4th Artillery from Fort Leavenworth to Utah in May, 1857. He was to escort and ensure that newly confirmed Governor Alfred Cumming took office and to act as posse comitatus as needed for federal judges to follow.²⁸⁶ Buchanan failed to

283 Ibid., 490; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 46-48.

284 Elbert B. Smith, *James Buchanan*, 66.

285 Bancroft, *History*, 495.

286 Ibid., 497-500.

inform Brigham Young of his being replace. Whether that was intentional or an oversight is not known.

On the tenth anniversary of the Mormons' first arrival in the Great Salt Lake Valley, a large celebration was held in Big Cottonwood Canyon outside of the city.²⁸⁷ On the day of the celebration, a buckboard wagon with A. O. Smoot, Judson Stoddard, O. Porter Rockwell and an "emotionally unhinged" Eleanor McLean "Pratt" arrived in Big Cottonwood Canyon with news of the cancellation of the mail contract, the approach of the Army of Utah, and the murder of Parley P. Pratt.²⁸⁸ Eleanor McLean in her anger called down vengeance not just on her legal husband, but on the entire state of Arkansas for the crime.²⁸⁹ The celebration that should have been a joyous event became instead one of mourning, loss, and anger. Once again, the Gentiles and the government had attacked their faith.

Brigham Young got up on a platform and announced the news and followed it with an impromptu speech declaring, "As for any nation coming here to destroy this people, God Almighty being my helper, they cannot come here."²⁹⁰ The Deseret News recorded Young as saying, "We have borne enough of their oppression and hellish abuse, and we will not bear any

287 The Mormons first arrived on 24 July, 1847. 24 July was later enshrined as a state holiday called Pioneer Day. It is celebrated both as a civil holiday in Utah and by Mormons worldwide as a religious remembrance of the event. The present author was raised in an LDS home and celebrated this event through most of his childhood.

288 Bancroft, *History*, 504-05; Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 80.

289 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 27, 75.

290 *Ibid.*, 26-27.

more of it. ... In the name of Israel's God, we ask no odds of them."²⁹¹ The Nauvoo Legion was mobilized with orders to be ready to march anywhere at a moment's notice, putting Utah on a war footing.²⁹²

Alexander Fancher and his wagon train arrived in Great Salt Lake City a mere eleven days after Eleanor McLean and Porter Rockwell arrived in Big Cottonwood Canyon with the sad news of Pratt's death in Arkansas. The wagon train was from Arkansas. Not just Arkansas, but from the same part of Arkansas. With McLean's imprecations against the whole state as guilty of the death of her "husband" and Apostle, the Fanchers and others in the train were guilty by association. As will be noted below, their association with the US government by calling themselves "Uncle Sam's boys" also got them associated with the Army. These two things happened in an environment where Gentiles were hated and distrusted and where government was, too. A long memory of grievances combined with recent grievances would certainly have made it easy – or at least easier – to dehumanize their victims and accept a role in attacking the wagon train.

291 "The 24th of July," *Deseret News*, 29 July 1857, cited in Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 80.

292 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 168-69.

Chapter 5: The Wagon Train and the Massacre

In the mid-19th century, there were two ways to get to California: by ship or over land. For those who chose the latter, there were several routes available, but by far the most popular was a collection of closely related routes we now know as the Overland Trails or the Emigrant Trails.²⁹³ Most of these trails began Independence, Missouri (now a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri), and ended in several locations in California, Oregon, and Washington States. There were other points of contact with these trails, as well. For John D. Lee and other Mormons, the trail began at Winter Quarters in modern-day Omaha, Nebraska. Traveling generally westward until they met the Platte River, the Mormon Trail paralleled the Oregon Trail west through Nebraska and into western Wyoming. At South Pass, Wyoming, the Mormon Trail turned southwestward into the valley of the Great Salt Lake where it reached its terminus in Great Salt Lake City at the southern end of the namesake lake. Great Salt Lake City (modern-day Salt Lake City) was the first city between Independence, Missouri and California along the Overland Trails.²⁹⁴ This made Great Salt Lake City an important way point for both emigrants and Mormon settlers alike. Alexander Fancher and his party would attempt to stop here to purchase consumables and recruit their animals as many others had done before them.²⁹⁵ As noted above, Fancher had been here twice already and probably had a working assumption of repeating past experiences. After helping to settle Fort Harmony in Iron County, Utah, Lee

293 The name “Emigrant Trails” is name officially used for that part of the National Trail System that follows the trails used by emigrants to the western US in the mid-to-late 19th century.

294 Bagley and Bigler, *Pioneer Camp*, 323.

295 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 98; Fancher, 99.

returned to Great Salt Lake City on 1 July 1851 and profited well from the sale of his holdings and trading with emigrants until his return south in October of that year.²⁹⁶

For Alexander Fancher, California could be accessed via the Oregon Trail into southern Idaho and then turning southwest into modern-day Nevada, by going into Great Salt Lake City and then going around the north side of the Great Salt Lake and following the Humboldt Trail through central Nevada. Or he could turn south and following the northern route of the Old Spanish Trail from southern Utah into California via the Mojave Crossing. Fancher had made the Humboldt Trail crossing in 1850.²⁹⁷ In 1854, he had taken the Old Spanish Trail.²⁹⁸ Both trails went through Mormon controlled and settled areas in Utah Territory. In 1857, the Fancher Party used the newly opened Cherokee Trail along the Arkansas River to the Front Range of the Rockies in Colorado to reach the Overland Trails in Wyoming near Fort Bridger.²⁹⁹ After reaching Great Salt Lake City, the party was convinced to take the Old Spanish trail again despite having originally intended to take the Humboldt River route. It was suggested that Indians were less hostile than along the Humboldt and the grass at Mountain Meadows and

296 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 169.

297 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 72. Burr Fancher does not specifically mention the Humbolt Trail, but asserts that Alexander Fancher was through Donner Pass by 10 September 1850 and headed south through the Sacramento Valley.

298 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 28.

299 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 58.

other locations along the southern route was better.³⁰⁰ Fancher was familiar with both trails and that probably contributed to the party's change of plans. In 1850, Fancher had purchased a ranch in central California with his brother and may have thought it faster to get there via the Old Spanish Trail where he could drop off his seed herd before taking market cattle to the gold fields rather than the other way around.

Both John D. Lee and Alexander Fancher traveled westward overland to get to their destinations, though on slightly different versions of the trail. For both men, a significant level of planning and a significant expense was involved. In the case of Lee, it kept him impoverished until after his journey was completed and he was finally able to settle in Utah Territory. It was a five month reminder that he had been driven, yet again, somewhere else for his faith. For Fancher, it was careful planning and making his purchases out of his growing wealth that made his three trips across the continent possible. If all went well, the third trip would put the capstone on a plan that was literally years in the making. Both men sought a better life in the here and now, but Lee openly embraced his poverty and struggles in the hopes of something better in the hereafter.

The Cost of Going West

The journey across the plains started with a wagon and the outfit that would go into it. John Unruh conservatively estimated that a family could cross the plains for around \$1,500 (or about

300 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 99. Matilda Scott, daughter of Fancher Party member, William Cameron, recorded that some chose to stick to the Humboldt River route and parted from the Fancher Party at Great Salt Lake City and thus survived to reach their destinations in California.

\$33,000 in today's money). Other sources suggest between \$100 and \$200 per person to make the journey (or about \$2,200 and \$4,500 in today's money).³⁰¹ The famous Conestoga wagon was rarely, if ever, used on the Overland Trails.³⁰² It was a heavy freight wagon with a curved bottom designed for the roads of Pennsylvania. Overlanders used a straight bottomed wagon of smaller size. The "prairie schooner," as it came to be known, came in a variety of models, but all had the basic feature of being a straight, boxy design on wheels that one could sleep in or under at night. Two to three thousand pounds of cargo per wagon was the limit if one did not want to sour the draft animals pulling it. Jesse Looney gave the advice to put as much as a single yoke of oxen could pull readily and then put three yoke to the wagon.³⁰³ A well made wagon would be made of well seasoned wood and every part was useful in some way. Even the tail gate could double as a dining table. Properly caulked or tarred, the wagon box could be separated from the wheels and axles and be used to float the contents over streams.³⁰⁴ Wagons sometimes contained four inch extensions atop the walls of the box, dubbed "a Mormon fashioned wagon bed," that extended the depth and width. Wagons and their canvas covers were often painted, sometimes in very bright colors.³⁰⁵

301 Will Bagley. *So Rugged and Mountainous: Blazing Trails to Oregon and California 1812-1848*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), p. 130.

302 Bagley, *Pioneer Camp of the Saints*, 51.

303 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 135.

304 Ibid.

305 Ibid., 139.

Wagons

The wagon was used as shelter for people and provisions alike. They ordinarily had double canvas covers, often treated with linseed oil or painted for waterproofing.³⁰⁶ At least 250 pounds of provisions per person was recommended, including flour, sugar, bacon, coffee, tea, rice, and dried fruit. Of course basic tools were also brought. Aside from this, trail veterans warned against taking “useless trumpery” on the trails. Failure to heed this advice resulted in piles of abandoned furniture, clothing, stoves, and other wares left beside the trail.³⁰⁷ While household goods were discouraged by trail veterans, housing was not. William Martin recommended tents for up to eight persons as necessary gear.³⁰⁸ Burr Fancher records a total of twenty-two wagons and carriages in the Fancher Party. Of those twenty-two, four wagons and four carriages belonged to Alexander Fancher.³⁰⁹ A well-prepared wagon would be a valuable source of supplies and survival gear that would, ideally, allow the owner to get a better start in their new life at their destination. Although railroad speculation had created a financial panic on both sides of the Atlantic in 1857, this did not affect the prices of stock or wagons on the American frontier.³¹⁰ This would have the effect of making good wagons and stock even

306 Ibid., 136, 139-40.

307 Ibid.

308 Ibid., 136-38.

309 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 91.

