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“A BLACKER LIST OF CRIME WAS NEVER LOOKED UPON”: MORMON VIOLENCE,  
UTAH STATEHOOD, AND THE MEMORY OF THE MOUNTAIN MEADOWS  
MASSACRE, 1857-1896

By

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Montana, Missoula, MT, 2019

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Title: "A Blacker List of Crime Was Never Looked Upon": Mormon Violence, Utah Statehood, and the Memory of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, 1857-1896

Chairperson: Kyle G. Volk, Ph.D.

In 1863, John Cradlebaugh spoke in the House of Representatives in opposition to admitting Utah into the Union as a state on account of the predominately Mormon population's excessively violent nature. Cradlebaugh who had been appointed to the position of associate justice for the Territory of Utah in 1858 claimed to have conclusive, first-hand information about the nature of the Utah people and the dangers that their church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, presented to the rest of the nation. "Mormonism," he declared, "is one of the monstrosities of the age in which we live." He then described the violent practices of the Mormon faith and listed specific violent incidents which had taken place in the Utah Territory. In addition, Cradlebaugh protested that the Mormons favored an un-republican, un-American system of governance and ultimately had a flawed understanding of what it meant to be Americans. He then accused Brigham Young, the leader of the Church of Latter-Day Saints and also the governor of the Utah Territory until 1858, of being a theocratic despot. Mormons had blurred the line between church and state, and therefore Utah lacked the requirements to become a state. Furthermore, he feared that Mormonism would "go on spreading until it overthrows all the nations of the earth." Mormonism needed to be stopped because Mormon leaders' imperial aspirations threatened civilization. Cradlebaugh's wholesale denunciation of Mormonism would be used against the Utah statehood seekers and cited as evidence of the Mormons' culture of violence and general un-Americanness throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Cradlebaugh argued to Congress that the Mormons had perpetrated unforgivable acts of violence against American citizens and had then thwarted the government's attempts to seek justice. The "worst and darkest in this appalling catalogue of blood," he contended, was "the

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

cowardly, cold-blooded butchery and robbery at Mountain Meadows.”<sup>2</sup> To him, the Mountain Meadows Massacre provided the clearest evidence of the Mormons’ unusually violent nature. Cradlebaugh informed Congress that as a magistrate in Utah he had visited the site of the massacre, where two years after the attack, “there still lay ghastly under the sun of Utah the unburied skeletons of one-hundred nineteen men, women, and children, the hapless, hopeless victims of the Mormon creed.” Cradlebaugh argued the Mormon Church itself was guilty of the heinous crime. He summarized the details of the Massacre and then voiced his frustration over the inability of the federal courts to inflict punishment upon the Mormons. The Mormons, he argued, exhibited their disdain for the United States government by refusing to convict each other for brutal crimes committed against American citizens. His tirade ended with an emphatic plea, “God forbid that this people should be admitted into the Union as an independent state. I protest against in the name of humanity, which would be violated by the admission! I protest against it in the name and on behalf of the murdered victims of the cruel Mormon faith, whose moldering bones are bleaching in almost every valley in the Territory.”<sup>3</sup> The Mountain Meadows Massacre proved, according to Cradlebaugh, that the Utah Mormons were too violent and uncivilized to be admitted into the Union as an equal state.

Cradlebaugh, who had participated in the first investigation into the Mountain Meadows Massacre and had witnessed the gory aftermath, issued the first indictments against the perpetrators of the incident. Despite his efforts to punish the murderers, however, it would take

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<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth historical analysis of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, see Juanita Brooks *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Ronald W. Walker, Richard E Turley and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

twenty years for one and only one man to be punished for his role in the massacre. Meanwhile, as facts about the massacre became known throughout the country, rhetoric of Mormon violence became mainstream in American culture. The *Chicago Tribune* was among many that reported on numerous unsolved murders in Utah Territory and concluded that “a blacker list of crime was never looked upon...murders that fill the soul with horror.” The unpunished violent incidents in Utah, according to the *Tribune*, “exhibit a reign of terror that no one could have believed possible in the United States.” That justice for the victims of Mormon violence had not been attained furthered the notion that Mormons were inherently uncivilized. To detractors, true Americans honored the rule of law. Mormons, however, consistently protected each other and their church in defiance of the law. The *Tribune* concluded with a grim reminder, “This is the Utah that seeks admission into the Union!”<sup>4</sup> The fate of Utah statehood was thereafter linked with violence, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre specifically proceeded to rear its head throughout the debates and public discourse surrounding Utah’s admission into the Union and the Mormon peoples’ place within the nation.

This thesis argues that Mormon critics, including Republican politicians, Christian and women’s groups, and the national media weaponized the violence associated with Mormonism to prevent the citizens of Utah from exercising their constitutional rights. Opponents of Utah statehood argued that not only had there been myriad violent incidents in the Utah Territory but that the Mormon institutions themselves were inherently violent and undemocratic. Mormonism, according to these critics, operated as a theocracy, which led to religious fanaticism and institutional violence. Likewise, polygamy, according to these critics, led to the oppression of and violence against women. Mormon detractors argued that Mormon women were held in

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<sup>4</sup> “Mormonism: The Secret Murders of the Avenging Angels—Two Mormon Bishops Indicted For Murder,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1871.

bondage and were essentially white slaves. The theocratic nature of Mormonism combined with its violent practices and polygamous marriages provided evidence of Mormon barbarism. United States society at large claimed to celebrate democracy, the separation of church and state, tolerance, and the rule of law. Mormonism, many contended, was incompatible with those values.

While critics attacked Mormonism for its undemocratic modes of governance, they actively sought to remove democratic rights from the Mormon population. Political opponents used the accusations that the Mormon Church and its policies were responsible for excessively violent incidents, such as the Mountain Meadows Massacre, to prevent the Mormon people from exercising full citizenship. Statehood, Mormon opponents contended, would permanently entrench Mormon power in Utah, making it difficult or even impossible to coerce the Mormons into conforming to accepted American norms. Therefore, by preventing statehood, Congress had the authority to oversee legal matters in Utah and to marginalize the Mormon people by creating and enforcing such anti-Mormon legislation as the Edmunds Act, which completely disenfranchised the Mormon people. More importantly, however, Mormon detractors leveraged the Massacre for political ends. Republican majorities during the Civil War and reconstruction era prevented Utah, which leaned heavily Democratic, from political participation in a powerful partisan play.

In post-Civil War America, during an era of reconstructions, the Republican Party sought to reshape the nation by prescribing conditions before populations could be integrated or reintegrated into the evolving nation in order to ensure that they would function according to the Republican model of democracy.<sup>5</sup> In an effort to reconstruct Utah into the Republicans' vision

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<sup>5</sup> Steven, Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016), 5.

for America, policymakers disenfranchised Mormon voters, denied them representation, superseded the rights of local and state governments, abolished the right to be tried in court by one's peers, and even used and threatened military force and intervention. In an era of expansionism and empire, Utah was essentially relegated to colonial status until the Republicans in power could rest assured that Utah would function according to their understanding of democratic government and society. The unofficial stipulations imposed by Republican policymakers would include Mormons demonstrating their commitment to non-violence (at least against American citizens), conforming to traditional family dynamics and sexual norms, and embracing republican forms of governance. Ultimately, opponents of Mormonism weaponized the Mormons' reputation for violence to advance partisan, economic, social, and cultural ends.

This thesis argues that the Mountain Meadow Massacre cemented perceptions of Mormons as a particularly violent people. The massacre and subsequent violence associated with Mormonism fed the belief that Mormons were not civilized Americans. At the time, this widely publicized conflict fueled already virulent anti-Mormon sentiment by providing evidence of Mormons' ostensibly violent nature and their unwillingness and inability to be assimilated into American society, and most fundamentally, their incapability of democratic self-rule. Although the Mormons had already come under fire for practicing polygamy, the Mountain Meadows Massacre demonstrated their hostility toward outsiders (Americans) and proved that Mormons couldn't be trusted to behave like civilized, white, Protestant, American citizens.<sup>6</sup> As the Mormons became infamous for their early cultural violence, the Massacre came to epitomize

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<sup>6</sup> C.C. Goodwin, "The Political Attitude of the Mormons," *The North American Review*, Vol. 132, No. 292. (March 1881): 276-286; "The Mormon Theocracy: The Un-American and Un-Republican Blending of Church and State in Utah," *The Daily Inter Ocean*, Chicago, IL, May 28, 1881; "The Frauds," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 3, 1891.



their peculiar savagery, barbarism, and otherness.<sup>7</sup> Mormon violence, especially the Mountain Meadows Massacre, lingered as another powerful reason to relegate the Mormons to the status of second-class citizens. As detractors pointed to Mormon violence to delegitimize the Mormons, the Mountain Meadows Massacre stood at the forefront of their arguments. This anti-Mormonism manifested in many ways, but most importantly, it informed debates over the issue of Utah's statehood during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Violence, real and perceived, contributed to the vehemency of the Republican Party against admitting Utah into the Union as an equal state.

Simultaneously, critics' regular weaponization of the Mountain Meadows Massacre spurred a prolonged struggle over the memory of the incident. The persistence of the Massacre in public discourse created a contest over the facts as the opposing sides attempted to control the narrative for political purposes. The continued presence of the Massacre in public discourse made it impossible for the Mormons to ignore the atrocity in their past which caused them to spend decades trying to justify it and place blame elsewhere. The struggle of the key players to control the narrative led to questions over what actually happened, who was responsible, and how the incident should be remembered. At each point of memorialization, the battle for control of the narrative was—and to some extent remains— religiously and politically charged. The initial battles over the memorialization of the Mountain Meadows Massacre foreshadowed the bitter contest of its memory that persists to this day.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Brent M. Rogers, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Mormons and the Federal Management of Early Utah Territory* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 188.

<sup>8</sup> Shannon A. Novak, *House of Mourning: A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2008).

This thesis joins a conversation about violence perpetrated by and against the Mormons (or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) in the nineteenth century and the political and social consequences of that violence. There has been an immense amount of academic scholarship surrounding the Mormons and their relationship with the rest of the United States during the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Recent scholars specifically focus on how the violence perpetrated against the Mormons leading up to their exodus to the Utah territory shaped their outlook on people outside of their faith.<sup>10</sup> Several recent works focus on the role that religious fanaticism played within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints leading up to and after their move to Utah.<sup>11</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon’s article explores the role that religious differences played in the interactions between the Mormons and the Methodists involved in the massacre.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, several books detail the events of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, starting with Juanita Brooks’ account, which although controversial at the time, has been upheld by subsequent narratives.<sup>13</sup> Will Bagley’s work, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the*

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<sup>9</sup> Brent M. Rogers, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Mormons and the Federal Management of Early Utah Territory* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2020); Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847-1896* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1998); Edward Leo Lyman, *Finally Statehood: Utah’s Struggles, 1849-1896* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Alex Beam, *American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014); Thomas M. Spencer, *The Missouri Mormon Experience* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010); Spencer W. McBride, *Joseph Smith for President: The Prophet, the Assassins, and the Fight for American Religious Freedom* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021); Benjamin E. Park, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004); Sally Denton, *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon and Jan Shipps, “Fatal Convergences in the Kingdom of God: The Mountain Meadows Massacre in American History,” 37 (Summer 2017): 307–347.

<sup>13</sup> Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Ronald W. Walker, Richard E Turley and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Shannon A. Novak, *House of Mourning: A Biocultural History of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2008).

*Mountain Meadows Massacre* followed in 2002. In 2008, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' historians Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard published a detailed account of the Massacre.<sup>14</sup>

While engaging with conversations about the Mormons' relationship with the United States government and its people, this project differs from the rest of the conversation by focusing on the fallout of and the political weaponization of Mormon violence, most specifically the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The majority of scholarship focuses on the role that polygamy played in the Mormons' exclusion from American political life. Most Mormon scholars have emphasized how polygamy was the primary cause of the anti-Mormon sentiment that prevented Utah becoming a state for forty-six years.<sup>15</sup> While most scholars blame polygamy for the contentious relationship between the Mormons and the rest of the nation, this thesis contends that Mormon violence, in addition to polygamy, played a vital role in determining the Mormons' place within American society. News of the massacre fueled existing anti-Mormon sentiments and provided convenient evidence for their political enemies. Indeed, both violence and polygamy contributed to accusations of Mormon barbarism. The Mountain Meadows Massacre contributed to the public's perception of Mormons as violent, un-American, and even barbaric, and therefore, unworthy of statehood or even of being American citizens. This project contributes to the current scholarship by shifting the focus to include the Mormon violence, most importantly the Mountain Meadows Massacre, as one of the main impediments to Utah gaining statehood. This thesis first engages the Mountain Meadows Massacre and its causes and then

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<sup>14</sup> Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); E. B. Long, *The Saints and the Union: Utah Territory During the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: the Mormon Quest for Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

analyses how the incident contributed to and cemented perceptions of Mormons as a particularly violent people, and finally, it discusses the lasting consequences of those perceptions.

In addition to being in dialogue with Mormon, Utah, and Western history, this thesis will contribute to the genre of historical memory. This project will join other scholars in looking at the process of the creation of and the contest over historical memory and its consequences, including Ari Kelman whose 2013 work, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek*, analyzed the contested memory of the Sand Creek Massacre and the subsequent difficulties in the memorialization of the event.<sup>16</sup> Other notable works in this genre are David Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War and American Memory* and *Denmark Vesey's Garden* by Ethan J. Kytte and Blain Roberts.<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, several recent dissertations and articles specifically focus on the manner in which the Mountain Meadows massacre should be taught and commemorated.<sup>18</sup> Like other works of historical memory, this project will analyze contested memory. However, this project will also track how the contested memory shaped memorialization and how its memorialization shaped historical outcomes.

Finally, this thesis engages with works about violence in American history such as *American Homicide* by Randolph Roth.<sup>19</sup> Roth's 2009 book charts the changes in the patterns of homicides throughout American history and analyzes the reasons for those changes. This

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<sup>16</sup> Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Ethan J. Kytte and Blain Roberts, *Denmark Vesey's Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy* (New York: The New Press, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Shannon A. Novak, "Remembering Mountain Meadows: Collective Violence and the Manipulation of Social Boundaries," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 62, no. 1 (Spring 2006); Casey Olsen, "The Evolution of History: Changing Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre in Utah's Public-School Curricula" (PhD diss., Utah State University, 2013); Janiece Johnson, "*In Search of Punishment: Mormon Transgression and the Mountain Meadows Massacre*" (PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2014); Berry, Leah Ashley. "Teaching Controversial Subjects: Mountain Meadows" (MA Thesis. University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Randolph Roth, *American Homicide* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

explication of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the largest massacre of white Americans perpetrated by other white Americans in the history of westward expansion, is an important contribution to the history of American violence. This thesis will also contribute to scholarship about violence in the American West and the role that religion played in those conflicts. Prominent among these works is Susan Juster's *Sacred Violence in Early America* which provides an analysis of the root of and connections between religion and violence.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Todd M. Kerstetter, "State Violence and the Un-American West: Mormons, American Indians, and Cults." In *From Jeremiad to Jihad*. Edited by John D. Carlson and Jonathan H. Ebel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Susan Juster, *Sacred Violence in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

## Chapter 1: Atonement for the Mountain Meadows Massacre: 1857-1877

In 1859, Major James H. Carleton led a regiment of the U.S. Army to Mountain Meadows, Utah with orders to investigate rumors of a horrendous massacre and to provide protection to travelers on the Old Spanish Trail, the route to California through southwestern Utah. Upon arriving, Carleton and his unit met three other army companies that were already collecting and burying human remains. Carleton confirmed that the victims were members of the missing Fancher-Baker wagon train party, a group of wealthy, Methodist migrants who had left Arkansas in late 1856 bound for California. “The scene of the massacre, even at this late date,” Carleton lamented, “was horrible to look upon.” Carleton’s men immediately began collecting the remains of the victims that had been scattered across the meadow. These soldiers were battle hardened and accustomed to violence and its bloody aftermath, but the scene that lay before them shook them to their core. Carleton bemoaned that the scene before them could “not possibly be excelled by any other scene that ever before occurred in real life.” After recovering the remains of an additional thirty-four individuals, Carleton’s unit built a “rude” monument out of granite stones from the surrounding hillsides. Carleton described the monument as “conical in form and 50 feet in circumference at the base and 12 feet in height.” On top of the stone monument, the soldiers placed a cross with an inscription that read, “Vengeance is mine: I will repay saith the Lord.” At the base of the rock cairn, under the cross, stood a large piece of granite with these words, “Here 120 men, women, and children were massacred in cold blood early in September 1857. They were from Arkansas.”<sup>21</sup> The monument, Carleton must have hoped, would honor the victims and serve as a warning to the local Mormons that they would pay for their brutal act.

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<sup>21</sup> James Henry Carleton, *Special Report of the Mountain Meadow Massacre*, Govt., Print Off, 1902, 15-16.



*Hutchings' Illustrated California Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 44, February 1860

Within two years, vandals destroyed Carleton's monument. The specifics surrounding the monument's initial demolition remain contested. The most consistent tale, however, implicates Brigham Young, the leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who purportedly ordered its destruction.<sup>22</sup> According to one participant's journal account, when Young stopped at the site of the massacre with sixty men in 1861, he read the inscription, and responded, "It should be Vengeance is mine, and I have taken a little."<sup>23</sup> According to one self-identified participant, Dudley Leavitt, Brigham Young raised his arm to the square, a symbol of authority and sacred oaths in the Mormon church, and "in five minutes there wasn't one stone left upon another. He didn't have to tell us what he wanted done. We understood."<sup>24</sup> Other first-hand accounts mention Young's cryptic phrase and gesture but fail to include a description of the cairn's subsequent

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<sup>22</sup> "He Was Mad," *Daily Union Vedette*, May 9, 1865; "The Grand Archees," *Union Vedette*, Oct.14, 1865; H.H. Bancroft, *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1900), 557; *Congressional Globe*, 37<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1863: 123; *Congressional Globe*, 41<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1870: 3579.

<sup>23</sup> Olsen, 148; Wilford Woodruff's Journal, May 25, 1861, 577 quoted in Brooks, 182.

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, 183; Also quoted in 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): 341.

destruction. Mormon apologists point to the discrepancy to establish doubt about how the monument came to be dismantled.<sup>25</sup> Although the facts remained contested, in 1874 *The Salt Lake Tribune*, a publication run by non-Mormon residents of Salt Lake, reported that, “the monument was destroyed by the Mormons, who could not stand such a rebuke of their diabolical guilt.”<sup>26</sup> Mormon critics cited violence against the monument as evidence of a lack of the Mormons’ contrition and atonement for the massacre.<sup>27</sup>

In 1864, five years after Carleton constructed the first of several monuments in memory of the victims of the Meadow Mountain Massacre, U.S. Cavalry Captain George F. Price discovered the “monument which was erected several years ago by an army officer, torn down—the cross taken away, and the stones forming the monument, scattered around the springs.” Prices’ company halted their trek after discovering “both grave and monument having been defaced by impious hands.” Price reported, “I immediately determined to repair the grave and rebuild the monument.” Captain Price and a contingent of soldiers proceeded to rebuild Carleton’s cairn. Price’s men gave the monument the same inscription as the first, “Vengeance is mine: I will repay saith the Lord.” This time, however, they included on the second monument the words, “Mountain Meadow Massacre, September 1857.” Price and his soldiers all readily agreed to this unexpected postponement in their return to Camp Douglass by two days “in the privilege of erecting at this place—a monument at once expressive of our horror at the act—our respect for the memory of the murdered dead, and our sympathy for their fate.” Before leaving the site, Price and his men layered rocks over the graves of the “remains of the murdered

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<sup>25</sup> “Question: Did Brigham Young Order That the Mount Meadows Monument Be Destroyed,” *Fair Mormon*, accessed Jan 20, 2021, <https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/>; Olsen, 148-51.

<sup>26</sup> “Mountain Meadows Monument,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 27, 1874.

<sup>27</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 37<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1863, 123; *Congressional Globe*, 41<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1870, 3579; “Talmage on the Mormons,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, November 1880, 57; “The Monument,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 1875.



innocent, who were betrayed and massacred in cold blood by white fiends and their Indian allies.”<sup>28</sup> According to Price and other critics, the Mormons, by perpetrating such a violent act against members of their own race and country, committed an unforgivable betrayal.

Price wanted the Mormons to pay for the mass murder of the emigrants. In his report, Price noted that the monument, “appears well from the road, and will stand for years, if no impious hand destroy it.” Price wanted to ensure that travelers and Mormons alike would not forget what had transpired. Price noted that the monument was visible from the road. Perhaps he hoped to leave a visible warning of impending vengeance. Price’s publicized letter ended with a plea to the U.S. government, “I cannot refrain at this time, from entering my protest as a soldier and as an American, at the delay of a powerful Government in at least attempting to bring the leaders of this infamous crime to justice, and holding them up for the execution of the entire Christian world.” While Price lamented that the government had failed to obtain justice for the murdered emigrants, the *Salt Lake Tribune* stated that this second monument was “recreated over the bones of the slain, (and) appealed again for Almighty retribution,” and therefore was meant as a warning of God’s impending vengeance.<sup>29</sup> National newspapers published Price’s report, which was seething with fury and outrage, a sentiment which Americans by and large shared. Calls for justice continued to intensify.<sup>30</sup> The *Union Vedette* concluded, “we trust that no ruthless vandal hand will again be permitted to disturb the sacred resting place. We leave them to their own consciences, trusting that the scriptural motto emblazoned on the monumental cross will

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<sup>28</sup> “General Items,” *Union Vedette*, June 8, 1864; “Mountain Meadows Monument,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 27, 1874; George Frederic Price, *Across the Continent with the Fifth Calvary* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1883), 442.

<sup>29</sup> *Union Vedette*, June 8, 1864; “Mountain Meadows Monument,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 27, 1874.

<sup>30</sup> “Crime Strangely Exposed: The Voice of the American People Crying out for Justice,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 3, 1874, reproduced from *Religious Philosophical Journal*.

find ample and full vindication hereafter.”<sup>31</sup> The monument would continue to be a site of contention for at least the next one hundred and fifty years.

Within a month of its reconstruction, ruffians altered this second monument. The vandals carved into the cross, “Remember Haun’s Mill and Carthage Jail.”<sup>32</sup> Both incidents cited in this inscription were references to vigilante justice perpetrated against Mormons before their mass exodus to Utah. The Army officers who constructed the monuments had been determined to not let the American government or the general population forget about the horrifying massacre or to let it go unrevenged. At first, the Mormons simply attempted to erase the memory of the massacre by destroying the monument. Later, however, rather than denying Mormon involvement, these vandals suggested that the violence perpetrated against the outsiders was justified, an act of retribution for the past persecutions of the Mormon people.<sup>33</sup> Within a decade, “impious hands” did, in fact, tear down the second monument. The *Salt Lake Tribune* remembered that the monument had been “demolished by the Destroying Angels of Zion.” The newspaper then predicted that the monument would “rise once more and stand there in the beautiful vale of Mountain Meadows, telling to the ages yet to be, the story of a priesthood in the nineteenth century which offered human sacrifices to the demon Hate!”<sup>34</sup> The destruction of the Price’s monument gained national attention. *The Chicago Tribune* reported that “vandals destroy the poor wooden cross,” of the second monument; by doing so, however, according to the article, “they only succeed in impressing the word vengeance more deeply upon the hearts. May God speed the triumph of justice.”<sup>35</sup> The destruction of the monument led to renewed calls for justice.

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<sup>31</sup> “Our Notes of Travel Continued—A Visit to the Mountain Meadows,” *Union Vedette*, June 30, 1864.