310 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 61.

more valuable to the impoverished Mormons in southern Utah. Brigham Young commented on the high prices of both in 1857.³¹¹

Draft Animals

Pulling wagons required draft animals. The horse team is certainly the most depicted method of westward travel in Hollywood and in many wagon train paintings. “Horses will not do to depend upon for service,” Captain Medorem Crawford warned.³¹² Crawford’s ideal team consisted of “three yoke of light, active cattle” pulling a good wagon with double covers.³¹³ For Captain Randolph B. Marcy, mules were preferred for some journeys and oxen for others. Teams of six mules could be used for journeys of up to a thousand miles over good ground. For longer journeys or across muddy or sandy routes, a team of eight oxen were his preferred method. Marcy did admit the question was far from settled. He also admitted that eight oxen could be purchased for one-third the cost of six mules, making them a much more economical choice.³¹⁴ In addition to draft service, oxen could be eaten like any other cattle if dire necessity dictated, where horses or mules would not be eaten as readily by Euro-American settlers. The ready willingness to eat an ox later became the source of one of many rumors against the

311 “From the East to the Pacific, and the Land Sharks of Utah,” *Deseret News*, 13 July 1854, 64.

312 Medorem Crawford. “To Emigrants.” Broadside, 1863. (Clackamas Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon).

313 Ibid.

314 Randolph Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions with Maps, Illustrations, and Iteneraries of the Principle Routes Between the Mississippi and the Pacific*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1859), 27-28.

Fancher Party as they made their way south through Utah.³¹⁵ In the Mormon Exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois to Winter Quarters in the future Nebraska Territory, oxen were preferred because of their cheapness, their hardiness in being able to graze on native grasses, and for availability to Mormons who were often nearly destitute.³¹⁶

Firearms

Weapons among the overland emigrants were ubiquitous. Hunting and self-defense far from the nearest store, ranch, or military fort was never far from the emigrant's mind. Medorem Crawford recommended that everyone keep a gun conveniently nearby at all times.³¹⁷ Randolph Marcy offered the similar advice:

*Every man who goes into the Indian country should be armed with a rifle and revolver, and he should never, either in camp or out of it, lose sight of them. When not on the march, they should be placed in such a position that they can be seized at an instant's warning; and when moving about outside the camp, the revolver should invariably be worn in the belt, as the person does not know at what moment he may have use for it.*³¹⁸

315 See below for further discussion on the use of rumor generally, and of a poisoned ox specifically.

316 Bagley, *Pioneer Camp of the Saints*, 50-51.

317 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 136.

318 Randolph Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler*, 41.

Marcy goes on to recommend both Colt's pistol and revolver rifle as the best choices in his considered opinion.³¹⁹ Although Marcy refers to Indian country, as noted above, the great majority of criminal acts on the trails were committed by whites preying on the emigrants along the trails. William Bedford Temple, who accompanied Alexander Fancher on his first cattle drive west in 1850, wrote to his wife:

*I would here remark near all the stealing and killing is done by the whites following the Trains the number thus engaged [sic] is very great. Not a day goes by but Ponies or cattle is missing [sic] not but of these mean white men will shoot a man for his provision. Some are traveling with nothing on earth but arms. I am to believe this stealing is done by many who steal fine horses and mix them with the crowd from day to day. I think I am not mistaken.*³²⁰

Stealing from wagon trains was primarily a white criminal's occupation. Few Indians were willing to create trouble for wagon trains. Martha Williams would remember it this way: "We had no trouble with the Indians . . ."³²¹ For many years Indians seldom molested whites.³²² They were more likely to demand a toll of white emigrants.

319 Ibid., 42.

320 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 67.

321 Martha Williams Reed, "Old California Pioneer Passes Away at Fallbrook. Martha Williams Reed, Aged 87, Crosses the Plains by Ox-Team in the Early Gold Excitement of California." *The Fallbrook Enterprise*, 12 January 1917.

322 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 91.

Knowing that white emigrants had allowed cattle to graze in Pawnee corn fields in 1850, Fancher scouted a route that took his animals wide of their farms³²³. Fancher also prohibited buffalo hunting by his hands to avoid depriving Indians of their sustenance.³²⁴ Seeing this consideration, the Pawnee were less demanding on Fancher's group than on others. At one river crossing, a group of Pawnees demanded a cow because they could not find any buffalo due to white hunters. Fancher rode to the side of the herd and shot one steer and gave it to them.³²⁵ Fancher appears to have maintained this policy on his subsequent cattle drives in 1854 and 1857. In a place where "good fences" could not make "good neighbors," Alexander made up the difference by taking extra precautions with his hands, leaving his need for firearms primarily for defense against whites, not Indians. It also demonstrated that he was considerate of the Indians he encountered as he traveled west.

Manpower

The final ingredient in a successful overland immigration was manpower. On a cattle drive, that necessarily included a number of drovers who were hired especially for the purpose. The professional cowboy, as they stereotype has come down to us today, largely did not yet exist in America. Cow hands were often transients working their way from one place to another. As

323 Fancher, *Alexander*, 69.

324 *Ibid.*, 70.

325 *Ibid.*, 69.

in the instance of the Fancher cattle drives across the Overland Trails, these were often young, single men looking for a way to get to the California gold fields.³²⁶

Young, inexperienced cowhands, termed “waddies” could expect pay ranging from \$25 to \$40 per month. The horse wranglers could expect \$50. Cooks and “ramrods,” or more experienced drovers, could expect \$75 per month. Trail bosses were worth \$100 or more.³²⁷ According to Burr Fancher, Alexander Fancher’s first drive to California had between 250 and 300 head of cattle. He asserts that this would require a minimum of a trail boss, two point men, two swing riders, two flankers, and three drag riders. Assuming at least two were “ramrods” and that a cook was hired to go along, this would require a minimum of \$500 per month for a five month cattle drive from Arkansas to California. In addition to the drovers were four “nighthawks” who would watch the cattle herd and the horse remuda at night to prevent thefts, warn of impending storms that might cause stampedes, etc.³²⁸ These also would have to be paid, but sources do not indicate what their pay scale might be. One might speculate that they had to be paid extra for the night shift and having to sleep in a moving wagon during the day. Each cow hand also needed five to six horses to prevent the mounts from souring along the trail from lack of rest.³²⁹ Assuming three lead and three trail riders remained and two swing and two flank riders for a herd of 300, the Fancher wagon train herd would have required six

326 Fancher, 63, 93.

327 Jimmy M. Skaggs, "Cattle Trailing," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ayc01> on 5 January 2018.

328 Fancher, *Alexander*, 63.

329 *Ibid.*

flank and six swing riders. The visible presence of cowhands on a drive would be an indicator of the potential financial wealth of any given wagon train. A few animals could be maintained by a family. A large herd required hiring out help that had to be paid. The Baker family had at least seven hired hands in the wagon train.³³⁰ For criminals and the desperately poor along the trail, such a wagon train might provide a tempting target for gain.

Livestock

The drovers, of course, managed the most visible part of the Fancher Party's wealth: livestock. Cattle, oxen, and horses are recorded for nearly all the Fancher Party families. Some like Milum Jones were only recorded with a few animals, in his case four yoke of oxen.³³¹ Basil Parker records that Fancher's co-captain had 600 cattle, mules, and horses when he left Arkansas.³³² Most fell somewhere in between these numbers. Some, however, had animals of high value. Party member William Cameron had twenty-four oxen, thirty milk cows³³³, and a blooded race horse named One-Eyed Blaze said to be worth \$3,000.³³⁴ Burr Fancher suggests

330 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 65.

331 Ibid., 66.

332 Basil G. Parker, *Recollections of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*, (Plano, California: Fred W. Reed, American Printer, 1901), 5

333 The fresh milk and other dairy products provided would be an invaluable food commodity on the trail, though no estimate of the value can be made without knowing how much milk was collected and what, if anything, it was processed into.

334 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 65; Gordon and Shipps, "Fatal Convergence," 340. According to Bagley's investigations into family affidavits, the blooded mare, One-Eyed Blaze, belonged to William Cameron.

that Alexander Fancher's wagon train in 1857 had 1,000 head of cattle, 200 horses, and 40 wagons. He also notes in a chart that fifty-nine mules and 186 oxen were in the train.³³⁵ Oxen, it might be argued, were the most valuable of all draft animals. They might be eaten in a pinch, as noted above. They often pulled the most strenuous of loads and owners often developed strong emotional bonds with their oxen.³³⁶

Wealth

While much of the wealth of the Fancher Party was held in livestock and trail furnishings, there was said to be a significant amount of cash taken along as well.³³⁷ While Burr Fancher estimates the total value of the Fancher train's major belongings, only Bagley gives any estimates of actual value of coinage taken along.³³⁸ The amounts given only add up to \$4,818 for the whole wagon train, a far cry short of the \$100,000 rumor that probably represented a high estimation of the total value of the wagon train rather than the cash on hand. Bagley does not cite a cash estimate for Fancher on the 1857 journey. He does, however, point out that Fancher was in possession of a strong box with \$4,000 in coin when he returned to Arkansas

Gordon and Shipps assign ownership to Alexander Fancher but cite Bagley as their source. Either way, John D. Lee almost certainly ended up in possession of the horse.

335 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 88, 91.

336 Bagley, *So Rugged and Mountainous*, 152-53.

337 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 28.

338 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 63-65.

in 1856 to prepare for the his final journey.³³⁹ Having returned via Panama, he would have needed to order new wagons for the final journey. The wealth that Bagley points out for Fancher Party members suggests that most of them would have done likewise. Burr Fancher notes at least three wagon and carriage businesses operating in the region that the Fancher and Baker parties came from in Arkansas and surmised that party members would be in possession of products from these manufactories.³⁴⁰ Fancher was a business man who would have known that his hired hands had to be paid whether the cattle sold at expected prices or not, making it safe to surmise that he had a considerable amount of cash with him. Those hired hands and new wagons would have been a signal of wealth to any Euro-Americans who might have seen them on the trail.