<sup>32</sup> Lorenzo Brown Journals as quoted in Brooks, 183.

<sup>33</sup> “What caused the Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *Fact Check*, accessed January 22, 2021, <http://www.conflictsofjustice.com/what-caused-the-mountain-meadows-massacre/#comments>; Olsen, 152.

<sup>34</sup> “Mountain Meadows Monument,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 27, 1874.

<sup>35</sup> “The Monument,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 1875.

This early battle over the memorialization of the Mountain Meadows Massacre foreshadowed the battle that would transpire between the Mormons and the rest of the nation over the next several decades. After the Mormons had left the United States in an effort to reclaim their sovereignty, they increasingly came to see themselves as a peculiar people and to see outsiders as a threat to their self-determination. Leading up to the Mountain Meadows massacre, a combination of fear of further persecution and an era of religious fanaticism created an environment of war hysteria that had dire consequences for both Mormons and outsiders. After the Mountain Meadows Massacre, outsiders wanted to punish the Mormons for their violent act. The Mormons, on the other hand, tried to defend themselves by placing blame anywhere else. A battle over what had transpired and what should be done about it ensued. The Mountain Meadows Massacre came to be used as a weapon with which to punish the Mormons. Incidentally, the Mormons viewed the treatment they were receiving as further religious persecution which, increased their resentment towards the United States government. Consequently, reconciliation between the groups was complicated and would require that the Mormons at large atoned for the Massacre.

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When the Fancher-Baker party failed to make their rendezvous in San Bernardino, California in October of 1857, California newspapers immediately began speculating that the Mormons were involved in their disappearance; however, initially, national newspapers by and large assumed that Indians had massacred the travelers.<sup>36</sup> The Mormons responsible for the attack, contributed to and took advantage of the misconception by blaming the Paiutes and

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<sup>36</sup> “Rumored Massacre on the Plains,” *Los Angeles Star*, October 3, 1857; “Horrible Massacre of Emigrants By Indians,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 12, 1857; “Perils of the Plains: The Mormons and the Late Massacre,” *San Francisco Herald*, October 21, 1857; “Killing of Immigrants—Mormons falsely Accused—Further Endurance No Longer a Virtue,” *Western Standard*, November 6, 1857.

denying all culpability.<sup>37</sup> Despite their attempts to blame the Paiutes, however, within days of the massacre, *The Los Angeles Star* reported that “the late horrible massacre and robberies, perpetrated upon emigrant trains in Utah Territory, were committed by the Mormons and Indians under Mormon influence.”<sup>38</sup> By November, many national media outlets reported that the Indians had murdered the immigrants, but that they had been goaded into it by the “destroying angels of the church.”<sup>39</sup> Citizens of California, whom had all traveled through Utah, held a public meeting to discuss the matter and petitioned the president of the United States requesting “speedy action to punish the authors of the recent, appalling and wholesale butchery of innocent men, women, and children” lest, they feared, emigration would become impossible through the southern Utah route to California.<sup>40</sup> The Californians had a vested interest in putting a stop to the violence along the route as it was a major lifeline to the United States and vital to the growth and sustainability of their fledgling state.

Critics of the Mormon Church argued that the Mountain Meadows Massacre was not an isolated incident but rather reflected a larger pattern of violence. The *San Francisco Herald* pointed to previous violent crimes committed by Utah Mormons; particularly by “an organization of blood-thirsty scoundrels, known as the ‘Destroying Angels,’ who stop at no villainy.”<sup>41</sup> Not only were Mormons violent, according to these critics, their church operated as a criminal organization which utilized institutionalized violence to attack Americans. Mormon critics pointed to past instances of violence to argue that the Mormons were responsible for not

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<sup>37</sup> Carleton, 17; “A Tale of Horror,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 1859.

<sup>38</sup> “Rumored Massacre on the Plains,” *Los Angeles Star*, Oct 3, 1857.

<sup>39</sup> “Over One Hundred Persons Slaughtered by Indians—Mormon Instigation Suspected,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1857; “Complicity of the Mormons in the Late Emigrant Massacre—The Indians were Tools in the Hands of the Saints,” *New York Herald*, December 4, 1857; “A Tale of Horror,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 1859.

<sup>40</sup> “Public Meeting,” *Los Angeles Star*, October 13, 1857; “Further Particulars About the Murdered Emigrants—Their Names and Circumstances—The Mormons Guilty of the Crime—How Should They Be Punished,” *Daily Alta California*, November 1, 1857.

<sup>41</sup> “Topics of the Day,” *San Francisco Herald*, October 12, 1857.

only the Massacre but also for treason against the United States government and American citizens. At a public meeting in Arkansas, the families and neighbors of the deceased concluded that the Mormons were “as a community, systematically engaged in the infamous work of robbing and murdering peaceful wayfarers and emigrants and resisting the authorities and laws of the United States and in short rebelling and treason against the general government.”<sup>42</sup> A group of California citizens argued that the massacre was a culmination of a “long, undisturbed, systematic course of thefts, robberies, and murders, promoted and sanctioned by their leader, Brigham Young, together with the elders and followers of the Mormon Church, upon American citizens.”<sup>43</sup> Not only were Mormons accused of attacking outsiders, reports abounded that Mormons were being “murdered for apostasy or a few dollars, or because they know too much for the good of their priestly leaders.”<sup>44</sup> The argument continued that “The Mountain Meadows Massacre, instead of standing the first and only occurrence of its kind seems to have been, in fact, the culmination of wickedness, to which its Mormon perpetrators had become emboldened by previous successes.”<sup>45</sup> In his report, Carleton accused the Mormons of being “land pirates” who had a system in place to rob emigrant trains while placing the blame on local Indians.<sup>46</sup> However, others argued that the systematic robbery in which the Mormons were participating must have been a part of Utah’s plan to defeat United States Army in the event of the anticipated invasion.<sup>47</sup>

As California newspapers continued to pile allegations upon the Mormons, Mormon newspapers came to the defense of the Mormon people. A Mormon journal, *The Western*

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<sup>42</sup> “Public Meeting of the People of Carroll County,” *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, February 27, 1858.

<sup>43</sup> “Public Meeting,” *Los Angeles Star*, October 13, 1857.

<sup>44</sup> “Mormon Atrocities,” *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, August 13, 1859, 106.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Carleton, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Brooks.

*Standard*, fired back at the accusation that Mormons had been the perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. “It is but another illustration of that utter disregard of justice and honor which has been continually exhibited by journalists and others in their treatment of the Mormons.” *The Western Standard* then questioned, “How long they expect we can endure such things, and not arise and resent them.” However, their persecutors, according to the article “may yet learn that there is a limit even to Mormon forbearance and endurance.”<sup>48</sup> To these Mormons, these accusations were seen as another example of religious persecution. The article continued its lament, “This continual abuse and piling on of false charges—this eternal whine about Mormon treason, Mormon aggressions, Mormon licentiousness, with these oft-repeated threats of whipping us into an abjuration of our principles and of exterminating us, we are tired of hearing. We know that the Mormons in Deseret are an industrious, peaceable, God-fearing people, and that they have been most foully abused and vilified.”<sup>49</sup> Everyday Mormons could not have been responsible for the attack, according to their defenders, because they were good, hard-working Americans and accusations of violence were simply a weapon to use against them.

Despite their protestations, however, as the evidence unfolded, it became apparent that the local Mormons were guilty, and consequently, their defenses became more colorful. Mormon newspapers continued blaming the Indians but also began a victim-blaming campaign to place blame on the Fancher-Baker wagon train party for their own demise. Meanwhile, Mormon apologists continued to claim that the Mormons themselves were actually the real victims. In December of 1859, the *Deseret News*, an organ of the Mormon church, told its readers that the California newspapers were “blowing and striking in perfect phrenzy about the late massacre of

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<sup>48</sup> “Massacre of Emigrants—Reckless and Malignant Slanders,” *Western Standard*, October 23, 1857.

<sup>49</sup> “Killing of Immigrants—Mormons falsely Accused—Further Endurance no longer a Virtue,” *Western Standard*, November 6, 1857.

emigrants by Indians at the Mountain Meadows, pouring all the blame, as is so customary, upon the Mormons. Of course,” they contended “the Mormons should feed, clothe and civilize the wild and degraded red man, with, comparatively, scarcely a farthing’s worth of assistance from the government, and then, when passers have poisoned, cheated, abused, and wantonly slain the Indians, forsooth the cankering venom of recreant editors is ruthlessly poured upon the Mormons for not turning out in mass and standing between savage vengeance and those who excited it.”<sup>50</sup> Accusations that the emigrants poisoned a spring and committed other depredation while traveling through Utah ran rampant among the Utah Mormons as proof of that the emigrants were morally depraved and, therefore, deserving their fate.<sup>51</sup>

Ironically, the Mormons’ characterizations of the Native Americans as savage, barbaric, and uncivilized came to be used by mainstream Americans to describe the Mormons. After the Mormons’ guilt in the massacre became common knowledge, cementing their violent reputation, accusations that they were not really white Americans began to emerge. White Americans, according to Mormon detractors, would not have committed such an atrocity against other white Americans.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the Mountain Meadows Massacre showed that Mormons themselves were uncivilized, barbaric, and a racial “other.”<sup>53</sup> In 1859, *The Valley Tan* reported that “white men, or at least those who claim to be white” were believed to be responsible for the attack.<sup>54</sup> Despite their skin color, according to their detractors, the Mormons’ behavior suggested that they were actually a different race. The Mormons’ initial attempts to blame the Indians on account of

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<sup>50</sup> “The California Mail,” *Deseret News*, December 9, 1857

<sup>51</sup> There are a plethora of supposed wrongs committed by the emigrants while traveling through Utah. See Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, by Bishop O.F. Whitney. Utah, 1890. None of the accusations held up to contemporary or modern analyses.

<sup>52</sup> Incidentally, until the Oklahoma City bombing, the Mountain Meadows Massacre held the record for the largest massacre by and against white Americans in United States history.

<sup>53</sup> Paul W. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> “Concepts,” *Valley Tan*, February 15, 1859.

their savage ways backfired as the racist terms used by the Mormons were then applied to themselves. Mormon critics hurled the terms savage, barbaric, and uncivilized back at the Mormons. In one instance, Representative William Windom accused the Mormons of “having painted themselves as savages,” and with the “assistance of *other* savages who needed no paint” committed the massacre at Mountain Meadows.<sup>55</sup> Mormons became non-white in the eyes of some Americans based on their moral character as a group, including their propensity toward violence.<sup>56</sup>

It didn't take long for the news media to begin debating how to handle the mass murderers in Utah. Arkansans whose countrymen had been massacred were outraged and wanted immediate retribution. The *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat* reported that they had received news from a California newspaper that we have “lost some of our best citizens.” They then questioned, “What will the government do with these Mormons and Indians? Will it not send out enough men to hang all the scoundrels and thieves at once, and give them the same play they give our women and children?”<sup>57</sup> One California newspaper proposed that the United States government should “dissolve the Territorial government, declare their laws null and void, send large bodies of soldiers to be stationed at every town and settlement in the Territory, let martial law prevail, then hang or shoot every man that rebels, punish everyone according to his crimes, and give encouragement to the Gentiles to settle there.”<sup>58</sup> Fighting violence with violence even before facts were known seemed to be the most popular option.

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<sup>55</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1866: 1127.

<sup>56</sup> For more see Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*; Jason E. Pierce, “Unwelcome Saints: Whiteness Mormons, and the Limits of Success.” *In Making the White Man's West* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado) 179-208.

<sup>57</sup> “Extract From a Letter from Carrol Co.,” *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, February 18, 1858.

<sup>58</sup> “Further Particulars About the Murdered Emigrants—Their Names and Circumstances—The Mormons Guilty of the Crime—How Should They Be Punished,” *Daily Alta California*, November 1, 1857.



Meanwhile, as rumors of the Massacre ran amok, Congress debated who was responsible and what should be done about it. As early as 1858, proponents of government subsidized-railroads, bemoaned to Congress that the victims' "bones are now bleaching on the Mountain Meadows, while their murderers go unwhipped of justice."<sup>59</sup> The railroad, argued proponents, would provide safe passage across this dangerous route to California. Railroad supporters leveraged the tragic demise of the Fancher-Baker Party to rally support for their project. California Senator, William M. Gwin told his colleagues, "I am unable to give to you the details of this horrid massacre, as they are still shrouded in mystery. All that I can tell you is that one hundred and eighteen American citizens, including in this number sixty-two women and children, have been massacred without cause, and that as yet their blood is unavenged."<sup>60</sup> Gwin asked Congress "To make the inquiry, and then to inflict punishment." Gwin asserted his belief that the "various Indian tribes in the vicinity of the Mountain Meadows were the immediate agents in this butchery." A resolution passed to make inquiries into the Massacre, but only after Senator Houston insisted that no one would be punished until the completion of thorough investigations. "Some persons killed them. The Mormons are suspected of it...I am opposed," stated Houston, "to this indiscriminate warfare upon Indians or Mormons, or any other people, until their guilt is ascertained."<sup>61</sup> A resolution passed and an inquiry ensued. Houston's insistence, in all likelihood, prevented what would have been a retaliatory massacre of Native American groups who were originally accused of the deed.

Carleton, tasked with investigating the Massacre, reported back to Congress "there is not the shadow of a doubt that the emigrants were butchered by the Mormons themselves."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 35<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1858: 53.

<sup>60</sup> *Congressional Globe* 35<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1858: 1176-1177.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Carleton, 12.

Carleton reported that the attack was “perpetrated by Mormons all painted and disguised as Indians.”<sup>63</sup> Carleton had interviewed local Mormons, Indians, and the surviving children and concluded that although the Mormons had claimed the children had been with the Indians and rescued by the Mormons, the children had never been with the Indians at all. Carleton seethed, “Murderers of the parents, and despoilers of their property! These Mormons, rather these relentless fiends, dared even come forward and claim payment for having kept these little ones barely alive; these helpless orphans who they *themselves* had already robbed of their natural protectors and support.”<sup>64</sup> In his report, Carleton questioned, “how this crime, that for that for hellish atrocity has no parallel in our history, can be adequately punished.” Carleton wrote that he had discussed the state of justice system in Utah with Judge Cradlebaugh and had concluded that attaining justice in the Utah territory with Mormon juries was a “ridiculous farce.” Carleton bemoaned that “there are other heinous crimes to be punished besides this...crime is found in the footsteps of the Mormons wherever they go, and so the evil must exist as long as Mormons themselves exist.”<sup>65</sup> Carleton recommended putting Utah Territory under martial law as he and Cradlebaugh had agreed that that would be the only way “in which even partial punishment can be meted out to these Latter Day Devils.”<sup>66</sup> Depriving citizenship rights to Utahans to coerce them into submission continued to gain traction as a possible solution to the Mormon problem.

In June of 1859, official reports and news coverage based on the initial investigations began reporting that the massacre had been carried out by the Mormons.<sup>67</sup> In August of 1859,

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, Families: A New History of the North American West 1800-1860*, (New York: University of Nebraska Press) 487; “The Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *Daily National Democrat*, June 4, 1859.

<sup>64</sup> Carleton, 27-28.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

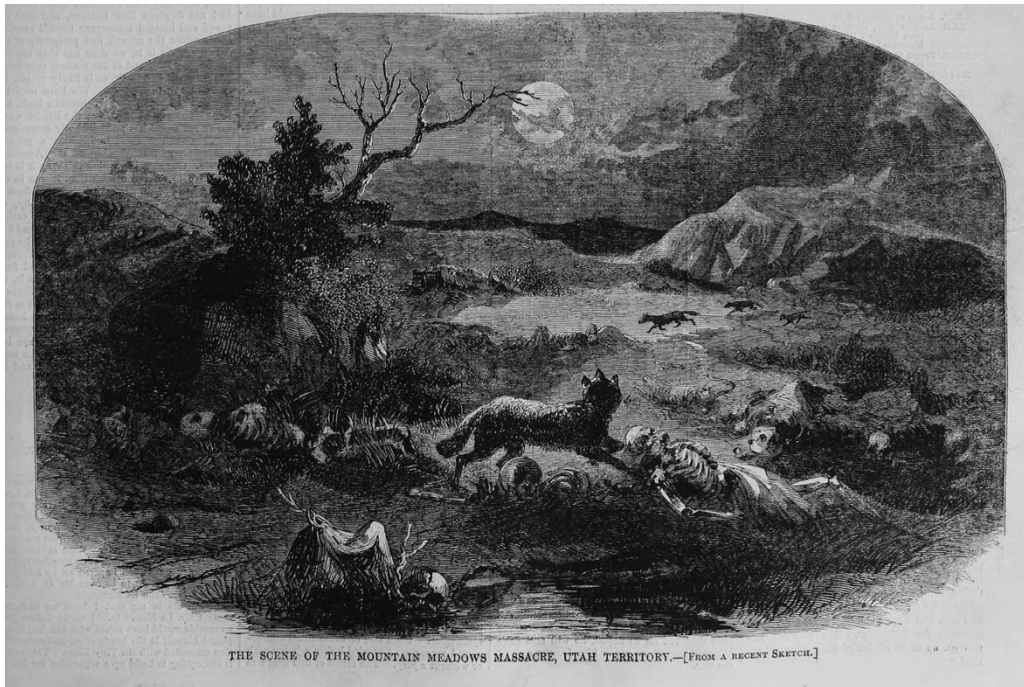
<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>67</sup> “A Tale of Horror,” *Chicago Press and Tribune*, June 16, 1859; “The Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *Daily National Democrat*, June 4, 1859; “The Mountain Meadows Massacre-Pursuit of the Murderers-Heart Rending Details,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, July 9, 1859.

*Harper's Weekly* published a story and a sketch based upon the findings making the Mountain Meadows Massacre infamous.<sup>68</sup> The sketch included with the article showed numerous human skeletons laying around a meadow and wolves running amongst them. The unburied human remains reminded viewers that the victims had been treated barbarically in their deaths and afterwards. The writer related details from the scene, "the empty sockets from their ghastly skulls tell me a story of horror and blood. On every side around me for the space of a mile lie the remains of carcasses dismembered by wild beasts; bones, left for nearly two years unburied, bleached in the elements of the mountain wilds, gnawed by the hungry wolf." The story reminded readers of that the death toll included children, "garments of babes and little ones, faded and torn, fluttering from each ragged bush...human hair, once falling in glossy ringlets around childhood's brow or virtue's form, now strewing the plain in masses, matted, and mingling with the musty mould." The emigrants' remains were left to the elements "with their wives and families, as dear to them as our own to us," after they "were coolly, deliberately, and designedly butchered by those professing to be their countrymen." The article concluded that the Mormons perpetrated this massacre and suggested that perhaps, the Mormons were not really Americans. The *Harper's Weekly* story eliminated doubt that the Mormons at large were the villains of the Mountain Meadows incident and Mormonism was linked with violence in the eyes of the public.

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<sup>68</sup> "Massacre at Mountain Meadows: Utah Territory," *Harper's Weekly*, August 13, 1859.



“Massacre at Mountain Meadows: Utah Territory,” *Harper’s Weekly*, August 13, 1859.

As early as December of 1857, families of the massacre victims inquired about retrieving the surviving children. Prominent attorney and Arkansas state senator William C. Mitchell wrote a letter to the Chairman of Indian Affairs, W.K. Sebastian. “Two of my sons were in the train that was massacred, on their way to California...one of my sons, Charles, was married and had a son, which I expect was saved.”<sup>69</sup> Mitchell wrote that his grandson, Baby John, was “three months old this month.”<sup>70</sup> A grieving Mitchell told Sebastian, “I feel that a must have satisfaction for the inhumane manner in which they have slain my children, together with two brother in-laws and seventeen of their children.”<sup>71</sup> Although concerned that the government had not yet taken action against the Mormons and Indians in Utah, first and foremost, Mitchell

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<sup>69</sup> Mitchell to Sebastian quoted in *Message of the President*, December 31, 1857.

<sup>70</sup> Sebastian relates to Mix quoted in *Message of the President*, September 11, 1858, 42-43.

<sup>71</sup> Mitchell to Sebastian, *Message of the President*, December 31, 1857.

wanted assurance that they would make efforts to obtain the children. A group of family members called upon the government to help them “reclaim the survivors of the massacre.”<sup>72</sup> In 1859, Sebastian requested ten thousand dollars “for defraying the expense of ransom, recovery, and restoration to their homes, of the children surviving the massacre.”<sup>73</sup> Sebastian got the money, but not before Representatives Gwin and Johnson of Arkansas again insisted to Congress that someone be punished for the massacre. Gwin lamented “there was not one left of those who would have been able to tell the tale--none except the little children who were saved—all the rest were massacred.”<sup>74</sup> Retrieving the children, however, would take priority over justice. After Dr. Jacob Forney collected the children from Utah, Mitchell journeyed to Fort Leavenworth to accompany the children back to Arkansas. Baby John, however, was not among the rescued children; he did not survive the attack.

Witness testimony supported Carleton’s assertion that the Mormons were responsible for the massacre. Forney, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, under orders from the U.S. Army, retrieved the seventeen children who had survived “the butchering affair.” Local Mormon, Jacob Hamblin, told Forney that the children had been with the Indians but that he had collected them and kept them safe. When Forney took possession of the children, the children revealed the subterfuge. The children, all under the age of eight, reported that they had been in the possession of Mormon families since the massacre and had never been with the Indians.<sup>75</sup> One child, reported to Forney that after the attack, he saw one of the men wash “the paint from his face, which he had used to disguise himself as an Indian.”<sup>76</sup> After talking with the children, Forney

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<sup>72</sup> *Message to the President*, 3-4; “Public Meeting of the People of Carroll County,” *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, February 27, 1858.

<sup>73</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 35<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1859: 1400-1401.

<sup>74</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 35<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1859: 1400-1401.

<sup>75</sup> “Surviving Children of the Murder Fix the Crime upon the Mormons,” *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, May 31, 1859; *Message of the President*, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Reuban Campbell, *Message of the President*, 8.

wrote to General Johnston, “What is more important than all, is, that at least four of the oldest of the children *know*, WITHOUT DOUBT KNOW, enough of the material facts of the Mountain Meadow affair, to relieve this world of the white hell-hounds, who have disgraced humanity by being mainly instrumental in the murdering at least one hundred and fifteen men, women, and children, under circumstances and manner without a parallel in human history for atrocity.”<sup>77</sup> After retrieving the children, it didn’t take long for the United States Government officials to confirm that the Mormon leaders had unfairly blamed the Paiute Indians by fabricating and twisting the entire tale to exonerate themselves. Forney reported that two of the oldest children, John Calvin Miller and Ambrose Miram Tackett, were being detained by the government “to testify in such legal proceedings as may be instituted against the parties charged” with the massacre.<sup>78</sup>

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Before their move west, the Mormons were victims of frequent acts of violence and discrimination. Among the most significant of these persecutions was Missouri Executive Order 44, also known simply as the Extermination Order.<sup>79</sup> Signed into law by Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs, the Extermination Order arose from a sentiment of unrest and contention within the communities the Mormons had recently moved into. Boggs summed up his order with a succinct statement: “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 beyond all description.”<sup>80</sup> Boggs signed the Order as a response to the Mormon War, a series of clashes

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<sup>77</sup> Jacob Thompson, *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*, 1860, 4-18; Jacob Forney, “Sixteen White Children Recovered From the Indians,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, June 23, 1859.

<sup>78</sup> *Message of the President*, 64-65. The names of the boys are slightly different in various sources.

<sup>79</sup> “Missouri Honors Man Who Refused to Kill the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Ensign*, January 1995.