The Massacre

Dates vary as to when the Fancher Party arrived in Great Salt Lake City. Burr Fancher asserts that they arrived in Great Salt Lake City a week after Brigham Young gave a fiery anti-government sermon on 24 July 1857.³⁴¹ That would place their arrival on 31 July. Other sources generally state that the Fancher Party arrived in early August. Bagley cites their arrival as the day that Brigham Young's second-in-command, George A. Smith, departed Great Salt

339 Ibid., 61.

340 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 94, 95.

341 Ibid., 100.

Lake City for the southern settlements to rally the war cry on 3 August, 1857.³⁴² All appear to agree that the Fancher Party left Great Salt Lake City on 5 August 1857 under antagonistic pressure.

Young's speech was given on 24 July, the tenth anniversary of the Mormons' first arrival in the Great Salt Lake Valley. On that day, Eleanor McLean, a convert who had been secretly married to Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt without benefit of divorce from her husband, Hector McLean, arrived in Big Cottonwood Canyon with news of Pratt's murder by her husband. Accompanying her was O. Porter Rockwell, one of Brigham's "destroying angels," who brought news of the impending arrival of the United States Army to depose Brigham Young and replace him with Alfred C. Cumming and install Gentile federal judges to the bench in Utah. He also reported the cancellation of the federal mail contract to Utah Territory.³⁴³ Brigham Young gave a fiery sermon that evening. Although the exact contents of the speech have been lost, multiple sources have noted its major points, recording that he declared Utah an independent state, war on Gentiles (non-Mormons), and asked "no odds of them."³⁴⁴ When he left for the southern part of Utah, George A. Smith carried letters to the Mormon bishops that included orders to "Save your ammunition and keep your guns in order" for war with the US Army.³⁴⁵ Overlander George Powers recalls that he saw 300 militia headed for Fort Bridger

342 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 83.

343 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 99-100; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 80.

344 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 100 n. 47; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 80; Watt, et al., 5:227-28.

345 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 84.

to gather a stockpile of flour stored there and that militia companies were drilling in Great Salt Lake City in the fall of 1857.³⁴⁶

It was into this hostile environment that the Fancher wagon train arrived, presumably no earlier than mid-day on the day of 3 August.³⁴⁷ Sources disagree slightly on where they actually stopped. Fanny Stenhouse claims the Fancher wagon train stopped on the banks of the Jordan River.³⁴⁸ Josiah Gibbs believed they encamped at Emigration Square, an area reserved for overlanders.³⁴⁹ Mormon historian Orson Whitney records that they camped on the Fifth Ward pasture near modern-day 800 South and 600 West.³⁵⁰ Historian Sally Denton concluded that the Fancher Party started at Emigration Square, but moved later in the day to the Jordan River after facing hostility from the Mormons.³⁵¹ Alexander Fancher and co-captain Jack Baker rode into Great Salt Lake City on 4 August in search of grain for bread and horse feed. Although livery stables had “for sale” signs up, no offers were accepted and only evasive answers were forthcoming as to why. Burr Fancher records a visit by Mormon apostle Charles Coluson Rich. Rich asked to speak to the leaders of the train and then proceeded to order them to depart the following day. This may account for the unusual decision to move camp, if Denton is correct,

346 “The Late Horrible Massacre,” *Los Angeles Star*, 17 October 1857, 2.

347 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 97.

348 Stenhouse, “*Tell it All*,” 326.

349 Gibbs, *Lights and Shadows*, 211.

350 Orson Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 Volumes. (Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon 1892-1904), 2:790.

351 Sally Denton, *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857*. 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2003), 118; Lyford, 279-80.

and would also explain the other two locations cited.³⁵² When asked where the party might purchase some grain, Rich informed them that Mormons had been forbidden to sell anything to outsiders.³⁵³

This open hostility toward Gentiles was evident when Basil Parker arrived on 7 August with his party. Local Mormons had accused the Fancher party of poisoning water that killed some cattle. It would not be the last time this accusation was used. With the help of Indians who were in the city at the time, Bill Hickman, another of Brigham Young's "destroying angels" nearly incited an incident, though Parker says he addressed Hickman and asked him not to allow it to continue. After Hickman agreed, Parker surmised that with the vitriol against the Fancher train and the Indians being used in an attempt against his own party that the Indians were being set up as scapegoats for Mormons to act against the Fancher party. He believed that he was unable to send warning ahead without compromising the safety of his own party. He concluded that "they were doomed to destruction before they ever left the city."³⁵⁴ George Powers of Little Rock, Arkansas came to the same conclusion. He told the *Los Angeles Star* that "The people had refused to sell the train any provisions, and they told us they were sorry they had not killed them there; but, they knew it would be done before they got in. They stated

352 In other words, they encamped at Emigration Square, then Rich orders their departure and afterwards they relocate to the 5th Ward pasture, which was very close to the Jordan River.

353 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 100.

354 Parker, *Recollections*, 7-9.

further, that they were holding the Indians in check until the arrival of their chief, when he would follow the train and cut it in pieces.”³⁵⁵

The poverty in southern Utah in the 1850s made stock and grazing range extremely valuable. Conflicts between Mormon settlers and Gentile emigrants were a common way for Mormons to obtain both money and livestock. In one case, Doctor Thomas Flint, a Gentile passing through Utah to California was harassed at nearly every settlement he stopped near. He would be accused of allowing stock to wander into wheat ricks or of using “neighborhood range” necessary for winter stock survival. Some of his stock was seized at Nephi, Utah and he was fined twenty dollars.³⁵⁶ A large party like the Fancher train with its estimated 900-1000 head of stock would need a significant amount graze range as they passed through. This led to conflict over winter graze range. Mormon settler, Samuel Pitchforth, wrote in his diary about one such confrontation and noted the Fancher party’s claim to “Uncle Sam’s grass.” Peace officer Simon Wood approached to notify the Fancher train that Mormons needed the field for winter graze. He recorded that co-captain, Jack Baker replied, “This is Uncle Sam’s grass. We are his boys. We have a better claim on it than a bunch of rebel Mormons which had to be kicked out of one state to another and finally out of the United States. We are staying right here.”³⁵⁷ Such minor conflicts might have been allowed to build in order justify the later

355 “The Late Horrible Massacre,” *Los Angeles Star*, 17 October 1857, 2.

356 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 100.

357 Ibid., 101, 104; cf. Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 281.

massacre in the minds of Mormons and thus also justify taking the spoils that were available. George Powers, near the end of his report to the *Star* surmises the following:

One reason that might be assigned for the massacre of this train, is, that it was known to be in possession of considerable valuable property, and this fact excited the cupidity of the Mormons. ... They were well supplied with arms and ammunition, an element of gain that enters largely into all Mormon calculations. The train was composed of families who all seemed to be in good circumstances, and as they were moving to California, their outfit indicated that they might be in possession of considerable funds. ... Feeling perfectly safe in their arms and numbers ... they were not permitted to feel the dangers that surrounded them, until they were cut off from all hope of relief.³⁵⁸

Methodist Episcopal missionary to Utah, C. P. Lyford, stated that “Here was the richest ... company of men to ever travel the southern route to California. Their wagons, teams, and loose stock, alone, amounted to over \$300,000...”³⁵⁹ In other words, the materials in possession, or believed to be in possession, of the Fancher train were valuable to the Mormons in southern Utah for the expected conflict with the federal government, for the relief of the Mormons’ poverty, or both.

Grazing rights were not the only claims made against the Fancher party. A number of rumors were put into effect as George A. Smith made his way southward through the

358 “The Late Horrible Massacre,” 2.

359 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 278.

settlements. As George Powers and Basil Parker both noted that Indians were present and appeared to be being set up to blame for the crime. However, only one of the rumors used against the Gentile wagon train involved Indians. While settled down for the night at Corn Creek, one of the Fancher train's oxen died. The Pahvant band of the Paiutes who lived nearby asked for the animal and Fancher gave it to them. Powers who camped at Corn Creek a few nights later found the Indians peaceful and that no one had died recently despite reports from the Mormon side that indicated a Fancher party member had intentionally poisoned the dead ox.³⁶⁰ A later version of the poisoned ox story relates to a Mormon teen, Proctor Robinson, of whom it was claimed he died after skinning some cattle that had died after drinking water from a poisoned spring.³⁶¹ Basil Parker refutes these stories with the response that emigrants from both Missouri and Arkansas had to be on good behavior because they were aware of Parley P. Pratt's murder and that Mormons were remembering old grudges on top of the death of Pratt.³⁶² A later examination found the stream at Corn Creek simply too well flowing to be poisoned even by a "barrel of arsenic."³⁶³ This may have been an attempt to make the few Indians at Great Salt Lake City look like an entire angry tribe on the war path.³⁶⁴

Other reasons for the attack were related to the history of conflict between Mormons and Gentiles or were outright *ad hominem* attacks. Bagely and Bigler write, "Not only did the

360 "The Late Horrible Massacre," 2.

361 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 401-02.

362 Parker, *Recollections*, 7.

363 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 283.

364 *Ibid.*, 277, 283; Parker, *Recollections*, 8.

doomed emigrants come *to* the wrong place in August, 1857, but they came *from* the wrong place.” Northwestern Arkansas was where Mormon apostle Parley P. Pratt had been murdered by a jealous husband just months before. It was guilt by association. Closely related to this one was the spurious claim that “Missouri wildcats” were in the train. Though no contemporary account mentions it, since its first mention sixteen years later, it has become an essential part of the Mormon side of the story.³⁶⁵

Another essential part of the Mormon story is the assassination of founder Joseph Smith, Jr., in June of 1844. Shortly after the mob murdered Smith, the Mormon church added an oath to its secret temple ceremonies that read in part: “I pray and will never cease to pray ... to avenge the blood of the Prophets on this nation, and I will teach this to my children and to my children’s children...”³⁶⁶ The wife of massacre participant, Isaac C. Haight addressed the Female Benevolent Society of Cedar City the day before the massacre began and instructed them to teach their children to desire to avenge the blood of the prophets.³⁶⁷ Charles Wesley Wandell, an apostate Mormon writing under the *nom de plum* of “Argus” wrote to the *Daily Utah Reporter* in 1871 that “You ... taught that the killing of Joseph and Hyrum Smith had to be atoned for by the shedding of blood, and, in that connection I once heard you say that there was not enough of blood in the whole United States to make full satisfaction for their death.”³⁶⁸

365 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 398-401.