<sup>80</sup> Lilburn Boggs, “Boggs Extermination Order 44,” 1838.

between the Missouri volunteer militia and the Danites, a secretive, fraternal organization that carried out vigilante justice on behalf of the church.<sup>81</sup> Missouri vigilantes used the Order as justification for the incident known as the Haun's Mill Massacre, the second incident carved into the cross of Price's monument. During the Haun's Mill Massacre, a Missouri militia killed seventeen Mormon men and boys in cold blood just days after Boggs issued the order.<sup>82</sup> This incident was instrumental in the Mormons' flight out of Missouri to Illinois where Joseph Smith, the founder, leader, and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or "Mormons," founded the city of Nauvoo.<sup>83</sup>

Shortly after Joseph Smith and his followers fled to Illinois an unknown assailant attempted to assassinate Boggs. In 1842, as Boggs sat in his home, reading the newspaper, an assassin shot him through his window four times. Boggs miraculously survived the attack. Although never substantiated, Boggs contended that Joseph Smith had put his friend, the notorious gunfighter and Danite, Porter Rockwell, up to the attack. Boggs' affidavit charged Smith with "being an accessory before the fact to an assault with intent to kill, made by O.P. Rockwell."<sup>84</sup> Several disaffected Mormons came forward with testimony claiming that Smith had publicly prophesied that Boggs "should die by violent hands within a year," offered a reward for his murder, and asked the Danites to carry out an assassination. One witness testified that Rockwell had been missing during the time of the assassination attempt. When questioned about

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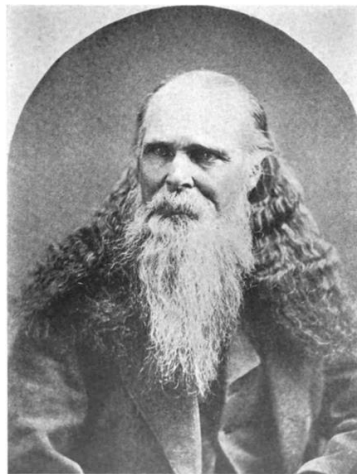
<sup>81</sup> Alexander L. Baugh, *A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri* (Provo UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-Day History and BYU Press, 2000); Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987); Brandon Kinney, *The Mormon War: Zion and the Missouri Extermination Order of 1838* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> Thomas M. Spencer, *The Missouri Mormon Experience* (University of Missouri Press, 2010); Beth S. Moore, *Bones in the Well: The Haun's Mill Massacre of 1838* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, OK, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> For more on Nauvoo see Benjamin E. Park's *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 2020).

<sup>84</sup> "Circuit Court at the United States, for the District of Illinois," *Illinois State Register*, Springfield Illinois, April 28, 1843; "History of Joseph Smith," *The Deseret News*, March 19, 1856.

Rockwell's absence, Smith had stated that he had, "Gone, gone to fulfill a prophecy."<sup>85</sup> Although officials arrested Rockwell for the murder attempt, he was never indicted.<sup>86</sup> After an arrest in 1877 for a series of murders, newspaper articles named Rockwell "the notorious Mormon murderer and accredited chief of the Danites...who has been the ready tool of the Mormon leaders from almost the foundation of their church to carry out vengeance against their enemies."<sup>87</sup> The article reminded readers of the accusations that Rockwell had attempted to assassinate Boggs in 1840. Despite his life of violence, Rockwell died of natural causes in Salt Lake in 1878 but not before becoming a legend. Western ballads and lore remembered Rockwell as one of the most feared and dangerous men in the west.<sup>88</sup>



ORRIN PORTER ROCKWELL  
1813-1878

"Thus the gallows was cheated of one of the fittest candidates that ever cut a throat or plundered a traveler."—*Salt Lake Tribune*.  
"Porter's life on earth, taken altogether, was one worthy of example and reflected honor upon the church."—*Apostle Joseph F. Smith*.  
(Photo taken six weeks before his death, by C. R. Savage)

Charles Kelley and Hoffman Birney, *Holy Murder: The Story of Porter Rockwell*, Front piece

<sup>85</sup> "Mormonism," *Asheville Messenger*, August 5, 1842.

<sup>86</sup> *Boon's Lick Times*, March 11, 1843.

<sup>87</sup> "A Pair of Mormon Murders," *The Jasper Weekly Courier*, October 19, 1877.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Kelley and Hoffman Birney, *Holy Murder: The Story of Porter Rockwell* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1934); Harold Schindler, *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966); Ballads (4): "The Ghost of Porter Rockwell"; "Destroying Angel: Ballad of Porter Rockwell"; "Old Port Rockwell"; "The Mormon Bishop's Lament," Richard E. Lingenfelter, Richard A. Dwyer, David Cohen, *Songs of the American West*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).



The Carthage Jail Incident, the first incident that the vandals had cited on Prices' monument, took place after the Mormons had established themselves in Nauvoo, Illinois.<sup>89</sup> Wary of another violent expulsion, Smith secured a city charter "which made it almost independent of the state," formed the Nauvoo Legion, a church-operated private militia, and began running the city as a theocracy.<sup>90</sup> Smith, as both civic and religious leader, held despotic power. Although Smith apparently believed that in this way he could protect his followers from outsiders, the next threat to Smith's theocracy came from within. In 1844, a group of recently excommunicated dissidents led by William Law, formed an opposition newspaper, *The Nauvoo Expositor*. The editors vowed to advocate for the "unconditional repeal of the Nauvoo city charter," "censure and decry gross moral imperfections wherever found," "to advocate and exercise the freedom of speech," and to "oppose with uncompromising hostility, any union of CHURCH and STATE."<sup>91</sup> The one and only issue of the newspaper paper exposed Smith's polygamous marriages and called on him to repent. The most damning accusations printed in the *Expositor* were affidavits from the dissidents stating that they had been excommunicated because of their refusal to keep quiet their knowledge that Smith had been secretly practicing polygamy.<sup>92</sup> As mayor of Nauvoo, Smith declared the printing press a public nuisance and ordered it burned to the ground. The marshal of Nauvoo along with a members of the Nauvoo Legion carried out the order and destroyed the printing press. After the incident, Smith mobilized the Nauvoo Legion and declared martial law in preparation of defending his city from what he assumed would be a

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<sup>89</sup> For more on Nauvoo, see Benjamin E. Park's *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2020).

<sup>90</sup> Brooks, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Prospectus of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, May 10, 1844.

<sup>92</sup> *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844.

retaliatory attack. Smith's actions outraged county and state officials who proceeded to file charges of treason against Smith.

The citizens of Illinois were likewise infuriated by Smith's attack on the press; many interpreting it as an assault on American values. One Illinois newspaper seethed, "the strong arm of violence, brute force, and by an infuriated mob, that in a blind and phrenzied passion of destruction...the authorities of the city--again violate the constitution in innumerable points."<sup>93</sup> Shortly after the destruction of the printing press, the *Alton Weekly Telegraph* reported that Smith had attempted to sustain his power through "violence, bloodshed and wanton disregard of the law." The paper wrote that the non-Mormon citizens of Hancock County had determined to rid the area of Mormons. The reason, according to the article was the "most shameful attack made by Joe Smith and his minions upon the liberty of the press."<sup>94</sup> The article urged their readers to refrain from mob violence. The report, however, admitted that a thousand-armed citizens of Illinois had already held a meeting and made inflammatory resolutions to attack on the city of Nauvoo. Since Smith had placed Nauvoo under martial law, the newspaper reminded its readers that the Mormons were prepared to defend themselves. The paper editorialized that they hoped "for the honor of the state, we hope that it has not been disgraced by mob violence."<sup>95</sup> After several failed attempts to arrest Smith, on June 25, 1844, Smith and some of his closest advisors turned themselves into the authorities averting the brewing, inevitable bloodshed. Two days later, as Smith awaited trial, a vigilante mob charged the Carthage Jail and assassinated the church's beloved founder and prophet, Joseph Smith, and his brother Hyrum.

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<sup>93</sup> "The House of Representatives: The Repeal of the Nauvoo Charter Under Discussion," *Belleville Advocate*, March 27, 1845.

<sup>94</sup> "The Crisis," *Alton Weekly Telegraph*, June 22, 1844.

<sup>95</sup> "The Mormons," *Alton Weekly Telegraph*, June 22, 1844; "From Nauvoo," *The Ottawa Free Trader*, June 28, 1844.

To his followers, Smith's death was a story of martyrdom and religious persecution. In the aftermath of his murder, violent rhetoric on both sides continued to intensify. To Mormons, Smith became a martyr, solidifying their sense of cohesion as a persecuted people and entrenching their us versus them mindset.<sup>96</sup> Later, when a jury acquitted the vigilantes of murdering the Smith brothers, Mormons interpreted it as further evidence of state sponsored religious persecution.<sup>97</sup> Smith's untimely death created a succession crisis within the church. The largest, and most belligerent, faction united behind Brigham Young. Young's violent rhetoric preceding and following his rise to power gave a loud signal to Mormons and non-Mormons alike, that the Mormons under his command intended to not take any more abuse. Acting on those emotions, Brigham Young led his group of Mormons out of the United States into Mexico, in what would soon after became part of the United States again in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Thus, in 1847 the first group of Mormons settled in the Utah Valley, where they hoped they could expand their religious freedoms, escape religious persecution, and form their own government to those ends. They moved west in search of greater freedom and safety, but in doing so they found themselves isolated from any moderating influences or government safety nets. This newfound freedom and independence meant safety stemmed from maintaining a firm grip over the collective population. Therefore, outsiders and apostates were in more danger than ever before. In this new territory where their theology and authority were initially largely unopposed, the Mormons often used past instances of vigilantism and mob violence against them to justify their own acts of violence against others, including the members of the Fancher-Baker party who were killed during the Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Hyde, 365; Brooks, 6.

<sup>97</sup> "The Brothers' Final Hours in Carthage," *Deseret News*, July 9, 1994.

<sup>98</sup> Gordon, 110.

After Smith's murder, Young added to the Mormons' temple ceremony an "Oath of Vengeance," in which participants vowed to avenge the death of the prophets: "I will 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."<sup>99</sup> Therefore, every Mormon who participated in their temple ceremony learned that it was their duty to avenge the blood of Joseph Smith. The punishment, according to Mormon doctrine, for not upholding their sacred temple oaths was voluntary disembowelment.<sup>100</sup> John D. Lee and the other participants in the Massacre understood that they were "placed under the most sacred obligations to avenge the blood of the Prophet, whenever an opportunity offered."<sup>101</sup> In 1857, rumors in Southern Utah maintained that the Baker-Fancher wagon train contained members of the mob that had killed Joseph Smith and his brother. Local Mormons even claimed that they heard members of the Baker-Fancher party bragging about owning the gun that killed Joseph Smith. Whether or not the party made these claims is left to conjecture; however, they were not involved in Smith's murder. Rumors of their involvement, however, would have justified the execution of the "Oath of Vengeance."

Even before the creation of the Utah Territory, there were efforts to exclude the Salt Lake Mormons from territorial status on account of their violent behaviors. In March of 1850, the Mormon Church of Latter-Day Saints, a sect of Mormonism that did not move to Salt Lake with Young, complained that the Utah Mormons "control the post office, and obstruct the free circulation of information." The leaders of this particular faction of Mormonism contended that

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Bagley, 21; *Congressional Globe*, 31<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> session, 1850: 92; *Congressional Globe*, 40<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1868: 4383-4389.

<sup>100</sup> Bagley, 176.

<sup>101</sup> John Doyle Lee, and William W. Bishop, *Mormonism Unveiled: Including the Remarkable Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee* (Pease-Taylor Publishing, 1891), 160; Bagley, 21, 393; Michael Andregg, "The Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857: A Civilization Encounter With a Lesson For All," *Comparative Civilizations Review*, Spring 2011; 43, 64.

the Salt Lake Mormons, who they called the “Salt-Lake Mormon Banditti,” regularly intercepted their religious newspaper and letters to their recently departed friends and family. The non-Utah Mormons implored Congress to protect them from “the tyranny, injustice, and political intrigues of the Salt-Lake banditti, and insist that the treasonable acts and designs of the Salt-Lake combination are sufficient, not only to show the impropriety of admitting Deseret into the Union, but also to convince the Government that no Salt-Lake Mormon should be allowed to hold any office.” Furthermore, argued these Mormons, the Utah Mormons had “commenced a warfare against the liberty of speech and of the press, and against the religious rights of American citizens who do not acknowledge their supremacy.”<sup>102</sup> Another group of Illinois citizens petitioned Congress not to allow territorial status to the Salt Lake Mormons on account of them “favoring a Kingly Government, are robbers and murderers, and that these men are in favor of polygamy.”<sup>103</sup> Although in 1850 the Mormons were still not admitting that they were practicing polygamy, in Illinois, some people were evidently aware that it was happening, particularly within the other Mormon sects. Polygamy was the most significant doctrinal split between the Utah Mormons and the other Mormon groups. Incidentally, accusations that Mormons were too violent for statehood predated the official church doctrine that permitted polygamy.

While contemplating Deseret’s place within the nation, federal government officials debated the accusations of violence within the Mormon community. In June of 1850, an Iowa Congressman, Shepherd Leffler, reported to Congress that he would not “indulge in a wholesale denunciation of the Mormon people.” Rather, he said there were two types of Mormons, the “great mass of the people...honest, industrious, and laborious citizens, disposed to seek an honest livelihood by honest means.” The other, smaller group “villains and vagabonds, thieves

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<sup>102</sup> *Congressional Globe* 31<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1850: 524.

<sup>103</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 31<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1850: 413

and robbers, murderers, desperadoes, outlaws, fugitives from justice, steeped in every grade of vice, distinguished for every grade of crime, daring, heedless, reckless, their hands against every man, except the Mormons.”<sup>104</sup> After burning down the *Nauvoo Expositor* and fleeing Illinois, the Mormons, these critics argued, had institutionalized the suppression of the press and free speech. By doing so, contended their adversaries, they had desecrated the First Amendment and the American Constitution and were, therefore, unworthy of territorial status. President Zachary Taylor opposed granting the Mormons admission in Union and vowed to “veto any bill passed, state or territorial” for that “Mormon pack of outlaws.”<sup>105</sup> Taylor, however, died before he had the chance leaving the question to Millard Fillmore.

Although the Utah Mormons had hoped for the creation of the State of Deseret, on September 9, of 1850, Congress passed the Organic Act, a part of the Compromise of 1850, changing Deseret’s name to Utah, shrinking its boundaries, and granting it territorial status. Fillmore signed the Act and began making appointments. Of utmost significance, Fillmore appointed Brigham Young to the governorship. Despite Young’s appointment, however, the Mormons were disappointed that they were not granted immediate statehood. Early in their history, Smith had implored the federal government to protect his followers and their religious liberties from local governments. Federal government officials, including President Martin Van Buren, had repeatedly told Smith that it was a state’s rights issue, and the federal government had no jurisdiction and could not or would not do anything to help.<sup>106</sup> After their move to Utah, the Mormons had hoped to use the state’s rights argument to protect themselves from unwanted

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<sup>104</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 31<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1850: 819; Leffler was mad that the Mormons traveling through Iowa voted on their way through.

<sup>105</sup> Almon W. Babbitt to Brigham Young, July 7, 1850, quoted in Stephen Eliot Smith, “Barbarians at the Gate,” *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Autumn 2009): 591.

<sup>106</sup> Spencer W. McBride, *Joseph Smith for President: The Prophet, the Assassins, and the Fight for American Religious Freedom* (New York, NY: Oxford university Press, 2021); Gordon, 107-111.

dissention.<sup>107</sup> Incidentally, the Mormons became staunch popular sovereignty proponents. As sectional tensions had arisen over slavery expanding into new territories, Northern Democrats had proposed “a moderate approach” that allowed territories to decide “their local domestic institutions for themselves.”<sup>108</sup> Without the right to self-govern, territories remained subordinate to the federal government. The federal government, in the eyes of some Mormons, should have been held accountable for the death of Smith because they had refused to act to protect religious freedom and to suppress religious persecution. Young reportedly fumed, “I know the United States did not murder our wives and children, burn our houses, and rob us of our property, but they stood by and saw it done, and never opened their mouths, the damned scoundrels.”<sup>109</sup> The fact that the federal government did not come to the Mormons’ aid fueled intense anti-American sentiments among the Mormon population.

Therefore, the Utah Mormons were particularly resentful of federal, non-Mormon (or what they called gentile) appointees. The Mormons voiced their displeasure by ignoring, harassing, and even threatening federal appointees. At least sixteen federal officials left Utah, all frustrated that the Mormons ignored their authority and several afraid for their lives.<sup>110</sup> One Fillmore appointee, John M. Bernhizel, wrote that “not only are the officers sent here are treated with coldness and disrespect, but that the Government of the United States, on all public occasions, whether festive or religious, was denounced in the most disrespectful terms, and often with invectives of great bitterness.” One government official wrote to Fillmore that at a public celebration, Young still resentful at being denied statehood, had exclaimed, “Zachary Taylor is

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<sup>107</sup> Gordon argues that “In Utah, they absorbed and redeployed the very theories of local sovereignty that had been used against them so brutally in the states,” 110.

<sup>108</sup> Rogers, 1-19.

<sup>109</sup> “Report from the Secretary of State,” *Congressional Globe*, 32<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 88.

<sup>110</sup> Hyde, 457; *Congressional Globe*, appendix 32<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 85-93.

dead and gone to hell, and I am glad of it!” And then prophesied that “any other president of the United States, who shall lift his finger against this people, will die an untimely death and go to hell.”<sup>111</sup> Several appointees reported that they themselves were being threatened with violence and death. In 1850, three officers reported that they were leaving the Utah Territory because, “it is impossible for any officer to perform his duty or execute any law.”<sup>112</sup> In 1857, *The National Era* reported that in Utah, “United States officers are so frightened by Mormon ruffianism, that they cannot uphold the United States laws.”<sup>113</sup> These accusations of lawlessness would be used against the Mormons for decades to come.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Mormon church often clashed with local communities and with the United States government concerning ethical, moral, and religious differences, most notably the practice of polygamy. The Mormon church publicly affirmed polygamy, or “plural marriage,” as a central tenet of their religion in 1852.<sup>114</sup> The practice, previously kept secret, became public knowledge in 1852. The general population found the practice of polygamy to be especially abhorrent. As early as 1854, Congress began debating how to respond to polygamy in Utah. In 1856, the Republican Party platform called polygamy and slavery the “twin relics of barbarism” and vowed to eliminate both practices.<sup>115</sup> Republicans contended that they had the “right and duty to prohibit in the territories those twin relics of barbarism, polygamy and slavery.”<sup>116</sup> In subsequent polygamy debates, Congressman Morrill reported on the evils of Mormonism. Morrill contended that Brigham Young held “more despotic

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<sup>111</sup> “Report from the Secretary of State,” *Congressional Globe*, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> sess. 85.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>113</sup> “Mormon Outrages,” *The National New Era*, May 28, 1857.

<sup>114</sup> “A Special Conference of the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 14, 1852.

<sup>115</sup> “Relics of barbarism,” 1856, *Circular*, July 3, 1856.

<sup>116</sup> “The National Platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties From 1856 to 1880,” United States, 1880.



power than is exercised by any ruler on the globe where written constitutions are observed.”<sup>117</sup>

Republican politicians consistently used inflammatory rhetoric to link polygamy and barbarism.

“Under the guise of religion,” Morrill contended, “this people has established, and seek to maintain and perpetuate, a Mohammeden barbarism revolting to the civilized world.”

Furthermore, while the Civil War was brewing in a sectionally divided nation, Morrill linked the Mormons with the Democratic Party. Incidentally, many Democrats, while most opposed to polygamy, maintained that the government did not have the right to interfere. Southerners understood that if the federal government used their power to suppress polygamy, the same power could be used against them to eliminate slavery.<sup>118</sup> Historian Sarah Barringer Gordon explains that “action against polygamy was understood by all concerned as an opening wedge in the protective shield around state’s rights, and the South’s ‘peculiar domestic institution.’”<sup>119</sup> By linking polygamy and slavery with violence, Northern Republicans were able to argue that the government had the moral obligation to put a stop to both of the violent, barbaric practices.

A religious reformation that the Mormon church undertook in 1856 fanned the flames of religious fervor among the Utah Mormons.<sup>120</sup> After several years of drought and famine, some of the Mormon settlers were starting to become disillusioned with the church and its promises. The famine and poverty among the Mormons at this time was so widespread, thistle roots and other weeds substantiated a significant part of the settlers’ diet.<sup>121</sup> In 1857, Congressman Morrill reported to Congress that “the people had been driven to subsistence—living upon pumpkins in some instances.”<sup>122</sup> As a response to the difficulties, the church leaders called upon members to

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<sup>117</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 34th Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1857: 284-290.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, 596-598.

<sup>119</sup> Gordon, 57.

<sup>120</sup> For more on the Mormon Reformation see: Paul H. Peterson, "The Mormon Reformation of 1856-1857: The Rhetoric and the Reality," *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 59-87.

<sup>121</sup> “Utah,” *New York Daily Tribune*, September 5, 1856; Peterson, 62-63.

<sup>122</sup> *Congressional Globe* 34th cong. 3<sup>rd</sup> Sess., 1857: 287

repent and atone for their sins and to recommit to the church's teachings.<sup>123</sup> Brigham Young and his counselors taught members that they were experiencing hardship because they had forgotten God and they needed to fully commit to his Church. Brigham Young warned, "The time is coming when justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet; when we shall take the old broadsword and ask, Are you for God? And if you are not heartily on the Lord's side, you will be hewn down."<sup>124</sup> Church leaders encouraged members to confess to and repent of any sins and to get rebaptized to demonstrate their commitment to the church.<sup>125</sup> These teachings emphasized an all-or-nothing approach to religious practice and fostered an era of religious fanaticism, which had dire consequences for apostates and "gentiles," or non-Mormons, in the Utah territory.

The most shocking part of the Mormon reformation was the "blood atonement doctrine," which stated that apostates and members who had committed certain sins, such as murder and adultery, could only be saved by the shedding of their blood. During the reformation, Young and other leaders began using violent rhetoric encouraging the shedding blood to "save" the souls of those who had gone astray. In 1856, Young announced, "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, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins."<sup>126</sup> Stories of the performance of the violent blood atonement doctrine were prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>127</sup> One often cited source is from dissident, Bill Hickman,

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<sup>123</sup> "Great Reformation," *Deseret News*, September 24, 1856.

<sup>124</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 3 (Brigham Young University: 1967), 226; Peterson, 59-87.

<sup>125</sup> "Great Reformation," *Deseret News*, September 24, 1856.

<sup>126</sup> As quoted in Olsen, 13.

<sup>127</sup> Kate Field, "Mormon Blood Atonement," *The North American Review* 143, no. 358 (1886): 262-67; T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons* (Shepard Book, 1904); J. H. Beadle, *Life in Utah: Or the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism, Being an Expose of the Secret Rites and*

known to his contemporaries as “Brigham’s Destroying Angel” and one of the leaders of the Danites, a group that critics of the Mormon Church claim was a church sanctioned vigilante organization. Hickman, wrote in his memoirs that he had performed the blood atonement a number of times at Young’s behest.<sup>128</sup> Although the violent blood atonement rhetoric provided evidence of Mormon violence for anti-Mormon writers and politicians, in all likelihood the rhetoric’s main purpose was to illicit fear to help maintain conformity among the population.<sup>129</sup> Perhaps the rhetoric was also a calculated ploy to keep dissent to a minimum. Additionally, the rhetoric and fear gave church leaders an opportunity to grant clemency and show mercy to those who had been convinced that they were supposed to die for their sins. Even if the doctrine was largely hyperbolic, however, it fed into the belief among non-Mormons that Mormons were an exceptionally violent and dangerous people.<sup>130</sup>

Although the church originally published Young’s sermons about the blood atonement for internal distribution to members, the *Salt Lake Deseret News* published a series of the Young quotes which picked up by several national newspapers.<sup>131</sup> Subsequently, in 1870 Aaron Cragin spoke about the blood atonement and read the quotes in a Senate speech.<sup>132</sup> In one highly publicized passage Young explained, “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

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*Ceremonies of the Latter Day Saints* (National Publishing Company, 1870); Josiah F. Gibbs, *Lights and Shadows of Mormonism* (Salt Lake: Salt Lake David e Tribune Publishing, 1909); “Blood Atonement: Did Cannon Do Any of the Churches Avenging?,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 23, 1882; “The Blood Atonement Doctrine,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, April 20, 1874; “Blood Atoned for Disobeying Orders,” *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, April 10, 1877; “Blood-Atonement: Still Practiced Among Mormons,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec 18, 1881.