366 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 21.

367 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 127.

368 Argus, 17 February 1871, “Mountain Meadows,” *Daily Utah Reporter*, 22 February 1871, 2.

The issue of Smith's murder was of the utmost importance to Mormon thinking at the time and had an ongoing demand for vengeance. Wandell goes on to say, "At the time of the Mountain Meadow massacre, the Mormon people had been long and persistently trained to the idea of the necessity, sinlessness, and even piety of church murders."

No peaceful wagon train was likely to raise the ire of Utah's settlers enough to trigger violence. Nor were Mormons, in the main, willing to instigate violence against those who had not attacked them, Wandell's claims notwithstanding. In order for ordinarily peaceful Mormons to engage in violence against ordinarily peaceful Gentiles, two things were necessary: motives and orders from above. In order to achieve the former, George A. Smith rode south along the route the Fancher train was following. He and Nephi Johnson camped across Corn Creek from them the first night. They were approached by members of the wagon train about good places to rest and recruit their animals. They were directed to Cane Spring at Mountain Meadows near Nephi Johnson's ranch.³⁶⁹ Smith, riding in his carriage, and Johnson on his horse could travel faster than a large emigrant train (much of which was pulled by slow oxen) and doing so began to spread rumors as they went.

Lyford gives us two closely related rumors concerning the makeup of the Fancher train. First the Joseph Smith's assassins were among the emigrants, and second, that the very gun used to dispatch the mortally wounded Smith was in the possession of one of them.³⁷⁰ His unnamed source said that one emigrant held the pistol up, claimed that it was used on Smith,

³⁶⁹ Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 281-82.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 274-76.

and that it was loaded for “Old Brigham.”³⁷¹ In another version, seventy-two year old Ed Parry was working outside when the Fancher train came through. Two members of the train attempted to obtain whiskey from the locals and when they would not comply, he swore that he had the gun that killed Smith and added that he and his company were headed to California where they would raise a company of soldiers and return to kill the Mormons.³⁷² Mormon settler, Charles Willden recounted a similar story in 1882.³⁷³ While there is no contemporary evidence to suggest that this is true, it has become an important part of Mormon folklore about the event and may suggest a contemporary belief about the Fancher party on the Mormons’ part.

Related to this rumor is another that the Fancher train was acting as an advance scouting party for the US Army. This makes no sense since women were forbidden to participate in military service at the time. Even boys were strictly limited to being drummers until at least 16 years of age. In the American Civil War five years later, Confederate Partisan Ranger William Clarke Quantrill was trapped in the home of Mr. Tate, a sympathizer to the southern cause in Missouri by federal troops. Although Quantrill would come to have a reputation for brutality against his opponents, he called for a cease-fire in order to allow the women to leave the house.³⁷⁴ This was a common pattern before Sherman’s March to the Sea set a new precedent

371 Ibid., 275.

372 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 117; Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 56.

373 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 116.

374 Paul R. Petersen III, *Quantrill of Missouri: The Making of a Guerrilla Warrior*. Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland House, 2003, 117.

for total war. Another evidence of how women were generally protected by society is illustrated by the story of Eleanor McLean, who had joined the Mormons against her husband's wishes but eventually received his reluctant acceptance on the ground that she kept all things Mormon out of her home. One day while singing from a recently purchased hymnal, her husband, Hector, flew into a rage, burned the hymnal and beat her, casting her out of the house in San Francisco. She went into the house of a neighborhood doctor who not only cared for her wounds, but also put her up in a boarding house, called the constable to take a report, and proceeded to back charge Hector McLean for the costs incurred.³⁷⁵ This same Eleanor McLean later eloped with Parley P. Pratt without divorcing Hector McLean.³⁷⁶ It was she who reported his death to Brigham Young at Big Cottonwood Canyon. Women, although disadvantaged in society in many ways were usually protected from violence. Exposing them not just to potential violence, but to military violence, makes little sense in light of the social sensibilities of the time.

Another rumor that found its way into the lexicon of legends concerning the Fancher party is that there was no "innocent blood" among the party members. For Mormons then as now, the shedding of innocent blood is the unpardonable sin. William W. Bishop, Lee's attorney, completed Lee's truncated autobiography by adding in Lee's confessions. In that confession, we see both the belief in a lack of innocent blood and orders coming down from above. In the

375 "The Murder of Parley P. Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*. 4 July 1857, quoting an unnamed New York City newspaper account; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 8-9.

376 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 9.

days before the massacre began, Isaac C. Haight had an all-night meeting Lee to discuss the impending attack on the Fancher train.³⁷⁷ Haight assured Lee that they were acting “under orders” and that “there will not be one drop of *innocent* blood shed, if every one of the d___d pack are killed, for they are the worse [sic] lot of out-laws and ruffians I ever saw in my life.”³⁷⁸ Haight backed up this assertion with written orders signed by himself on the night before the siege began to wipe out the wagon train. He assured Lee that the orders were from his superior, Col. Dame, commander of the Iron County Brigade of the Nauvoo Legion.³⁷⁹ According to early Mormon leader, Wilford Woodruff, Lee stated after the slaughter that many of the Fancher party had, in fact, been in the Missouri and Illinois mobs that had attacked and killed many of the Saints and added the prurient detail that many of the men and women were “ro[ttten] with the pox.”³⁸⁰ Woodruff went on to discuss the idea of innocent blood in some detail. Bagley notes, after Bigler, that this is an irrelevant discussion if the attackers were Indians as many Mormons have claimed.³⁸¹ Independent historian, Connell O’Donovan, has noted that the earliest written account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre was written by Brigham Young’s step-daughter, Charlotte Ives Cobb, who reports in a letter written no later

377 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 118.

378 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 220-21.

379 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 141.

380 Ibid., 177.

381 Ibid., footnote 29.

than 20 September 1857 that Young blamed Indians for the deaths of the Fancher party.³⁸² O'Donovan notes that through such letters, Young was able to create a meme that would remain the standard Mormon account for years.

As the Fancher train progressed further south, hostility toward both the wagon train and sympathizers increased palpably. George A. Smith carried letters from Brigham Young to bishops and stake presidents in southern Utah.³⁸³ To stake president Isaac Haight, Young wrote, "Save all ... grain, nor let a kernel go to waste or be sold to our enemies. And those who persist in selling grain to Gentiles ... note as such."³⁸⁴ Orders to hoard grain included directions to cache it in the mountains and scorch anything left behind.³⁸⁵ These orders were delivered by George A. Smith at every stop, on pain of excommunication.³⁸⁶ Not all Mormons along the trail, however, were willing to be cold-hearted. William Aden, a young man from Tennessee on his way to California had spent several months in Provo earning money to complete his journey. He joined the Fancher train as it headed south. William Leany of Parowan recognized him as the son of someone who had protected Leany from an anti-Mormon mob in Tennessee and invited him in for a meal on the night the train camped nearby.

382 Connell O'Donovan, "The Earliest Written Account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre?" *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Fall 2013), 149.

383 In the LDS church, bishops are local pastors and stakes (the rough equivalent of a diocese) are headed by a stake president who presides over a fixed geographic area and all the members therein. The stake president is the equivalent of a Catholic bishop.

384 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 84.

385 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 100.

386 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 281; cf., Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 105.

After dinner, Aden noticed the onion patch growing near the front door of Leany's home and asked for a few. Leany told him to take all he wanted and that he was welcome to them. For this crime of gratitude a local tough was sent to beat Leany. One neighbor remarked that he was never right in his mind after that.³⁸⁷ Mormon leader William H. Dame was accused of giving the order, but denied it saying if the issue was pushed that he would "put the saddle on the right horse, and you all know who that is!" referring to George A. Smith.³⁸⁸ Lyford also suggests that certain disaffected Mormons had, in fact, joined the train at some point.³⁸⁹ As George A. Smith traveled south, he fanned the flames of hostility toward outsiders and backouts.³⁹⁰ He suggested at Parowan that fruit trees be planted in the public square and that bones made good fertilizer.³⁹¹ This hostility would surely have been even greater toward those whom the Mormon community viewed as traitors supporting their supposed enemy. By the time the Fancher party reached Cedar City, both sides were becoming primed for a confrontation.

At Cedar City, the Fancher Party attempted to obtain some badly needed supplies. Multiple stories of the Fancher Party using abusive language and insulting the locals were told. In one such story, a pistol was even brandished in the face of one woman. When an attempt was made to arrest the alleged miscreant, he and several others drew arms and dared anyone in Cedar

387 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 115.

388 Ibid., 214.

389 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 278.

390 "Backouts" here refers to apostate Mormons attempting to leave the Territory.

391 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 84.

City to attempt to arrest them. More accusations of claiming to have killed Joseph Smith were recited here, too. However, as Bagley asks, would men who had their families along have acted so recklessly? No two witnesses' stories were the same and no contemporary account to the alleged incident exists.³⁹²

What is contemporary to the event are the meetings held in Cedar City and in nearby towns prior to the arrival of the Fancher party to determine what should be done about the train. Preparations had already been made to engage local Indian bands in the coming attack. Lee had already carried out orders to collect the warriors of the Southern Paiutes. He had brought warriors from the Santa Clara band into Fort Harmony in preparation for the coming attack.³⁹³ The town meetings were held in order to get white Mormon settlers in on the affair. According to Lyford, it was “conclusively established that Brigadier-General George A. Smith, Colonel William H. Dame, Lieutenant-Colonel I. C. Haight, and Major John D. Lee held a council of war at Parowan. They determined the place, manner, and all the minor details of the massacre.”³⁹⁴ No precise date is given for this meeting, but on August 15, George A. Smith had departed Parowan on a military tour to “prepare for any eventuality.”³⁹⁵ Lyford does not mention anyone else at this meeting, nor any dissenting voices that may have been present. If accurate, it may have recorded a private planning meeting prior to the more public meetings

392 Ibid., 117-18.

393 Ibid., 119.

394 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 284.