<sup>128</sup> William Adams Hickman and J. H. Beadle, *Brigham’s Destroying Angel: Being the Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman, the Danite Chief of Utah*, (Shepard Book Company, 1904).

<sup>129</sup> Peterson, 67.

<sup>130</sup> Peterson, 74-80.

<sup>131</sup> “Chief Justice McKean’s Charge to the Grand Jury,” *Salt Lake City Deseret News*, October 14, 1874.

<sup>132</sup> Aaron Cragin, “Execution of Laws in Utah Speech of Hon. Aaron Cragin,” May 18, 1870.

be saved, spill it.”<sup>133</sup> This attitude towards sin was cached in the language of love and religious duty, yet the results were frightening to Mormons and non-Mormons alike, causing one man to write, “the fire of the reformation is burning many out who flee from the Territory, afraid of their lives.”<sup>134</sup> At one point, a group of dissenters, unofficially known as the Gladdenites, spoke out against Brigham Young primarily because of their objections to polygamy. During a sermon at a publicized conference, Young called out the apostates, “keep your tongues still, lest sudden destruction come upon you.” Young continued, “rather than apostates will flourish here, I will unsheathe my bowie knife, and conquer or die. Now you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgement will be put to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.”<sup>135</sup> Young’s violent attitude towards apostates did not soften over time.

In addition to the reformation, in the fall of 1857, news of the murder of Parley Pratt, a Mormon prophet who had recently been killed in Arkansas where the Fancher wagon train originated added fuel to the atmosphere of religious fervor. While proselytizing for the Mormon church, Pratt had initiated a romantic relationship with a married woman, and together they made plans to travel to Utah once he retrieved the woman’s children. Pratt attempted to return and collect the children while their mother waited en-route to Utah, but their father killed Pratt during the attempt.<sup>136</sup> The children’s father was never charged with a crime. The Mormon church leaders, however, quickly turned the story of Pratts’s death into a story of martyrdom, and the

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<sup>133</sup> “Chief Justice McKean’s Charge to the Grand Jury,” *Salt Lake City Deseret News*, October 14, 1874.

<sup>134</sup> Juanita Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 2:625.

<sup>135</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1 (Brigham Young University, 1967), 83; “Our Utah Correspondence: History of the Morrisites,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 24, 1863.

<sup>136</sup> “The Great Mormon Massacre,” *The Independent...Devoted to the Consideration of politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts* 27 no. 1393 (Summer 1875); “History of the Mormon Rebellion of 1856-57: W.R. Hamilton, “History of the Mormon Rebellion of 1856-57: The Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *United Service; a Quarterly Review of military and Naval Affairs*, November 1890: Ann Eliza Young, 234-238.

Mormon population accepted it as yet another example of religious persecution.<sup>137</sup> Church leaders used news of Pratt's murder to remind their members that the federal government would not protect them from religious persecution.<sup>138</sup>

Relations between the U.S. Government and the Utah Territory continued to deteriorate and culminated in the 1857 attempt by President James Buchanan to replace Brigham Young as the territorial governor. Buchanan argued the Mormons were in a state of rebellion against the United States based upon reports that government officials were being harassed and that treasonous rhetoric ran rampant in the Utah Territory. The Mormon Rebellion led to a substantial military standoff between the Mormon Nauvoo Legion, an experienced private militia, and almost one-third of the U.S. Army.<sup>139</sup> In 1855, Young, had already announced. “[I]n regard to those who have persecuted this people and driven them to the mountains, I intend to meet them on their own grounds....I will tell you how it could be done, we could take the same law they have taken, viz., mobocracy, and if any miserable scoundrels come here, cut their throats.”<sup>140</sup> Leading up to the Utah War, inflammatory language on both sides became increasingly more violent. In August of 1857, Herbert C. Kimball, counselor to Young, fumed during a sermon, “send 2,500 troops here, our brethren, to make a desolation of this people! God Almighty helping me, I will fight until there is not a drop of blood in my veins.”<sup>141</sup> When it became apparent that the Army was enroute to Utah, Young and his counselors began fanning the flames of fanaticism by reminding their followers of past persecutions. The commander of the Nauvoo Legion started preparing their troops for battle by reminding them, “We have experienced the repeated

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<sup>137</sup> David Bain, "The Great Utah Mystery," *New York Times*, 2003.

<sup>138</sup> The details of this story are contested; however, his murder caused a great deal of excitement in Utah.

<sup>139</sup> For more about Utah War see William P. MacKinnon, "Into the Fray: Sam Houston's Utah War," *Journal of Mormon History* 39, no. 3 (2013): 200.

<sup>140</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2 (Brigham Young University, 1855), 311.

<sup>141</sup> *Deseret News*, August 12, 1857, as quoted in Brooks, 19.

desolation of our homes. Our women have been ravaged. Our prophets and brethren have been imprisoned and murdered, and the people en masse have been exterminated from their midst.” Kimball thundered, “We now appeal to the God of our Fathers and Prophets for protection against the hostilities of any Mob that shall invade our Territory and invoke the aid of the heavens to strengthen us in defending ourselves against further aggressions.”<sup>142</sup> The inflammatory rhetoric used by the Mormon leaders served to inflame feelings of anger against the United States and its non-Mormon citizens. The Baker-Fancher Party were traveling through the territory in an environment of intense religious fanaticism and war hysteria.<sup>143</sup>

Although many of the details of the Massacre are contested, a consensus has been more or less reached on the major details. In September of 1857, at the height of religious fanaticism and warmongering, a local Mormon militia organized and spearheaded the attack on the California-bound Fancher-Baker wagon train party. John D. Lee, a high-ranking church official, militia officer, and the area’s Indian agent, led the attack. Under his command, a contingent of the Mormon militia disguised themselves as Indians and carried out an ambush on the wagon train, killing and wounding more than a dozen men in their initial attack. In response to the surprise attack, the emigrants immediately circled their wagons, made crude fortifications, and began to fight back. The siege lasted for four days, until September 11th when Lee approached the wagon train with a white truce flag. Lee convinced Fancher’s party to lay down their weapons, promising them he could get them safe passage past the “Indians” if they walked out unarmed and left their possessions behind. Out of simple desperation, the party, who needed water and ammunition, accepted Lee’s terms and reluctantly followed his directions. The Fancher party walked out in two columns; women and children in one and men and boys in the

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<sup>142</sup> Brooks, 20.

<sup>143</sup> Gordon and Shipps, 308; Brooks, 15-30.

other, each man escorted by a militia man. After marching about a mile, the Mormons turned and shot the man or boy who they were escorting. With the exception of seventeen children who all looked too young to tell the tale, the Mormons, possibly with some Paiute Indians, ambushed and massacred the column of women and children.<sup>144</sup> The atrocity came to be known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>145</sup>

In light of the political climate between Mormons and the rest of the nation leading up to the Utah War, the Baker-Fancher party had been doomed. In anticipation of the U.S. army's invasion, Mormon leaders had ordered their members to not trade or sell any supplies to travelers, which led to numerous altercations between the groups.<sup>146</sup> A recent series of natural disasters had left many Mormon settlements experiencing severe poverty and famine. The Fancher party carried a large amount of wealth, reports stated that the Fancher-Baker wagon train party was the wealthiest emigrant party that had ever crossed the Utah territory.<sup>147</sup> The emigrants were purportedly traveling with over a thousand head of Texas longhorn cattle. Further evidence of their wealth were carriages for the ladies and children to ride in, an unusual luxury in westward travel in 1857. Their evident wealth made the party desirable targets, especially because the Mormons needed supplies in preparation for war with the United States government and in anticipation of their supply lines being shut off. By 1859, some news reports were declaring that "the chief motive that prompted the Mormons to commit the Mountain Meadows Massacre seems to have been plunder. Atrocities too horrible to be related, and which

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<sup>144</sup> Reports on how many Paiutes were involved varies from zero to six hundred. The Paiutes of today deny that any of their people were present.

<sup>145</sup> Richard E. Turley Jr., "The Mountain Meadows Massacre," *The Ensign*, September 2007.

<sup>146</sup> "A Lying Prophet: Brigham Young Deposes Concerning the Mountain Meadows Massacre," *The Inter Ocean*, July 31, 1875.

<sup>147</sup> Carleton, 32; "The Mountain Meadows Massacre," *Daily National Democrat*, June 4, 1859; "The Mountain Meadows Massacre—Pursuit of the Murderers—Heart Rending Details," *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 9, 1859; Gordon and Shipps, 308.

seemed to shock the savages themselves.”<sup>148</sup> According to these news reports, the Mormons’ violence was shocking even to the “uncivilized” Native Americans.

Three days after the Mountain Meadows Massacre, in anticipation of a U.S. Army invasion, Brigham Young declared martial law. “We are,” he announced, “invaded by a hostile force who are evidently assailing us to accomplish our overthrow and destruction.”<sup>149</sup> Young ordered members of the Utah militia to kill any Army officers and scouts they encountered. Furthermore, Brigham’s Proclamation stated that no one would be allowed to travel across the territory without a permit.<sup>150</sup> One copy of this Proclamation was dated August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Perhaps it was backdated to give some form of justification for the attack on the Fancher-Baker party. Nonetheless, starting in September of 1857, the proclamation became public, and the Utah militia began using guerrilla tactics to prevent the Army from entering the territory. The militia systematically destroyed the government supply trains and implemented a scorched earth policy. Unsurprisingly, the U.S. government considered Young’s tactics to be treasonous. Young, on the other hand, interpreted the army’s impending attack to be an affront to religious freedom and the right to self-determination. In 1856, a hot-headed Young had begun talking of secession, “As the lord lives, we are bound to become a sovereign state, or else be an independent nation by ourselves.”<sup>151</sup> During the height of tension, in 1857, Young decided that the time had arrived and declared Utah’s independence from the United States.

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<sup>148</sup> “The Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *Chicago Press and Tribune*, June 11, 1859.

<sup>149</sup> Brigham Young, “Proclamation by the Governor,” September 15, 1857.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*; “BRIGHAM YOUNG’S PROCLAMATION,” *Liberator* 27, no. 48 (1857): 192; “The Mormon War,” Letter from Great Salt Lake—Mormon View of the Impending Struggle—Reliance of the People on Brigham Young—Determination to Fight,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1858; “The Mormon War: Martial Law Proclaimed in Utah—The Mormon Forces Called Out,” *New York Times*, Nov 19, 1857; W.R. Hamilton, “History of the Mormon Rebellion of 1856-57,” *United States; a Quarterly Review of Military and Naval Affairs* (1879-1905) July 1890.

<sup>151</sup> Quoted in David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West* (Logan, UT: Utah State University press, 1998), 121.



This Utah War between the Mormons and the United States was arguable just one of the fronts in an Age of Civil Wars.<sup>152</sup> However, by 1858, Brigham Young and the U.S. government had reached an uneasy agreement, which concluded “a bloodless war, that campaign against the Mormons.”<sup>153</sup> Young eventually agreed to allow the military into Salt Lake City to install Alfred Cummins as the new governor. After the Utah War, Young, Rockwell, and other Mormon leaders were charged with high treason.<sup>154</sup> Ultimately, President Buchanan pardoned the Mormon leaders of the treason charges. The army, however, established a presence at Camp Floyd, fifty miles from Salt Lake City and maintained their presence until 1861 when the troops were recalled to fight in the Civil War. This Mormon rebellion and treason charges contributed to the notion that the Mormons were not really Americans; they were enemies of the United States government.

Buchanan’s decision to drop the treason charges against the leaders of the Mormon Rebellion had its dissenters. In 1859, the *Hannibal Daily Messenger* contended that the Utah War had been misguided from the very beginning. According to the article, the federal government, rather than sending a large standing army to “watch Brigham Young,” should have given “them thirty days to leave or swing. They were guilty of **treason** against the Federal Government, and we are opposed to compromises with **traitors**.” The Messenger maintained that although Cummins had replaced Brigham Young, as governor, Young was still running the show. Furthermore, according to the *Messenger*, Young and his henchmen had conspired to prevent the investigation of the “dreadful, inhumane butcheries by the Mormon Church.”<sup>155</sup> The

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<sup>152</sup> Stephen Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016); David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil Wars, 1857-1858* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

<sup>153</sup> Keene Abbott, “The Sound of Running Water,” *Outlook* 99, no. 9 (1911): 484.

<sup>154</sup> “Important From Utah: Indictments of the Mormon Leaders for HIGH TREASON,” *The Times-Picayune*, March 6, 1858.

<sup>155</sup> “Utah and the Mormons,” *Hannibal Daily Messenger*, May 3, 1859.

article reminded readers that the federal government had spent millions of dollars trying to get the people of Utah to submit to federal rule but that they had continued with their treasonous policies and violent attacks on American citizens. Furthermore, the Mormons had thwarted the federal government's attempts to seek justice and punish the perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. By not indicting the murderers, therefore, the Utah Mormons continued to be viewed as treasonous and anti-American.

In 1861, Abraham Lincoln appointed John W. Dawson as Governor to the Utah Territory. Dawson's stay in office only lasted for three weeks. Despite being the newly appointed governor, Dawson opposed Utah's admission into the Union. In December of 1861, less than three weeks after taking office, Dawson vetoed a bill calling for a constitutional convention. In January, Dawson wrote to Lincoln that he had left the territory afraid for his life. Dawson claimed that the Mormons had forced him out of the territory because he vetoed their plan to attain statehood.<sup>156</sup> The Mormons, on the other hand, contended that Dawson had made "inappropriate advances" toward a Mormon widow, which had led to the altercation. Either way, Dawson left the territory and reported to Lincoln that "En route to home and Washington City, I was followed by a band of Danites and 12 miles out, wantonly assaulted and beaten." The violence that Dawson experienced first-hand served to solidify his perceptions that Utah would not accept federal authority and was, therefore, unworthy of statehood. In a letter to Lincoln, Dawson complained about "the horrid crimes that have been committed in this territory—and which have gone unpunished, have no parallel among civilized nations—take the Mountain Meadows Massacre...take the robberies and murders which have been committed on emigrants within this

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<sup>156</sup> Will Bagley, "A Terror to Evil-Doers: Camp Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and Utah's Civil War," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2012): 321-322.

territory.”<sup>157</sup> In addition to protesting against Utah’s admission into the Union, Dawson asked Lincoln to send the army back to Utah to help put a stop to the violence being perpetrated in the territory against federal appointees.

After Dawson left the territory, in 1862, the Utah delegates drafted a constitution for the State of Deseret. Their 1862 bid for statehood failed. Even worse, for the Mormons, Congress a few days before had passed the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act. In a speech in the House of Representatives, Morrill, the bill’s sponsor, asserted that, “Mormons were hostile to the republican form of government and favored slavery, polygamy, and violence, but worst of all, they were democrats.”<sup>158</sup> In 1862, President Lincoln signed the bill, which officially banned bigamy in all federal territories. Despite signing the bill, Lincoln made no attempt to enforce the law. The bill however criminalized what the Mormons considered to be a key tenet of their religious practice. By this measure, Mormons practicing their religion became outlaws in the eyes of the federal government. Leading up to the Civil War, politics in the United States had fractured upon sectional lines. During the Civil War, a Republican dominated Congress had no intention of admitting Utah into the Union. The Republican Party’s yet unfulfilled efforts to eradicate the “Twin Relics of Barbarism” created a political link between Utah and the Southern states. Meanwhile, Nevada had become a territory in 1861, and by 1864, the Lincoln administration began encouraging Nevada to apply for statehood which was granted the same year.<sup>159</sup> Nevada a solidly free, Republican state, would help to ensure Lincoln’s reelection bid in November of 1864.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> John W. Dawson to Abraham Lincoln, January 13, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress.

<sup>158</sup> Howard R. Lamar, "Statehood for Utah: A Different Path," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1971): 307-27.

<sup>159</sup> Hahn, 242-243.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the Mountain Meadows Massacre became the most famous incident of Mormon violence in the nineteenth century, a lesser-known event, the Morrisite War, also contributed to the Mormons' reputation for violence.<sup>161</sup> This confrontation began in 1861 when Joseph Morris, a Mormon convert, declared that the Lord had named him his true prophet. "I have chosen thee from before the foundations of the world to be a mighty man, yea, to be a prophet in Israel."<sup>162</sup> Morris' revelation, naming himself as God's prophet, placed him in direct conflict with Brigham Young, the most powerful man in Utah. Over the course of the next three years, Morris wrote more than a dozen letters to Young asking him to turn the role of "prophet and seer" over to himself. The Church leadership ignored Morris until he began preaching that he was the "true" prophet of the church and publicly criticizing Young's leadership and character. When Morris started to gain followers, Young excommunicated Morris and seventeen of his followers who refused to denounce Morris. Meanwhile, Morris purportedly continued to receive revelations from God, to predict the second coming of Christ, and to poach dissenters from the discontents among the Mormons. Within a couple of months, Morris baptized at least four hundred believers into his new church which he named the Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Most High whose members became known as Morrisites.<sup>163</sup> Historian David Bigler noted that with over one-thousand converts, all former Mormons, the Morrisites numbered two percent of Utah's population. The Morrisites had become "more than a nuisance" to Brigham Young.<sup>164</sup>

With rumors of Mormon violence and the blood atonement running rampant in the national news, many voiced concerns with the safety of the Morrisites. The *Chicago Tribune*

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<sup>161</sup> For more about Morrisite War see LeRoy Anderson, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites*, (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1988).

<sup>162</sup> Joseph Morris, *The Spirit Prevails* (San Francisco: G.S. Dove; J.A. Dover & Co., Printers, 1886), 9.

<sup>163</sup> Richard W. Young, "The Morrisite War," *The Contributor*, July 1890; "Important from Utah. A Schism in Mormondom, Adventure of the Morrisites," *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 1862.

<sup>164</sup> Bigler, 210-217, C. Leroy Anderson and Larry I. Halford, "The Mormons and the Morrisites," *The Magazine of Western History* 24, no. 4 (Autumn 1974): 5.

opined that trouble would come to the Morrisites after the U.S. army left the Utah territory. “The Brighamites are already threatening him and his followers with extermination...there is much rumor about the troops leaving Utah.”<sup>165</sup> Congressmen began debating what would happen when the army quit policing the Mormons. In 1860, Congressman Nelson read to Congress from an opinion piece from the *Prairie Beacon* that in Utah, “murders of the most atrocious kind are of a daily occurrence, while the perpetrators go unpunished.” The army was, according to the article, “the only safeguard to our citizens.” If the army left Utah, according to these seemingly prophetic concerns, “the demons who now revel on the spoils of the slain will exterminate everyone in the valley who does not yield to the behests of the church, and acknowledge the lecherous old traitor, Brigham Young as prophet.”<sup>166</sup> During Morris’ rise, the army at Fort Douglass provided some protection for the Morrisites and other dissenters, but once they were gone, all bets were off.

In 1861, shortly after the onset of the Civil War, the Army which had been placed in Utah to police the Mormons after the Mountain Meadows Massacre left Utah to participate the Civil War. In the absence of the army, Lincoln had charged the territorial government with protecting the mail routes and telegraph lines. It was in this moment, without federal oversight, that the Mormon militia attacked the Morrisites. The fighting began when Colonel Robert Burton of the territorial militia shot a cannonball into the Morrisite congregation killing two women and seriously maiming a teenaged girl. In sum, eleven people were killed, including nine Morrisites and two members of Burton’s militia. After a two-day standoff, Burton charged into the fort and shot Morris, his counselor John Banks, and two women. With Morris’ death, the battle ended. The militia arrested the remaining male Morrisites and took them to Salt Lake where they faced

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<sup>165</sup> “Important from Utah. A Schism in Mormondom, Adventure of the Morrisites,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 1862.

<sup>166</sup> “Polygamy in Utah,” T.A.R. Nelson, in the House of Representatives, April 4, 1860.

charges and “stood trial for murder and resisting due process.”<sup>167</sup> In Salt Lake City, officials displayed the bodies of Morris and Banks, at City Hall. National newspapers reported that “great crowds, eager to see the noted schismatic” came to view the bodies.<sup>168</sup> Federal Judge Kinney, convicted the remaining Morrisites and sentenced them to hard-labor and heavy fines. Three days after Kinney sentenced the Morrisites, however, the new territorial governor, Stephen S. Harding, overturned their convictions, released them from prison, and assigned federal troops to escort them out of the Utah Territory. The 1863, *The Evening Bulletin* reported that, “the Morrisites were fleeing, under protection of General Connor, from the wrath, persecutions of the Mormons.”<sup>169</sup> To outsiders, it looked as though the Mormons were so violent and intolerant that it was necessary for federal troops to protect religious dissenters; further evidence that the Mormons were incapable of self-government.

National news reports by and large viewed the Morrisites as victims of religious persecution. The *Syracuse Standard* reported that the treatment of the Morrisites had been a “terrible instance of religious intolerance among professedly religious people.”<sup>170</sup> National newspapers, printed a sermon given by Young concerning the confrontation highlighting his violent rhetoric against the Morrisites, “If I had my way about it, I would not spare neither man, woman, or child alive, but as it is a United States affair, they can have it as they please.” Young’s own statement confirmed that Mormon violence had in fact been dampened by the presence of the federal government. Despite Young’s assertion that it was a legal not religious matter, the militia was comprised of all Mormons who had been taught the blood atonement

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<sup>167</sup> Leroy Anderson, 144.

<sup>168</sup> “A Salt Lake City Letter,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, December 24, 1868.

<sup>169</sup> “Matters in Mormondom,” *Daily Evening Bulletin*, May 21, 1863.

<sup>170</sup> “The Morrisite Massacre: A tragic Chapter in the History of Mormonism: Some New Light on a Dark Subject,” *Syracuse Standard*, May 4, 1890.

doctrines. The excessive force used by the militia suggested that the Mormons wanted retribution, and from the outside, it looked like Morris' assassination was the fulfillment of the Mormons' notorious "blood atonement" doctrine.

Immediately after Governor Harding released the Morrisite prisoners, the *Evening Bulletin* reported, "the house of the governor was assaulted, and his windows broken in by stones thrown from the street." According to the *Bulletin*, no one was arrested or injured in the riot, but the article concluded that the incident proved that Mormons resented the federal government and any non-Mormon interference.<sup>171</sup> To non-Mormons, such as Harding, this incident further proved that Mormons would resort to violence when they didn't get their way. In the aftermath, Mormons petitioned to have Harding removed from office because they perceived him to be anti-Mormon. In response, the non-Mormon population responded by petitioning to have Judge Kinney removed from office on account of the commonly held belief that Young had undue influence over him. Kinney then publicly condemned Harding's actions: "the Governor, clothed in the pardoning power, interposed to prevent the punishment due to rebels against the law."<sup>172</sup> Lincoln responded to the petitions by recalling both Governor Harding and Judge Kinney. The Mormons were so pleased with Kinney's response to the events surrounding the Morrisite affair that they went on to elect him as their next delegate to Congress. Interestingly, modern accounts of Harding typically blame his anti-polygamy stance for his contentious relationship with the Mormons. However, it is likely that it was his decision to release the Morrisites that caused the rift.

Apparently unamused by the Nauvoo Legion's use of federal authority to commit violence against their religious competitors, President Lincoln called Patrick E. Connor and the

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<sup>171</sup> "Letters from Great Salt Lake," *Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 14, 1863.

<sup>172</sup> Richard Young as quoted in Anderson, 146.

California volunteers to Utah reestablish a military presence in the Territory. Lincoln charged Conner with establishing a permanent U.S. Army post, Camp Douglas, and to take over the job of protecting communication lines. Connor understood it to be his personal responsibility to establish order and to protect non-Mormons from Mormon violence. Connor said of his new assignment, “I have a difficult and dangerous task before me.” Connor reported that he intended to “intrench my position, and then say to the Saints of Utah, enough of your treason.” Conner explained that “the Federal officers desire and beg that I will locate near the city. The Governor Harding especially is urgent in the matter.”<sup>173</sup> Connor believed that non-Mormons and federal government officials needed federal protection and that the Mormons needed to be subdued. Therefore, Conner established the permanent military fort on a plateau, three miles from the city’s center, overlooking the Mormon stronghold, a visible reminder to the Mormons that they were under army supervision. In 1865, the *Salt Lake Democrat* published a letter which was written to Connor explaining that “our efforts should therefore aim to make such communications safe, by thorough protection of “Gentiles” against Mormons.”<sup>174</sup> Meanwhile, Conner started a mining operation and began recruiting non-Mormons to move to Utah in an effort to dilute the Mormon population. The army stationed in Utah to protect non-Mormons provided more evidence that Utahans needed federal government oversight to keep a lid on Mormon violence.

A biographical sketch of Connor published in 1887 explained that as the first powerful, successful non-Mormon in Utah, Connor had made it his life goal to “wrest from the church—disloyal and traitorous to the core—the absolute and tyrannical control of temporal and civil

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<sup>173</sup> Long, 101.

<sup>174</sup> “General P.E. Connor,” *Salt Lake Democrat*, March 30, 1887.



affairs.”<sup>175</sup> To that end, Connor had established Utah’s first secular newspaper, *The Union Vedette*. The establishment of this newspaper made the national news. *The Louisville Daily Journal* reported that “a free press has been at last established at Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory, that has not fear of Brigham Young before its eyes.” The article argued that “it was one of the ineffaceable disgraces of the Buchanan Administration that the Mountain Meadows Massacre, one of the most atrocious deeds of blood ever perpetrated in this or any country, was never investigated, and the red-handed murderers brought to justice.” The article then, applauded Conner and the *Union Vedette* and proclaimed that “it is never too late to mete out justice to the guilty, and we hope our Government will yet take steps to bring some of the bloody wretches who perpetrated the Mountain Meadows massacre to justice.”<sup>176</sup> National news outlets seemed to believe that a free press in Salt Lake would lead to justice for the victims of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

In 1865, the editors of *The Union Vedette*, declared their intention to ensure “that the government will be informed that as Utah is now governed, she is unworthy of State sovereignty.”<sup>177</sup> As a part of their mission statement, the editors stated, “We know that the blood of murdered innocents stains the soil of Utah and that those whose hands are red with crime have thus far escaped punishment.”<sup>178</sup> Within a week of launching their newspaper, *The Union Vedette* published an article entitled, “Reasons Utah Should Not be Admitted to the Family of States.” Violence featured heavily in their anti-statehood argument. The *Union Vedette* discussed the church’s blood atonement doctrines, “the right to shed human blood for the remission of sins.” They then reminded their readers that “the perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows

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<sup>175</sup> “General P.E. Connor,” *Salt Lake Democrat*, March 30, 1887.

<sup>176</sup> “A Free Press,” *The Louisville Daily Journal*, Aug 15, 1865.

<sup>177</sup> “Our Mission,” *Union Vedette*, January 31, 1865.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

Massacre have not been brought to justice,” and that “other murders committed by Church counsel have never been punished.” Furthermore, “the Statues of Utah are filled with unjust, wicked, and outrageous laws, oppressive to every man who does not bow down and worship the one manpower of Utah.”<sup>179</sup> The article concluded that the Mormon “leaders only crave for a state government so as to enable them to carry on more securely their evil designs.”<sup>180</sup> Statehood, according to these critics, would allow the Mormons to continue their violent way of life without federal government interference. Therefore, granting statehood would endanger the gentiles and dissidents in the state and the Church would then be able to use the law to suppress dissent.

As a part of Conner’s goal of preventing Utah from gaining statehood, in 1870, he and a group of non-Mormons founded a political party, the Liberal Party.<sup>181</sup> The Liberal Party ran in opposition the People’s Party, which was essentially an appendage of the church; the *Deseret News* functioned as its mouthpiece. Political party affiliation would remain divided along religious lines until 1891 when the parties disbanded. The Liberal Party used the *Union Vedette* and later *The Salt Lake Tribune* to argue against Utah statehood. The articles published by these newspapers were regularly republished in national newspapers. These non-Mormon newspapers used violent events in Utah’s history to weave a story of Mormon violence, tyranny, treason, and intolerance; all used as reasons to prevent Utah from gaining statehood. The newspapers claimed that Americans valued democracy, the separation of church and state, religious tolerance, and the rule of law. Mormonism, the non-Mormons of Utah contended, was incompatible with those values. The Liberal Party and their newspaper used the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the

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<sup>179</sup> “Reasons Why Utah Should Not be Admitted into the Family of States,” *Union Vedette*, February 7, 1865.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Brigham D. Madsen, “General Patrick Edward Conner,” in *From the Ground Up: A History of Mining in Utah*, ed. Colleen Whitley (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2006) 58-80.

Morrisite War as evidence that the Mormon church institution employed systematic violence to squash minority groups and was therefore unworthy of statehood.<sup>182</sup>

Despite his continued denunciation of the Mormons for their violent ways, Conner was responsible for numerous atrocities committed against various Native American groups. In fact, Conner led the regiment that committed the Bear River Massacre, the largest massacre of Native Americans in United States history. In this one attack, Conner and his militia unit murdered over four hundred Shoshoni men, women, and children.<sup>183</sup> Conner's hatred of Mormons was apparently only matched by his hatred of Indians. Despite the cantankerous relationship between the Mormons and Conner, Porter Rockwell, arguably the most murderous man in Mormon history, guided Conner's men to the Shoshoni encampment and participated in the attack. One Mormon bishop remarked after the massacre that "the Lord raised up his foe to punish the Shoshoni without us having to do it."<sup>184</sup> Despite the Mormons' complicity in the Bear River Massacre, however, the Shoshoni who survived the attack eventually converted to Mormonism. Conner's indignation at violence, it seems, only applied to violence committed against white Americans.<sup>185</sup>

Despite their overwhelmingly minority status in Utah, the non-Mormons of Utah used the Mormons' reputation for violence to wage gutsy political battles against their counterparts. In 1868, William McGroarty challenged Utah's delegate to Congress, William Hooper, for his seat.

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<sup>182</sup> "Reasons Why Utah Should Not be Admitted into the Family of States," *Union Vedette*, February 7, 1865.

<sup>183</sup> Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshoni History* (Salt Lake City, UT: BCC Press, 2019), 37.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Parry, 31.

<sup>185</sup> Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshoni History* (Salt Lake City, UT: BCC Press, 2019); Kass Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004); Brigham D. Madsen, *The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1985); Newell Scheib Hart, *The Bear River Massacre: Being a Complete Source Book of the Genocidal Action Against the Shoshones in 1863- And of General P.E. Conner and How He related to and Dealt with Indians and Mormons on the Western Frontier* (Preston, ID: Cache Valley Newsletter publishing Company, 1983); John Barnes, "The Struggle to Control the Past: Commemoration, Memory, and the Bear River Massacre of 1863," *The Public Historian* 30, no. 1 (January 2008): 81-104.

Unsurprisingly, McGrorty, a Liberal non-Mormon in Utah, lost the race. Following this defeat, however, McGrorty (unsuccessfully) argued to Congress that Hooper was not entitled to his seat because despite having won the election, delegate Hooper had taken pledges, such as the Oath of Vengeance, that were “hostile to the people and Government of the United States.” During his speech, McGrorty read testimony from several apostate Mormons describing the oaths that Mormons took in the “endowment houses” in which they claimed Mormons declared hostility towards the United States government. Delegate Hooper, according to McGrorty, was ineligible for his seat because he had “abjured his allegiance and pledged himself in active hostility to the United States by fanatical pledges so overwhelming in the obligation with which they were accepted, that no official or secular oath can retract them.”<sup>186</sup> Mormons, according to McGrorty’s arguments, could not be seated in Congress because the Mormon Church, and therefore Mormons, were institutionally violent. McGrorty would not be the last to use the Oath of Vengeance as evidence that the Mormon church was inherently violent and anti-American; and that therefore, members of the Church should be denied their rights as American citizens. Being a Mormon, according to this argument, was not compatible with being an American.

McGrorty reminded Congress of the “existence of an organized band of murderers in Utah, as well as an authorized and established practiced of murder inseparable from the Mormon system.” McGrorty cited the Mountain Meadows massacre as one of the many instances of the work of this “murderous band.” Furthermore, according to McGrorty, evidence had linked Hooper to the Mountain Meadows Massacre by his known association with John D. Lee. According to McGrorty, Hooper was apparently guilty by association. McGrorty reminded Congress that it had been eleven years since the massacre had taken place. “Its perpetrators,”

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<sup>186</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 40<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1868: 4386.

seethed McGrorty, “red with the blood and gorged with the wealth of the murdered victims, walk unpunished...if the apathy of the government continues, it will soon leave these murderers to an impunity as entire and absolute as its own responsibility for justice disregarded.” If Utah were permitted statehood, McGrorty warned, the federal government would not have jurisdiction to seek justice for the Mountain Meadows Massacre or other violent crimes. “The Mormons,” according to McGrorty, “avow their intention of perpetuating their polygamy, and placing their other crimes beyond the reach of judicial inquiry by admission into the Union as a State.”<sup>187</sup> Statehood would give Utah jurisdiction over the courts, and therefore, the perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows Massacre would likely never be brought to justice.

Despite the opposition from Utah’s non-Mormon population, in 1871, Utah began preparing for their fourth statehood attempt. During the statehood discussions, both in Congress and in the press, Mormon critics continued to point to Mormon violence and lawlessness to argue against admitting Utah as a state. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that the gentiles of Utah were “against the admission of Utah as a State,” and according to the report, non-Mormons would “not cease to protest.” *Even if* polygamy were prohibited by the state constitution, “it would leave the existing evil to leaven and corrupt the future for the life of a generation.”<sup>188</sup> Polygamy, according to these dissenters, was not the only or even the primary reason to deny Utah statehood. If Utah were granted statehood, argued the Liberals, it would give “a hierarchy of morbid fanatics powers which would drive from the country every gentile person, and build up in the basin of Great Salt Lake an impregnable State, intolerant of all non-Mormon influences.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 40<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1868: 4383-4389.

<sup>188</sup> “Utah: The Mormons Attempt to Secure Admission as a State, Opposition of the Gentiles Thereto, and the Causes of that Opposition,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 26, 1872.

<sup>189</sup> Robert H. Briggs, “A Seething Cauldron of Controversy: The First Trial of John D. Lee, 1875,” *Journal of Mormon History*, no. 1 (Winter 3013):15; “Deseret,” *New York Tribune*, April 30, 1872.

These gentiles forwarded their opposition to Utah statehood to President Ulysses S. Grant. The Mormons made an effort to gain the support of the gentiles by nominating Conner to the Convention, but Conner refused to even participate. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that Conner “declined emphatically his election as delegate to the Convention for the Admission of Utah, on the ground that he is opposed thereto.”<sup>190</sup>

Coinciding with the formation of the Liberal Party, in 1870 Congress began seriously debating a bill to allow for federal enforcement of the Morrill Anti-Polygamy Act. Aaron Cragin began the debate along partisan lines; “the record of the Republican party is already glorious and immortal, but its mission is not yet completed.” Cragin stated that slavery had “received its death-wound and died like a traitor;” however, “polygamy, the other twin relic of barbarism, still remains.” Cragin described the horrors of polygamy, but there was more. According to Cragin, “Polygamy is not the only revolting feature of Mormonism. The whole system is a compound of monstrosities and frauds. It enjoins falsehood, theft, and murder as sacred religious duties, as well as the systematic degradation of woman in the name of Almighty God.” Cragin reminded his colleagues about the Mountain Meadows Massacre, “the darkest chapter in Mormon history, the most perfidious act of cruelty and wholesale butchery to be found in the annals of this or any other country.” Cragin then editorialized that “it hardly seems possible that any human beings, claiming to be civilized, could have devised and carried out these fiendish acts.” Cragin contended that the bill to enforce the laws in the Utah Territory did not interfere with religious liberty; rather, he maintained “it seeks to repress crime and restore a great community to moral health.” “The sword of justice must,” according to Cragin, “attack robbers, murderers, polygamists, and conspirators. Men may be devotees of error, but they have no right to be

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<sup>190</sup> “Utah,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 14, 1872.

devotees of crime, even under a pretended religious sanction.” Cragin called on the Government to enforce anti-polygamy legislation and argued that it was their duty to do so. The Mormon “desperados,” according to Cragin, could not continue to ignore the law.<sup>191</sup> Despite Cragin’s efforts, legislation to enforce the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act would not become law until 1874.

In 1871, Grant had made it clear that he would not support Utah statehood until the Mormons demonstrated their commitment to American values. In President Grant’s third state of the union address, he reported that “in Utah, there remains a remnant of barbarism, repugnant to civilization, to decency, and to the laws of the United States.” Grant vowed that “neither polygamy nor any other violation of the existing statutes” would be permitted in the territory, and Mormons would no longer be allowed to “violate the laws under the cloak of religion.”<sup>192</sup> In addition to eradicated polygamy, the people of Utah would need to demonstrate their respect for federal law. The *New York Herald* predicted that “President Grant never will approve by signature any bill for admission of Utah into the Union till she is purged of charges of religious murders.” The article then questioned who in Congress would favor Utah statehood “till the black list has been atoned for.”<sup>193</sup> Indeed, still, fifteen years after the Massacre, justice had not been meted out nor had the incident been atoned for in any way. Grant argued that his issue with Utah was not with Mormon religion, but with their practices, presumably including religious violence. Despite Grant’s hostility, in 1872, the Utah legislature presented their newly drafted constitution to Congress. The statehood proposal, however, didn’t even make it out of committee. Meanwhile, Grant vowed to veto any attempt by Utah to gain statehood “before atonement was made for the Mountain Meadows Massacre...for the long list of murders that

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<sup>191</sup> Senator Aaron H. Cragin, “Execution of Laws in Utah,” Delivered in the Senate, May 18, 1870.

<sup>192</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, “Third State of the Union Address,” 1871.

<sup>193</sup> “The Mormons,” *New York Herald*, March 25, 1872.

stain our history.”<sup>194</sup> Utah, it seemed, would have to find a way to atone for the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

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<sup>194</sup> “The Utah Press in the Past,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 29, 1872.



## Chapter Two: Vengeance, 1868-1896

Despite not yet having atoned for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, in 1872, the Territory of Utah again attempted to attain statehood.<sup>195</sup> Statehood-seeking Utahans, however, met with intense opposition from the Republican congress during an era of reconstructions. Republican proponents of reconstruction policies wanted to withhold statehood rights from rebellious states until safeguards could be put in place to assure that the law would be upheld. By and large, these Northern Republicans saw themselves as a civilizing force in the fight against barbarism and despotism.<sup>196</sup> During the Reconstruction era, while the southern states were being reintegrated into the Union, Utah was undergoing a similar process of reconstruction.<sup>197</sup> After the Civil War, Republicans argued that they could not both enforce the laws *and* protect freed peoples if they restored statehood rights to the southern rebellious states.<sup>198</sup> Likewise, opponents to Utah statehood argued if allowed into the Union, the federal government would not have the power to prohibit polygamy or to enforce *any* law in Utah. One reconstruction proponent, Senator Aaron Sargent, urged “if Utah is to be admitted into the Union as a State, I would have fundamental conditions prescribed, like these prescribed on the reconstruction of the southern states.”<sup>199</sup> Sargent proposed that for ten years after attaining statehood anyone in Utah taking office or voting should be required to take an oath that they were not nor would ever enter into a polygamous marriage. During reconstruction, Republicans had proposed oaths of loyalty to

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<sup>195</sup> “Admission of Utah into the Union Memorial of Convention,” *Deseret News*, June 12, 1872.

<sup>196</sup> David Prior, “Civilization, Republic, Nation: Contested Keywords, Northern Republicans, and the Forgotten Reconstruction of Mormon Utah,” *Civil War History* 56, no. 3, 2010.

<sup>197</sup> Hahn, 387-391; Prior; Brett David Dowdle, “Beyond the Pale of Human Sympathy: Utah and the Reconstruction of the American West, 1856-1890,” PHD dissertation: Texas Christian University, 2018.

<sup>198</sup> Gregory Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of the War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 5.

<sup>199</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1873: 645, 646.

ensure that Southerners who had supported the Confederacy were denied the right to vote or to hold public office.

Throughout the 1870s, Americans and Congressmen debated the best way to enforce federal law in the Utah Territory and to bring Mormon Utah into line with the rest of the nation. A new debate about what exactly the Mormons would need to do to come into alignment with the rest of the nation emerged. In 1873, Mormon ally, Senator Aaron Sargent, argued that if it were not for polygamy, “there could not be a single objection raised to the admission of Utah as a State.”<sup>200</sup> To Sargent, anti-polygamy enforcement could be solved by administering loyalty oaths and denying rights to polygamists. The issue of polygamy could, according to these Sargent and other proponents be corrected, and Mormons could be assimilated into American society. During this period, Mormons and their allies began an effort to rebrand the Mormon question. By sticking to the story of the problem with Mormons being polygamy, Mormon allies were able to ignore their problematic history of and reputation for violence. Mormon delegate to Congress, George Cannon, for example, argued that “the only fault, humorously, found with us is that we are too much married.”<sup>201</sup> To their supporters, the Mormons’ “peculiar institution” did not prove that Mormons were violent or un-American, just a little strange, and therefore, polygamy as the main impediment to statehood became the mantra for Mormons and their supporters. Sargent, a railroad proponent and an ally of the Mormons, for his part, had a vested interest in maintaining peace with the Utah Mormons for the sake of railroad interests. Sargent played a “major role in modifying some of the harshness of later bills” and unsuccessfully tried to derail several major pieces of anti-Mormon legislation.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1873: 645, 646.

<sup>201</sup> George, Q. Cannon, *A Review of the Decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Case of George Reynolds vs. the United States* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1879), 43.

<sup>202</sup> Lyman, 55, 84, 88, 91-95; Gordon, 112.

Sargent's contention that polygamy was the main issue with granting Utah statehood, however, met with fierce hostility. Aaron Claggett from Montana, for example, rebutted Sargent's claims that polygamy was the main issue with Utah statehood. Claggett contended that the issue was not polygamy or religion or even violence. "The difficulty that is pending in Utah does not lie in these things," Claggett reasoned, "but they constitute simply a few of the expressions of a central idea that is behind them all." According to Claggett all of the problems with Mormons existed because in Utah "there is a one-man despotism...there is no basis for a republican form of government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. There is only theocratic despotism." Violence, however, was a natural extension of a system whose head, "exercised over its members an espionage more complete than that of the Spanish Inquisition," and furthermore, according to Claggett, "ready to do its bloody work at a nod from this head, stands the Danite band." Claggett pointed to the Danites as evidence of institutional violence. Claggett complained about the Mormon leaders' hatred of U.S. government which was evident in the "high-handed manner which they not only ignore but trample under foot every law of the United States which stands in the way of their doing whatever they may please to do in order to regulate 'the religious duties of man to his maker.'" Claggett reminded Congress of the accusations that Mormons regularly intimidated and disenfranchised Gentile voters in Utah. Claggett concluded that he was opposed to Utah being admitted as a state "now or ever until the Mormon hierarchy shall have learned to respect the laws of the country which shelters and gives them protection; and extend to all people within the boundaries of that Territory the equal protection of equal laws."<sup>203</sup> Claggett pointed to lawlessness, violence, and oppression of outsiders as proof that Mormons were not ready to be Americans.

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<sup>203</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1873: 920-922.

During these debates, Senator Windom argued that he would not deny anyone constitutional rights, but he believed Congress needed to “go to the very verge of our constitutional power in the effort to utterly destroy that institution.” Windom contended that it was “not merely the polygamous character of that organization which in my judgement merits condemnation.” He stated that Congress needed to look at history to “understand the character of that institution. There are other features of that institution even worse than polygamy.” Windom gave a detailed account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and then complained that after the Massacre, Congress had even paid Brigham Young an appropriation of forty thousand dollars to distribute goods to the Native Americans through the local Indian agent, John D. Lee. Windom contended that essentially the money “was to pay Brigham Young for murdering these American citizens at Mountain Meadows.” Windom argued that the incident demonstrated the character of the organization, but also that the Church held undue power in Congress. Windom accused all Senators who showed Mormonism any sympathy and who had been arguing that the situation had improved in Utah since the Mountain Meadows Massacre of “spreading the rose-colored veil...over that cancerous sore on the body-politic.”<sup>204</sup> Mormon violence had not improved, according to their detractors, and anyone who said otherwise needed to be reminded of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the fact that the Mormon population had not yet atoned for it.

Windom then read an affidavit from a Territorial judge in 1872, listing a series of recent violent incidents in Utah including accusations of assaults, mutilations, and assassinations of young dissenters. “Polygamy,” according to the affidavit, “is the merest nothing compared with the bloody despotism which forced it upon and perpetuates it among the people; a despotism so strong that many persons are afraid to demand an examination of or make inquiries about a

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<sup>204</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1873: 1806-1809.

murder committed at their own doors.” The judge maintained that congress had the duty to eliminate “that most terrible relic of barbarism, the blood atonement. The killing of an apostate to save his soul,” after all, “is murder.”<sup>205</sup> These recent acts of violence, according to anti-Mormons proved that the state of affairs had not improved in Utah. The real relic of barbarism, to this senator, was the violent Mormon blood-atonement doctrine, which condoned murder. To some anti-Mormons, the blood atonement, being a horrifically violent practice, was the truly evil part of Mormonism. They argued throughout the anti-polygamy enforcement debates that violent acts could only be prosecuted by shifting the probate court jurisdiction to federal jurisdiction so that the trials would be overseen by federal appointees.

In 1872, as Utah prepared for their latest attempt at statehood, major newspapers also debated the problems with Utah statehood. The *New York Tribune* argued that “if the pernicious fruits of Mormonism are to be destroyed, it must be done in the Territory of Utah.”<sup>206</sup> The *Chicago Weekly Post* contended that if Utah became state, “no power from outside can enter there to enforce any law for the suppression of polygamy...and polygamy will be erected into a permanent State institution.”<sup>207</sup> While some news reports focused on polygamy, The *New York Herald* reminded readers of Mormon violence and questioned “if atrocious murders have been committed in the name of the Lord while Utah was a territory of the United States... what will happen when the country is wholly and irrevocably in the hands of the men who committed the murders?”<sup>208</sup> Meanwhile, *The Salt Lake Tribune* argued that those who were supporting Utah statehood simply could not “comprehend what Mormonism is when it is in control. They can not begin to comprehend what it would be in full control of this region, with State lines around it to

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<sup>205</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 1873: 1804-1809.