395 George A. Smith, *Deseret News*, 23 September 1857, 227.

where plans against the Fancher train were announced. This may also be the same meeting called “the Tan Bark Council” wherein Dame, Haight, and another person, probably Lee, spent the night planning the attack on the wagon train.³⁹⁶

While all or nearly all the Mormons along the southern trail had heard preaching from George A. Smith on the need to defend Zion, not all agreed that just any and every Gentile needed to be cut off. John Hawley, who had traveled south with the wagon train for a time was one such voice. He was present at the meeting in Washington, Utah where he was impressed that the local bishop, Harrison Pearce, was the most militant of all. Hawley recorded that Pearce wanted to see all the Gentiles stripped naked, have their backs lashed, and be left in the sun to die of dehydration.³⁹⁷ Hawley, although listed by Lee as one of the participants, was not keen to take up arms against civilians. Neither were others. Nevertheless, openly dissenting voices appear to be largely absent from the record. The lack of these voices tends to support the idea that Mormon authorities high up were aware of the situation. If they were opposed to the massacre, one would expect that dissenting voices would not only be present, but emphasized as evidence that these were not the doings of the church leadership. One suspects that they would be in the majority if the leaders were against it as later claimed.

Dissenting voices may well have been absent from fear. John M. Higbee, a participant in the massacre and technically the superior officer to John D. Lee, would later recall, “The

³⁹⁶ Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 115.

³⁹⁷ John Hawley, unpublished autobiography, Community of Christ (formerly RLDS) archives, Independence, Missouri, n.d., 16.

Bishop [at Nephi, Utah] wanted those who would rather have their right arms severed from their body than to back out of defending this people raise their hands. (I think all hands were raised.)”³⁹⁸ Bagley and Bigler say of this quote “No doubt those who were more afraid *not* to kill that day at Mountain Meadows outnumbered the fanatics.”³⁹⁹ Lee reports that Isaac C. Haight was in charge of the Iron County military district and his orders as such were law. He adds, “... and to disobey orders was certain death; be they right or wrong, no Saint was permitted to question them, their duty was obedience or death.”⁴⁰⁰ Laban Morrill, who attended a regular prayer meeting at Cedar City on Sundays arrived late and found the meeting full of angry voices. Some, like Isaac Haight and William H. Dame were overtly in favor of the massacre and others were against it, though no names are given for the opposition. Morrill moderately suggests a rider be dispatched to Brigham Young and await further orders. A vote is taken, unanimously in favor of the proposition. Bishop Philip Klingensmith was not happy about this outcome and adjourned the meeting, reconvening trusted lieutenants outside and sending two men to waylay Morrill on his way home. Morrill testified that intuition told him to take a different route home and that he was saved from violence thereby.⁴⁰¹

Whatever the plans and pep rallies at local Latter-day Saint wards may have been, the territorial militia received orders to muster. Lyford records that they were to come “armed and

398 John Higbee, 1896 Statement, Mountain Meadows Massacre File, LDS Archives. Cited in Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 28.

399 Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 28.

400 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 218.

401 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 126-27.

equipped as the law directs, and prepared for field operations.” According to him, the militia was given one hour to prepare and begin mustering with forty rounds of ammunition.⁴⁰² On Friday, 4 September 1857, Lee met with Paiute Indians in full war paint near Cedar City. They had already been convinced to participate in the massacre by John Higbee, Isaac Haight, and Mormon bishop, Philip Klingensmith. They asked Lee to lead them, but he had orders to bring other Indian bands to the fray and ordered them to camp near the Fancher train in secret and await orders.⁴⁰³ By this point, the plans were firm and it was a matter of carrying out the orders from “all in authority” above them. Lee himself was certain that his orders came locally from Isaac C. Haight in consultation with William H. Dame and that they, in turn, had received them from “all in authority.” In his final confession, Lee asserted, “It is a new thing to me, if the massacre was not decided by the head men of the Church, and it is a new thing for Mormons to condemn those who committed the deed.”⁴⁰⁴

On 6 September 1857, the Fancher wagon train started their last leg into the Mountain Meadows, according to Bagely.⁴⁰⁵ Rachel Hamblin recalled the Fancher train passing her home about mid-day on the 5th. They halted at the Mountain Meadows in Iron County, Utah. Their plan was to wait for the Duke train to catch up and to recruit their animals for the Mojave

402 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 285-86.

403 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 119.

404 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 214.

405 *Ibid.*, 121.

crossing into southern California.⁴⁰⁶ The wagon train was disorganized and stopped in a natural grass filled bowl that would serve as a natural cattle pen. The last of the wagons arrived after dark, too exhausted to form a wagon fort.⁴⁰⁷ For Alexander Fancher, this would prove a fatal mistake. As an experienced wagon master, he should have known the dangers and insisted on forting up the wagons. Perhaps he did, but the emigrants were just too exhausted from increasingly poor nutrition and hard travel. No record of the orders given or not given that night survives if it was ever made.

Prior to 7 September 1857, there is no evidence that John D. Lee and Alexander Fancher ever met or crossed paths, but the events of this day set in motion the chain of events that led to their brief and tragic meeting. While it was still dark, raiders crept in to the southwest of the emigrants' camp and drove the cattle up the draw, away from the emigrants. Others descended into the ten to fifteen foot deep arroyo that Mogatsu Creek flows through and crept undetected to within shooting range of the wagon train.⁴⁰⁸

The opening barrage interrupted a breakfast of coffee, quail, and rabbit. Somewhere between ten and fifteen were hit and seven were killed instantly. Three were wounded enough to be unable to fight and died within a couple days. Both Baker and Fancher family traditions

406 Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 287; Lyford mistakenly says the shooting began on "Monday, September 10th," however, it was Sunday, 6 September 1857 when the shooting began;

407 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 121; Gibbs, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 24.

408 John Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons: Speech of Hon. John Cradlebaugh, of Nevada, on the Admission of Utah as a State. Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 7, 1863.* (Privately printed, 1863), 17-18.

hold that Alexander Fancher and Jack Baker, his co-captain, were wounded in the attack, though there is no way to know this for certain. James Mathew “Matt” Fancher took command in their steads.⁴⁰⁹ The attackers also made use of a coordinated crossfire from the hills immediately to the west of the grassy bowl and from Cane Spring near the camp. A frontal attack was attempted, but the Arkansans repulsed them, killing at least one Paiute and injuring two of their chiefs, Moquetas and Big Bill, with bad leg wounds. Experienced overlanders like Alexander Fancher knew that weapons must be kept within arm’s reach at all times and ready to use. The firefight lasted about half an hour and the attackers withdrew to regroup, allowing the emigrants to pull their wagons into a fort and begin digging entrenchments behind them.⁴¹⁰ Thus began the siege.

By sunset, it was readily apparent that the attack had settled into a siege that the attackers had not considered. Lee recalled, “Now we knew the Indians could not do the work and we were in a sad fix.”⁴¹¹ The Paiutes later said that the Fancher party had long guns and were good marksmen.⁴¹² Lee left the Mountain Meadows to look for reinforcements. In the meantime, guards were set up around the springs to prevent the Fancher party from accessing the water and others drove the Fancher party herd toward Iron Creek.⁴¹³ While as many as three score

409 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 125.

410 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 123, 125; Lyford, 287.

411 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 228.

412 Cradlebaugh, *Utah and the Mormons*, 17; Letter from Nephi Johnson to Anthon H. Lund, 18 March 1910, Mountain Meadows File, LDS archives.

413 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 126.

whites ultimately participated in the massacre, it is unclear who arrived when. Many, perhaps most, of them trickled in a few at a time as volunteers but without specific orders. Skirmishes continued on Tuesday and Wednesday with more Paiutes leaving with part of the cattle herd each day. Though the total number of Indian participants is unclear, their numbers were dwindling until the majority staying were freebooters with little tribal loyalty and the wounded who could not travel.⁴¹⁴ The heat of late summer left the corpses of dead livestock and the Fancher party dead stinking and the lack of water made the emigrants' situation more terrifying for thirst. At some point two members of the Fancher party grab buckets and make a heroic run for the spring and bring back four buckets of water under withering gunfire.⁴¹⁵

Desperate for help, William Aden and another man known only as "the Dutchman" volunteered to make an attempt to contact the Duke train coming behind the Fancher train. Aden and the Dutchman walked their horses out on foot under cover of darkness until it was safe to ride. Near Richards' Springs, Aden and the Dutchman saw a campfire and surmised that it might be connected to the Duke train. Approaching and dismounting, he was approached by Mormon elder, William C. Stewart who asked him what we wanted. As Aden finished his tale, Stewart put a pistol to Aden's chest and fired, killing him instantly. The Dutchman was also shot, but bolted on his horse back to the wagon fort at Mountain Meadows, taking knowledge that they were cut off from behind with him.⁴¹⁶

414 Ibid., 129-30.

415 Denton, *American Massacre*, 131.

416 Ibid., 131-32.

On Thursday the 10th, the bell is rung in Cedar City and orders to muster were given out to those chosen to participate. Participant Philip Klingensmith recalled that “the militia was called out for committing acts of hostility.”⁴¹⁷ Isaac Haight ordered the regiment to muster “armed and equipped ... for field operations.” Both Brooks and Bagley speculate that the participants were mostly married men who had gone through the Endowments ceremony in the Mormon temple or an endowment house and had taken the Oath of Vengeance.⁴¹⁸ This makes sense because then, as now, only the most dedicated Mormons are allowed to enter the temple. These would be the most likely to act upon distasteful orders. However, uncertainty about the exact membership of the massacre participants and LDS church reticence to discuss temple ceremonies and related matters makes this line of reasoning difficult to follow up with evidence.⁴¹⁹ Whatever the final composition of the militia muster was, they marched for the Mountain Meadows.