<sup>206</sup> “Deseret,” *New York Tribune*, April 30, 1872.

<sup>207</sup> “The Admission of Utah,” *Chicago Weekly Post*, April 11, 1872.

<sup>208</sup> “The Mormons,” *New York Herald*, March 25, 1872.

protect it.” The stakes, according to these non-Mormon Utahans were much higher than just the ability to suppress polygamy. Statehood was, to these opponents, an effort “to turn the Territory over into Mormon hands.”<sup>209</sup> The non-Mormons of the area, contended statehood opponents, would be put in danger after Mormons gained the sovereignty that came with statehood.

Amid the Mormon efforts to gain statehood, a group of dissenting Utah citizens petitioned Congress “to protest against said admission, at present time.” The memorialists laid out their objections and argued that state government in Utah, “owing to the disparity of the Mormon and the outside element, can only result in the elevation of the Mormon religion to the dignity and influence of State power.” They argued that all political power would be in the hands of Mormons. “And this,” according to their petition, “when the experience of your memorialists is that they have always used this power to injure and oppress the minority.”<sup>210</sup> These dissenters argued that “the main object of securing a State government...is to obtain control of the Courts in this Territory...which would ultimately result in the discharge of all persons belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints now held to answer for some of the numerous and most atrocious crimes ever known.”<sup>211</sup> Their statehood power, argued dissenters, would enable the Mormon leadership to protect church-sanctioned violent crimes and to continue to use violence to oppress the non-Mormon minority. *The Deseret News*, the Church newspaper, published the memorial in-full along with the names of all those who had signed the petition.<sup>212</sup> Publishing the names of detractors in the Mormon newspaper demonstrated a continued hostility towards political opponents, not to mention a complete lack of concern for their safety.

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<sup>209</sup> “The Frauds,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 3, 1891.

<sup>210</sup> “Against the Admission of Utah As a State: Memorial of Citizens of Utah,” 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., 1872: 1-3.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>212</sup> “Memorial,” *Deseret News*, June 6, 1872.

Thirty apostate Mormons attached affidavits to the document explaining their objections to Utah becoming a state. One man, Abraham Taylor, stated that he “was satisfied that Brigham Young and the priesthood counseled murder and robbery,” including incidents such as the Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>213</sup> Several petitioners claimed to have first-hand knowledge that Brigham Young knew all about the Mountain Meadows Massacre and who the participants were yet he “never attempted to bring them to justice.”<sup>214</sup> According to the affidavits, Church leaders regularly “counseled the killing of Mormons and Gentiles.”<sup>215</sup> The objectors reported that they heard Young specifically spew violent rhetoric against outsiders and apostates. Several of the men claimed to have personally heard Young sermonize that “if the enemies of the church did not leave Utah he would send them to hell cross-lots.”<sup>216</sup> Joseph Silver reported that “the doctrine of remission of sins by the shedding of human blood is held sacred by the Mormon authorities; therefore, the many murders committed in this Territory, if not counseled by them, have received their sanction.”<sup>217</sup> Several of the men testified that they had immigrated from Europe and upon arrival in Utah, were surprised by the persistence of violence and violent rhetoric. John Forbes stated that after arriving in Utah, he “became satisfied that the Mormon leaders were bad men.”<sup>218</sup> The petitioners all claimed to fear the “great calamity which would befall the gentiles and apostate Mormons should Utah become a state.”<sup>219</sup> If and when the Territory gained statehood, the anti-statehood crowd theorized, the federal government would not have the power to protect enemies of the Mormon Church from violence.

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<sup>213</sup> “Against the Admission of Utah as a State: Memorial of Citizens of Utah,” 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., 1872: 61.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 62, 71. Cross-lots apparently means Hades.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

In addition to concerns over violence being perpetrated against gentiles and apostates, many affidavits reported that Mormon leaders were hostile to the United States government. The petition repeatedly called Mormon loyalties to the United States into question. Taylor reported that “Mormon leaders are enemies of the United States Government and sympathized with the rebellion of the South.”<sup>220</sup> Abraham Watters stated that he believed that the Mormons were disloyal to the United States and had heard Young and other church elders “denounce the government of the United States hundreds of times.”<sup>221</sup> Jehel Watters explained that the Mormons were disloyal to the United States and “hate the government with an intense hatred.”<sup>222</sup> Another reported that Mormons are “extremely disloyal, praying for and prophesying of the destruction of the United States Government.”<sup>223</sup> The memorial included a newspaper article about a sermon in which a church elder repeatedly called President Grant “Useless Grant” and threatened to “tear up the railroad, break down the telegraph lines and destroy millions of dollars’ worth of property” rather than submit to federal laws. The whole “spirit of his discourse,” according to this article, “was treasonable, abusive, and incendiary, calculated to inspire war, or, rather to incite Mormons to deeds of violence.”<sup>224</sup> One petitioner argued that “their arrogance and love of tyranny would engender civil war.”<sup>225</sup> Violent rhetoric against the federal government caused some of these petitioners to believe that insurrection and violence against the federal government was inevitable. The accusations that the leaders were intentionally inciting violence further proved that the Church institution was inherently violent and treasonous.

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<sup>220</sup> “Against the Admission of Utah as a State: Memorial of Citizens of Utah,” 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., 1872: 61.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.



Overall, the petitioners were primarily concerned by the prospect of the Mormon church having control of all the branches of the state government, particularly the court system. Although some of the petitioners mentioned polygamy, it was not their primary concern. The interviewer asked one of the men, Eli B. Kelsey, if he thought Congress should pass a law prohibiting polygamy in the territories. He emphatically replied that he did not. "History will," according to Kelsey, "revenge itself upon and damn the man or the party who shall ever inaugurate a religious crusade in free America."<sup>226</sup> Kelsey, however, wished to keep Utah in territorial status because otherwise the Mormon leaders were going to have a monopoly on all government powers. Many interpreted Mormon church officials' efforts to gain statehood as an effort to "clothe theocracy with state powers."<sup>227</sup> The stakes of admitting Utah into the Union, according to one man was that the "priesthood would have increased power to carry out their anti-republican policy, and justice would be crippled and criminals go free."<sup>228</sup> Tho's Brown was one of several who believed church leaders wanted a state government so "that they may shield men charged with high crimes, and even have power to punish those whom they esteem their enemies."<sup>229</sup> One man complained that "he did not wish any church to have sole control of political matters, especially a church having so bloody a code."<sup>230</sup>

In 1872, with many Americans unhappy with Reconstruction policies, Horace Greeley challenged Grant for the presidency. Greeley who seemed to be more sympathetic to the Mormons than most had campaigned for a reconciliatory approach in dealing with the South. Leading up to and during the Civil War, Greeley, as the founder and editor of the *New York*

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<sup>226</sup> "Against the Admission of Utah as a State: Memorial of Citizens of Utah," 42<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., 1872: 77.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

*Tribune* had advocated for complete abolition. After the war, however, he had advocated for complete amnesty for all southerners.<sup>231</sup> Greeley recommended forgiveness from all sides and recommended a policy of “impartial suffrage and universal amnesty.” Greeley put his money where his mouth was and in 1866, posted Confederate president, Jefferson Davis’ bail. During the election of 1872, Greeley became the nominee for the Liberal Republican Party which had emerged from a coalition of those who were critical of Grant and his reconstruction policies.<sup>232</sup> The Liberal Republican party’s platform called for the “immediate and absolute removal of all disabilities imposed on account of the rebellion.”<sup>233</sup> The fact that Greeley endorsed this compassionate approach must have been comforting to the Mormons who hoped that they would soon be permitted to exercise their full rights as citizens. The Democratic Party endorsed Greeley believing him to be their only chance to defeat Grant. Greeley’s manta of universal amnesty and impartial suffrage, along with his support of local control policies gained Greeley the support of parties who favored unity and peace in the aftermath of the Civil War. Greeley presumably also supported the fair treatment of the Mormons.<sup>234</sup>

Mormon leaders endorsed Greeley who they argued, believed in “free speech, free press, free soil, free religion, and free men.” The *Deseret News* reported that at the ratification meeting Greeley supporters argued that Greeley was the best candidate because “the very morning of Appomattox, Greeley proclaimed to the world that he was for universal suffrage and universal amnesty.” One speaker bemoaned that the Republican Party had, since the end of the war,

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<sup>231</sup> Robert C. Williams, *Horace Greeley: Champion of American Freedom* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006); James M. Lundberg, *Horace Greeley: Print, Politics, and the Failure of American Nationhood* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press), 146-181.

<sup>232</sup> Lundberg, 164-165.

<sup>233</sup> “The Presidential Campaign: Candidates and Platform of the Liberal Republicans,” *The Phrenological Journal of Science and Health (1870-1911)*, July 1872, 55.

<sup>234</sup> Edward Leo Lyman, *Finally Statehood: Utah’s Struggles:1849-1896* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2019), 80-81.

“actually stamped out of existence eleven of the States of the Union, and erected over them a colossal, imperial despotism.” Furthermore, Alexander Majors contended that, “territorial vassalage has been wrong from the very beginning.” Clearly believing that Greeley would grant Utah statehood, the speaker urged the Mormons to “bear this patiently, hoping that it is only a few months to the time when we shall be in the enjoyment of the rights and privileges enjoyed by men in other states.”<sup>235</sup> George Q. Cannon, Utah’s delegate in Congress also spoke in support of Greeley. “Fellow-citizens, although as a citizen of Utah, I have no vote in the Presidential contest which is now approaching, I, no more than you can view it with indifference.” The outcome of the election was of utmost interest in the territory as statehood hung in the balance. According to Cannon, the people of Utah could “trust Horace Greeley. We have reason to have confidence in him.”<sup>236</sup> Ever since the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Mormons had felt that Greeley was relatively friendly to their people. Back in 1859, Greeley had visited Utah and interviewed Brigham Young. Greeley had publicly proclaimed that some Mormons had committed the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but he contended that, “the great mass of these people, as a body, mean to be honest, just, and humane.”<sup>237</sup>

Grant, on the other hand, had so far refused to even consider admitting Utah into the Union until the Mormons at large atoned for the massacre and went through a process of reconstruction. In 1872, Grant contended that the policy of the Utah legislature had been to “evade all responsibility to the Government of the United States, and even to hold a position of hostility to it.” Therefore, Grant proposed a revision to Territorial Law that “will secure peace,

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<sup>235</sup> “The Greeley-Brown Ratification Meeting,” *Deseret New*, July 15, 1872.

<sup>236</sup> “The Greeley-Brown Ratification Meeting,” *Deseret New*, July 15, 1872.

<sup>237</sup> Horace Greeley, “Horace Greeley in Utah: The Mountain Meadows Massacre—Popular Sovereignty,” *Chicago Press and Tribune*, August 26, 1859; “The Presidential Campaign: Candidates and Platform of the Liberal Republicans,” *The Phrenological Journal of Science and Health*, July 1872, 55.

the equality of all citizens before the law, and the ultimate extinguishment of polygamy.”<sup>238</sup>

Mormons predictably protested against Grant’s accusations, and the *Salt Lake Herald* argued that “the president has been misinformed and misled. In no part of the United States is the Constitution held in more reverence and the laws esteemed more sacred than in Utah.”<sup>239</sup> Despite their protestations, Mormons were openly defying anti-polygamy laws and had so far not convicted the men responsible for the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Nonetheless, it appeared as though Grant was prepared to force the Mormons into submission by any means necessary. During the 1872 presidential campaign, while the Liberal Republicans called for the end of reconstruction policies, a new phase of reconstruction was just beginning in Utah.<sup>240</sup> Even though Democrats grudgingly voted for Greeley, Grant won the election in a landslide. Statehood would not come to Utah under Grant’s watch.

After winning the reelection in 1873, President Grant asked Congress to pass legislation that would put all criminal matters in Utah into the hands of federal courts. As long as probate courts were choosing juries from local pools, Grant argued that “it will be futile to make any effort to enforce laws...or provide punishments of polygamy or any of its affiliated vices or crimes.”<sup>241</sup> In his state of the union address in 1873, Grant explained that as things stood in the Utah Territory, “crimes go unpunished. To prevent anarchy there,” Grant argued “it is absolutely necessary that Congress provide the courts with some mode of obtaining jurors, and I recommend legislation to that end.”<sup>242</sup> Grant asked Congress to reform the judiciary system in the territories. Grant’s recommendations would be the beginning of the end of Mormon

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<sup>238</sup> “Fourth Annual Message of President U.S. Grant,” December 2, 1872.

<sup>239</sup> “The President and the Mormons,” *New York Herald*, December 5, 1872.

<sup>240</sup> Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 144-145.

<sup>241</sup> As quoted in Kenneth David Driggs, “The Mormon Church-State Confrontation in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of Church and State*, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 277-278.

<sup>242</sup> “President Grant’s Fifth State of the Union Address,” December 1, 1873.

autonomy in the area.<sup>243</sup> The *New York Herald* reported that Young, the “wily autocrat of the Rocky Mountains,” must now “realize that his reign of terror is drawing to a close.” Grant, according to the article, “has only to hold a steady hand over Utah, and to make Brigham feel that ‘murders in the name of the Lord’ will no longer go unpunished.”<sup>244</sup> In response to Grant’s request, Congress passed the Poland Act in 1874. The Poland Act essentially took all power from the probate courts and placed the power in the federal government’s hands. With the passage of the Poland Act, federal authorities began prosecuting powerful Mormons for violating the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862.<sup>245</sup> Utah’s delegate, George Q. Cannon was arrested for bigamy as he prepared to go to Washington to take his seat in Congress.<sup>246</sup> *The Inter-Ocean* reported that Cannon had been charged with the “crime of secret and lascivious association and cohabitation.”<sup>247</sup>

Anti-Mormons had consistently linked crime and violence with polygamy; sometimes even claiming that polygamy was the cause of the lawlessness found in Utah. The Poland Act allowed for the enforcement of all laws, meaning that polygamy and violence were linked and now both enforceable. Mormon critics argued that by catering to vices and justifying crimes, Mormonism had “started down the slippery slope to lawlessness.”<sup>248</sup> Polygamy, according to these detractors, was like a gateway drug into other crimes. In 1869, a non-polygamist branch of Mormonism had made the same connection and concluded that the “Danite system in Utah is the handmaiden of polygamy; for in fact, robbery and murder are the result of that system, and

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<sup>243</sup> Driggs, 277.

<sup>244</sup> “The Last Move of the Prophet-Brigham Afraid of Grant-The Dictator of the Saints Retires from Commercial Speculation-Will Not Abandon Polygamy but Will Go TO Mexico-His Political Moves Exposed,” *New York Daily Herald*, April 10, 1873.

<sup>245</sup> Driggs, 277-278.

<sup>246</sup> Gordon, 113; “Tottering Mormonism: The Polygamous Saint, George Q. Cannon, Delegate in Congress from Utah, Indicted and Arrested,” *The Inter Ocean*, November 16, 1874.

<sup>247</sup> “Tottering Mormonism,” *The Inter Ocean*, November 16, 1874.

<sup>248</sup> Quoted in Gordon, 47.

polygamy has been the moving cause in committing those notorious deeds of blood for which Utah has become so notorious. The Mountain Meadows massacre bears testimony to this.”<sup>249</sup> Polygamy, according to anti-Mormons, led to other crimes of violence and murder and, according to these dissenters, even the Mountain Meadows Massacre was the result of polygamy. Some, like Ann Eliza Young, contended that “leaders of Mormonism-George Q. Cannon included- are not sincere in their professions and teaching. They are inspired by unmixed wickedness; and I enter an earnest, a solemn protest against polygamists and murderers in Utah going longer unwhipped of justice.”<sup>250</sup> According to Young, Mormon men did not actually believe that polygamy was an important part of their creed; it was just a way to justify their criminal behavior. Furthermore, these detractors wanted justice for victims of Mormon violence.

Since the Republican party platform had connected slavery and polygamy as the “twin relics of barbarism in 1856,” popular media had often portrayed Mormon women as slaves. Since the 1850s, anti-polygamy novels had argued that polygamy was a form of slavery. In the novel *Boadicea*, for example, one of the characters declared that Mormon women “are in fact white slaves...and are frequently subjected to personal violence.”<sup>251</sup> Violence, domestic and otherwise, according to these writers, was a consequence of polygamy.<sup>252</sup> In 1875, abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote that their day had “seen a glorious breaking of fetters” and slavery had “become a nightmare of the past.” “Shall we not then hope,” continued Stowe, “that the hour is come to loose the bonds of a cruel slavery whose chains have cut into the very hearts of thousands of our sisters – a slavery that debases and degrades womanhood.” Stowe pleaded for

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<sup>249</sup> “The Dante System,” *The True Latter-day Saints Herald*, January 1, 1869, 200-202.

<sup>250</sup> “Mormon Polygamy: Letter from Mrs. Ann Eliza Young to President Hayes, Protesting Against the Extension of Executive Clemency to the Convicted Bigamist, George Reynolds,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1879; “The Bondage of Bigamy: An Appeal of the Gentile Women of Utah,” *The Indiana State Sentinel*, November 13, 1878.

<sup>251</sup> Quoted in Gordon, 47.

<sup>252</sup> For more see Gordon, Chapter 1; Bruce Burgett, “On the Mormon Question: Race, Sex, and Polygamy in the 1850s and the 1990s,” *American Quarterly*, no. 1 (March 2005): 75-102.

all women to pray for and make efforts “to free her sisters from this degrading bondage.”<sup>253</sup> In 1879, Ann Eliza Young, after escaping her plural marriage to Brigham Young, wrote, “Slavery! What slavery was ever worse than that of woman in Mormonism! I tell you none! I do not speak from hearsay; I know by long and terrible experience that what I write is true.” Later, in 1879, Young urged President Hayes to “use every means to destroy Mormon polygamy, and extirpate every feature of it from the land. It can bear no good fruits, - nothing but sin, and misery, and madness.” Essentially, argued these anti-Mormon writers, polygamy equaled slavery and slavery equaled violence.

In 1873, when Young filed for a divorce, national newspapers quickly picked up on the story and reported the proceedings closely.<sup>254</sup> Meanwhile, Ann Eliza began a tell-all speaking tour, a popular venue for entertainment in the mid-twentieth century, where she discussed her life as a Mormon woman and polygamous wife. Dignitaries including Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia, attended one of her wildly popular lectures in Washington D.C. After one of her lectures, Grant purportedly told Young that based on her testimony, he had come to believe that Utah’s delegate to Congress, polygamist George Cannon, should be expelled from office.<sup>255</sup> Young reportedly testified in front of Congress in opposition to polygamy and Mormonism in general.<sup>256</sup> Her testimony is credited with helping to pass the Poland Act. Young stayed in the spotlight for ten years as she participated on the lecture circuit. Later she published her autobiography, *Wife Number 19: or the Story of Life in Bondage*, which detailed the oppression of women and the

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<sup>253</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, preface to *Tell It All: The Story of a Life’s Experience in Mormonism* by T.B.H. Stenhouse (Connecticut: A.D. Worthington, 1874).

<sup>254</sup> “Utah: Concerning the Divorce Suit of Ann Eliza Young,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 23, 1873.

<sup>255</sup> “Polygamy Must Fail by a Woman’s Hand,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 10, 1875.

<sup>256</sup> “Ann Eliza Goes to Washington,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 4, 1874; “Polygamy Must Fail by a Woman’s Hand,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Feb. 10 1875.

prevalence of violence in Utah.<sup>257</sup> A later edition of her book included an in-depth discussion of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Young wrote that “of all the numberless atrocities that succeeded the Utah Reformation, and were the direct outgrowth of the teaching of the revolting doctrine of the Blood-Atonement, nothing approaches in fiendish barbarity the Massacre at Mountain Meadows.”<sup>258</sup> Young like many others, connected polygamy and violence with barbarism.

In 1875, Eliza Ann Young reported that the effects of the Mormon reformation were still alive and well in Utah. She claimed that murders were on the decline by 1875, but she argued that “it is only the presence of a large Gentile element that prevents the full exercise of the blood-atonement.” She noted that Mormon leaders had been on their best behavior since “Uncle Sam is fixed with no small degree of sternness on the City of the Saints; and more important still, Deseret has not yet been admitted into the Union as a state!” At the present time, argued Young, the Mormons were on their best behavior. After Utah became a state, the Mormons would resume their violent way of life without fear of government intervention. “The Spirit of assassination,” according to Young, “still remains.”<sup>259</sup> Mormon critics continued to argue that the nature of the Mormon system had not changed. After outlining a long list of murders that had been committed in the territory, Young argued that those who had lived through the reformation, or “reign of terror,” in Utah had to admit that Brigham’s teachings “tended to make crime prevalent.” Concerning Brigham’s violent rhetoric, Ann Eliza declared “it is no wonder that such language as this, poured into the ears of the already half-crazed Saints, should incite them to

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<sup>257</sup> Young, Ann Eliza, 1844. *Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage: Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy* (Connecticut: Dustin, Gilman, 1875); “The Mormon Divorce-Suit: A Lawyer’s Review,” *The American Socialist: Devoted to the Enlargement and Perfection of Home*, May 10, 1877, 148; Claudia Glenn Dowling, “Ann Eliza and the Prophet.” *American History* 47, no. 3 (2012), 34-41.

<sup>258</sup> Young, 228.

<sup>259</sup> Young, 263.



deeds of violence.”<sup>260</sup> Therefore, to Young, “all these murders lie at his door...his hands are red with innocent blood, his garments dyed with it, and no atonement can ever wash out the damning spots.”<sup>261</sup> Young’s condemnation of Mormonism and Brigham became an integral element in the public discourse surrounding the Mormons and their place in American society.

While gentile women consistently pushed for stricter anti-polygamy legislation, that same legislation faced immense opposition from Mormon women.<sup>262</sup> In 1870, while Congress began considering a bill to enforce the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, a group of three thousand Mormon women met at their Salt Lake tabernacle to “manifest our indignation and protest against the Bill before Congress.” At the meeting which came to be known as the Great Indignation Meeting, these Mormon women argued that the federal government was attempting to prevent them from exercising their own constitutional rights. One of these women, Sarah Kimball, argued that the bill “would not only deprive our fathers, husbands and brothers of enjoying the privileges bequeathed to citizens of the United States, but it would also deprive us, as women, from selecting our husbands, and against this we must unqualifiedly protest.” The committee resolved that the laws that would allow for the prosecution of polygamy were “malicious attempts to subvert the rights of civil and religious liberty.”<sup>263</sup> Newspapers as far away as London, reported on the meeting and noted that the women “one after another they rose to denounce what they termed a religious persecution.”<sup>264</sup> Lecinda Brown argued that “our enemies have been trying for years to make themselves believe we were kept in a state of slavery and that we would prefer elsewhere if it were possible...There is no place on earth where women have more liberty and

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<sup>260</sup> Young, 189.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>262</sup> Gordon, 111.

<sup>263</sup> “Minutes of a Ladies Meeting,” *The Ogden Junction*, March 19, 1870.

<sup>264</sup> *The Morning Post (London)*, January 16, 1873.

enjoy such glorious privileges as the women of Utah.” Incidentally, women in Utah had gained suffrage in 1870 and touted it as evidence that they were more free than other American women. Additionally, Utah arguably had the laxest divorce laws in the nation, making it relatively easy for Mormon women to obtain divorces.<sup>265</sup> If a version of the Poland Act were to pass, argued Brown, “our rights will be very limited indeed, we shall not have the right to select even a husband of our choice.” Ann Odell said that if the bill under consideration passed, “it will infringe on our rights as women and interfere with that religious liberty that is guaranteed to all parties who live under the glorious banner of the Stars and Stripes.”<sup>266</sup> Practicing polygamy, as women and as American citizens, was their choice and right, argued these Mormon women.

Almost two decades after the Mountain Meadows Massacre no one had been charged for the murders of the members of the Fancher-Baker wagon train party. Politicians and journalists had not let Americans forget. The outrage over the lack of justice along with new authority granted from Poland Act prompted federal authorities to begin pushing for a reckoning. In 1874, nine Mormons were indicted, but only John D. Lee would go to trial. One of the indicted men, Philip Klingensmith, turned state’s evidence and provided new information about the massacre reigniting public outrage.<sup>267</sup> After much political fenagling, Lee’s trial proceeded with eight Mormon and four non-Mormon jurors. When the trial began, *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported that because of the composition of the jury, “it is not likely that a verdict will be found.”<sup>268</sup> The prosecution, nonetheless, proceeded seemingly excited in anticipation of being able to reveal the

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<sup>265</sup> Sarah Barringer Gordon, ““The Liberty of Self-Degradation”: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth Century America,” *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (December 1996): 815-847.

<sup>266</sup> “Minutes of a Ladies Meeting,” *The Ogden Junction*, March 19, 1870.

<sup>267</sup> “The Mountain Meadows Massacre: An Old Tragedy Revived,” *Maine Farmer*, December 12, 1974; For more on Klingensmith see: Anna Jean Backus, *Mountain Meadows Witness: The Life and Times of Bishop Philip Klingensmith* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1996).

<sup>268</sup> Robert H. Briggs, “A Seething Cauldron of Controversy: The First Trial of John D. Lee, 1875,” *Journal of Mormon History*, no. 1 (Winter 3013):15.

new, horrific details of the massacre provided by their new star witness, Klingensmith. Personal correspondence suggests that the prosecutors were aware that a conviction was unlikely; however, they were hoping that the testimonies would implicate George A. Smith, Brigham Young's counselor, who had traveled through Southern Utah inciting violence leading up to the Mountain Meadows Massacre.<sup>269</sup> The national press covered the proceedings closely. Klingensmith described the massacre in all of its gory detail never before heard, which reporters telegraphed out at the end of each day. Major newspapers published the grisly details the following mornings, and the public was riveted.<sup>270</sup>

During the trial, *The Salt Lake Tribune* questioned, "Why are not Brigham Young and George A. Smith arrested? These blood-stained criminals should no longer be permitted to run at large." The newspaper reported that Lee had been serenaded by the Mormon Band as he headed toward his trial and suggested that perhaps the band should serenade Young as well since "the butcher who executes should receive no more honors than the butcher who plans." *The Tribune* concluded by quoting from the *San Francisco Herald*, explaining that they hoped Klingensmith's testimony "will provoke a stern vengeance which will bring retribution not only to the fanatic fiends who slaughtered men and women in cold blood and dashed out the brains of babes, but will exact a pound of flesh from the uttermost from the instigators of this diabolical massacre. If civil law will not reach Brigham young, martial law or lynch law should."<sup>271</sup> While the commentators hoped that the Mormon hierarchy would be held accountable, the prosecutors

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<sup>269</sup> Briggs.

<sup>270</sup> "Particulars of the Mountain Meadows Massacre in All of Their Blood-Curdling Detail," *The Spirit of Democracy*, August 3, 1875; "A Great Crime Unpunished," *New York Times*, July 23, 1875; "If the Vengeance of the Lord Is Slow, it is Equally Sure," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 26, 1875; "The Lee Trial," *The Weekly Arizona Miner*, September 24, 1875.

<sup>271</sup> "City Jottings," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 27, 1875.

attempted to make Lee's trial a referendum of Mormonism itself.<sup>272</sup> Lee's trial had implication far beyond simply determining Lee's accountability. Lee was caught in a political struggle that would determine the fate of Utah and its statehood ambitions.<sup>273</sup>

While the prosecution had a strong case that Lee was complicit in the Massacre, there remained some question as to whether he was giving or taking orders. Nonetheless, up until the closing arguments, it looked as though Lee may be convicted. During final arguments, however, assistant prosecutor, Robert Baskin, made what seemed like an extraordinarily bizarre decision and intentionally provoked the Mormon jurors. Baskin reminded the jury that it took eighteen years for the anyone to be prosecuted for the attack. Not until the federal government had taken over the role of prosecuting criminal cases with the Poland Act was something being done. Baskin blamed the Mormon theocracy "for this heinous crime." They could have pushed for immediate justice, however, according to Baskin, "they would not punish...the perpetrators of certain crimes, amongst which is this, the most horrible of all crimes, the Mountain Meadows Massacre." Apparently to the sound of the booing, mostly Mormon audience, Baskin pronounced, "I arraign Brigham Young, as an accessory of this murder...Then I arraign Brigham Young as accessory before the fact. I arraign him as having violated his oath of office...I arraign him for having quietly sat by and seen these little children made orphans of." Baskin proceeded to invite the jurors who were not Mormons to acquit Lee, he didn't expect them to vote for a conviction, he announced, because the church "had made them criminals...had made them cowards and destroyed their manhood; yes which had made them craven cowards; and they were lower than the Indians, their confederates." Baskin proclaimed that he did not hold all Mormons

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<sup>272</sup> Briggs, "The prosecutors' specific strategy was to make the Lee trial into a referendum on the tyranny and corruption of the Mormon hierarchy and the fanaticism of its deluded followers."<sup>272</sup>

<sup>273</sup> Briggs.

responsible, however, he thundered, “I do hold Brigham Young responsible. I do hold the system which has carried it out and which teaches and carries out...the shedding of human blood to atone for real or imaginary offenses. I hold-I arraign this iniquitous system and the leaders of the Church!”<sup>274</sup> The church was not on trial, but Baskin made the Mormons feel otherwise.

Even though Lee was on trial, the prosecutor argued that the massacre ultimately wasn't Lee's fault. Rather, the responsibility belonged to the church and its leaders; their followers were merely pawns. The prosecution undermined their own case against Lee, and by attacking the Mormons' church and faith, prompted all of the Mormons on the jury to vote for acquittal. Apparently, the prosecutors got the outcome that they were hoping for. Baskin's associate had written to his wife shortly before the trial, that “Baskin intends to make a scathing arraignment of Brigham Young... The most we can hope for is a hung jury...strange to say, we are all hoping this will be the result.” Baskin's closing arguments drew attention to the fact that before the Poland Act, Mormons would not try their own in a court of law. Lee's acquittal proved that even after the Poland Act, they would not convict each other even for the most heinous acts of mass murder; evidence that the Poland Act had not gone far enough in its suppression of Mormons in political arenas. A national news story reported that the case provided evidence that not only “demonstrated Lee's guilt, but also fastened the responsibility of this cowardly, treacherous, and horrible crime upon dignitaries high in the Mormon Church.”<sup>275</sup> Lee's acquittal proved to outsiders, who had been riveted by the trial proceedings, that Mormons could not be impartial and should, therefore, not have the right to sit on juries.

A year later, Lee was tried again. Brigham Young publicly pulled support away from Lee before the second trial, and the jury found Lee guilty. A firing squad executed Lee in 1877 at

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<sup>274</sup> As quoted in Briggs.

<sup>275</sup> “The Trial of John D. Lee,” *Perrysburg Journal*, August 20, 1875.

Mountain Meadows, but only after Lee wrote his confession, which implicated the entire church bureaucracy including Brigham Young.<sup>276</sup> National and international newspapers reported that Lee's confessions confirmed that the massacre had been planned by Mormons and that "it was one of the most fiendish massacres that ever reddened the earth."<sup>277</sup> Lee claimed to be just a scapegoat and a man who had simply been following orders. Mormon authorities, on the other hand, argued that Lee was a renegade, and he alone was responsible for the atrocity.<sup>278</sup> Lee's confessions were published in major national and even some international newspapers. In 1877, the *Chicago Tribune* reported, "The vengeance has come; and with a certain dramatic fitness John D. Lee has been shot upon the very field where, twenty years ago, his infernal massacre was perpetrated. His actions are avenged; the law is vindicated."<sup>279</sup> Two days after Lee's execution, however, *The Chicago Tribune* reported that Lee had believed that he "was an unwilling agent of the Church, acting under compulsion, and the sole responsibility rests upon the heads of the church." The article continued, "it is to be hoped that the other guilty parties may be speedily brought to justice. It is not fair that one man alone should suffer when others are equally as guilty."<sup>280</sup> *The Salt Lake Tribune*, contended that Young was the most guilty of all and reported that "the blood of hundreds of humans cry aloud from the earth for vengeance upon the leader of the Mormon Thugs," signed the Mountain Meadows Ghost.<sup>281</sup> Despite these calls for greater justice and the preponderance of evidence that there were other participants, just as if not more heavily involved than Lee, no one else was ever tried. After Lee's execution, Klingensmith, the state's witness in the case against Lee, allegedly experienced multiple assassination attempts,

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<sup>276</sup> John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled: The Life and Confession of John D. Lee*, 1877.

<sup>277</sup> "A Fiendish Murder Plot," *Valley Spirit*, March 28, 1877; "The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Lee's Confessions: Frightful Mormon Atrocities," *Belfast Newsletter*, April 5, 1877.

<sup>278</sup> Mormon historian, Juanita Brooks, provides a compelling argument that Lee was scapegoated by the Church.

<sup>279</sup> "The Mountain-Meadow Massacre Revenged," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 25, 1877.

<sup>280</sup> "The Mountain-Meadow Massacre Revenged," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 25, 1877.

<sup>281</sup> *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 20, 1877.

until finally his body was reported to have been found in a prospector's hole in Mexico, himself a victim of the vengeance of the Avenging Angels. National newspapers reported that Klingensmith had predicted his own demise; "I know that the church will kill me, sooner or later, and I am as confident of that fact as that I am sitting on this rock. It's only a matter of time; but I'm going to live as long as I can."<sup>282</sup>

In 1875, under the provisions of the Poland Act, the federal government indicted George Reynolds, a Mormon polygamist, for marrying a second wife. Reynolds' test case went before the Supreme Court. Reynold's team, led by George Biddle, maintained that polygamy was, to members of the Mormon faith, a religious duty, and therefore, prohibiting polygamy violated the First Amendment of the Constitution. The Morrill-Anti-bigamy Act was, according to the Church's legal team, unconstitutional. Charles Devens argued the test case for the government and his argument focused on the human cost of polygamy. Devens contended that if allowed to practice polygamy on religious grounds, numerous other violent crimes could and would be perpetrated on religious grounds. The *New York Times* reported that Devens argued that if polygamy was permitted "under this rigid interpretation go the Constitution, a sect of East Indian Thugs who should settle in the Territories might commit murder with impunity, on the ground that it was sanctioned and enjoyed by their system of religious belief." According to the article, Devens concluded his argument "with an eloquent and impressive reference to the Mountain Meadows Massacre by the Mormon 'Avenging Angels' as an illustration of the fanatical extremes to which men, unrestrained by law, may be carried under a mistaken conviction of

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<sup>282</sup> "Bishop Smith's Death," *New York Times*, August 5, 1881; "Klingensmith: He is Supposed to Have Been Murdered by Mormons," *The Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, August 4, 1881; "The Destroying Angels: Bishop Smith Falls a Victim to the Blood Atonement," *The Butte Weekly Miner*, August 23, 1881.

religious duty.”<sup>283</sup> By allowing polygamy, according to Devens’ argument, more blood would be spilled. Reynolds lost the case and subsequently spent the next two years in prison and paid a five hundred dollar fine.<sup>284</sup>

Cannon, Utah’s delegate to Congress, denounced the Supreme Court’s decision and fumed that Mormon men were being persecuted. “Our crime has been,” Cannon elucidated, “We married women instead of seducing them; we reared children instead of destroying them; we desired to exclude from the land prostitution, bastardy and infanticide.”<sup>285</sup> Cannon continued, “If George Reynold is to be punished, let the world know the facts. Conceal them not under the thin veil hypocritical pretense. Let it be published that in this land of liberty, the most blessed and glorious upon which the sun shines, the law is swiftly invoked to punish religion, but justice goes limping and blindfolded in pursuit of crime.”<sup>286</sup> The prosecution of polygamy, to the Mormons, was nothing short of religious persecution. Furthermore, Mormons had argued throughout their history that Mormon women were actually protected by their system of marriage. They often touted the fact that prostitution was non-existent in the Utah Territory as proof of good moral health. Mormons argued that polygamy was not a form of violence, and that actually Mormon women were treated better than other American women. In a polygamous system, argued polygamists, women were not at risk of becoming mistresses, prostitutes, or spinsters, and their children didn’t have to deal with the stigma associated with being born out of wed-lock.

After the Supreme Court ruled against Reynolds, Cannon appealed to President Hayes to grant Reynolds clemency. Ann Eliza Young protested against Cannon’s appeal and argued that

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<sup>283</sup> “Is Polygamy a Crime?” *New York Times*, November 15, 1878; Gordon, 126.

<sup>284</sup> “A Blow at Polygamy,” *The New York Times*, January 8, 1879; “Test Case in Polygamy,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 16, 1878.

<sup>285</sup> George, Q. Cannon, *A Review of the Decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Case of George Reynolds vs. the United States* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1879), 52.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



“Canon is enforcing his appeal by threats (which is the regular Mormons style)” and threatening to “fight to the bitter end.” Canon’s threats of violence played right into the hands of those who continued to claim that polygamy led to violence. Young accused Cannon of going back to Utah and preaching that Mormons must “be faithful to their religion in spite of the Supreme Court or the Government.” Young questioned “Why should the appeals of a foul polygamist like George Q. Cannon cause one particle of hesitation? Why should he be listened to for one moment? ... It is incredible that he should be permitted to thrust himself between the President and a criminal convicted of Mormon polygamy.”<sup>287</sup> Meanwhile, a group of non-Mormon women from Utah wrote an open letter to the first lady and the women of the United States complaining that Congress had “failed to enact efficient or enforce existing laws for the abolition of this great crime.” According to these women, the fact that Cannon, “an apostle polygamist with four acknowledged wives is permitted to sit in Congress, not only adds to the enormity of the crime but makes more revolting to our common Christian principals.” These women proceeded to call on Christian women and Christian organizations to call on Congress to delay “the admission of Utah into statehood” until “the great sin of polygamy may be abolished.”<sup>288</sup>

The Reynolds case drove an explosion of anti-polygamy and anti-Mormon rhetoric. As anti-polygamy rhetoric ran rampant, Mormons continued to defy the law, citing an attack on their constitutional rights and claiming religious persecution. Cannon, for one, continued to defy the law and his vocal opposition set an example for polygamist Mormons in Utah. Cannon, still sitting in Congress, complained that those wishing to prosecute Mormons were “Mormon-

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<sup>287</sup> “Mormon Polygamy: Letter from Mrs. Ann Eliza Young to President Hayes, Protesting Against the Extension of Executive Clemency to the Convicted Bigamist, George Reynolds,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1879.

<sup>288</sup> “The Bondage of Bigamy: An Appeal of the Gentile Women of Utah,” *The Indiana State Sentinel*, November 13, 1878.

eatery.”<sup>289</sup> Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes responded to the Mormons’ defiance and announced that “the continued deliberate violation by a large number of the prominent and influential citizens” for practicing polygamy “demands the attention of every department of the Government.” Rutherford threatened to withhold the “rights and privileges of citizenship” to those who “violate or oppose” the enforcement of anti-polygamy legislation.<sup>290</sup> By 1880, Hayes announced that polygamy “can only be suppressed by taking away the political power of the sect which encourages and sustains it.” Therefore, Hayes proposed that “the right to vote, hold office, and sit on juries in the Territory of Utah be confined to those who neither practice or uphold polygamy.”<sup>291</sup> In 1881, Republican President James A. Garfield continued on the anti-polygamy train, “the Mormon Church not only offends the moral sense of manhood by sanctioning polygamy, but prevents the administration of justice through ordinary instrumentalities of law.” Garfield called on Congress to “prohibit in its jurisdiction all criminal practices.”<sup>292</sup> Republican President Chester A. Arthur jumped on the bandwagon; “the existing statute for punishment of this odious crime, so revolting to the moral and religious sense of Christendom, has been persistently and contemptuously violated ever since its enactment.” Congress, contended Arthur, had the “duty of arraying against this barbarous system all the power which under the Constitution and the law they can wield for its destruction.”<sup>293</sup>

By 1882, Christian and women’s groups had focused their attentions on stamping out polygamy. As their focus had shifted from the South as reconstruction came to an end, there was a renewed energy directed at eradicating polygamy.<sup>294</sup> Congress under renewed pressure, began

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<sup>289</sup> Quoted in Driggs.

<sup>290</sup> Third Annual Message of President Hayes, December 1, 1879.

<sup>291</sup> Fourth Annual Message of President Hayes, December 6, 1880.

<sup>292</sup> James A. Garfield’s Inaugural Address, March 4, 1881.

<sup>293</sup> Chester A. Arthur’s First State of the union Address, December 6, 1881.

<sup>294</sup> See Gordon chapters 4 & 5. “The erosion of a national commitment to reform in the South actually increased the attention paid to Utah,” 120.

debating the best way to make the adjustments that the past few presidents and the antipolygamy crowd had asked for. Congress addressed the presidents' concerns with the Edmunds Act. The proposed legislation would remove Mormons from jury service, revoke voting rights, and prohibit Mormons from holding any public office. The *Christian Union* printed an article encouraging Congress to pass the bill. Troops would need to be sent to Utah, they believed, because "it is foolish to suppose the Mormons will allow execution of a law like this" after all, according to the article... "they are men to whom deeds of blood are familiar."<sup>295</sup> The Mormons, according to these detractors would and had shed blood to protect their way of life. Nonetheless, the Christian newspaper insisted, "Pass this bill and enforce it...polygamy can be stamped out and it will."<sup>296</sup> The Mormons found some sympathy among Democrats on the principals of state's rights and self-rule, but not enough to stop the tide of anti-Mormon legislation. In March of 1882, the Edmunds Act became law and Mormons became a completely disenfranchised people. According to Howard R. Lamar, importantly, the Edmunds Act "would not have passed without pressure from protestant churches and national religious press."<sup>297</sup>

While women's and Christian groups continued their attacks on Mormons for their polygamy and periphery crimes, other Mormon dissenters reminded Americans that the issue was bigger than polygamy. Secular non-Mormons, such Judge C.C. Goodwin, consistently reminded Americans that in Utah, there exists "a despotism as absolute in its control over its own people as ever existed on earth." Goodwin contended that "behind polygamy there is in the Mormon creed a deadly menace to free government." He argued that the Mormon creed had taught them to view "the perpetration of any crime in the interest of their church as a mere

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<sup>295</sup> "The Mormon Problem," *The Christian Union*, February 9, 1882

<sup>296</sup> "The Mormon Problem," *The Christian Union*, February 9, 1882

<sup>297</sup> Lamar, 317.

emotionless act of duty.” The Mormon Church, argued these dissenters, was inherently violent and lawless. Mormons simply obeyed orders, and according to Goodwin, the Mountain Meadows Massacre was a natural result. The Mormons, he contended “remain substantially the same to this day.”<sup>298</sup> One Mormon critic argued that “the times have changed” and the Mormons’ teachings had become milder but only out of political necessity. Despite their milder teachings, however, “Mormonism is essentially unpatriotic and even traitorous, absolutely un-American and anti-republican.”<sup>299</sup> Talmage conceded that atrocities in Utah were on the decline, but only “because a regiment of United States troops is stationed on the hills overlooking the city and may at any time rake the city with shrapnel.” The decline in violence, according to Talmage, was “not because Mormonism is any less the brutal and bloody, but because it has not the courage.”<sup>300</sup> Another correspondent wrote that “the spirit of the Mormon tiger is the same now that it was twenty years ago,” however, “its claws and teeth are so clipped by the fear of the nation’s indignation, that it can only growl and wait for the time when under the nurture of Statehood, their teeth and claws will be fully grown.”<sup>301</sup> These correspondents all cited the Mountain Meadows Massacre as evidence of Mormon violence and all agreed that with statehood, Americans could expect to see that kind of violence in Utah again.

Protestant groups continued their attack on Mormonism on national platforms. In one instance, Talmage attempted to conflate all kinds of vices including violence with Mormonism. On July 2nd, 1881, Charles Guiteau shot President James Garfield at a train station calling it a “political necessity.” While the citizens of the United States mourned the shooting and

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<sup>298</sup> C.C. Goodwin, “The Political Attitude of Mormons,” *The North American Review*, March 1881, Vol132, No. 292.

<sup>299</sup> D.L. Leonard, “The Utah Church-State,” *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, July 1884.

<sup>300</sup> Thomas Dewitt Talmage, “Talmage on the Mormons,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard* (November 1880): 57.

<sup>301</sup> J.M. Coyner, “Concerning Your Correspondent,” *National Journal of Education* 8, no. 25 (December 1878):107.

subsequent death of President Garfield, Guiteau claimed that he was justified because Garfield's death would "unite the Republican Party and save the Republic."<sup>302</sup> In between the time of Garfield's shooting and his death two months later, Americans sought to make sense of the senseless assassination. Meanwhile, Talmage attacked Guiteau's character, "I will not say that he was a Mormon, but he has all the Mormon theories. He had the ugliness of a Mormon, the licentiousness of a Mormon, the cruelty of a Mormon, the murderous spirit of a Mormon, the infernalism of a Mormon."<sup>303</sup> Talmage's message was clear, Guiteau, though not a Mormon, was just as evil and violent as a Mormon. By Talmage's estimation, if someone were committing violent or immoral acts, they were acting "like" Mormons. Talmage made being "a Mormon" an insult fitting for the worst kinds of criminal, murders and traitors.

After the passage of the Edmund's Act, Congress had to decide whether to let Cannon keep his congressional seat. The discussion began with Congressman Miller reminding members of Congress that the Mormons of Utah were hostile to the United States government and "in Utah, great crimes have been committed and have been unwhipped of justice. Open violation of this Government has frequently occurred. The course of justice obstructed. Organized assassination has been frequently perpetrated." Furthermore, according to Miller, the "Mountain Meadows Massacre was traced directly to the Mormon Church." Miller recalled how it took twenty years for Lee to be tried for the murders and even then, the trial had brought to light that the Church had "not only winked at but had incited the massacre."<sup>304</sup> Again, politicians laid the Mountain Meadows Massacre at the door of the whole Mormon Church, which despite Lee's execution, had apparently not properly atoned.

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<sup>302</sup> E.E. Barclay, *The Life and Assassination of President Garfield: Together with the Life of the Cowardly Assassin, Guiteau* (Pennsylvania: Barclay & Co., 1881), 25.

<sup>303</sup> "Discourse by Rev. T. Dewitt Talmage," *The New York Evening Express*, October 3, 1881.

<sup>304</sup> *Congressional Record*, 53<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1882: 3059.