As the massacre participants were marching toward their target, the Fancher party was making one last desperate effort to send for help. A letter was composed to “the Masons, Odd Fellows, Baptists, and Methodists of the States, and to all good people everywhere.”⁴²⁰ It

417 Klingensmith statement, recorded in Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 239.

418 Endowment houses were a sort of temporary temple used in the first decades in Utah until temples could be built.

419 In my personal experience, being raised as a Mormon, we were strictly ordered not to discuss anything we knew about what went on inside of the temples with anyone who was not a temple recommend holder. The reasoning was that it was too sacred for profane ears and only initiates should know about it.

420 Beadle, 500; See also Lyford, 296-302 for more specifics about the letter and the short prayer circle that preceded the escape attempt.

described the siege and described the assailants as well armed and supplied with ammo. The letter begged for help, or at least for justice if help could not come in time. The names of the wagon train members, and an itemization of their possessions were included. The surviving adults signed it.⁴²¹ Three wagon train members volunteered to sneak out and attempt to deliver it. Sally Denton records them as John H. Baker, son of Fancher's co-captain, Jack Baker, Tilghman Cameron, and Fancher's son, Hampton Fancher.⁴²² Burr Fancher lists them as Abel Baker, Tilghman Cameron, and Hampton Fancher.⁴²³ Bagley speculates that Abel Baker, Jesse or Lorenzo Dunlap, and John Milum Jones. Whatever their identities, all sources agree that three escaped and were spotted and later tracked down by massacre participant Ira Hatch. Oral tradition held that either John D. Lee or Jacob Hamblin, whose ranch was four miles from the wagon fort, was given the letter and that it was at some then-future point destroyed by the recipient.⁴²⁴

Friday, September 11th, dawned quietly. Just before dawn, John D. Lee used Indian interpreter Nephi Johnson, a lieutenant in the Nauvoo Legion, to order the few remaining Paiutes to lay in ambush along the road back to Pinto, Utah. They would attack the women and children when they arrived. A few Nauvoo Legion members donned wigs and face paint and joined them.⁴²⁵ A few of the Nauvoo Legionnaires resisted orders. One, William Hawley,

421 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 141-42; Denton, 132-33.

422 Denton, *American Massacre*, 132.

423 Fancher, *Alexander Fancher*, 110.

424 Denton, *American Massacre* 133.

425 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 143.

refused outright, called the officers murderers and imprecated the curse of God upon the participants. He was summarily chained to a wagon wheel at the Hamblin ranch.⁴²⁶

About mid-morning a white flag was spotted. William Bateman, who had himself been a back-out and had returned to the LDS fold just months before was sent to open negotiations. Bagley speculates that this may have been a test of loyalty; Sally Denton asserts that it was precisely that.⁴²⁷ Once his white flag was spotted, a young girl was put in a clean white dress and sent to meet him. Once his intentions to negotiate were made certain, Matt Fancher rode out on one of the party's last remaining horses to meet Bateman. Bateman informed Matt Fancher that Lee wanted to enter the wagon fort to negotiate a cease-fire. Fancher agreed.

About noon Lee utilized Masonic hand signals as he approached the wagon fort to gain trust. Once in, he introduced himself as a federal Indian agent and as a duly constituted major in the Utah militia. He placed himself in a unique position to negotiate with the Indians he alleged were behind the siege. Lee informed them that the Indians were angry with the wagon train, but that if the Fancher party would give up their guns and allow the Mormons to escort them back to Cedar City, they would guarantee their safety.⁴²⁸ There was a sharp division between those who saw the Mormons as their saviors and those who believed this was a treacherous deal. After two hours a deal was reached to disarm the Fancher party and abandon the wagon fort. The last recorded words of Alexander Fancher were to his son, Matt: "Good

426 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 364.

427 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 144; Denton, *American Massacre*, 133.

428 Denton, *American Massacre*, 133-34; Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 145.

God no, Matt!” The majority believed that Alexander Fancher was delirious from his wounds and ignored him. A hasty burial of two dead was allowed and then the badly wounded, including Alexander Fancher along with the guns and a few other items were loaded into the front two wagons alongside the smallest children. Some distance was allowed before the women and older children were allowed to march out of the wagon fort. After the women and children had gotten approximately three-quarters of a mile ahead, the men were escorted out. Each man had a personal armed escort.⁴²⁹ Denton notes that it was unusual in its exactitude.⁴³⁰

The final episode in the massacre itself came as the men arrived at a point about half a mile from their wagon fort. Major John Higbee, who was in charge of the men’s escort called a halt. Firing his pistol into the air, he called out the order, “Do your duty!” (Some versions have it as “Do your duty to Israel!”).⁴³¹ Hearing the initial shot, the front two wagons halted and Lee opened fire on the wounded, presumably becoming Alexander Fancher’s murderer. The men were almost all finished off in one volley and the rest in the second or third attempt. The women were subjected to a combination of knife, tomahawk, and firearm deaths. The work is estimated to have taken about half an hour.⁴³² Children under the age of eight, the age of accountability

429 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 146; Bagley here says only a quarter mile difference, but when I visited the Mountain Meadows in late May, 2018, the memorial markers sites of the men’s and women’s slaughters were three-quarters of a mile apart. Both markers claimed to be on the actual sites of the men’s and women’s massacre locations.

430 Denton, *American Massacre*, 136.

431 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 146; Denton, *American Massacre*, 137; Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 305-06, Here Lyford assigns the order to Lee, which is incorrect.

432 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 146-51; Denton, 136-41.

and thus the upper limit of innocent blood in Mormon belief, were spared and taken to the home of Jacob Hamblin. There his second wife, Rachel cared for them until the next day when they were parted out to various families.

Both late on 11 September and again on 12 September, the Mormon militia members took oaths of silence to tell no one, including their own wives what had happened. Some Paiutes from the Shivwits band, however, had witnessed the whole thing from the hill side as they were up collecting piñon nuts as part of their lifeway cycle. They appear to have known they could not remain in the area and attempted to keep the knowledge as a tribal secret.⁴³³ The Paiutes from the Santa Clara band who had participated had quickly stripped every useful garment from the dead.⁴³⁴ A quick, shallow burial was given to the corpses that the Mormons could locate before dark. It was shallow enough that local scavengers had no problem digging them up for an easy meal.

Nephi Johnson noted in his statement about the massacre that he had been assigned to guard the emigrants' wagon fort from the Indians still present in the Mountain Meadows. When Isaac Haight arrived, Johnson suggested that the wagon train be burned and that they all "go home like men."⁴³⁵ Haight would not allow it. Bagley cites avarice, following Johnson's statement. Whatever his motive, property, especially horses known to have belonged to Fancher party members, were seen in the possession of prominent Mormons by other emigrants, as noted by

433 Denton, *American Massacre*, 141-42.

434 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 153-54.

435 Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 225-26, cited in Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 171.

George Powers' article in the *Los Angeles Star* above. The Mormons' Paiute allies got about twenty horses and most of the common cattle, as well as most of the flour. The wagons and the majority of their possessions as well as the best horses, mules, and oxen were driven back to Cedar City.⁴³⁶ In March of 1858, John D. Lee was ordered by Brigham Young to use the remaining stolen cattle to the best interests of the missionaries and their Indian clients. He put his own brand on them and divvied them out as the Indians had need of them. He claimed to have lost money in the process of following orders, making this yet another sacrifice he made for his church.⁴³⁷ It certainly could not have cost him much since he sent seventy cattle to pay his personal debts to his friend, Levi Stewart and W. H. Hooper in April, 1858. He also was able donate two wagons and 18 yoke of oxen to the Perpetual Immigration fund around that time, as well.⁴³⁸ Lee did keep some of the loot for himself. James Lynch learned in 1859 that Lee had give several things of value to the church to be put in the bishop's storehouse in Cedar City, but had kept back a fine carriage for himself. Witnesses informed him that some \$80-90,000 in gold coin, household goods, and other items were then "making rich the harems of this John D. Lee."⁴³⁹ According to Lynch, this had been the source of some envy in southern Utah, where poverty still reigned for many.

436 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 172.

437 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 257.

438 Juanita Brooks and Robert Glass Cleland, *Mormon Chronicle*, 1:148, 158, 320-21n26.

439 Lynch Affidavit, 27 July 1859, Buchanan, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, Serial 1033, 82.

According to Nephi Johnson's testimony at the second trial of John D. Lee, when the massacre was finished and the bodies shallowly buried, "a great many speeches" were made.⁴⁴⁰ Some of those speeches ordered that the Mormons' participation be kept secret and that the participants always insist that the Paiutes did it.⁴⁴¹ After these speeches, Lee, Haight, Dame, and Higbee stood in the center of the men, facing the cardinal directions while each of the men put his left hand on the shoulder of the one next to him and his right hand to the square in order to swear an oath. The oath was to keep the matter secret, not to discuss it even among themselves, and to "help kill all who proved to be traitors to the church or people in this matter."⁴⁴²

Rachel Hamblin described how the night before, seventeen blood soaked children, two of whom were badly injured, were brought to her home just to the northeast of the massacre sight. All of them were "shrieking with terror and grief and anguish." Some of them simply would not be consoled.⁴⁴³ Now these children had to be provided for. Bishop Klingensmith assigned most of the children to homes in the Cedar City area. Three Dunlap sisters were allowed to remain together out of concern for Sarah Dunlap whose arm was mangled by a bullet aimed at her mother. Lee himself took in Christopher Carson Fancher, whom he called Chancey, and a

440 Nephi Johnson testimony, in Gibbs, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 51.

441 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 247-48.

442 Ibid. 247-50; Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 221.

443 Carelton, *Special Report*, serial 4377, 3, 5-6.

young girl, possibly the twenty-two month old Triphenia Fancher.⁴⁴⁴ All the surviving children were later located and returned to family in Arkansas.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 14; Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 225.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Returning to the question of motivations for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, we can once more ask why Mormons who believe that murder is a guarantee of everlasting hellfire would participate in the massacre of 140 plus men, women, and children? How would the men on the ground justify what they did in light of their history, circumstances, and beliefs?

As the foregoing thesis demonstrates, there are a lot of details that contributed to the attitudes and conditions that allowed this event to happen. Religious beliefs on the part of Mormons were shifting and developing, allowing a variety interpretations of what it meant to be a Mormon in the 19th century. Religious differences with their Gentile neighbors often led to conflict that was sometimes violent. These differences were compounded by elected officials and other authorities who frequently took the Gentile side in these conflicts. Political actions against Mormons like the 1856 Republican Party platform, the “Extermination Order” of Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs, and others created an atmosphere of inherent distrust of government by Mormons. Economic conditions that frequently left Mormons impoverished due to immigration, forced re-locations, and the isolation and poor conditions in Utah Territory left some Mormons embittered and jealous of their more successful neighbors in California and Oregon where prosperity and contact with the outside world was much stronger. Finally, social relations between Mormons and Gentiles often left Mormons with few allies and an inherent distrust of Gentiles.

Mormons’ shifting beliefs in the 19th century as Mormon dogmas developed can be best illustrated by the practice of plural marriage, or polygyny. Although officially revealed in 1843, it was not publicly revealed until 1854. By that time, men like John D. Lee had been

practicing the belief for a decade.⁴⁴⁵ Another shift in doctrine was that of murder and what it meant. In 1831, Joseph Smith gave a revelation declaring that murder was unforgivable in this life and the next.⁴⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Brigham Young brought the doctrine of Blood Atonement to the church in his sermons during the Mormon Reformation. He declared that it was not murder to spill the blood of a sinner in order to save their souls. As early as 1852, Brigham Young called for decapitation as the punishment for miscegenation in the Utah Territorial Assembly saying, “it would do them good that they might be saved with their brethren.”⁴⁴⁷ Whatever the earliest call for the Blood Atonement Doctrine, Young was preaching it in the church by 1857. He claimed that he could “refer you to plenty of instances where men, have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins,” and, “This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it.”⁴⁴⁸ This certainly applied to apostates and backouts, but also applied to Gentile sinners, too. From this line of reasoning, rumors of apostates, backouts, the presence of Joseph Smith’s murderers or the presence of the gun that killed him being in the Fancher wagon train could prove enough justification to attack some or all members of the wagon train. The election of 1856 that first brought the Republican Party to prominence in Congress, combined with James Buchanan’s desire to unite the nation made

445 Brooks, *John Doyle Lee*, 379.

446 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 42:18.

447 Brigham Young, “Speech by Gov. Young in Joint Session of the Legeslature [sic], Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, LDS Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

448 G. D. Watt, J. V. Long, et al., editors, *The Journal of Discourses*, volume 4. (Liverpool, UK: Asa Calkin, 1858), 215-221; see also: Bagley and Bigler, *Innocent Blood*, 63.

plural marriage a target of convenience. Seeing their deeply held beliefs not only openly under political attack, but seeing the Army of Utah approaching in 1857 must have left Mormons feeling deliberately attacked on specifically religious grounds. These facts might well have left Mormons as a whole, and men like John D. Lee in particular, ready and willing to attack a wagon train that was rumored to be filled with candidates for Blood Atonement or which might be an advanced scouting party for the Army.

Politically, this was not the first time Mormons had been targeted. Joseph Smith had been accused of banking fraud involving an insolvent unchartered bank.⁴⁴⁹ Soon, Smith left Ohio for Independence, Missouri. Later, Mormons followed Smith to Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri. There, voting *en bloc* for whatsoever candidate Smith appeared to favor, Mormons infuriated old settlers who were sometimes outvoted by their Mormon neighbors. John D. Lee was himself a participant in the Gallatin Voting Day Riot in 1838 that set off the Mormon War.⁴⁵⁰ The loss of this brush war led to the incarceration of Smith and several close associates for several months before they escaped to Nauvoo, Illinois.⁴⁵¹ Repeated attempts were made to arrest Smith while in Nauvoo, but each attempt was thwarted until he finally surrendered to Illinois authorities after the *Nauvoo Expositor* event, leading to his arrest and

449 Esplin, Ronald K., "Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Crisis of 1837," Religious Studies Center, *Brigham Young University*. Retrieved from <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/joseph-smith-prophet-and-seer/joseph-smith-and-kirtland-crisis-1837> on 31 March 2019.

450 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 60.

451 Jeffrey R., Holland, "Lessons from Liberty Jail." Religious Studies Center, *Brigham Young University*. Retrieved from <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/volume-10-number-3-2009/lessons-liberty-jail> on 31 March 2019.

subsequent assassination. That assassination led to the addition of the Oath of Vengeance being created and added to LDS temple ceremonies.⁴⁵² Although nothing in the Oath specifically calls for blood-letting, it is vague enough to allow for it. Bagley notes that Dimmick Huntington's journal suggests that the crime was not just justified by the Oath, but planned as such at high levels in Great Salt Lake City.⁴⁵³

The poor economic conditions in Utah Territory in the 1850s could have led some to justify, or further justify, the murders on the grounds of avarice, envy, or pure need. Once the Fancher wagon train was seen as a band of avowed enemies, it would be a short leap to justifying the act based on the idea of depriving the enemy of material goods or military value, if one believed the spy rumor. Emigrant P. M. Warn wrote, "An element of gain enters largely into all Mormon calculations." And, as Bagley notes, the Fancher train members were well armed, and had good equipment, all indicators of potential wealth hidden in the wagons.⁴⁵⁴

In spite of phenomenal early growth, Mormonism did not gain widespread social acceptance. Mainstream Protestantism simply did not accept any canonical scripture books outside of the sixty-six book Protestant Bible and rejected the idea that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, like divine revelation continued into the present age. Protestantism also rejected that God would single out an uneducated individual, that God was a material being, that humans

452 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 21.

453 Ibid., 378.

454 Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 102 (including quote from Warn).

were gods-in-embryo, and that marriage was to be patterned after Old Testament polygyny.⁴⁵⁵ As these significant theological differences caused friction, so did some Mormon habits like voting *en bloc* for whichever candidate the Prophet Smith appeared to support. The Gallatin Voting Day Riot was one such result which led to the Mormon War of 1838.⁴⁵⁶

Although technically part of the religious element of this thesis, this last element is by far the most powerful in my mind: obedience to all in authority. Councilor to Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball said on this topic, “learn to do as you’re told ... if you are told by your leader to do a thing, do it. None of your business if it is right or wrong.”⁴⁵⁷ Lest this be dismissed as rhetorical, Lee himself spoke of it frequently.⁴⁵⁸ He goes so far as to testify that in Cedar City at the time of the massacre, Isaac C. Haight and William H. Dame were in command and it was simply “obedience or death” to their duly constituted authority.⁴⁵⁹ This was not mere obedience to men who also held secular authority. Lee tells us that “The rulers of the Mormon church ... act by direct authority from God, and that disobedience to orders is rebellion to

455 Butler, Wacker, and Balmer, *Religion in American Life*, 207-211.

456 Ibid., 207-08; see also Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 50-84 for an extended description of these events and Lee’s participation therein as a Danite.

457 Watt, G. D., J. V. Long, et al., *The Journal of Discourses*, 6:32-33.

458 Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 54, 55, 61, 70, 75, 186, 218, 234, 240, 262, 274, 282, 384, 395, 412; Lee often goes into some depth on the topic from both the positive and negative points of view (i.e., comparing blessings for obedience to chastisement for disobedience).

459 Ibid., 218.

God.”⁴⁶⁰ It is probable that obedience to those in authority over the LDS church was seen as the most important reason for participants to agree (however reluctantly) to the massacre.

For the approximately fifty murderers to participate in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a very high hurdle of the threat of eternal damnation had to be overcome. Poverty was the least supported reason for this event, though it is mentioned. Social non-acceptance and political realities led to a litany of lingering grudges and to knee-jerk actions after the Army of Utah’s approach was announced. However, religion interpreted through the lens of obedience to those in authority, in light of the Oath of Vengeance, and a desire to be separate from their Gentile neighbors remains the strongest case for motivation of those who participated in the murders. Without the religious elements the political, social, and economic elements would not likely have been enough to overcome the threshold to murder.

460 Ibid., 384.

Bibliography

Books:

Alexander, Thomas G., "Generating Wealth from the Earth 1847-2000," Colleen Whitley, Ed., *From the Ground Up: A History of Mining in Utah*. Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2006.

Arrington, Leonard J. *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*. Second Edition. Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1958, 2005.

Bagley, Will, *Blood of the Prophets : Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002.

_____, *So Rugged and Mountainous*. Overland West: The Story of the Oregon and California Trails, Volume 1: 1812-1848. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010.

Bagley, Will, Ed. *The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock*. Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier, Volume 1. Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 2001.

Bagley, Will, and David L. Bigler, Eds. *Innocent Blood: Essential Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier, Volume 12. Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clarke Company, 2008.

_____, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857-1858*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011.

Bancroft, Hubert Howe, *History of the Pacific States of North America, Volume 21: Utah*. San Francisco, California: The History Company, Publishers, 1889.

Beadle, J. H. (John Hanson), *Western Wilds, and the Men Who Redeem Them. An Authentic Narrative, Embracing an Account of Seven Years Travel and Adventure in the Far West; Wild Life in Arizona; Perils of the Plains; Life in the Cañon and Death on the Desert ... Adventures among the Red and White Savages of the West ... the Mountain Meadow Massacre; the Custer Defeat; Life and Death of Brigham Young, Etc.* San Francisco: San Francisco, A.L. Bancroft, 1879.

Bigler, David L., *Confessions of a Revisionist Historian*. Will Bagley, Editor. Utah, Mormons, and the West, vol. 16. Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 2015.

Brooks, Juanita, *John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat*. Glendale, Calif.: Glendale, Calif., A.H. Clark Co., 1962.

Brooks, Juanita, and Robert Glass Cleland, eds., *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876*, 2 vols. San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1955.

Butler, Jon, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 2013.

Clark, Donald Lee, *Traveling with the Oregon Trail Pioneers of 1853*. Middleton, Idaho: CHJ Publishing, 2002.