Miller questioned why, since the Mormon Church institution was anti-republican and “threatens the safety of this nation,” Congress should not suppress Mormonism. “Why should anyone,” questioned Miller, “holding to those opinions and practicing those tenets be admitted to a seat in this House?” Miller contended that there was a precedent for refusing to seat those hostile to the United States. According to Miller in 1861, Congress had refused to seat a southerner who had not fought against the Union, but who had sympathized with the Confederacy and had declared the Union invasion of the South an unholy war. At the time Congress concluded that the man was a threat to public safety and that he could be excluded from Congress for disloyalty. As a part of the reconstruction movement, Congress had the right to refuse to seat anyone who they deemed hostile to the federal Government. Therefore, Miller asked Congress to “shut the door and refuse admission to any Delegate from the Territory of Utah until it sends a representative for a law-maker who is not a notorious law breaker.”<sup>305</sup> In the State of Tennessee, argued Miller, the intermarriage of a white man with a woman of a different race is a felony and the man is, therefore, not able to vote or hold any office. The Democrats in favor of seating Cannon argued that the Republicans real issues with the Mormons was that they “have committed the offense of belonging to the Democratic Party.”<sup>306</sup>

Cannon met with fierce opposition from several other members of Congress, including Congressman Cassidy from Nevada. Cassidy proclaimed that Congress, by seating Cannon for all of those years, “has been an accessory to the crime of polygamy quite long enough.” He stated that he was, therefore, “in favor of suppressing polygamists whenever and wherever one dares to raise his head. Especially am I in favor of placing a quietus upon the chief polygamist in Utah, George Q. Cannon.” Cassidy contended that Brigham Young had sent Cannon to congress

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 3059.

<sup>306</sup> *Congressional Record*, 53<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1882: 3059.

for the express purpose of making “polygamy respectable in the eyes of the civilized world.” Cassidy continued, “Then we have the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the terrible vengeance of the destroying Angels in Utah, all directly traceable...to the Mormon system. The leaders condoned and concealed the bloody work of the murderous members of their church for more than twenty years, thereby becoming accessories after the fact to all of these terrible crimes.” Cassidy thundered, “I hold Cannon morally responsible for his share of these crimes against mankind and civilization. Morally he comes here red-handed from the Mountain Meadows massacre and the hundreds of assassinations perpetrated by the Destroying Angels of the Mormon leaders. He also comes as a self-confessed felon under the law. I am against him and the whole foul and disgraceful system which he represents.”<sup>307</sup> Cassidy, it seems, held all Mormons as accessories to the murders of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

When Cassidy finished his tirade, Congressman Calkins stood and reminded Congress of the Mormon Rebellion of 1857, “a speck of war appeared in the territory of Utah, growing out of the defiance of the Mormon people to the authority of the Government.” President Buchanan, reminded Cassidy, had sent troops to suppress the rebellion. In addition to the rebellion against the United States, Calkins reminisced, “coming up out of the past is a tale of blood, the equal of which is scarcely found in any annals of bloody crime that history records, so horrible and atrocious that a savage might have sat at their feet and learned the deeds of cruelty.” The “darkness and bloodshed should not be forgotten,” and according to Calkins neither should “the virtues” which belong to the Mormon people. “These are some of the historical facts allied to and connected with the contest now presented.”<sup>308</sup> The right of the Territorial delegates to take their seats in Congress was, according to these Congressmen, connected to the historical

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<sup>307</sup> *Congressional Record*, 47<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1882: 3071-3072.

<sup>308</sup> *Congressional Record*, 47<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1882: 3072.

propensity of the Mormons towards violence. Cries of “Don’t forget the Mountain Meadows Massacre” had become weaponized to deny rights to the Mormons, even the right to send representatives to Congress. Congress voted that Utah’s delegates were “not entitled to a seat in this Congress as a Delegate from the Territory of Utah.” Furthermore, they declared that “the seat of the delegate... is declared vacant.”<sup>309</sup> Congress thereby denied representation to the Territory of Utah and its people.

Despite the anti-Mormonness of 1882, the people of Utah launched another statehood attempt. In April of 1882, a Constitutional Convention met and drafted a constitution. This time, they abandoned their hopes of having the State named Deseret and asked to be admitted as the State of Utah. According to their memorial, Mormons believed that “it is the right and duty of the people of Utah ...to plead for and demand a republican form of government.”<sup>310</sup> The efforts, however, were to no avail. The bills for admission were sent to committees and put on hold. In 1885 Mormons held a mass meeting in Salt Lake City to “draft a series of resolutions and a protest to the President of the United States, and the nation, in which the wrongs the people of this Territory have suffered and are still suffering from the tyrannical conduct of federal officials.” In *The Protest and Declaration of Grievances*, the Mormons contended, that the authorities had “disregarded our rights in the matter of local self-government.” The document explained that they had asked for statehood in 1849, 1856, 1862, 1872, and again in 1882. “A Territorial government is not a republican institution,” complained the Mormons, “but for thirty-five years we have been compelled to accept the colonial conditions which it imposes.” The committee asserted that Utah possessed all of the requirements for statehood and should,

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<sup>309</sup> *Congressional Record*, 47<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1882: 3075.

<sup>310</sup> As quoted in Howard R. Lamar, “Statehood for Utah: A Different Path,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, no. 4 (Fall 1971): 318.



therefore, be admitted.<sup>311</sup> The protest asserted that the “charges of treason and rebellion made against our people, are as absurd as they are untrue.”<sup>312</sup> The Mormons maintained that they had been victims of religious persecution, and that the charges against them were unfounded.

In 1887, the Utah Territory made another statehood attempt, and once again Congress responded by tightening anti-Mormon legislation. Mormons this time, however, appeared to be ready to align with the nation’s expectations for a republican sister state. Utah’s proposed 1887 constitution declared polygamy “incompatible with a republican form of government.”<sup>313</sup> Apparently, almost nobody believed the sincerity of their anti-polygamy provisions. National newspapers including the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that their “proposed constitution is a delusion...they are pretending to have killed polygamy.”<sup>314</sup> National newspapers reported that while the proposed constitution prohibited polygamy, at a church conference the same day, leaders had encouraged their constituents to “adhere faithfully to Mormon principles in assurance of their ultimate triumph.”<sup>315</sup> Apparently, in an effort to demonstrate their sincerity, the Utah legislature proposed a bill to outlaw polygamy in the territory. According to their opponents, “this shrewd move was taken by the Mormons in order to put themselves on record as being in earnest.”<sup>316</sup> Delegates from Utah, however, announced that the proposed constitution addressed the concerns that had previously prevented Utah statehood, namely, by prohibiting polygamy, providing for minority representation, and committing to the separation of church and state.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> *Mormon Protest Against Injustice: An Appeal for Constitutional and Religious Liberty* (Salt Lake City: Jos. Hyrum Parry & Co., 1885).

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> *Struggle for Statehood Chronology*

<sup>314</sup> “To Battle Against Polygamy,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 9, 1888.

<sup>315</sup> “The Proposed Mormon Fraud,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 21, 1887.

<sup>316</sup> “Shrewdness of the Mormons: Utah Legislature to Do Its Part in the Scheme to Secure Statehood,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 14, 1888.

<sup>317</sup> “Utah’s Knock for Admission,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 1, 1887; “Utah’s Constitutional Convention: A Separation of Church and State- the Rights of the Minority,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 3, 1887.

Again, Mormon opponents argued that there was more at stake than just polygamy. Several articles noted that statehood would lead to the persecution of non-Mormons in the area.<sup>318</sup> One Mormon detractor, Frank Wilkenson, stated that “at present, the leaders have quit murdering Gentiles. They desire to have Utah admitted as a state. Then the bloody game could be safely recommenced.”<sup>319</sup> According to the article, in the past “the Mormons dealt out death to Gentiles as long as it comparatively safe to kill. The Church reeks with Gentile blood. As I write,” continued the Wilkenson, “a vision of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, where 120 Arkansas emigrants were massacred in cold blood by the Mormons rises before me.” Another article argued that “the majority of the people of Utah give their first allegiance to another sovereignty,” the Mormon Church and its leaders.<sup>320</sup> Many contended that if Utah became a state, “the Mormon priests would rule the state.”<sup>321</sup> Another article argued that Mormonism was more dangerous and less republican in nature than other American religions because they congregate together so they can form “a political party; a militia;” a dangerous blend of church and state. The Mormons, according to *The Tribune* “have founded as Ishmaelitish state in this country, a state which, like its prototype, has naught to offer to other States but conversion, tribute, or death.”<sup>322</sup> Accusations of violence and barbarism continued to plague the Mormons of Utah.

Meanwhile, the gentiles of Utah again announced that they “unanimously oppose the Mormon Statehood scheme recently indorsed by a Democratic Congressional caucus.” Newspapers across the country printed their protest in which they announced, “polygamy is not

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<sup>318</sup> “The Proposed Mormon Fraud,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 21, 1887.

<sup>319</sup> “Wealth of the Mormons,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 8, 1888.

<sup>320</sup> “Why statehood should Not Be Given To Utah,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 5, 1887.

<sup>321</sup> “Opposing Utah Statehood,” *The Butte Miner*, December 18, 1888.

<sup>322</sup> “The Mormon Problem,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 2, 1887.

dead.”<sup>323</sup> Aside from polygamy, however, the gentiles argued that the admission of Utah, “would retard progress...and hand the Utah over to the Mormon hierarchy.” The non-Mormons of Utah encouraged all “patriotic citizens everywhere to unite in strong protests to Congress against the proposed action.” The admission of Utah, claimed opponents, “would be a crime against American institutions.”<sup>324</sup> Although newspapers choose to highlight the polygamy aspects of the gentile argument against Utah statehood, including the version they sent to Congress, the Utah non-Mormons had a lot more to say about the violent and anti-American aspects of Mormonism. The gentiles argued that the “treasonable features of Mormonism have not been eliminated.” Furthermore, they “opposed the admission of Utah as a state because it would be under the tyrannical domination and control of a secret organization commonly called the Mormon Church,” which they contended, is “un-American in all its tendencies.” Utah with statehood powers would “drive away the men and women who are fast making it fit to enter the union of the States.” The inevitable violence against outsiders threatened their own safety, and therefore, non-Mormon Utahans feared that they would have to abandon Utah and their properties.

Additionally, newspapers reported that the Mormons and the Democratic leaders had purportedly come to an arrangement, a plan “to arrange for a Democratic offset” to the admission of the Republican territories such as the Dakotas.<sup>325</sup> The Democrats were indeed threatening to obstruct the admission of Dakota until Utah was admitted.<sup>326</sup> In 1887, it looked like five states were preparing for statehood admissions. Only Utah would be a Democratic state; the others were solidly Republican. *The Tribune* reported that “the movement for the admission of Utah is

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<sup>323</sup> “The Proposed Mormon Fraud,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 21, 1887.

<sup>324</sup> “A Protest From Utah: the Gentiles Oppose Statehood Because Polygamy is Not Dead,” *Darlington Democrat*, December 28, 1888; *Congressional Record* 50<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1889: 1293.

<sup>325</sup> “Article 5—No Title,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 8, 1887.

<sup>326</sup> “Staving Off Dakota’s Admission,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 2, 1887.

pushed through the Mormon hierarchy through the Democratic party.”<sup>327</sup> The Mormons, “who in view of the Statehood movement, have all suddenly become staunch Democrats.”<sup>328</sup> *The Chicago Tribune* pointed out that “it would be a big thing for the Latter-Day Saints to have two of their number sitting in the United States Senate. It would also be a big thing for the Democrats to three electoral votes.”<sup>329</sup> The Democrats, according to the article, could not for much longer stop the tide of admissions of Republican states and the best they could hope for would be to offset it with the admission of a Democrat state, Utah. In 1888, Congressman Washington claimed that the Republican majorities were taking advantage of the situation for political reasons. Washington insisted that states should be admitted “without regard to the politics or party affiliation of its people. Any other view than this is narrow, partisan, and unpatriotic.”<sup>330</sup> Utah being denied statehood, had nothing to do with polygamy, according to Washington. It was a matter of party politics. Utahans were caught in the crossfire. Although the other states were admitted, the Democrats and Utah would have to wait. Democrats continued to insist that Republicans disenfranchised the Mormons solely “because they vote the democratic ticket.”<sup>331</sup> Violence, and polygamy for that matter, according to this argument, was merely a weapon in the arsenal to protect Republican majorities in Congress.

After being denied statehood again, Utah delegate Caine complained to Congress that the Mormons had made great efforts “to bring that much abused Territory into harmony with the rest of the nation.” Caine insisted that the people of Utah had been assured that when they banned polygamy they would be admitted into the Union. They were told, according to Caine, that

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<sup>327</sup> “Keep the Mormons Out,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 21, 1888.

<sup>328</sup> “Democrats Freeze Out Mormons,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 7, 1888.

<sup>329</sup> “Three Electoral Votes: Democrats Look with Favor On Utah’s Proposed Admission,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 8, 1887.

<sup>330</sup> *Congressional Record*, 51<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1890: 2688.

<sup>331</sup> *Congressional Record*, 51<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1890: 2991.

polygamy was the only impediment to being allowed statehood. The Mormons had agreed to stop plural marriages, but it had not been enough. Caine concluded that apparently “their opposition is upon altogether different ground.” The bar had been moved, bemoaned Caine; local “obstructionists” wanted to keep Utah in a state of bondage and to deprive them of their civil rights: the right to hold office, vote, and sit on juries.<sup>332</sup> Making efforts to eliminate polygamy did not, to Caine’s dismay, immediately open the door to statehood for Utah.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court upheld the Edmunds Act and the complete disenfranchisement of Mormon voters. After the Supreme Court ruling, practicing Mormons whether monogamous or polygamous would not be allowed to vote. Simply belonging to an organization “which teaches or practices or encourages polygamy” was apparently enough of a reason to disenfranchise a population.<sup>333</sup> Congress further bolstered the Edmunds Act with the Tucker Amendments to allow the government to seize all of the Mormon Church’s assets. Of course, the Church challenged the seizure of their properties, but in 1890 the Supreme Court again ruled against the Mormons. Ultimately, with its money and assets on the line, the Church agreed to permanently suspend polygamous marriages. Shortly after the Supreme Court’s ruling, the church’s president, Wilford Woodruff issued a Manifesto, officially putting a stop to the doctrine of plural marriage.<sup>334</sup>

In December of 1894, the House began discussing the admission of Utah. Elijah Morse, of Massachusetts, one of the remaining detractors, announced that he was still “opposed to admitting the Territory of Utah as a State.” Utah, according to Morse, had a “history of superstition, licentiousness, murder, and crime that is a disgrace to civilization, and one of the

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<sup>332</sup> *Congressional Record*, 50<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1888: 7949-7953.

<sup>333</sup> *Congressional Record*, 50<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1888: 7950.

<sup>334</sup> Wilford, Woodruff, *The Official Declaration or Manifesto* (Salt Lake City: *The Deseret News*), October 6, 1890.

foulest, blackest blots on the pages of history.” Morse denounced Mormons for their violence. Before voting to admit Utah as a state, Morse stated that he wanted “these people, with their hands reeking with crime, with fingers red with the blood of the Mountain Meadows massacre, to bring forth fruit meet for repentance.” Utah representative Rawlings, goaded Morse by reminding him that the Mountain Meadows Massacre was ancient history. “Outrages,” insisted Rawlings, “have been committed in every community, in every state of civilization.” Even in Massachusetts “in the older days,” goaded Rawlings, they “burnt witches, persecuted Quackers, drove out from the community” dissenters. Congress apparently applauded and cheered. Rawlings stated that he did not “defend the men who committed the Mountain Meadows Massacre. That was,” according to Rawlings an atrocious and cruel butchery.” Rawlings then joked that he “was seven years old at the time” and that he “did not participate in it.” The men who did commit the atrocity, Rawlings reminded Congress, were all dead.<sup>335</sup> The Utah Statehood Bill, enabling Utah to achieve statehood, passed in the House of Representatives with only five dissenting votes.

Woodruff’s Manifesto is commonly cited as evidence that polygamy was the main holdup in Utah attaining statehood. Agreeing to stop polygamy, however, did not immediately allow Utah to gain statehood; there were other holdups. Before Utah was allowed statehood, the church leadership also issued a statement repudiating the blood atonement doctrine and addressed allegations of sedition, the melding of church and state, and blood oaths. The church presidency denied and simultaneously repudiated alleged violent practices including the blood atonement doctrine and the Oath of Vengeance. The church, they stated, was purely

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<sup>335</sup> *Congressional Record*, 53<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1893: 174-187.

ecclesiastical in nature and wielded no “punitive power.”<sup>336</sup> The Manifesto reassured readers that they viewed killing “with the utmost horror; it is abhorrent to us and direct opposition to the fundamental principles of our creed.” Additionally, the church disbanded their political party, The People’s Party, and recommended that their constituents joined one of the national parties. Meanwhile, after forty years of Republican presidents, Democrat Grover Cleveland ascended to the presidency. After denouncing polygamy, the blood atonement doctrine’s and eliminating the final vestiges of theocracy, Utah was finally granted statehood in 1896.

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<sup>336</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Manifesto of the Presidency and Apostles*, (Salt Lake City: *The Deseret News*) December 12, 1889.

## Epilogue

By 1931, only a pile of loose stones remained at the site of the Mountain Meadows Massacre monument. The few remaining stones, the *Millard County Chronicle* reported, “any sheepherder could gather in a forenoon.” The *Chronicle* lamented that the current generation of Mormons “is not satisfied with total indifference but wish to be placed in a better light before the world.” Building a new monument and having a proper dedication “would,” hoped the descendants of the perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, “place the actors of a crime in a better light and lift a load off their descendants.” These local Mormons believed that the crumbling monument reflected badly on their church and themselves. They hoped that a new monument would, “remove the stigma from the present Mormon generation.” The descendants urged their predecessors to ask the world for forgiveness and to atone for their sins. Participation in these events, according to the author, would lead to complete absolution. The *Chronicle* contended, “There will always be a Mountain Meadows skeleton in the closet of every Mormon, until this skeleton is courageously dragged forth and buried with authority and finality,” only then would Mormons be able to “frankly point to a lasting monument, and a suitable inscription for reply to every uplifted finger of shame.” The proponents for this new monument wanted an acre allotted to the monument that would be “protected by law from molestation by vandals.”<sup>337</sup> The monument had been replaced several times, and apparently these Mormons hoped that their monument would stand the test of time.

On the seventy fifth anniversary of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the *Millard County Chronicle* reported that “appropriate services were held” in honor of the victims. Local Mormons organized the event and dedicated the new monument, which placed blame for the massacre

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<sup>337</sup> “Seventy-four Years of Neglect,” *Millard County Chronicle*, August 10, 1931.



solely on John D. Lee. The monument completely deflected blame from the church, even failing to mention that Lee was a member of the church. Lee's descendants, including Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, began pushing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to accept responsibility.<sup>338</sup> According to the *Washington Post*, the plaque caused "despair of the descendants of John D. Lee." His family believed that "Lee could not have joined in the killing of an innocent emigrant party unless someone in the Mormon hierarchy had ordered him to do it."<sup>339</sup> Eventually, in 1961, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints posthumously reinstated Lee's church membership. Although it appeared the Church was willing and ready to make amends, shortly after the monument dedication, they acquired the land on which the monument sits and began to "discourage visitors." The church had a picnic table removed, quit maintaining the road until it became inaccessible, and removed the signs to make it difficult to find the location.<sup>340</sup> Within a few years, however, pressure from "tourist groups and traveling clubs forced the County Commissioners to repair the road and to keep it open and passable."<sup>341</sup> Apparently the church leaders had hoped to go back to pretending like the massacre had never happened.

In 1998, after an earthquake damaged the Monument, Mormon Church leaders, agreed to repair the monument. During construction, a backhoe contractor inadvertently disinterred thousands of the massacre victims' bones.<sup>342</sup> The state archeologist, Kevin Jones, excavated and collected the human remains for examination as is required by state law and called on

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<sup>338</sup> Sally Denton, "A Utah Massacre and Mormon Memory," *New York Times*, 2003.

<sup>339</sup> Cynthia Gorney, "Epilogue to a Massacre," *The Washington Post*, 1990.

<sup>340</sup> Brooks, 214.

<sup>341</sup> Olsen, 154.

<sup>342</sup> Novak, *House of Mourning*, 7; Christopher Smith, "Bones of Contention: Unearthing Mountain Meadows Secrets: Backhoe at a S. Utah Killing Field Opens 142-Year-Old Wound," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 12, 2000; Sally Denton, "Utah Massacre and a Mormon Memory," *New York Times*, May 24, 2003.

anthropologist, Shannon A. Novak, to analyze them. Shortly after beginning their work, however, Utah Governor, Mike Leavitt, signed an executive order, stopping forensics analysis.<sup>343</sup> Leavitt, a Mormon and a descendant of one of the participants of the Massacre, sparked another controversy with his decision.<sup>344</sup> Detractors accused him of attempting to get the “remains reburied without any extensive examination that might have drawn new attention to the brutality of the murders.”<sup>345</sup> Indeed, the forensic analysis that had already been completed, indicated that most of the victims had been shot at close range. According to the Paiute’s oral histories, their people had not participated in the massacre. The evidence seemed to substantiate the Paiute’s version of the story.<sup>346</sup> The descendants of the murder victims reinterred the remains in a private ceremony. At the 1999 monument dedication, LDS Church President, Gordon B. Hinkley, spoke and took the opportunity to reiterate that the Church was not to blame for the events of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. “That which we have done here must never be construed as an acknowledgment of the part of the church of any complicity in the occurrences of that fateful day.”<sup>347</sup> Although willing to construct a monument for the victims, the church continued to deny responsibility on behalf of their organization. Although a partial recreation of Carleton’s 1859 cairn, the new monument did not have the wooden cross with the inscription that had so infuriated Brigham Young in 1860, “Vengeance is mine saith the Lord.”<sup>348</sup>

At the 150th anniversary commemoration, in 2007, the Church appeared to be prepared to accept responsibility for the Massacre. Church representative, Henry Eyring, officially “expressed profound regret for the massacre,” and for the “undue and untold suffering

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<sup>343</sup> Christopher Smith, “Forensics Study Aids in Tribe’s View of Mountain Meadows Massacre,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, January 21, 2001.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, Olsen, 158.

<sup>345</sup> Denton, 2003.

<sup>346</sup> Smith, “Forensics Study”; Christopher Smith, “Voices of the Dead,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 13, 2000.

<sup>347</sup> Christopher Smith, “The Dilemma of Blame,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 13, 2000.

<sup>348</sup> Bagley, 372; Novak, 7.

experienced by the victims then and by their relatives to the present time.” Eyring also expressed regret to the Paiutes, “who have unjustly borne for too long the principle blame for what occurred during the massacre.” He concluded by saying, “What was done here long ago by members of our church represents a terrible and inexcusable departure from Christian teachings and conduct. We cannot change what happened here, but we can remember and honor those who were killed here.”<sup>349</sup> Dissenters pointed out immediately that, “Regret is not always synonymous with apology, and while Eyring did appear to be emotionally moved by the circumstances, he never spoke those simple words that the descendants have wanted to hear.”<sup>350</sup> The statements by Eyring were accepted by some as an apology, however, others noted that he didn’t actually apologize. The process of reconciliation between the Mormons, their church, the descendants of the massacre, and the Paiute Indians is an ongoing process, perhaps it always will be.

Although the monuments have altered the landscape of the site of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the place itself has changed. Nearby residents tell of how the land, once beautiful and lush, has become desolate and barren. Scientists claim that the land had been over-grazed and that, therefore, the topsoil washed away leaving a barren landscape. Nearby residents, however, claim that the topography changed after the massacre to match the ugliness of the events that transpired there. Local legends assert that the site is haunted. One Paiute resident recalls her grandmother’s admonitions, “if you have to go through there, you better hurry and get through before it gets dark. Because she said you could hear crying and screaming at night.” Scientists have given explanations for why the physical landscape of Mountain Meadows has changed,

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<sup>349</sup> Carrie A. Moore, “LDS Church Issues Apology over Mountain Meadows,” *Deseret News*, 2007.

<sup>350</sup> Bill McKeever, “When Regret is Not Synonym with Apology,” *The Habit of Clear-Thinking People*, September 17, 2007.

however, among local Southern Utah Mormons, there is a commonly held belief, “God has cursed the land.”<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Olsen, 147-149; Brooks, 214-215.

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