Cleland, Robert Glass, and Juanita Brooks, *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee 1848-1876*, 2 volumes. San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1955.

Cradlebaugh, John. *Utah and the Mormons: Speech of Hon. John Cradlebaugh, of Nevada, on the Admission of Utah as a State. Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 7, 1863.* Privately printed. 1863.

Crawford, Medorem, "To Emigrants." Broadside, 1863. Clackamas Historical Society, Oregon City, Oregon.

Denton, Sally. *American Massacre : The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857.* 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2003.

Ekins, Roger Robin, *Defending Zion : George Q. Cannon and the California Mormon Newspaper Wars of 1856-1857.* Spokane, Wash.: Spokane, Wash. : Arthur H. Clark Co., 2002.

Green, John P., *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons Under the "Exterminating Order" by John P. Greene, an Authorized Representative of the Mormons.* Cincinnati, Ohio: R. P. Brooks, 1839.

Gibbs, Josiah F. (Josiah Francis), *Lights and Shadows of Mormonism.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Salt Lake City, Salt Lake Pub. Co., 1909.

Gibbs, Josiah F. *The Mountain Meadows Massacre.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Salt Lake Tribune Publishing Co., 1910.

Hamblin, Jacob, *Jacob Hamblin, a Narrative of His Personal Experience : As a Frontiersman, Missionary to the Indians and Explorer, Disclosing Interpositions of Providence, Severe Privations, Perilous Situations and Remarkable Escapes*. Salt Lake City: Salt Lake City : Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881.

Hawley, John. Unpublished autobiography, Community of Christ Archives (formerly the Reformed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives), Independence Missouri, n.d.

Korns, J. Roderic, and Dale L. Morgan, *West from Fort Bridger: The Pioneering of the Immigrant Trails across Utah 1846-1850*. Revised by Will Bagley and Harold Schindler. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1994.

Lee, John D. (John Doyle) and W. W. Bishop, *Mormonism Unveiled : Including the Remarkable Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee, and a Complete Life of Brigham Young ... Also the True History of the Horrible Butchery Known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Albuquerque, NM: Albuquerque, NM : Tierra Blanca Publications : Distributed by University of New Mexico Press, 2001.

Leone, Mark P., *The Roots of Modern Mormonism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Lyford, C.P., *The Mormon Problem: An Appeal to the American People*. New York: Philips and Hunt, 1886.

Marcy, Randolph, *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions with Maps, Illustrations, and Iteneraries of the Principle Routes Between the Mississippi and the Pacific*. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1859.

Novak, Shannon A., *House of Mourning : A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. Salt Lake City: Salt Lake City : University of Utah Press, 2008.

Parker, Basil G., *Recollections of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Plano, California: Fred W. Reed, American Printer, 1901.

Penrose, Charles W., *The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Who Were Guilty of the Crime? An Address Delivered by Elder Charles W. Penrose, October 26th, 1884*. Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1899.

Petertsen III, Paul R. *Quantrill of Missouri: The Making of a Guerrilla Warrior*. Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland House, 2003.

Pratt, Parley Parker, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Embracing His Life, Ministry and Travels, With Extracts in Prose and Verse, fro His Miscellaneous Writings*, Parley P. Pratt [son of the author], editor. Chicago, Illinois: Law, King, and Law, 1888.

Reeve, W. Paul., and Parshall, Ardis E. *Mormonism : A Historical Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2010.

Saum, Lewis O., *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Sessions, Grant A., *Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

Smith, Elbert B., *The Presidency of James Buchanan*. Manhattan, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1975.

Smith, Joseph, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Period I. History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet by Himself*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1912.

Smith, Sherry L., *A View From Officers' Row: Army Perceptions of Western Indians*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1995.

Stenhouse, T. B. H. (Thomas B. H.), *The Rocky Mountain Saints : A Full and Complete History of the Mormons : From the First Vision of Joseph Smith to the Last Courtship of Brigham Young : Including the Story of the Hand-Cart Emigration ; the Mormon War ; the Mountain-Meadow Massacre ; the Reign of Terror in Utah ; the Doctrine of Human Sacrifice ; the Political Domestic, Social, and Theological Influences of the Saints ; the Facts of Polygamy ; the Colonization of the Rocky Mountains : And the Development of the Great Mineral Wealth of the Territory of Utah*. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873.

Stenhouse, Mrs. T. B. H. [Fanny], *"Tell it All": The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism, an Autobiography*. Hartford, Connecticut: A. D. Worthington and Co., 1873.

Walker, Ronald W., *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

Watt, G. D., J. V. Long, et al., editors, *The Journal of Discourses*, volume 4. Liverpool, UK: Asa Calkin, 1858.

_____. *The Journal of Discourses*, volume 5. Liverpool, UK: Asa Calkin, 1858.

_____. *The Journal of Discourses*, volume 6. Liverpool, UK: Asa Calkin, 1858.

West, Elliott, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Whitney, Orson, *History of Utah*, 4 Volumes. Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon 1892-1904

Articles:

“From the East to the Pacific, and the Land Sharks of Utah,” *Deseret News*, 13 July 1854, 64.

“Lee’s Last Confession. His Version of the Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *San Francisco Daily Bulletin Supplement*, 24 March 1877.

Argus, 17 February 1871, “Mountain Meadows,” *Daily Utah Reporter*, 22 February 1871

Baritz, Loren, “The Idea of the West.” *American Historical Review* 66, no. 3 (April 1961), pp. 618-640.

Cook, Lyndon W., “William Law, Mormon Dissenter.” *BYU Studies*, 22 (Winter 1982), pp. 47-72.

Gentry, Leland Homer, “Adam-ondi-Ahman: A Brief Historical Survey,” *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1973).

Gordon, Sarah Barringer, and Jan Shippy, "Fatal Convergence in the Kingdom of God: The Mountain Meadows Massacre in American History." *Journal of the Early Republic*, 37, no. 2 (Summer 2017), pp. 307-347. doi: 10.1353/jer.2017.0026

Grauer, Annel, "Bringing the Past to Life." *Current Anthropology* 50, no. 3 (2009): 405–6. doi:10.1086/598787.

Law, William, Wilson Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncy L. Higbee, Robert D. Foster, Charles A. Foster. *The Nauvoo Expositor*. 1 issue. 7 June 1844, 4pp. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/NauvooExpositor1844Replica> on 23 March 2019.

Novak, Shannon A., and Lars Rodseth, "Remembering Mountain Meadows: Collective Violence and the Manipulation of Social Boundaries." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 62, no. 1 (2006): 1–25. doi:10.3998/jar.0521004.0062.101.

O'Donovan, Connell, "The Earliest Written Account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre?" *The Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Fall 2013): 144-157.

Parman, Donald Lee, "Murder on the Trail." *Reviews in American History* 37, no. 2 (2009): 230–35. doi:10.1353/rah.0.0105.

Reed, Martha Williams, "Old California Pioneer Passes Away at Fallbrook. Martha Williams Reed, Aged 87, Crosses the Plains by Ox-Team in the Early Gold Excitement of California." *The Fallbrook Enterprise*, 12 January 1917.

Stanton, Phoebe, "On the Plains: Letter from Mrs. Alfred Stanton, a Well Known Pioneer of Marion County, Oregon," 9 May 1847. *Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association* (1912): 622-24.

Wood, Gordon S., "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism." *New York History*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (October 1980): 358-86.

Government Documents and Archival Materials:

Buchanan, James. *Message of the President of the United States, Communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, information in relation to the massacre at Mountain Meadows, and other massacres in Utah Territory*. 36th Congress, 1st session, House Executive Document 71, serial 956. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1859.

Carelton, James Henry. *Special Report of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, by J. H. Carelton, Brevet Major, United States Army, Captain, First Dragoons*. 57th Congress, 1st Session, House Exec. Doc. 605, Serial 4377.

DeBow, J. D. B., *Statistical View of the United States: Embracing its Territory, Population – White, Free Colored, and Slave – Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns, and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census; to Which Are Added the Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning With 1790, in Comparative Tables, With Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based Upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information*. Washington, D. C.: Beverley Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854.

Young, Brigham, "Speech by Gov. Young in Joint Session of the Legeslature" [sic], 5 February 1852, Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, LDS Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Websites:

"The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/a-of-f/1.1-13?lang=eng>

“The Convert Immigrants.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 1 August 2013. Retrieved from <https://history.lds.org/article/pioneer-story-the-convert-immigrants-?lang=eng> on 30 December 2018.

“Marriage: An Eternal Covenant.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. N.d. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/section-132-marriage-an-eternal-covenant?lang=eng> on 19 March 2019.

“Missouri Extradition Attempts.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. N.d. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/study/history/topics/missouri-extradition-attempts?lang=eng> on 19 March 2019.

BYU Virtual Tours. “Pioneer Telegraph Monument.” YouTube video, 1:47. Posted September, 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdXTUFJOljg> on 20 February 2019.

Clayton, William, “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” hymn #30. *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints website music database*. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/come-come-ye-saints?lang=eng> on 5 October 2018.

Esplin, Ronald K., “Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Crisis of 1837,” Religious Studies Center, *Brigham Young University*. Retrieved from <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/joseph-smith-prophet-and-seer/joseph-smith-and-kirtland-crisis-1837> on 31 March 2019.

Holland, Jeffrey R., “Lessons from Liberty Jail.” Religious Studies Center, *Brigham Young University*. Retrieved from <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/volume-10-number-3-2009/lessons-liberty-jail> on 31 March 2019.

Patterson, Dave, "Methodist History: The What and Why of Love Feasts." *The United Methodist Church*. General Commission on Archives and History. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/methodist-history-the-what-and-why-of-love-feasts> on 30 December 2018.

Porter, Larry C., "The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints website. Retrieved from https://www.lds.org/ensign/1996/12/the-restoration-of-the-aaronic-and-melchizedek-priesthoods?lang=eng&_r=1

Thompson, William L., "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," hymn #252. *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints website music database*. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/put-your-shoulder-to-the-wheel?lang=eng> on 5 October 2019.